SWEDISH JOURNAL OF ROMANIAN STUDIES

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The cover photo was taken by Gabriela Chiciudean in August 2023 and represents The Danube Gorge, Mehedinți County, Romania

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Editorial

The call for papers for Volume 7 of the *Swedish Journal of Romanian Studies* sought manuscripts which report rigorous research on Romanian language, literature, theatre and film, cultural studies, anthropology, history, translation studies, education as well as research seminars and reviews of works within these fields.

This first issue collates research which is both diverse and eclectic in topic and method by scholars from Turkey, Spain, Poland, Serbia, and Romania. This issue stands out because all the twelve papers are written in English. This deliberate decision not only sets a clear tone but also shows the journal's dedication to encouraging worldwide conversation and making the content accessible. By using English as the only language, this issue reaches a broader audience, inviting people from different parts of the world to connect with the articles and join the discussion on the topics presented.

Article Highlights

The current issue of our journal starts with four different articles conducted from a literary perspective. Therefore, the ***Literature*** section serves as an indispensable component in the dissemination of knowledge including key theories, methodologies, and findings relevant to the existing literature.

1. The inaugural study in this segment, *The Semantics of Language in Eugène Ionesco's Plays,* led by Cristina Mirela Nicolaescu, a Romanian scholar associated with *Yozgat-Bozok* University in Turkey, aims to scrutinize the distinctive attributes of Eugène Ionesco's theatrical compositions, particularly within the avant-garde and theatre of the absurd genres. The paper explores how these texts function, focusing on elements of dramatic language that differ from everyday oral and written language. It traces the evolution of theatre from the period of decadentism, noting a crisis of character and communication in a hostile world, leading to the emergence of the theatre of the absurd.

2. In the second article of this section, *The Status of the Romanian Literary Avant-Garde After 2000: From Marginalization to Recovery*, Alexandru Foitoș from West University of Timișoara, Romania, highlights the persistence of a secondary avant-garde, comprised of overlooked writers, and examines post-2000 works to underscore the complexity of the avant-garde's recovery. Additionally, the study addresses post-Urmuz epigonism and advocates for a re-evaluation of marginalized avant-garde figures within contemporary Romanian literary scholarship.

3. Andrei Victor Cojocaru, from *Alexandru Ioan Cuza* University in Iași, embarks on an intriguing journey in his forthcoming article, *Eminescu and Kabbalah*. He uncovers Eminescu's prose's mystical depths, influenced by Kabbalistic teachings, notably tracing parallels between *Luceafărul*'s Hyperion and the sephirah. Exploring the echoes of the Far East, Cojocaru intertwines them with Near Eastern mysticism, unravelling the symbolism within elements like water, symbolizing primal existence. Guided by Gaston Bachelard's poetics, his exploration converges with the enigma of Ain Soph in Kabbalistic lore.

4. In the latest addition to the literary section, *Why Politicize the Cultural Game? (Emil) Cioran's Ethos: Mysticism, Religion and Ethnic Philosophy*, Felix Narcis Nicolau, a professor affiliated with *Complutense* University of Madrid, presents a thought-provoking investigation. This research strives to explore the spiritual convictions entwined around Emil Cioran's diverse writings. Employing philosophical and cultural lenses, alongside elements of positivist determinism like climate and health, Nicolau scrutinizes works spanning various creative epochs.

Anthropology emerges not merely as a field of study but as a testament to the resilience of the human spirit, a testament to our capacity for empathy and understanding. With its multidisciplinary approach, anthropology sheds light on universal human experiences and societal adaptations, addressing contemporary issues like globalization and social justice, offering a holistic framework for our interconnected world.

5. This section starts with a thought-provoking study by Ewa Nowicka from Collegium *Civitas*, Warsaw, and Annemarie Sorescu-Marinković from the *Institute for Balkan Studies* of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Belgrade. Their collaborative research, titled *Cultural Intimacy, Cultural Distance: Methodological Aspects of anthropological Research into Romanians in Poland*, undertakes the dynamics of migrant experiences and perceptions within the Romanian community residing in Poland. The authors illuminate the evolution of these perceptions over a span of five years, utilizing a unique comparative approach. They conducted in-depth, face-to-face interviews with Romanians living in Poland, employing the same guide but differing in the nationality of the interviewers: Polish interviewers in the initial round and a Romanian interviewer in the subsequent one. Their study not only sheds light on the intricate fabric of migrant experiences but also paves the way for a deeper analysis of the interaction between social scientists and their interlocutors.

6. In *The Legacy of a 20th-century Cleric: A Catholic Priest's Economic Chronicles. Anthropological Insights from Written Documents*, Mária Sziscszai from *Babeş–Bolyai* University of Cluj–Napoca presents a captivating exploration into a treasure-trove of personal economic records and supplementary documents originating from the 20th century. This collection, belonging to a Catholic priest hailing from Satu Mare County, Romania, stands as a tribute to a bygone era, offering a rare glimpse into the Hungarian-speaking region during this epoch. The study explores the priest's economic decisions, the value he placed on different assets, and his understanding of wealth in a changing society. The author not only honours the memory of a singular priest but also enriches our understanding of the human experience amidst the ebb and flow of history.

7. The latest article in the anthropology section, *Historiographic Imaginary and Hypotheses of Heredity in the Configuration of Romanian Cultural Identity*, examines the linguistic techniques, as well as compensatory trends in establishing and shaping a distinctive national identity. Similar to other emerging cultures, Romanian society has strived for survival and growth by defining its identity in relation to neighbouring cultural landscapes, either through opposition or alignment with foreign influences, mirroring a dynamic interplay between the concepts of Self and Other. Through an analysis of historical and literary manipulation, Ioana Alexandra Lionte-Ivan from The University of Medicine and Pharmacy *Grigore T. Popa*, Iași, expounds upon how Romanian culture has responded to various challenges such as aging, identity crises, delayed development, and legitimacy concerns.

The third section of our journal comprises an article dedicated to ***History***. Through the study of history, we gain a deeper appreciation for the complexities of human civilization and the interconnectedness of our collective heritage, empowering us to experience the present with wisdom gleaned from the past.

8. Attila Carol Varga, representing *George Bariţiu* Institute of History, explores the fascinating account of *Swedish Freemason Lars von Engeström and his Description of Transylvania* during the 18th century. Von Engeström, a multifaceted figure serving as a rector, diplomat, and envoy of the Kingdom of Sweden, provided valuable insights into Transylvania, including details about the uprising led by Horea, Cloșca, and Crișan in 1784. Despite uncertainties regarding his physical presence in Transylvania, von Engeström's portrayal offers a vivid fresco of the region, depicting its ethnic and confessional diversity,

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including perspectives of the Romanian Roma community and the challenges faced by its inhabitants.

By featuring **Research Seminars**, our journal fosters collaboration and networking among researchers, scholars, and academics. Specifically designed to acquire targeted knowledge within their academic field, the two research seminars presented in this issue focus on providing field research, instruction, research findings, and generating ideas for future research endeavours.

9. In their contribution to our journal, Otilia Hedeșan and Diana Mihuț, from West University of Timișoara, present the inaugural research seminar titled *Rethinking Fieldwork: Researching Food in the Aftermath of Lockdown*. This article consists of field research methodology within the context of addressing the uncertainties stemming from the Covid-19 pandemic. Through the lens of investigating Romanian food heritage, the authors offer a compelling analysis, drawing from five poignant interviews conducted during the height of the pandemic. Furthermore, they unravel the motivations driving individuals to share their life experiences and cultural knowledge amidst such uncertainties, revealing a profound duty to preserve and transmit cultural heritage. This research seminar not only offers insights into the methodological challenges of fieldwork in unprecedented times but also celebrates the resilience and commitment of communities to preserve their cultural identity.

10. Gabriel-Dan Bărbuleț, from *1 Decembrie 1918* University of Alba-Iulia, presents a comprehensive examination titled *Pragmatic Strategies in Teaching the Romanian Language to International Students*. Through a multifaceted methodology comprising literature review, classroom observations, and interviews with seasoned instructors, the research addresses the diverse challenges encountered by learners amidst the backdrop of increasing globalization. Drawing from sociolinguistic theories, the study underscores the pivotal role of pragmatic competence in fostering effective communication. Ultimately, the study offers valuable insights for educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers, advocating for culturally sensitive language curricula that promote cross-cultural communication and bridge cultural divides.

The **Book Reviews** section serves as a critical component within our journal, offering a platform for scholars and experts to engage with and evaluate the latest publications in their respective fields. The current issue welcomes two such book reviews.

11. Mădălina Elena Mandici from *Alexandru Ioan Cuza* University of Iasi introduces *The Séance of Reading: Uncanny Designs in Modernist Writing* (2023), a book inspired by Thomas J. Cousineau's extensive teaching background and his involvement in Romanian academia as a Fulbright scholar. Mandici's work invites readers to explore seminal texts from American and European literature by examining them through the prism of the Romanian ballad *The Legend of Master Manole* and Mircea Eliade's perspective on mythical creation through sacrifice.

12. Monica Manolachi from the University of Bucharest reviews the scholarly significance of *Dicționarul Romanului Central-European din Secolul XX* [The Dictionary of Central European Novel in the 20th Century], coordinated by Adriana Babeți and edited by Oana Fotache. This project is viewed as a pioneering effort to chart a transnational literary phenomenon. Manolachi's analysis highlights the dictionary's uniqueness, showcasing its rich linguistic diversity and multicultural scope. With 250 entries covering works initially published in one of the fourteen languages spoken in the region, including international languages like French and English, the dictionary encompasses both canonical texts and lesser-known works, offering a comprehensive exploration of Central European literature in the 20th century.

Acknowledgements

As we put together the reviewer board for Volume 7, Issue 1 of the Swedish Journal of Romanian Studies, we have gathered a diverse group of 28 wonderful peer reviewers. These experts come from prestigious universities and respected research institutes across a spectrum of countries: Poland, Italy, Israel, Bulgaria, and Romania. Their backgrounds cover a wide range of academic specialties, ensuring that our evaluation process for this issue is thorough and varied. With their combined knowledge and viewpoints, our reviewers offer valuable insights that add depth to the scholarly discussions and uphold the high standards of academic excellence that we strive for in our journal. We are incredibly grateful to each member of the reviewer board for their important contributions to maintaining the quality and integrity of our publication.

We extend our profound gratitude to the 20 esteemed permanent members of the scientific advisory board for their invaluable contributions to this issue of the journal. These dedicated individuals hail from universities and research institutes across the globe, representing a diverse array of countries including Germany, Spain, Czech Republic, Slovak Republic, USA, China, Sweden, and Romania. Their unwavering commitment to excellence and their expertise in their respective fields have greatly enriched the quality and depth of the research published in this issue.

Andra Iulia Ursa

Introduction for contributors to
Swedish Journal of Romanian Studies

Focus and Scope

Swedish Journal of Romanian Studies (Centre for Languages and Literature, Lund University, Sweden / Centre for the Research of the Imaginary *Speculum*, *1 Decembrie 1918* University of Alba Iulia, Romania / *Complutense* University of Madrid, Spain / Romanian Language Institute, Bucharest) publishes studies about Romanian language, literature, theatre and film, cultural studies, translation studies, education, anthropology, history as well as research seminars and reviews of works within these fields. It welcomes articles that focus on case studies, as well as methodological and/or theoretical issues.

Swedish Journal of Romanian Studies is a new forum for scholars that sets and requires international high quality standards. The journal accepts papers written in Romanian or English, as well as in French, Italian, and Spanish.

Peer Review Process

SJRS has a two stage reviewing process. In the first stage, the articles and studies submitted for publication need to pass the scrutiny of the members of the editorial committee. The studies accepted in this stage are then undergoing a double blind review procedure. The editorial committee removes all information concerning the author and invites external scholars (whose comments are paramount for the decision of accepting for publication or not) to act as anonymous reviewers of the material. Neither the identity of the author, nor that of the reviewer is disclosed. The comments and recommendations of the anonymous reviewers are transmitted to the authors.

Open Access Policy

This journal provides immediate open access to its content on the principle that making research freely available to the public supports a greater global exchange of knowledge.

Indexation

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Literature

THE SEMANTICS OF LANGUAGE IN EUGÈNE IONESCO'S PLAYS

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Abstract

The goal of this paper is to present the characteristics of Eugène Ionesco's dramatic texts, a reason why the genre of avant-garde and theatre of the absurd are also considered, with a view to revealing their major ways of functioning. By pointing out the different dimensions of dramatic language, the emphasis is on those elements that differ from current oral and written language. Starting from the times of decadentism, a crisis of character can be noted in the theater around a type of individual who, as an alienated individual, cannot find his identity in a hostile surrounding world. One of the direct consequences of this crisis will be the impossibility of interpersonal communication, which will be best demonstrated with the concept and tenets of the theater of the absurd. In this context, the study of the theater of the 20th century is done from the perspective of cognitive semantics, as an autonomous level of language. The approach is organised around two notions: dramatic conventions and the actual language of the dramatic texts. The interpretative theory rooted in semantics is applied while analysing Ionesco's short plays. The starting point is the linguistics of the text as described by Eugen Coşeriu. Capturing the meaning and the means by which it is constructed is one of the objectives in accord with the main principles of cognitive linguistics. The way of analysing the meaning in a text is given by the presence of some textual functions, as possibilities provided by language through relationships that the linguistic sign establishes in the discursive act. The specificity of the discourse comes from the combination of verbal and non-verbal elements, in order to highlight the playwright's original style. The particularities of this type of language based on an ontological representation of the actional nature in human existence are also investigated. There are two dimensions recognisable in the language of literature: one is specific to the genre and the other one is particular, giving originality and uniqueness. The textual meaning in between these dimensions needs to be reconstructed from all their constituents identifiable at different levels of analysis. Ionesco distanced himself from the conventional and traditional theatre, finding a new formula for the dramatic genre in his own vision of what drama should be like. Ionesco's dramatic work includes short plays and extensive plays in which the author expresses his adversity against totalitarian regimes. He is the representative of the theater of the absurd and anti-theater. The corpus for this research is composed mainly of the plays The Bald Soprano, The Lesson and The Chairs, the most representative plays for the avant-garde spirit, short plays on the theme of language emptied of meaning and non-communication. Language has an impact on thinking and the resulting actions, which relates it to the ontology of human existence. As dramatic language is preponderently structured on dialogical interactions (and less on monologues, soliloquies and asides), its essence can be revealed by decomposing and recomposing them, from the angle of the conventions specific to the dramatic genre. The analysis of the selected fragments from the corpus has the role to highlight their semantic features in terms of conceptual representations.

Keywords: semantics; linguistics of the text; theatre of the absurd; Eugène Ionesco; communication.

The theoretical framework of the research on Ionesco's plays consists in establishing the connections between concepts as knowledge of the real world and the dramatic texts. These findings may lead to the need to synthesise the contributions and theories regarding interpretation. The strategies of decomposing the elements of language that built dramatic tension orient the reflections on the plays' deep meanings, also investigated in terms of artistic representation within the limits of the norms imposed by the communication situation, as well as genre-specific conventions.

The study further aims to discover the semantic strategies by which meanings are constructs in Ionesco's dramatic texts. One of the obvious strategies is the crowding of scenes charged with truisms, the tendency towards total desemantisation and the destruction of discursive coherence characteristic of texts of this kind, which is revealed through the use of verbal and behavioral automatisms. The internal dynamics is examined in the plays, through which the meanings are manifested, with the help of strategies provided by figurative language itself, such as puns and metaphors and their chaining, respectively.

From a cognitive perspective, the investigation is based on deductive competence, which identifies the relationship cause-effect by probing the deep structure of communication and by focusing on the mental faculties that intervene in the successive reinterpretations of the dramatic texts. Their adaptations to staging, require bridging the written text with the text performed on stage such as an oral expression, with specific instructions, certain rhythms of speech, repetitions, or change of language registers. More importantly, humor and irony, even cynicism and sarcasm are built with figures of speech such as ambiguity, paradoxical irony, and ellipsis. More often than not, ridicule produces a comic effect of the farce type. Multiple meanings or polysemy render flexibility to phrases, by highlighting those meanings in an individualised language filled with the particularities of the dramatic genre such as orality, gesture, mimicry, rhythm, connotation, metaphor, and so on. For instance, in the play *The Lesson*, the phrases appear as mathematical concepts of "square root" and "cube root" in explaining the root of words. Ionesco's theatre assumes exactly this problematic of the apparent non-intentionality in absurd situations, created in the related textual worlds with different levels of linguistic contextualisation:

> Language is one of the major manifestations of an Ecoian contract based on the counterbalance of two antinomic strives: to interpret Being in all its grandeur and to guard it from direct cognition and false interpretation (Korbut Salman, 2019, p. 1061).

Ionesco's characters are stylised, vaguely outlined, with an uncertain identity, and deindividualised, as they are created as types. Such typologies represent hypostases of the man Ionesco, who creates atypical heroes undergoing states of depersonalisation, at the same time unique and irrepeatable. His favorite themes are ontological emptiness, the void, death, failure, disarticulation of language, incommunicado, seclusion, grabbing automatisms and stereotypes, and all this seems to suggest the impossibility of breaking the deadlock. The major themes in the selected plays are philosophical reflections on obsessions and externalised anxieties. Moreover, a great artistic achievement of Ionesco's dramatic work is the original way in which these themes are presented, from several possible perspectives that confers complexity to a situation apparently simple. In their construction the literary motives are recurrent, becoming leitmotifs, and they support the tone of anxiety. Improving language means improving interpersonal interactions, thus avoiding mental disorders such as neuroses and depression. On the other hand, lack of precision in communication produces ambiguity and discontinuity, or imperfections, since information and consciousness are in a relationship

of isomorphism, or there should be an attempt to align them in order to clarify the content for the intended effects.

In *The Bald Soprano*, subtitled anti-play and originally written in Romanian under the title *English without a Teacher*, the playwright seems to parodise colloquial language. The author revealed that the starting point was his attempt to learn English with the help of a beginner's textbook, but Ionesco went beyond the idea of teaching, beginning to show the obvious truths expressed by characters such as Mr. and Mrs. Smith through sentences.

The creative process involved freedom, play, even creative frenzy, as the playwright himself has many times confessed in his Romanian early writings being carried away by imagination, and in this way, linguistic plurality produced defamiliarisation and uniqueness of the artistic expression. The central issue is the communication process between the characters of the dramatic text and the role of language in this process. The specificity of the dramatic language comes from its performative nature in the dialogic form. The characters' lack of mutual understanding makes possible the beginning of confusion and uncertainty as in everyday life, by opening a space for free and creative uses of language. That is why multiple functions of dramatic language can be identified by scrutinising monologues and dialogues, among which the semantic and artistic ones are prominent in this approach. One of the fundamental features of dramaturgy is the writing of a text in view of its staging in front of an audience. However, in both verbal and written expressions, a precise communication requires precise language. The semantic difficulty in the comprehension of dialogues is that the speakers and listeners cannot simultaneously perceive all the levels of reality implied and they cannot be certain which reality the respective notion belongs to in the formulation of a certain idea. Decoding the meaning of a communication sequence is a process of relating a thing to its name, within a conceptual frame of thought. For instance, tragedy brings a tone of hopelessness and futility. The play *The Chairs*, subtitled *A Tragic Farce*, ties together elements of poetic meditation and realistic triviality:

> OLD WOMAN: Come on then, tell your story . . . It's also mine;
> what is yours is mine! Then at last we arrived . . .
> OLD MAN: Then at last we arrived . . . my sweetheart . . .
> OLD WOMAN: Then at last we arrived . . . my darling . . .
> OLD MAN: Then at last we arrived at a big fence. We were
> soaked through, frozen to the bone, for hours, for days, for
> nights, for weeks (Ionesco, 1958, p. 115).

The comedy is simple in so much as the message is transmitted through the attitudes of the characters, through their language and the situations, producing hilarity of how these characters find themselves in strange situations, close to a farce.

The theater of the absurd, illustrated by *The Chairs*, appears as a revolution in the field of world dramaturgy. This type of dramatic creation produces a structure for itself in terms of the importance of scenic elements. Here, the dialogues between the characters are no longer in the foreground of attention, but they give way to nonverbal, and metalinguistic representations. In these literary texts, communication, as a fundamental way of using language, is met in the characters' plane. The constructions of characters with symbolic names, through the nuances of laconic dialogues, more often than not configure comic-tragic situations. "Thus, for Esslin, the conventions of the Theatre of the Absurd are defined by an aesthetic matching a philosophy" (Bennet, 2011, p. 30).

The tonality of conversations is in harmony with lines and attitudes from lightheartedness to cynicism, in some instances emphasised by repetions. To begin with, it is

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worth noting that most dialogues take place with only two participants. The dialogues are represented in various forms and become a model of textual generation, sliding towards the depth structure of the works. The dramatic speech (of small size, both in relation to the number of lines and the number of sentences or phrases) is carried out by: question - answer, and this formula diversifies into two positions: question - acceptance, question - line disagreement, thus approaching the dialogue from the common language understanding. The easiest to determine are the question-answer pairs in a sequence, where it is clear how they are initiated and replied to. Any answer reflects the way the question has been understood. An answer not accepted by the one who requested certain information may be an indication of a deficient formulation.

The characters are sometimes engaged in a passionate dialogue, a struggle full of adventures, each one escaping into a fantasy of their own. In this sense it is possible for the reader to comprehend the stylistic nuances, while taking into account the circumstances in which the communication takes place, as well as the psychological moment. The writer achieves a gradation of tension, intended to emphasise the comic by putting the features of the characters into more stark relief. In any conversation, the so-called pauses or silence appear, signaling difficulties in understanding the message or only disagreement with the interlocutor's opinions. Such situations are well represented in Ionesco's plays. The note of absurdity is emphasised by Mr. Smith's indifference to what his wife said. The points of suspension highlight the crisis of communication, with a certain degree of tension caused by automatic type of language, which is devoid of sense. The degree of intensity of the characters' emotional states is indicated by exclamatory and interrogative statements. These can suggest: alarm, despair, horror or instead, a contemplative state in front of a real situation.

Here is a representative sequence in this sense:

MR. SMITH: Hm. [Silence.]
MRS. SMITH: Hm, hm. [Silence.]
MRS. MARTIN: Hm, hm, hm. [Silence.]
MR. MARTIN: Hm, hm, hm, hm. [Silence.]
MRS. MARTIN: Oh, but definitely. [Silence.]
MR. MARTIN: We all have colds. [Silence.]
MR. SMITH: Nevertheless, it's not chilly. [Silence.]
MRS. SMITH: There's no draft. [Silence.]
MR. MARTIN: Oh no, fortunately. [Silence.]
MR. SMITH: Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear. [Silence.] (Ionesco, 1958, p. 21).

In this passage, the stage direction Silence along with the interjection "Hm" seem to function as ways of releasing thoughts in expressions that are more emotional rather than cognitive. The role of silence indicated as a stage direction points out a fragmentation of the thinking flow, but there is still no deviation from the topic, on the contrary, more details about "being cold" are added with each line. As shown in the quote below, common place truths are reiterated, which strengthens the impression of words without content or desemantised. The series of words: "cold", "chilly" and "draft" create a conceptual frame around the idea of coldness with several connotative variants: dispassion, detachment, indifference and such, even insesitivity and hearlessness. The repeated interjection "Oh, dear" relates to meanings of this sort, as an expression of commiseration but contradicts the previous adverbial "fortunately", as a positive view of the situation.

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In copying the platitudinous dialogues between Mr. and Mrs. Smith and their friends the Martins, Ionesco claims, he was suddenly struck by the strangeness of surprising truths (for example, there are seven days in a week, the ceiling is above us and the floor is below) and decided to communicate these eternal verities to others (Lane, 1994, p. 27).

Within the linguistics of the text, Coșeriu defined *meaning* as an expression of "attitudes, the speaker's opinions or intentions that come to be added to the contents of particular languages" (Coșeriu, 2013, p. 169). The objective character of meanings refers to what is considered a textual signifier, *expression* and *form* in the Humboldtian sense. The meaning or the textual content however, has a constitutive dynamic nature: it is not ready-made, pre-existing to interpretation. The surprise of what is meant by, but beyond what is actually said, is precisely the content of expressive competence. Along with the evocative functions, there are other two particularly important factors in the construction of meaning like *the framework* and *the discourse scope*.

The frame represents the totality of the circumstances of the speech, without which the discursive act would be much poorer. There are a number of frames which can be grouped into four types: situation, region, context and discourse scope, of particular interest for this research. In Ionesco's plays the focus is on a disorganisation of communication, more than on message transmission, as an implicit level of intersubjective communication, devoid of natural continuity. His plays represent expressions for new meanings, the dramatic creation acting as a binder of experiences. The anti-climax effect like circular ending, false tracks in regarding the denouement, the text leading to false climaxes, irony and so forth, they all make up indications of multiple fractured textual realities. Meaning is not something fixed, immutable offered by the author and accurately received by the reader, so that the importance of language creativity is emphasised around the emergence of a new linguistic construct.

The word as a sign or symbol does not faithfully and naturally reflect the thing described. The absolutisation of a word often prevents consideration of the various contradictory features of a given thing, as Jacques Lacan pointed out. It is not we who speak the language, but rather, language speaks through us (Lacan, 1966, p. 138). Even though several persons use the same language, each of them may assign a different meaning to the words, so that the idea that human beings are doomed to loneliness is emphasised strongly. The author puts clichés into their mouths and thus, the alienation of the characters in a state where they are not adapted to express absurdity which is confirmed as the inability to communicate with other people. Although the heroes of the play are English petty bourgeoisie and the author certainly mocks the conformist, by the meaningless concepts and slogans they express, Ionesco exposes without a doubt the weakened human condition. In *The Lesson*, the writer metaphorically shows how language can be a weapon of crime. There are endless other examples that could be given in which words are devoid of any semantic substance. In Ionesco's later work, the language is no longer as absurd as in *The Lesson*. In *The Chairs*, the apparent dialogue consists of numerous monologues. An old couple is waiting for the Speaker to give the message to the master of the house, conducts at its best a discussion resembling a dialogue of the deaf, as if the words they speak would fill the tragic void in which they feel stuck. The characters constantly say something in their subjective attitude to language and they cannot get the message across since the meaning is not transferred to their actions. In Ionesco's renowned play *The Bald Singer*, there are numerous examples of clichés which, when repeated many times, become "revealed truths" in so much as they stimulate thought without moralising.

Multiplication of absurdities necessarily leads to hilarity, but when they are pronounced seriously, this is getting unusual. Ionesco draws attention to verbal insufficiency

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due to semantic erasure of words, but also warns against spreading of all kinds of ideologies, that by language manipulation. This view exposes false perceptions of reality and its false expression through language as it is the case in the following example:

> MRS. MARTIN: But of course, that must have been I, sir. How curious it is, how curious it is, and what a coincidence!
> MR. MARTIN: How curious it is, how bizarre, what a coincidence! And well, well, it was perhaps at that moment that we came to know each other, madam?
> MRS. MARTIN: How curious it is and what a coincidence! It is indeed possible, my dear sir! However, I do not believe that I recall it. [Silence.] (Ionesco, 1958, p. 17).

The repetition "How curious it is, and what a coincidence!" functions as an initiation but also as an echoed confirmation when it is responded in the same way.

> […] a radical devaluation of language, toward a poetry that is to emerge from the concrete and objectified images of the stage itself. The element of language still plays an important part in this conception, but what happens on stage transcends, and often contradicts, the words spoken by the characters (Esslin, 1980, p. 58).

Regarding the reception of the dramatic discourse, the relationship between the literal, denotative level and the symbolic or metaphorising aspect require some contemplation as well. This can be attributed to the respective communication in order to determine what tendencies it manifests through semantic reactivations, while a new coherence emerges from disparate elements, in a new, original formula where language plays a key role. Ionesco advocated the idea of the distortion between the signifier-signified relationship by undermining language structures through the inadequacy of phrases to the speech context. Another frequent technique the dramatist used was to push language clichés to the extreme, in order to highlight the strangeness of life, everyday occurrences, or feelings like alienation and loneliness.

The play *The Lesson*, with the subtitle *A comic drama* presents an interesting type of dialogue from the linguistic perspective in the way common knowledge is discussed, like the names of the seasons, but at the same time it has a philosophical substance in what is not expressed. The stumbling or stutter and "uh" type of conversation fillers show uncertainty even if the truth is obvious. As nonsensical as it may sound, the phrase: "we can't be sure of anything" in correlation with the one above: "one must be ready for anything", when contemplated philosophically, it holds a profound meaning regarding the essence of human existence.

> PROFESSOR: Excuse me, miss, I was just going to say so,
> but as you will learn, one must be ready for anything.
> PUPIL: I guess so, Professor.
> PROFESSOR: We can't be sure of anything, young lady, in this
> world.
> PUPIL: The snow falls in the winter. Winter is one of the
> four seasons. The other three are . . . uh . . . spr . . .
> PROFESSOR: Yes?
> PUPIL: . . . ing, and then summer . . . and . . . uh . . .
> PROFESSOR: It begins like "automobile," miss (Ionesco, 1958, p. 48).

The multi-layered nature of symbols emphasises the relations between concepts and utterances, since words have different levels of abstraction. It reflects back on the function of

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language not only as the basic tool of communication but also as an artistic expression. For instance, the paradox is created by the juxtaposition of states of fact that bring in discussion hypostases of opposite meaning, which oppose or mutually exclude each other, relying on surprises, on the verge of some solutions that contain a considerable dose of humor, to apparent conflicts. The quarrel between couples is a common case in Ionesco's plays, putting under question the coherent functioning of the world. Ionesco's intention to undermine conventional expressions is visible in his entire dramatic work. From this point of view, the play *The Bald Singer* is a kind of *ars poetica*. It includes all major themes and the artistic beliefs of the author. The play's subtitle foreshadows the unconventional spirit, the rejection of all principles of traditional and ideological theater and opens up many avenues of interpretation. Through the conceptual merge between the linguistics of the text and cognitive semantics, an attempt seems to have been made to reshape the notion of absurdity. Ionesco's dramatic aesthetics ranges from comic to tragic or even mixing both genres like complementary components of reality. The art of dialogue excels in Ionesco's plays, with meaning being articulated on irony and parody or such techniques as verbal tics, obsessive repetitions, clichés or stereotypes, also verbosity, prolixity, and anacolutus. All these give the impression of discontinuity and fragmentation in the presentation of ideas, defying the expected logic of communication.

Ionesco's anti-plays cultivate absurd humor to the fullest. It often takes the form of a contrast between the elements of a situation. Ionesco defines the absurd as being a state of amazement when facing existential problems, and this may be correlated with the feeling of ontological emptiness. In this sense, as surprising as it may be, the absurd is perceived as a real experience. By overcoming the drama of person's absurd condition through humor, it allows a detachment from a futile and tragic existence. No wonder the climax of the play as the total disarticulation of language coincides with the loss of all reason in the characters. This is expected to happen, since by separation from his language, an individual loses his human dimension.

Conclusions

In summary, language in the dramatic text unfolds in multiple directions, with initiatives and responses on a wide range of registers. Some terms of comic nature and aesthetic resonance and phrases around the topic of communication, gather in games or absurd whims. In these circumstances, the complexity of the language incites to reflection and contemplation. The challenging experience of reading Eugene Ionesco's work justifies the broader goal to continue the research by expanding the corpus of theatre of the absurd and also by enriching the thematic references starting from the theoretical assumptions on dramatic texts of this type.

The transformation of meanings into designations implies exercising the cognitive function of language and then their orientation towards an extralinguistic space in a determined speech situation. The relationship between language and speech is formed by binding together the external and internal world of the speaker and thus, a fundamental dimension of meaning is concretised through signification and designation, in the playwright's desire to reach a high degree of freedom of expression, towards the abstract and imaginary. In approaching the theatre of the absurd, an analysis of the ways of transgressing logical thinking in writing drama has been carried out from the semantic perspective.

The existence of a superordinate semantic order that unifies the fragmentary experience of the segments of respective texts in a discontinuous dramatic system has been demonstrated, but it is susceptible of the underlying process. The progression of connotative meaning based on reasoning contradicts traditional logic. Allusion, double meaning, paradox,

tautology, irony, sarcasm as well as the cultivation of oppositions in paradigmatic lexical items and in their syntagmatic concurrence are detectable language strategies often used in Ionesco's plays. All these ways of analysing meaning rather seem to disorganise the discourse, reducing its dynamics to stereotyped expositions. Consequently, each of the symbols in the plays carries content that anticipates their future course. Ionesco's plays are, from this angle, surrealist collages, while putting textual realities in tension with illusions of meaning, in a wide range of alternatives. The entire dramatic work of Eugène Ionesco is based on the presence of a large number of memories, fragments of dreams, lived emotions or personal experiences. The originality of his style is noticeable in the method of combining and selecting them into new forms with enriched nuances and valences. This process requires the elimination of the conventional communication style by appealing to all forms of figurative language, by removing the discursive logic and concentrating the inner reality into abstractions and images, through the removal of drama writing canons.

The lingustic study of dramatic texts and stage plays has demonstrated the relationship between denotative meanings and symbolic representations at all levels of interpersonal communication between the plays' characters. Cognitive semantics has emphasised the domains of the concepts related to the plays' themes on an ontological basis with the essential vectors of expression in Ionesco's art, stemming from the need for authenticity.

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THE STATUS OF THE ROMANIAN LITERARY AVANT-GARDE AFTER 2000: FROM MARGINALIZATION TO RECOVERY

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Abstract

The present paper proposes a theoretical approach related to the critical reception of the Romanian literary avant-garde after 2000, a literary phenomenon in-between marginalization and recovery tendencies. Starting from interwar critical studies from Romania (E. Lovinescu, G. Călinescu, etc.), with predominantly negative perspectives regarding the critical reception of the avant-garde, we will observe how certain clichés of the reception of the phenomenon, seen as "extremist", as marginal, were perpetuated, with the "barrier" of the apparently impossible literary canonization. After 2000, however, literary studies discuss the historicization of the avant-garde phenomenon, which therefore became canonical in Romanian literary history. However, several elements of the "niche" avant-garde remained in the subsidiary, in the "shadow". This is what we call the marginal(ized), the secondary avant-garde, which includes a series of less known and researched avant-garde writers, but who contributed to the complex shaping of the avant-garde imaginary.

We will analyse several types of works published after 2000, in order to highlight the complexity of the avant-garde, under constant recovery: literary anthologies (Ion Pop, Nicolae Bârna), avant-garde dictionaries (Lucian Pricop, Dan Grigorescu), several critical studies after 2000 (Ion Bogdan Lefter, Ovidiu Morar, Emilia Drogoreanu, Paul Cernat, Dan Gulea, Emanuel Modoc, Delia Ungureanu, Daniel Clinci, Petre Răileanu, Gabriela Glăvan, Ion Pop, etc.). Many of them focus on the recovery trends of some forgotten writers, with the possibility of their inclusion in the central, canonical avant-garde, while other studies pursue new research methodologies, such as the avant-garde seen in a transnational context, in world literature context, etc.

An issue that we develop in the context of this extended future research, which is also highlighted upon in the present work, is that of post-Urmuz epigonism within Romanian literary avant-garde, a fact that explains the placement of many writers in the sphere of critical marginalization. Thus, many texts by less researched writers are forgotten, being always associated with the central avant-garde models, especially Urmuz, but also Tristan Tzara or other influential writers within the central avant-garde groups. It is precisely this problem that made us analyse the way in which the writers who are part of the marginal dimension of the avant-garde are recovered through contemporary literary studies from Romania.

Keywords: Romanian avant-garde literature; marginal(ized) avant-garde; literary studies; literary canon; literary influences.

1. Introduction and research context. The critical reception of Romanian avant-garde literature before 2000s

The presence of Romanian literary studies dedicated to central avant-garde writers, up to 2000, makes us wonder if the avant-garde phenomenon from Romania also consists of other writers who are less or not even valued at all. One may question if marginal(ized) writers contributed as well to the nuance of the avant-garde imaginary, by "promoting" the phenomenon's ideals and, moreover, a modern vision. The complexity of Romanian avant-garde literature in a European context resides in the generous critical reception it had after the

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2000s, which may be analysed from different perspectives: either from the perspective of the legitimacy of Romanian avant-garde in the context of the interwar period or observed through the prism of new methodologies such as *world literature*. What interests us is the pursuit of Romanian literary studies that attempt to recover some lesser-known Romanian avant-garde writers, because of the major influences that certain "central" representatives, influential members of the European avant-garde, had on the marginal(ized) writers.

This paper aims to trace the way in which the Romanian literary avant-garde, especially the "marginal", the "secondary" one, was received after the 2000s, through the appearance of important studies in this regard. However, although it is not the subject of our paper, we cannot help but refer to the situation before the 2000s, with the appearance, since the 1960s of important studies dedicated to the Romanian avant-garde. We can mention some important studies from the second part of the 20th century related to Romanian avant-garde literature, including studies such as Ion Pop (1969), Matei Călinescu (1970, 1972/2002/2017, 1996/2005), Ovid S. Crohmălniceanu (1972), Adrian Marino (1973), Marin Mincu (1983/1999/2006), Eugen Simion (1984), Mircea Scarlat (1986). Before these relevant studies, several articles discussed about European and Romanian avant-garde starting with Mihail Drăgănescu (1909), Cezar Petrescu (1925), Mihail Sebastian (1927), Mihail Dragomirescu (1931). During the 1930s, the years in which the Romanian literary avant-garde took shape, hostile critical receptions of the avant-garde prevailed through works of E. Lovinescu (1926-1929), Vladimir Streinu (1927, 1940, 1977), Pompiliu Constantinescu (1931, 1971, 1972), Constantin I. Emilian (through the first doctoral thesis about the anarchism of avant-garde writers, *Anarhismul poetic*, 1932), Șerban Cioculescu (1934, 1942, 1972), Radu Gyr (1937), G. Călinescu (1939, 1941, 1968, 1974, 1979, 1982, 1998, 2003), etc.

2. Methods, corpus, concepts

The problem identified in these first studies is closely related to the issue of the central literary canon, so that the avant-garde, itself a marginal(ized) phenomenon in the interwar period, presents its own canon within its own system, in which we distinguish a *central avant-garde*, the writers with a strong sphere of influence, especially within the avant-garde groups, respectively a *secondary avant-garde*, marginalized within its own system, formed of the lesser-known writers. The studies before 2000s preponderantly focused on the main, central writers of the avant-garde, drawing attention to discussions related to identity, to the marginalization of writers from anti-Semitic stakes, which is why Jewish avant-garde writers were often not discussed or not included in avant-garde anthologies and the central literary histories of Romanian literature. More information regarding identity and ideological influences of Jewish writers has been gathered by Ovid S. Crohmălniceanu, in *Evreii în Mişcarea de Avangardă Românească* [Jews in the Romanian Avant-Garde Movement], 2001 and Ovidiu Morar, in *Scriitori Evrei din România* [Jewish Writers from Romania], 2014, extremely relevant studies for researchers preoccupied by the main causes for which Romanian avant-garde has been perceived as a marginalized phenomenon.

Consequently, the evolution of Romanian avant-garde literature was mostly influenced by the ideological context, from marginalization in the interwar period to acceptance and revalidation starting with the communist period, ending up to canonization after 1990. We aim to highlight the critical reception of avant-garde literature in Romanian literary studies after 2000, reception which encapsulates the importance of lesser-known avant-garde writers. Through this systematic analysis and theoretical overview, we will be focusing on some relevant studies after 2000, about Romanian literary avant-garde, in order to draw attention upon new perspectives on avant-garde.

After the 1990s, respectively 2000s, literary studies focus on those writers that remained marginal(ized) in the literary studies of the 1960s, influenced by an ideological context, but also about the reception of the avant-garde itself as a phenomenon. The need to recover the avant-garde literary phenomenon from Romania was realized by the appearance of different types of works. New avant-garde anthologies appear, continuing the efforts of Sașa Pană (1969): Marin Mincu (1983, 1999, 2006), Gabriela Duda (1997), Ion Pop (2016), Nicolae Bârna (2017). Moreover, lexicographic works that primarily focus on the avant-garde phenomenon, after 2000, such as the avant-garde dictionaries compiled by Lucian Pricop (2003), respectively Dan Grigorescu (2003, 2005). Above all, we also mention recent studies, after 2000, that address the complexity of the avant-garde phenomenon from Romania, such as those of Ion Bogdan Lefter, Ovidiu Morar, Emilia Drogoreanu, Paul Cernat, Dan Gulea, Andrei Terian, Emanuel Modoc, Delia Ungureanu, Daniel Clinci, Petre Răileanu, Gabriela Glăvan, the journal *Caietele Avangardei* [The Notebooks of the Avant-Garde] (under the coordination of Ion Pop), all these highlighting the complexity of the approaches regarding the avant-garde phenomenon, but also its topicality, which can still be explored in the contemporary period.

In this paper, we will consider carrying out a *literature review* on the studies dedicated to the Romanian literary avant-garde, studies which appeared after 2000, noting how they propose new ways of approaching this phenomenon. Through this, we aim to outline an overview on the recent and contemporary critical reception of Romanian avant-garde literature. Thus, Ion Bogdan Lefter (2000) analyses (retrospectively) the possibility of having a central, "major" avant-garde, like the one West European one, if the interwar critical reception had not anchored the Romanian avant-garde in marginality (through critical discourses of E. Lovinescu or G. Călinescu), thus setting up a '(missed) chance to have had an avant-garde' (Lefter, 2000, p. 82, our translation)[1].

3. Romanian avant-garde literature in dictionaries

Lexicographical works after the 2000s aim to define and characterize this literary phenomenon in its complexity, recording a rich representation of avant-garde artists, magazines, movements, etc. On one hand, the general definition of the term *avant-garde* in Lucian Pricop's dictionary (2003) relies on the idea of rejecting the traditional canon and the academic art. The succinct definition offered by Lucian Pricop is reinforced, however, by other lexicographical references belonging to Irina Petraș (1992), Elena Zaharia-Filipaș (also a dictionary article from *Dicționar de Literatură Română* [Dictionary of Romanian Literature], coordinated by Dim. Păcuraru, 1979), respectively Ion Hangiu (1996), thus shaping a broad picture of Romanian avant-garde, based on ideas such as: the spirit of the frond, the denial of established art, the new art, etc. (Pricop, 2003, p. 17). On the other hand, Dan Grigorescu's dictionary (2003, 2005) turns out to be of greater complexity, the included articles highlighting the syncretic manifestation of the avant-garde at the international level, but also presenting elements "in the vicinity" of the avant-garde, located either in the period preceding the outbreak of the international avant-gardes, or in their extension. Dan Grigorescu's approach will also trace the history of the term *avant-garde*, a term with a military meaning: 'shock troop, combativeness, attack launched before the rest of the army starts the fight' (Grigorescu, 2005, p. V, our translation)[2], as also highlighted in Richard Kostelanetz's *A Dictionary of the Avant-Gardes* (2nd ed., 2000).

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[1] Original text: "Șansă (ratată) de a avea o avangardă".
[2] Original text: "Trupă de șoc, combativitate, atac declanșat înainte ca restul oștirii să înceapă lupta".

4. Reception of Romanian avant-garde in literary studies after 2000

Regarding the literary studies of Ovidiu Morar (2003, 2005, 2014, 2015), the exegete relies on the analysis of the reduced critical reception of Romanian avant-garde, based on different causes that are not only aesthetic in the first half of the 20th century, but also on the contemporary tendencies to approach the (syncretic) avant-garde under new research methodologies, focusing also on the texts of certain "forgotten" writers (Morar, 2005, pp. 23-24), promoting scientific events about literary avant-garde, the activity of the Romanian and European Avant-Garde Research Institute, etc. Ovidiu Morar's observations regarding avant-garde literature, contextually related to the period in which it appeared in Romania, highlight the social marginalization of this phenomenon:

> The explanations for the appearance of autochthonous avant-garde must first be sought not in a break of the nature of the one invoked by Mario De Micheli, but in a state of exasperation caused by marginalization, even social ostracism, combined with cloistering in a traditionalist, exclusivist environment, with very severe norms and taboos (Morar, 2005, p. 39, our translation)[3].

In *Avatarurile Suprarealismului Românesc* [The Avatars of Romanian Surrealism], 2003, Ovidiu Morar focuses on the surrealist movement within the avant-garde, distinguishing several stages in evolution (Morar, 2003, p. 10): from an early phase of avant-garde and surrealism after the First World War and at the time of the appearance of the first avant-garde magazines Romania, to a phase of surrealism around the Second World War, respectively a post-war phase, the activity of the Romanian Surrealist Group. Based on Morar's study, it is worth noting the attention paid to certain "marginal", "epigonic" names of Romanian avant-garde literature, including Moldov, Aurel Zaremba, Raul Iulian, Felix Brunea-Fox, Grigore Cugler, Tașcu Gheorghiu, Virgil Gheorghiu, etc., but also the attention directed to less known avant-garde magazines, evoked in recent literary studies that focus on Romanian avant-garde. Thus, Ovidiu Morar explains how certain writers are perceived as being under the influence of certain "central" models that provided writing "formulas" (Morar, 2003, p. 136), including those of Tristan Tzara or Urmuz. Thus, one of the merits of Morar's study is the analysis of elements and patterns that are similar to Urmuz's literary discourse, identified in other writers' texts (both "marginal" or epigonic writers and "central" ones such as Geo Bogza). Ovidiu Morar's study is fundamental for theorizing the existence of "central" models, "hyper canonized" figures of Romanian avant-garde, mythicized figures, or, as the exegete calls them, 'sacrosanct, quasi-mythical models' (Morar, 2003, p. 334, our translation)[4], in relation to which certain connections, textual similarities and continuities of vision will be established. All these tendencies to assimilate central models may represent the necessity to overcome a complex of marginalization, a desire for legitimacy and external recognition.

A critical positioning in relation to the interwar reception of the avant-garde is found in Emilia Drogoreanu's study (2004). The exegete analyses the avant-garde from the perspective of influences, taking, as a representative case, the Romanian avant-garde and the influences of Italian futurism, more precisely the way in which ideas of futurism, at the level of the European context, are propagated as echoes within the autochthonous avant-garde. In

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[3] Original text: "Explicațiile apariției avangardismului autohton trebuie căutate mai întâi nu într-o ruptură de natura celei invocate de Mario De Micheli, ci într-o stare de exasperare cauzată de marginalizarea, chiar ostracizarea în plan social, coroborată cu claustrarea într-un mediu tradiționalist, exclusivist, cu norme și tabuuri foarte severe".

[4] Original text: "Modele sacrosancte, quasi-mitice".

relation to the analysis of the interwar reception, Emilia Drogoreanu notes several reasons why the avant-garde was poorly received by the conventional literary critics from Romania:

> The error of historical-literary consideration of modernism […] that of placing the avant-garde in a marginal position in the field of literature of the moment, far from the center which was considered to be the modernism. Everything that was not part of the central zone, in this case, the productions of what was later called moderate modernism, was rejected by critics from the literary canon of the era, under the accusation of extremism (the case of avant-garde) (Drogoreanu, 2004, p. 22, our translation)[5].

Because of the existence of a traditional interwar literary canon, avant-garde literature could not receive much attention; in relation to the center of interwar literature, the avant-garde, with its writers, was marginalized:

> In interwar Romanian literature, the literary criticism of the time established a literary canon, within which the avant-garde was effectively marginalized, compared to other trends, and in the history of literature, passed to the chapter *Curente extremiste*, to quote a symptomatic case, one of the most illustrative (Drogoreanu, 2004, p. 75, our translation)[6],

that of E. Lovinescu, one of the Romanian literary critics with "authority".

The literary studies of Dan Gulea (2007, 2016) and Paul Cernat (2007, 2018) are also representative for the "niche" topic of marginal(ized) avant-garde. Dan Gulea's (quasi)exhaustive and well-synthesized study from 2007, *Domni, Tovarăşi, Camarazi: O Evoluție a Avangardei Române* [Gentlemen, Partners, and Comrades: An Evolution of the Romanian Avant-Garde], deals with the evolution of critical reception of the Romanian avant-garde literature, balancing the first hostile critical perspectives with the positive approaches that value the phenomenon. The exegete analyses several critical proletarian discourses dedicated to the avant-garde, but also highlights the steps of its historicization, following the appearance of the first critical aesthetic studies in the context of ideological liberalization, in the 60s. The thorough analysis of the evolution of reception also includes a focus on less researched writers, such as Victor Valeriu Martinescu, Jacques G. Costin, Felix Brunea-Fox, Grigore Cugler, Ionathan X. Uranus, and others. From Dan Gulea's perspective on the reception of the avant-garde, the "historical" avant-garde does not tend to "destroy", as conservative critics and representatives of traditionalist groups pointed out, but rather to "build", as the phenomenon contributed to the nuance of modern Romanian literature (Gulea, 2007, p. 436). Unlike the 2007 study, in *Marginaliile Avangardelor* [The Avant-Gardes Marginalia] (2016), Gulea relies precisely on the research of those innovative aspects of the avant-gardes (such as, for example, Jules Perahim's book illustration), which were not so known to readers and critics. In Gulea's conception (2016), the avant-garde is not strictly limited to the year 1947, taken as a landmark for the delimitation of the historicized avant-garde, but presents reverberations even after this year, since the avant-garde can constantly (re)define itself, by opposing a dominant cultural and literary field.

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[5] Original text: "Eroarea de încadrare istorico-literară a modernismului […] aceea de a plasa avangarda într-o poziție marginală în câmpul literaturii momentului, departe de centrul acestuia, care a fost identificat cu modernismul. Tot ceea ce nu făcea parte din zona centrală, în speță, din producțiile a ceea ce s-a numit mai târziu modernism moderat, a fost respins de critică din canonul literar al epocii, sub acuzația de extremism (cazul avangardei)".

[6] Original text: "În literatura română interbelică, critica literară a vremii a stabilit un canon literar, în interiorul căruia avangarda a fost efectiv marginalizată, în comparație cu alte tendințe, iar în istoria literaturii, trecută la capitolul *Curente extremiste*, ca să cităm un caz simptomatic, unul dintre cele mai ilustrative".

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One of the most complex studies that substantiates our approach belongs to Paul Cernat (2007), who aims to recover the insufficiently discussed avant-garde writers and their texts, by analysing the *periphery complex* of the first avant-garde wave (1908-1930), and the need for internal and external legitimation of the phenomenon. What interests us is the theoretical aspect related to the legitimacy of the avant-garde (which hides certain identity stakes), in order to understand whether the fixation of Urmuz as a central model and of the writers "in the shadow" of the model is valid, or we are talking about false epigonism in the case of the marginal(ized) writers. Cernat's approach also aims to recover some unjustly ignored personalities, anchored in the marginal dimension of the avant-garde phenomenon, such as Alexandru Bogdan-Pitești or the writer Jacques G. Costin. The literary critic also configures an ample dossier of reception of Urmuz from the period 1923-1989, important in order to understand the way in which Urmuz is still discussed in contemporaneity, through the label of the "hyper canonized" figure. The *periphery complex* highlights the

> pure models from the Center (symbolism, decadentism, avant-garde, surrealism) which are assimilated to the Periphery in 'weak', diluted, hybrid, eclectic forms. The isolated cases of perfect synchronization (Brâncuși, Tzara, later Eugène Ionesco, Isidore Isou) are explained by the fact that their innovative action manifested itself at the 'Center' (in Paris or elsewhere), not in the Romanian 'province' (Cernat, 2007, p. 10, our translation)[7].

An aspect of the avant-garde that often remains anchored in marginalization or even total ignorance is represented by the feminine affirmation in the context of the dominantly masculinized world of the avant-garde (through, for example, Milița Pătrașcu, Tana Qvil, Dida Solomon Callimachi, Filip Corsa, Merica Râmniceanu, Madda Holda, etc.). Cernat (2007, 2018) makes certain observations in relation to this side of the avant-garde, specifying that research directed at the feminine affirmations in the avant-garde movements is absent in the field of Romanian literary studies. Moreover, Cernat records several less unknown writers, considered "minor" avant-garde writers, such as Romulus Dianu, Sergiu Dan, Filip Corsa, Al. Tudor-Miu, and focuses on Ionathan X. Uranus, Grigore Cugler, Victor Valeriu Martinescu, etc. It is precisely through these approaches of Paul Cernat that we notice the idea of the marginalized avant-garde, which feels an acute peripheral complex (Cernat, 2007, p. 142), for which it is necessary to recover avant-garde precursors, those who become models and who directly or indirectly influence other avant-garde writers.

The 1930s represented the time when Romanian avant-garde tried to assert itself in Europe through various events: the invitation of certain representatives of the European avant-garde to Romania, the publication of many of their texts in Romanian magazines, the organization of international exhibitions, the publication of "Contimporanul" report in no. 100 from 1931, in which the entire activity of the last decade was summarized, the exposition of some programmatic texts through which the forerunners of the avant-garde were claimed, such as Urmuz. It is, thus, about the desire to affirm the identity and culture of the Romanian periphery in a European context, 'the edges of peripheral frustrations' (Cernat, 2007, p. 205, our translation)[8].

Following the reception of avant-garde over time, starting from the interwar period towards the ideological recoveries under the totalitarian regime, until the moment when it

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[7] Original text: "Modelele ʿpureʾ de la Centru (simbolism, decadentism, avangarde, suprarealism) care sunt asimilate la Periferie în forme ʿslabeʾ, diluate, hibride, eclectice. Cazurile izolate de sincronizare perfectă (Brâncuși, Tzara, mai târziu Eugène Ionesco, Isidore Isou) se explică prin faptul că acțiunea lor novatoare s-a manifestat chiar la ʿCentruʾ (la Paris sau aiurea), nu în ʿprovincia' românească".

[8] Original text: "Marginile frustrărilor periferice".

evolves towards "formula", towards "classicization", "historicization", the canonization of avant-garde is possible, through its post-war recovery:

> The recovery of the historical avant-garde in the critical canon in post-war Romania was in fact due to the "taming" of its denying, contesting, subversive potential, under the pressure of external approval: 1) through the historicization offered by temporal distance and the creative assimilation of the model within the new aesthetic movements; 2) by emphasizing the aesthetic, integrative, moderate character in relation to the iconoclastic radicalism of similar movements in Europe; 3) by speculating on the anti-bourgeois, Marxist, progressive character of its militants; 4) by claiming the international and absolute precursor role of artists of Romanian origin (Urmuz – considered an anticipator of surrealism, Dadaism and the absurdist literature, Brâncuși – founder of abstract art, Tzara – pioneer of Dadaism, alongside Hugo Ball, Hans Arp, Richard Huelsenbeck and Marcel Iancu, M.H. Maxy – initiator, in 1924, of plastic spectralism, E. Ionesco – creator, together with Samuel Beckett, of the theatre of ridicule and the absurd, Isidore Isou – inventor of lettrism), part of the autochthonous cultural heritage. Minimized, ignored or rejected at the beginning, often perceived as lacking "roots", and hostile to local tradition, forced – by the desire for international recognition or for reasons of political or, as the case may be, ethnic persecution – to expatriate, some of them became, in retrospect, reasons for national pride thanks to external success (Cernat, 2007, p. 395, our translation)[9].

Such an observation is related to the fact that there are influential, central writers of the avant garde that could have an impact on the subsequent evolution of the phenomenon. Thus, through a case like Urmuz, many writers have remained in oblivion through the constant critical reception achieved in relation to the "model" of influence. Paul Cernat's perspective highlights the fact that the claim of Urmuz as a precursor can represent an approach of identity "exacerbation", of 'identity representation' (Cernat, 2007, p. 399, our translation)[10], motivated by the complex of the periphery and the need for (inter)national recognition. Thus, one may question whether we are discussing about the phenomenon of false epigonism regarding writers such as Grigore Cugler, Ionathan X. Uranus, Madda Holda. Moreover, the Romanian avant-garde, which suffers from a "Romanian complex of belatedness and cultural marginality" (Spiridon, Gutthy & Jerzak, 2006, p. 430), tends to become, in turn, a model for European centrality, especially through the achievements of a writer (and a cultural animator) like Tristan Tzara. In this sense, we deduce that literary critics were influenced by the central models of the avant-garde when analysing the literary works of some writers from the 1930s.

5. The popularization of Romanian avant-garde literature after 2010s. Monographies, anthologies, and new approaches in literary studies

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[9] Original text: "Recuperarea avangardei istorice în canonul critic din România postbelică s-a datorat în fapt 'domesticirii' potențialului ei negator, contestatar, subversiv, sub presiunea omologării externe: 1) prin istoricizarea oferită de distanța temporală și de asimilarea creatoare a modelului în cadrul noilor curente estetice; 2) prin sublinierea caracterului estetic, integrator, moderat în raport cu radicalismul iconoclast al mișcărilor similare din Europa; 3) prin specularea caracterului antiburghez, marxist, progresist al militanților acesteia; 4) prin revendicarea caracterului de precursori internaționali și absoluți ai unor artiști de origine română (Urmuz – considerat anticipator al suprarealismului, al dadaismului și al literaturii absurdului, Brâncuși – întemeietor al artei abstracte, Tzara – pioner al Dadaismului, alături de Hugo Ball, Hans Arp, Richard Huelsenbeck și Marcel Iancu, M.H. Maxy – inițiator, în 1924, al spectralismului plastic, E. Ionesco – creator, alături de Samuel Beckett, al teatrului deriziunii și al absurdului, Isidore Isou – inventator al letrismului) anexați patrimoniului cultural autohton. Minimalizați, ignorați sau respinși la început, percepuți adeseori drept lipsiți de 'rădăcini' și ostili tradiției locale, nevoiți – din dorință de recunoaștere internațională ori din motive de persecuție politică sau, după caz, etnică – să se expatrieze, unii dintre ei au devenit, retrospectiv, motive de orgoliu național grație succesului extern".
[10] Own translation from Romanian: "Reprezentare 'identitară'".

In 2000s, but mostly after 2010, several studies and monographies focusing on the marginal aspect of the avant-garde appear, but also studies who put the avant-garde in relation to other cultural and literar phenomena. We mention studies such as Marian Victor Buciu's *Avangarda și Neoavangarda în Literatura Română* [Avant-Garde and Neo-Avant-Garde in Romanian Literature] (2006) or Cristian-Robert Velescu's *Victor Brauner d'après Duchamp, sau, Drumul Pictorului către un Suprarealism "Bine Temperat"* [Victor Brauner After Duchamp, or, The Painter's Path Towards A "Well-Tempered" Surrealism]*,* 2007. Even more recently, the importance of several studies highlights the international visibility of the phenomenon, as avant-garde is indeed an international movement, here mentioning, for instance, Alexandra Chiriac's *Performing Modernism: A Jewish Avant-Garde in Bucharest* (2022) or, at an international level, Monique Yaari's *«Infra-Noir», un et Multiple: Un Groupe Surréaliste Entre Bucarest et Paris, 1945-1947* ["Infra-Noir", One and Multiple: A Surrealist Group Between Bucharest and Paris, 1945-1947], 2014, etc.

After 2010, avant-garde is reconsidered in literary studies from the perspective that identifies it as the "core" of postmodernity, as in the case of Daniel Clinci's study (2014), in which the avant-garde represents a bridge between modernity and postmodernity. The exegete refers to the fundamental theoretical studies in the field in order to (re)define avant-garde, namely Renato Poggioli (1968) and Peter Bürger (1974), establishing that the avant-garde suffered a failure through the process of "museification" (Bürger, 2010, p. 701). Clinci adds that the success of the avant-garde was represented by its possibility to evolve to postmodernism. Moreover, the exegete notes and analyses the existence of *a crisis of the legitimacy of the avant-garde*, as we could also observe in the case of Paul Cernat's study (2007): the avant-garde movements appear in a

> modern culture of crisis. What is specific to this crisis is the fact that we are discussing about a crisis of legitimacy, which the avant-garde did not begin to solve, but to amplify, being engaged in the effort against the autonomy of the literary field (Clinci, 2014, p. 175, our translation)[11].

The fact that there are avant-garde anthologies even after 2010 suggests the complexity of the phenomenon, which can hardly be contained by a limited corpus of texts, especially after the 40s, when the influences of the avant-garde were stronger, identified up to postmodernity. However, most of the marginal avant-garde writers are not identified in these anthologies, the selection criteria of the texts being diverse: from "relevance" to the attempt to record all avant-garde writers, as in the case of Sașa Pană's anthology (1969). We also note the presence of a high interest in the creation of corpora containing avant-garde texts and the compilation of avant-garde anthologies: Ion Pop (2016), Nicolae Bârna (2017). Ion Pop (2016) records in his anthology the presence of several critical studies that appeared after 2000, specifically dedicated to less researched parts of the avant-garde movements, among which we specify: Simona Popescu's doctoral study (2000) on Gellu Naum, published in 2015 as *Autorul, un Personaj* [The Author, a Character], the Urmuz monographic work by Adrian Lăcătuș (2002), Radu I. Petrescu's study on B. Fundoianu's works *Privirea Medusei: Poezia lui B. Fundoianu/Benjamin Fondane* [The Gaze of Medusa: The Poetry of B. Fundoianu/Benjamin Fondane], 2003, Balázs Imre József with *Avangarda în Literatura Maghiară din România* [Avant-Garde in Hungarian Literature from Romania], 2009, Tom Sandqvist's study (2006, 2010) on Dadaism, a study dedicated to the surrealist writer D.

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[11] Original text: "Cultură modernă a crizei. Ceea ce îi este specific acestei crize este faptul că discutăm despre o criză a legitimității, pe care avangardele nu au început să o rezolve, ci să o amplifice, angajate în efortul împotriva autonomiei câmpului literar".

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Trost, by Michael Finkenthal (2013), the forewords written by Paul Cernat (2010) and Vasile Spiridon (2011) for the volumes that contain Geo Bogza's and Gellu Naum's texts. Worthy of mention, in addition to these contributions also targeted by Ion Pop, there are several studies directed at Dadaism and, implicitly, at Tristan Tzara: Andrei Codrescu, *The Posthuman Dada Guide* (2009), Marius Hentea, *TaTa DADA: The Real Life and Celestial Adventures of Tristan Tzara* (2014), Cristian-Robert Velescu, *Avant-Gardes et Modernités: Brâncuşi, Duchamp, Brauner, Voronca, Tzara & comp*. (2013), Petre Răileanu, *DADA în Direct, Rrmat de Tristan Tzara, Schiță de Portret* [DADA Live, Followed by Tristan Tzara, Portrait Sketch], 2016, etc.

Regarding Bârna's anthology (2017), in the introductory part, several concepts specific to the avant-garde are theorized, thus configuring a broad picture of avant-garde features, among which we mention: the radical character, the innovative character, the preference for surprise, for the show, the performance, violence, revolution, rejection of the canon (traditional, academic), demolition, denial, contestation, insurgency, freedom, anti-classical character, anti-traditional, anti-academic, anti-bourgeois, anti-philistine, anti-official, anti-authoritarian, militancy, language deconstruction, the shock, spontaneity, authenticity, manifesto, syncretism, internationalism, absurdity, interinfluences, etc. (Bârna, 2017, pp. 11-14). The discussion about the avant-garde that does not rely on the establishment of a canon and the imposition of a "formula" also occurs in Bârna's observations. Thus, the existence of "literary recipes" represents the fixation of some noticeable avant-garde "models" within each Romanian avant-garde group, represented by talented and original writers, who (in)directly influence those more or less related to those avant-garde groups. The question is how we distinguish the writers influenced within the avant-garde groups from those who did not join any group, those writers who wrote individually, more or less isolated from avant-garde groups, such as Grigore Cugler, Ionathan X. Uranus or Madda Holda. In this sense, Bârna mentions:

> There were great artists and writers who, without having explicitly joined the avant-garde – and without being considered, by literary history, as proper representatives of it –, radically renewed the field they were part of, and they did it (sometimes) in the way that the *militant* avant-garde predicted (Bârna, 2017, p. 12, our translation)[12].

We also identify the emphasis on *singular* modern and avant-garde writers in Gabriela Glăvan's study (2014), focused on Urmuz's "singularity" status (Glăvan, 2014, p. 66) within the modern literary canon, and on the identification of "particular modernities" in the texts of some writers such as Grigore Cugler or Horia Bonciu.

Finally, Nicolae Bârna (2017) detects the reception poles of the autochthonous avant-garde: if it is, indeed, marginal, or marginalised, negligible, taken into consideration only by a few avant-garde representatives, or is it, indeed, an important and complex phenomenon. This discussion highlighted by Bârna refers to a series of studies that I mentioned, so that either the avant-garde is seen as an "exaggeratedly" important phenomenon, with the aim of asserting autochthonism at the same level as the West European "world" (suggestion of "protochronist" impulses, as Bârna also specifies), or the literary avant-garde from Romania, historicized phenomenon, is still

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[12] Original text: "Au existat mari artiști și scriitori care, fără să se fi raliat explicit avangardei – și fără ca să fie considerați, de istoria literară, ca reprezentanți propriu-ziși ai acesteia –, au înnoit radical domeniul în care s-au manifestat, și au făcut-o (uneori) în felul pe care îl preconiza avangarda *militantă*".

minimized, being evoked and researched only out of polite obligation, but basically considered more marginal and more 'enclaved' than it was, and that precisely from the desire to avoid the accusation of national cultural narcissism, of 'protochronism', or from who knows what negative idiosyncrasies, etc. (Bârna, 2017, p. 23, our translation)[13].

Ion Pop's monographic study (1990, 2007, 2017), *Avangarda în Literatura Română* [Avant-garde in Romanian Literature], offers a detailed approach on the Romanian avant-garde waves, groups, and the movements contained within them (including the representative writers, along with those in the vicinity of the avant-garde). In his opinion, the avant-garde presents as fundamental features the rupture, the negation, the renewal of language, the revolt, the refusal of convention, the cultivation of marginality, the focus on novelty, spontaneity, the absolute freedom, etc. (Pop, 2017, pp. 5-8), all these traits shading the avant-garde "mood" that the writers particularly assimilate.

After analysing the critical reception of the avant-garde in the interwar period, Ion Pop considers that the pressure of the official literary canon determined the marginalization of "deviant phenomena", this meaning that the avant-garde, in order to be (re)considered and to be restored from marginalization, it had to undergo an evolution towards a "formula" (Pop 2017: 477), a "classicization" through which the avant-garde discourse becomes convention. Before entering the official "canon", the exegete specifies that 'for most critics, the small avant-garde groups [...] were no more than marginal realities in this space, expressing transient states of crisis' (Pop, 2017, p. 485, our translation)[14].

Nicolae Manolescu, Petre Răileanu, Mircea Martin, Mihai Zamfir, Eugen Simion represent other important names that focused on the avant-garde movements from Romania, relevant literary studies shaping an evolution of the reception of the avant-garde as a phenomenon between marginalization and recovery. In this context, these literary critics also highlight various prejudicial labels that have been attributed to the avant-garde, placing it in a secondary dimension, marginalized in relation to the central, canonical groups. More recent studies will focus on the recovery side and prepare the ground for new approaches in the direction of dismantling prejudices and myths about the avant-garde.

As for other recent studies, belonging to Delia Ungureanu (2017) or Emanuel Modoc (2020), the avant-garde is traced in the transnational dimension, through approaches in the context of *world literature*, highlighting the interinfluences, or, in Modoc's terms, the transactions which the various European avant-garde movements had between them, especially in the context of Central and Eastern Europe. Delia Ungureanu also observes the existence of surrealist ideas propagated in a transnational context. These theoretical studies can form the basis of the discussion about the influences of the center on the peripheries and how the periphery, in turn, becomes the center. In the case of Modoc's study, we encounter a use of the term *margin* associated with the avant-garde, seen rather as *the margin of the margin* (Cornis-Pope 1996: 53), based on observations related to the marginal position of the avant-garde within Romanian literature, doubled by a peripheral position of Romania in Europe. For our analysis, we will be interested in this concept of *double peripheral condition*, of *the margin of the margin*, the avant-garde being 'marginal both in the national literary system and in the system of the European avant-garde' (Modoc, 2020, p. 48, our translation)[15]. However, Emanuel Modoc identifies several clichés related to how the avant-

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[13] Original text: "Minimalizată, fiind evocată și cercetată doar din obligație politicoasă, dar în fond considerată mai marginală și mai 'enclavizată' decât a fost, și asta tocmai din dorința de a evita acuzația de narcisism cultural național, de 'protocronism', ori din cine știe ce idiosincrasii negative etc."
[14] Original text: "Pentru majoritatea criticilor, micile grupări de avangardă [...] nu erau mai mult decât realități marginale în acest spațiu, exprimând stări de criză trecătoare".
[15] Original text: "Marginală atât în sistemul literar național, cât și într-un sistem al avangardei europene".

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garde has been perceived as "marginal" in some critical studies (Modoc, 2020, p. 145). Romanian avant-garde was undoubtedly related to the European one, as the exegete observes the multitude of echoes, influences and relations with the various modernist movements in West Europe.

Modoc also argues in the concluding chapter of his study that two "clichés" of the Romanian avant-garde, from several critical discourses, persist in contemporaneity: 'the perfect synchronization with the movements from the West', and 'the marginality of the avant-garde phenomenon in the interwar period' (Modoc, 2020, pp. 218-219, our translation)[16]. Regarding this last "cliché", the exegete refers to the studies of Paul Cernat (2007) and Alex Goldiș (2011), concluding that

> if the multiple 'faces' of the Romanian avant-garde fluctuate according to the contexts, mutations and evolutions of literary studies specific to each period in which it was re-actualized, this phenomenon happens because the exegetical discourse is unable to relate strictly to the phenomenon, requiring reference to a super-ordinating paradigm (in this case, modernism) [...] The critical discourse recasts the image of the avant-garde according to a dominant paradigm, to place it either in the subsidiary or to use it only by the power of example (Modoc, 2020, p. 220, our translation)[17].

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, from the critical reception of the avant-garde, which began in approximately 1909 and with new approaches after 2000, we notice the outline of three stages of reception of the avant-garde: 1. of hostile receptions, in which certain "prejudices" take shape; 2. a transitional stage in which the avant-garde begins to be recovered and more seriously observed; 3. a final stage of recovery and highlighting some dimensions, contexts, marginal areas of the avant-garde, respectively retrospective analysis and critical reporting on previous literary studies that focused on avant-garde literature. The aspect that concerns us goes beyond the fixation of the avant-garde itself as a marginal(ized) phenomenon, in relation to the two canonical literary movements from Romania, modernism and traditionalism. We are interested in the configuration of the marginal dimension of the avant-garde, in relation to the central avant-garde, represented by the "historicized" phenomenon.

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[16] Original text: "Sincronizarea perfectă cu mișcările din Occident", "Marginalitatea fenomenului avangardist în perioada interbelică".

[17] Original text: "Dacă ´fețele´ avangardei românești fluctuează în funcție de contextele, mutațiile și evoluțiile studiilor literare specifice fiecărei perioade în care aceasta a fost reactualizată, acest fenomen se întâmplă pentru că discursul exegetic e incapabil să se raporteze *strict* la fenomen, necesitând raportarea la o paradigmă supra-ordonatoare (în speță, modernismul) […] Discursul critic reșapează imaginea avangardei în funcție de o paradigmă dominantă, care să o plaseze fie în subsidiar, fie să o folosească doar prin puterea exemplului".

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EMINESCU AND KABBALAH

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Abstract

In the pages of this article, we will bring together a series of interpretations of Eminescu's writings that prove the influence of the mysticism of Kabbalah on the great Romanian author. The understanding of Eminescu's poems through the lens of Kabbalah is a perspective adopted by several scholars. For example, starting with G. Călinescu, Hyperion (from the poem "Luceafărul") was compared to a sefirah. Since the influences of the Far East seem to be much more significant in the literary context in question, we will start from them and, later, correlate them with elements from the ideological background of Near Eastern mysticism. We will also point out certain aspects of the symbolism of the elements and, above all, of water – which is, ultimately, an emblem of the primordial space from which existence is born. Thus, starting from the perspective of Gaston Bachelard's poetics of the elements, we will investigate the correlation with the mysterious Ain Soph of Kabbalah.

Keywords: Kabbalah; Archaeus; symbol; reverie; the journey of initiation.

Introduction

Divinity reflects itself in the field of existence – and appears as a Universal Being (called, in Hinduism, *Brahma Saguna*). On the other hand, the Universal Non-Being (*Brahma Nirguna*) encompasses, in a potential state, all that exists – without being able to compare with any of the attributes of things, beings, or manifested phenomena. And yet, because everything returns, at the end of the Great Cosmic Day (*Mahamanvantara*), to the source of primordial unity, *Brahma Saguna* and *Brahma Nirguna* are to be understood only as two hypostases of Being (*Brahma*). The sum of the higher immanent forces must assume a form to exist on lower levels of existence, and the way genesis unfolds differs only formally from one mythological tradition to another. All cosmogonic texts are based on the same principles: there is an initial state of primordial time set in motion by the creative impulse. The initial void is inherent in creation, it is as such *par excellence*, not needing anything outside itself to be and, at the same time, sustaining the existence of the cosmos that lives within it.

The same principles are found, under various names, in all essential philosophical-religious contexts. In Christianity, they are called "Uncreated Light" (not embodied in any form) and "Light of the world". In Jewish mysticism the concepts of "Aelohim" and "Elohim"[1] propose a similar perspective. In its turn, the Sephirotic Tree merely presents a more detailed expression of the connection of the two major hypostases of the Being. In Mihai Eminescu's texts, the concepts considered are often associated with a reverie of the primordial rest.

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[1] Being analyzed from a grammatical point of view, the word "Elohim" cannot be translated as masculine singular – due to the ending specific to plural forms, in Hebrew: namely the letters *Iod* and *Mem* (-im). *Aelohim* or *Ain-Elohim* is the unmanifest divinity from which Elohim emerges.

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That reverie starts from a "decorative" appearance of a harmonious natural setting and reaches up to the unfathomable heights of the infinite sky. It can be easily observed that the poetic images in Eminescu's lyric involve a continuous harmonization of the elements. The fire of titanic revolt is always covered by the earth; and the earth is, in its turn, covered with the fire of the stars reflected in its waters. Breezes cross the entire nature, and the woods and the lake vibrate, listening to the whispers of the wind. However, this constant activity would become monotonous if there were not something beyond the appearance of the simple mutual play. The reverie cultivated by Eminescu seems to be directed towards "beyond", towards a "something else" in which the only melody is that of silence – a melody that combines light and life and then melts them into non-existence, eternal repose.

2. The connection between water symbolism and primordial repose

The exegetes of Eminescu's work (G. Călinescu, E. Papu, Ioana Em. Petrescu, I. Negoiţescu, Rosa del Conte) analyzed, from various perspectives, the primary elements that appear in Eminescu's verses, emphasizing their symbolic polyvalence. Among the four elements, water is predominant and, more than that, all the major symbolic aspects of the aquatic element can be found in Eminescu's poetry. Also, interesting to watch is the perspective from which water, as an undifferentiated mass, is associated with the image of primordial rest, giving birth to an unusual reverie, correlated – in turn – with sleep and the image of the beloved.

Framed in such a symbolic background, water is much more than an ornament of the landscapes described by the poet. It constitutes, in fact, the "substance" of some of the most sublime reveries. From the point of view of the poetics of the elements, water is, equally, a mirror of the world, a representation of motherhood, of life, and of death (Bachelard, 1997, p. 84). The play of water seems infinite: water is born from the springs of the earth, and the thirsty waters of the sky rise to the clouds, then descend again to the earth. However, in these images there is a natural tendency to harmonize and integrate into the cosmos: the water is sometimes static, sometimes dynamic, suggesting, paradoxically, both the idea of peace and rest, as well as the idea of an unsettling transition. Starting from this perspective, we will analyze the connection between sleep and water in Eminescu's verses.

G. Călinescu noted that drowsiness is the most persistent state of mind in Eminescu's lyric (Călinescu, 1985, p. 188). Of course, the previous observation must be completed by the contextual definition of "sleepiness". Transcending its biological functions and addressing the desire to overcome the constraining boundaries of form, sleep is the first step through which the thirst for primordial repose manifests. This is because perception during sleep is more comprehensive than when awake. It is not a coincidence that, in Greek mythology, Hypnos and Thanatos are brothers because, like death, sleep allows the soul to overcome both the boundaries of space and time, as well as those of logical reason. Consequently, during dreams, experiences and phenomena are accepted which, in the waking state, would be considered absurd or impossible.

2.1 Dream and reverie

Although there is an obvious connection between reverie and night dreaming, there must be a clear distinction between the two (Bachelard, 2005, p. 70). If, in the nocturnal dream, a male element of the being ("animus") is rather active, in the reverie we find a dominant female counterpart of the being ("anima"). The reverie can give rise to creative understanding but when the rays of consciousness no longer illuminate the dreamer, his reverie falls apart (p. 155). In addition, reverie is a generative spiritual phenomenon (it generates a symbolic world) and regenerator (since, through reverie, the psychic faculties of

man are vitalized by a deep inner experience). Far from being a "loss" through chaotic images, reverie can only exist in harmony, and harmony implies harmonization of all the elements that tend towards dispersion. Thus, the images are not only mechanically received, but actively internalized and experienced at an intimate level of being, the subject of the reverie being penetrated and traversed by the chromatic and musical vitality of the world. Moreover, it is well known that, within romantic literature, reverie is one of the most accessible methods for overcoming rationalization and even spatiotemporal limits.

In Eminescu's imaginary, death and sleep are – often – inseparable, being understood only through correlation with the symbolism of water. To paraphrase one of G. Călinescu's ideas regarding the poem *Mai am un singur dor*, we emphasise that, in his opinion (Călinescu, 1985, p. 212), the poet views nature as having a cosmogonic meaning, highlighting the primacy of water as an emblem of Chaos. In order to deepen our understanding of the connection between death (or sleep) and water, as well as to capture a certain particularity of the element that inspires the eminence reveries, it is necessary to analyze some passages from variants of the previously mentioned poem: "Mai am un singur dor: / În liniştea serii / Să mă lăsaţi să mor / La marginea mării; / Să-mi fie somnul lin / Şi codrul aproape, / *Pe 'ntinsele ape /* Să am un cer senin"[2] (Eminescu, 1994, p. 216); "Să-mi fie somnul lin / Şi codrul aproape, / Luceasc' un cer senin / *Pe-adâncile ape,*" (p. 219); "Să-mi fie somnul lin / Şi codrul aproape, / Lucească cer senin/ *Eternelor ape,*" (p. 221). There is no adjective comprehensive enough to describe these waters; they are equally: "vast", "deep" and "eternal". Through these descriptions, their mystery becomes even deeper, and the consciousness that penetrates it deepens increasingly and discovers new abysses, which are, in fact, facets of the same abyss. To understand this element loaded with such rich symbolism, we could make a parallel between the image of water and the image of the lover from Eminescu's poetry.

2.2 Love, beloved and reverie of repose

The reveries of the meeting with the beloved one often end in sleep, being accompanied by a distinct feeling of bliss, indescribable in its fullness. Usually, the poet uses the word "farmec" – 'charm' (Călinescu, 1985, p. 245) to suggest this state: "Să plutim cuprinşi de farmec / Sub lumina blândei lune – / Vântu 'n trestii să foşnească, / Unduioasa apă sune!"[3] (Eminescu, 1994, p. 74). 'Charm' appears as a natural result of (re)union with the beloved one, representing the peak of earthly love and, at the same time, the first step of cosmic love. To continue the interpretation, a parallel between love and sleep is needed: if sleep is abandonment, love is rediscovery.

Under certain circumstances, the beloved can be an anthropomorphic representation of the original water, embracing the lover with a rather motherly love. Then, the beloved becomes the symbol of quiet eternity, on whose chest the lover rests, adhering, at the same time, to the rest of the world. The lover longs to be enveloped by the perfume of that Eternal Feminine that has fascinated poets throughout time; because, in the last resort, the lover wants to merge with love itself.

Sometimes the beloved is "too far away", appearing and disappearing like a vaporous form, an air nymph that the lover can only dream of. As the (intangible) feminine ideal

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[2] Meaning: 'I have only one more wish: / In the evening's calm, / Let me be left to rest / By the edge of the sea ;/ May my sleep be peaceful / And the forest close by, / Over the vast waters, / May I have a clear sky'. (The English translation of the verses throughout this article belongs to us. Its sole purpose is to help readers who do not speak Romanian understand their basic meaning).

[3] 'Let us float, enchanted, / Under the gentle moonlight's grace – / Let the wind rustle in the reeds, / And the rippling water sings!'

crystallizes into a tangible feminine form, the lovers draw closer to each other, and the flame of passionate eros is subdued by the earth element (the meadow or the woods). The couple's union is outlined, in Eminescu's verses, as a harmonious fusion of the two principles (masculine and feminine) with nature. Following an overall analysis of Eminescu's lyric, we can distinguish five aspects of the beloved being:

1) the beloved as "form", with a beautiful body, warm and close;
2) the beloved as "form", with a beautiful body, but cold and distant;
3) the beloved as a delightful but intangible form;
4) the beloved as an ideal that transcends form;
5) the beloved as Eternal Feminine who perfects the ideal, source of love, and emblem of repose.

This last aspect is of particular interest to us, and to analyze it, we will start from the premise that the lover's disappointments occur when he is limited to the "beautiful form" (tangible lover), desired (intangible lover) and even idealized (beloved as ideal). Bewitched by the image of his beloved, he seems to forget that beauty appears to the eyes through form but far exceeds its limits. Overcome by melancholy or sadness, he intuits why the form is beautiful. Let us remember that when harmony is broken by suffering, the beloved is no more a very beautiful girl ("o prea frumoasă fată"), but a simple 'clay face' ("chip de lut"). Therefore, beauty does not reflect itself in the absence of love.

Lacking this harmonizing principle, the form loses its magic, ceasing to be a mirror for beauty. When the spell of form disappears, existence is seen as a transitory state, in which the common ground is clothed by multiple identities that gravitate around its source, being constantly set in motion by the need to become and aspire, at the same time, towards the eternal return. In the last instance, the beloved is only an "icon", an idealized image, but without independent value, being only a pale reflection of the beauty that sustains the charm of love.

The connection between repose (symbolized by the image of primordial water) and the beloved as the Eternal Feminine can be summarized by stating that although both can take any form, they are not subject to the constraint of form. The contour of water is limitlessness, and the contour of the beloved is love. At the same time, love gives birth to harmony, harmony gives birth to reverie, and reverie is the means to transcend the passage of time.

If there is a principle that directs and harmonizes the fluid substance of the dream universe, sleep exceeds the limit of necessity and carries the dreamer through his reverie. Love is the harmonizing principle and, at the same time, it is also *a call of the absolute* (del Conte, 1990, p. 210). This call is aimed at extinguishing the consuming existence and melting the being into the repose of non-being. Therefore, the most intimate "dream" of the poet, the deepest of his reveries is the reverie of rest in the kingdom of primordial repose where that eternal and immutable "being" reigns. However, there is a long way to get there, and such a path is proposed to us by the poem around which the next section revolves.

3. The initiatory journey and symbolism of the Sephirotic Tree in a poem by Eminescu

In this case, we are dealing with an unfinished poem known under two titles proposed by those who edited the text. In G. Călinescu's version, the title focuses on the figure of the magician (*Povestea magului călător în stele* [The tale of the wizard traveling among the stars]), whereas D. Murăraşu believes that a more appropriate title would be *Feciorul de împărat fără stea* [The emperor's son without a star] (Murăraşu, 1967, p. 17). Whether the emphasis falls on the mage or the emperor's son in those titles is of considerable relevance given that in the first part of the poem, it is the emperor's son who walks the path of initiation,

setting out in search of the mage, and, in the third part, the magician is the one who travels, and the emperor's son becomes the wanted one. This reversal of the roles of the seeker and the sought deserves special attention.

Although, inevitably, *Povestea magului călător în stele* has been the subject of some specialized articles and books, there are still insufficiently explored details regarding its symbolic implications. Among the many possibilities of interpretation, a particularly interesting one is the association of the characters with the Sephirotic Tree of Kabbalah. This kind of approach can provide a much deeper understanding of the journey of the emperor's son.

The first lines describe a genesis during which the stars descend their 'land of mysteries' on a ray: "În vremi de mult trecute, cînd stelele din ceriuri/ Erau copile albe cu părul blond și des/ Și coborînd pe rază țara lor de misteruri/ În marea cea albastră se cufundau ades"[4] (Eminescu, 1990, p. 339). From a certain symbolic point of view, the stars are Elohim, and the ray is how the "uncreated light" (*Ain Soph*) of Aelohim becomes a "limitless light" (*Ain Soph Aur*), which descends into the realm of creation.

The kingdom from which the emperor's son starts to climb the mountain of the magician can be identified with the *sefirah Malkuth* (which, in literal translation, means "kingdom"). And if the emperor's son is understood as a symbol of the "human soul" (*Tiphareth*), the emperor can be an allegory of the "spirit" (*Chesed*) that leads to knowledge. Let us not forget that the purpose of the journey is to prepare the emperor's son to become emperor, to become like his own "archetypal father". The path he takes to climb the mountain is made up of the spheres *Yesod* (meaning "foundation" or "base"), *Hod*, and *Netzach* (symbolizing, on a microcosmic level, emotions, and thoughts).

The reference to a higher type of understanding ("gândurilor mele aripe să le pui") is detailed by the words of the "great seraph" that provides an answer to the problems troubling the emperor's son (when he stops in the rosy marble hall to understand his fate[5]). It is also particularly relevant that the protagonist decides to travel at night, a fact that reminds us of the "dark night of the soul" (*la noche oscura del alma*) that Saint John of the Cross spoke of.

Mount Pion – a place where the earth merges with the sky and which exceeds any kind of concrete geographical limits – represents an *axis mundi* (Petrescu, 1978, p. 52). At the same time, the mountain is also an allegorical image of the initiatory journey, which can be correlated with the representation of the Sephirotic Tree. Therefore, the symbolism of the mountain includes numerous levels of interpretation that are not mutually exclusive but complementary. The journey to this (inner) mountain is both an ascent (overcoming the clouds and approaching the sun) and a descent into the depths of one's being (entering the mage's cave).

After climbing the mountain (to understand the 'enigma of life'), the emperor's son will learn that he has 'no angel' or 'no star' (Eminescu, 1990, p. 348). The lack of the star is explained by the fact that he belongs to that category of people to whom 'God in the world holds the place of a father'[6] (p. 349). The "father" appears in two hypostases: on the one

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[4] 'In times long past, / when the stars in the heavens / Were fair children with blonde and flowing hair / And, descending on a ray their land of mysteries, / They would often immerse themselves in the deep blue sea'.

[5] "Când mintea va cuprinde viața ta lumească, / Când corpul tău cădea-va de vreme risipit, / Vei coborî tu singur în viața-ți sufletească/ Și vei dura în spațiu-i stelos nemărginit; / Cum Dumnezeu cuprinde cu viața lui cerească / Lumi, stele, timp și spațiu ș-atomul nezărit,/ Cum toate-s el și dânsul în toate e cuprins/ Astfel tu vei fi mare ca gândul tău întins" (Eminescu, 1994, p. 350). Meaning: 'When the mind comprehends your earthly life, / When your body, over time, falls apart, / You will descend into your soul's existence, / And endure in its boundless, starry space, / Just as God encompasses the celestial life, / Worlds, stars, time, and unperceived atoms, / How everything is Him, and He is in all, / So, you will be vast as your extended thought'.

[6] "Dumnezeu în lume le ține loc de tată".

hand, as an emperor and, on the other, as a magician (both being called "părinte" by the emperor's son).

The magician lives 'above the world' (p. 344), situating himself in a higher plane of existence, and, by reference to the "profane world" he is *Das Ganz Andere* (Otto, 1996, p. 34). Contrary to the symbolic atmospheric elements evoked by the terms "iarnă, ploaie, zăpadă, fiori" (meaning 'winter, rain, snow, chills') in a lower realm, the 'cherished sunbeam' represents an allegory for enlightenment, illuminating the journey of the individual ascending the mountain. Initially, the magician dwells in an intermediate space, understood as a path to another subtle reality. Beyond the sun is the pinnacle of all creation, the 'fathomless abyss' (Eminescu, 1990, p. 358), described during the journey of the magician in the third part of the poem. It is essential to note that this abstract space exceeds "created light"; and to enter it, the magician 'releases the star' that had carried him there.

The total darkness in that abyss appears as an "uncreated light" (or "extinction") surrounded by stars ("deasupra vedea stele şi dedesuptu-i stele"). As we already know, this principle of "unmanifest limitlessness" is called *Ain Soph* in Kabbalah. It is interesting to note that each being has its primordial essence (*Ain Soph*), which is symbolized by a star. Following this interpretation, we must not lose sight of the fact that the first time the emperor's son meets the magician, he sits on a fallen star (p. 351).

The symbol (that of the magician, in this case) is the only possible description of divinity because we have access to God only through symbols (Kant, 1981, p. 247). From this perspective, we can understand why the darkness ("marmură neagră", "negre oglinde", "adînc întuneric", "E peştera neagră zăhastrului mag" etc.) appears as a constant attribute of the place where the mage resides. But there are two types of darkness: a "lower" one (meaning the absence of light or the "night of the soul") and a "higher" one (meaning "potential light" or "uncreated light" which exceeds common perception). Being able to follow the magician inside the mountain indicates that the emperor's son can overcome the "lower darkness" and enter the "upper darkness" (Davy, 1998, p. 347).

Considering that the destiny of the emperor's son is not written in the *Book of the World* (Cifor, 2000, p. 92), to decipher his fate (different from that of most mortals), the magician leads him to a series of rooms inside the mountain. The initiatory journey necessarily involves an initiatory death through which the mystery of Eros merges with that of Hypnos and Thanatos. The hero's journey will continue beyond the limits of the physical body after he is offered a cup that brings him sleep. This element allows the emperor's son to access much more profound levels of his being, culminating in the finding of the star at the end of the second part of the poem (Eminescu, 1990, p. 357).

Later, the prince is transposed into another existence and knows the life of the hermit. On the one hand, we can understand that the emperor's son, under the guidance of the magician, arrives at the place where the hermit leads his existence; on the other hand, we can understand that the emperor's son becomes an ascetic himself (understanding his condition through direct experience). We will continue to focus on the second perspective.

In the third (and last) part of the text, the magician's journey is described (p. 358) and thus, there is a reversal of the roles of seeker and sought: the magician becomes the seeker, and the prince becomes the sought. The magician appears as an omnipotent personification of wisdom, which can be identified with the Ancient of Days or with the Trinity within the Kabbalah: *Keter, Chokmah, Binah* (which, in translation, means: "crown", "wisdom" and "understanding"). It should also be emphasized that the emperor (*Chesed*) is the one who makes the connection between the "human soul" (his son – *Tiphareth*) and the magician (*Keter, Chokmah, Binah*) possible.

Another significant detail is that the magician never descends from his mountain (p. 342) but ascends to heaven. From this point of view, he does not make another journey but continues the journey of the emperor's son. If in the first stanza of the poem we are dealing with a description of the macrocosmic genesis, in the third part we can see the symbolic description of a microcosmic genesis. Thus, it is not the 'stars from the heavens' that descend into creation, but the magician himself descends from 'chaos' or 'from the top of the mountain' to the star where he finds the monk.

If in the first part of the poem the magician is described as a 'hermit', now the emperor's son appears as a hermit. Among the many details that can be commented on during their last meeting, we will only focus on the image of the ideal beloved being that the ascetic talks about.

By reference to the Sephirotic Tree, this ideal beloved – who appears as a beautiful and youthful angel (p. 365) – is *Geburah* (or "divine soul"). As a symbol of the human soul (*Tiphareth*), the ascetic prince aspires to union with the divine soul. To understand this perspective of interpretation, we can remember the journey in *The Divine Comedy*, during which Dante (as a symbol of the human soul) aspires to (re)unite with Beatrice (who is, in turn, the representation of the "divine soul"). Only through the mediation and guidance of the "divine soul" does it become possible to contemplate the spheres that exceed the perceptive capacity of the human soul. Moreover, within the structure of the Sephirotic Tree, *Geburah* acts as a mediator between the "human soul" and the "Heavenly Father".

The initiatory journey of Eminescu's poem does not end with the last stanza but continues in a world where the emperor's son and the 'etheric-ideal' of the beloved can coexist 'in the form of clay' of a body. In other words, to reach their full potential, the two souls are meant to merge into the same physical body (p. 369).

 Finally, this subchapter represents only a possibility of interpretation that cannot claim to be exhaustive. Although only a few passages of the text were discussed, we hope that they were relevant enough to highlight the fact that we are dealing with an *archetypal scheme of an initiatory journey* (Petrescu, 1978, p. 44) and, therefore, the stages of the path are intended, rather, for a symbolic reception. Beyond the appearance of the outer adventure, the journey of the emperor's son (as well as the journey of the magician) is an inner journey.

Summarizing, we can observe that the "human soul" (*Tiphareth*) is the one who undertakes the initiatory journey to acquire his "divine soul" (*Geburah*), tending, at the same time, to become like his own "archetypal parent" (*Chesed*) by acquiring "understanding" (*Binah*) and "wisdom" (*Chokmah*) to be worthy of the "crown" (*Keter*) of an emperor. Recalling that, in the initial section of the poem, the prince embarks on a quest to reach his objective by seeking out the magician, we can interpret the connection between the sefirot *Keter*, *Chokmah* and *Binah* with the representation of the old magician. Therefore, both the Pion Mountain, the emperor, the "great seraph", the magician, the ideal lover, the emperor's son, and the star are archetypal elements that can be found in the depths of each of us.

4. Principles of Kabbalah in a fragment of Eminescu's prose

Even after a hasty reading of Eminescu's prose, we cannot fail to notice that it is by no means a simple, marginal addition to poetry, but proposes a well-defined vision of existence. Well, the Empyrean described in *The Divine Comedy* finds its equivalent among the lines of the fragment entitled "Archaeus". The text is unfinished, extracted from a manuscript by Eminescu and published under this title in the edition of I. Scurtu, *Scrieri politice şi literare* (1905). Beyond the parallels with the thought systems of some European philosophers, the text under discussion may constitute another point of intersection between Eminescu's creation and the principles of Kabbalah.

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Before the actual analysis, we should mention a series of data regarding the word "Archaeus" (fr. *archée*, lat. *archeus*, gr. *arkhe*) that represents the primordial chaos, the amorphous matrix on which the entire creation was based. During the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, the term was encountered in alchemical texts, there being, as is natural, certain contextual differences – which, however, do not affect the essential ideational background of the term. In the second case, *archeus* names the vital principle (*anima mundi*) that sustains the existence of all beings and which, like all external elements and phenomena, had an individualized form of expression within each being. So, the existence of both a macrocosmic and a microcosmic *archeus* can be highlighted, correlated with the genesis of the body, but also with that of the soul. In short, the mechanical↔biological and the conscious↔spiritual appear as complementary possibilities through which the *archeus* can act.

The fragment itself begins by emphasizing the contrast between the "all-knowing" clerks and sub-commissioners (who frame existence within the rigid limits of their preoccupations, thus losing its meaning) and the thoughtful man who accepts that he knows nothing, questions, and has more uncertainties than certainties, and thus treads cautiously on the path of knowledge. The former will deal only with the "shells", and the latter will approach the core of things and be able to understand that 'Archaeus is the only reality in the world', compared to which 'all others are trifles' – as one of the two characters (that we will mention in the following pages) will state.

Perception is the first of the fundamental issues detailed in the proposed text: "Într'adevăr lumea cum o vedem, nu esistă decît în crierul nostru. (…) Lumea nu-i cumu-i, ci cum o vedem…"[7] (Eminescu, 1905, pp. 283-284). Having posed the problem in this way, it is easy to understand that perception is the foundation of knowledge. The mode of existence of each being is directly related to the more or less elevated degree of perception. The wider the perception, the more passivity turns into activity and the deeper the interaction between nature and its observer becomes. Also, the more there is a predisposition to think (about what exceeds the immediate sphere of perception), the more the being has superior means to investigate the external, but also the internal reality.

All the thoughts in the first part revolve around the question 'What is the truth?'. The answer continues as a rhetorical question, in which Eminescu combines the depth of thought with fine irony (p. 284). Later, two characters are introduced: the poet and the old philosopher. It is relevant to mention that they meet in a pub called "Noah's Ark". From a symbolic point of view, the pub can be understood as a place where the thirsty for knowledge enters, to take shelter from the deluge of everyday ignorance. In this context, the old philosopher will state: 'Well, Archaeus is the only reality in the world, all the others are trifles – Archaeus is everything'[8] (Eminescu, 1905, p. 286) – the reply is addressed to the young poet.

To study this type of reality (*Archaeus*) it is necessary to open the knowing subject towards a new type of understanding of the world and, implicitly, a meditation on the human condition. Precisely for this reason, before listening to the old man, the young poet has the feeling of becoming a child again. But even an innocent mind ready to intuitively receive the master's teaching can often be "blocked" by reason.

An attempt at a logical explanation of the Archaeus follows, but as expected, the limits of reason cannot encompass, in its entirety, the targeted reality. After the poet confesses to the old philosopher: '...I still don't know what Archaeus is' (p. 292), the latter (after having already offered a series of explanations and illustrative examples) presents, in a

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[7] Meaning: 'Indeed, the world as we see it exists only in our minds. (…) The world is not as it is but as we perceive it'.
[8] "Ei bine, Archaeus este singura realitate pe lume, toate celelalte sînt fleacuri – Archaeus este tot".

very concise manner, the characterization of Archaeus: 'It is the same *punctum saliens*, which appears in thousands of people stripped of time and space, whole and undivided...'[9] (p. 292).

In short, the archeus designates the essence and vital force of all phenomena and constitutes the prototype of all beings. Being understood as a world of archetypes from which creation emerges and, at the same time, as a point of continuously becoming an absolute possibility, this space (or way of "being") is not located in *illo tempore*, but in a continuously (omni)present. This is how the old philosopher describes this fact to the young poet: 'It is not easy to understand – because it is eternal. And eternal is all that is always present… in this moment. Not what was, because there were states of affairs, not what will be, because there will be states of affairs again. What is' (p. 291). And beyond the aspect called, by the ancient Greeks, *arkhe*, and, by the Kabbalists, "limitless" (*Ain Soph*) is the "Nothingness" (*Ain*) on which we will focus in the following pages.

5. The Nothingness (Ain) or the unknown God in Eminescu's lyric

References to the "unknown God" or "unnamed" can be seen in several poems, among which we mention: *Luceafărul*, *Scrisoarea I* and *Rugăciunea unui dac*. Of course, the previously mentioned texts have been studied from a multitude of perspectives, and the problem of the unknown God has also been addressed by established eminescologists. Even if we will not bring a new perspective on this issue, we believe that the topic is worth addressing in order to make a synthesis of some already known points of view.

To understand the concept of "Unknown God" in Eminescu's poems, we must, first, consider the (romantic) perspective from which the poet looks at it. Many times, the romantic writer is characterized by a religious syncretism that shows the desire to understand a reality beyond the conceptual boundaries specific to a canonical religion – without, however, denying these boundaries. What the romantic denies is the possibility of symbolic forms, specific to a religious tradition, to fully encompass the reality to which it refers. Maybe for this reason Eminescu wrote the lyrics: "Eu nu cred nici în Iehova, / Nici în Buddha-Sakya-Muni, / Nici în viaţă, nici în moarte, / Nici în stingere ca unii"[10] (Emienscu 1994: 115).

In fact, the poet "does not believe" in the possibility of any symbolic form containing the Truth. The previously stated hypothesis is confirmed by the next verse of the poem, which indirectly recalls one of the most famous ideas of Hinduism: "The world is the dream of Brahma". Entering the sphere of human reason, 'all these holy mysteries' become 'for man fragments of language' (Cifor, 2000, p. 52) – or, in other words, they become constrained by the conceptual boundaries of language. Simple words cannot contain the Logos, much less the source of this primordial Word, which is the "Unknown God". The "Unknown God" is neither "this" nor "that", but "Something else", which is impossible to name explicitly – representing only a generic name for the deepest aspect of divinity – present, of course, in all philosophical-religious traditions. Well, the concept of Universal Non-Being (*Brahma Nirguna* or *Para-Brahman*) referred to the same ultimate reality.

Given that the romantic writers took up the concepts of microcosm, macrocosm, and archetype developed in the mystical, kabbalistic, and alchemical tradition of the Middle Ages (Huch, 2011, pp. 331-342), the cosmological model proposed by them is, par excellence, a symbolic one (Petrescu, 1978, p. 15). Nature or creation is the mirror of the Creator, reflecting His attributes, without separating them from His ultimate and "uncreated" nature. The divine attributes appear as distorted (on the surface of the "mirror" of existence) either when it moves too far from the One it reflects or when an obstacle appears between the

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[9] "E unul şi acelaşi punctum saliens, care apare în mii de oameni disbrăcat de timp şi spaţiu, întreg şi nedespărţit…".

[10] 'I do not believe in Jehovah, / Nor in Buddha-Sakyamuni, / Neither in life nor in death, / Nor in extinction like some do'.

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creation and the Creator that limits or modifies the perception. The essence of the Creator is, therefore, in everything that exists, but not everything that exists faithfully reflects the image of the Creator.

At a microcosmic level, the attributes of the Creator are in a latent and potential state, like seeds. After the fall, man no longer reflects the "image and likeness of God", but still retains this possibility in the form of an archetypal essence located in the depths of his being. Thus, man can do nothing but a poetic act: *to guess or to feel in nature the great ideal of God* (Béguin, 1970, p. 113). The fulfilment of the poetic act presupposes a micro-genesis through which man becomes a *microtheos*.

As noted by G. Călinescu (1985, p. 8), there are two poems (*Rugăciunea unui dac* and *Scrisoarea I*) in which Eminescu presents the moment of genesis and, implicitly, the first manifestation of the "Unknown God". To begin with, we will consider the description of the genesis from *Scrisoarea I*, highlighting the following verse: "Când pătruns de sine însuși odihnea cel nepătruns"[11] (Eminescu, 1994, p. 132).

Given that, properly speaking, the "Unknown God" cannot be assigned any concrete attribute; his understanding is conditioned by the understanding of the world of archetypes from which creation arises. Existence itself is opposed to that uncreated state of being and, for this reason, existence can be understood as a mirror on the surface on which the attributes of non-existence are reflected. Continuing the analysis of the poem, we discover that the created world is not an independent reality, but only a 'dream of non-being'.

Constantin Noica observes that there was too much talk about non-being in Eminescu and, at the same time, that no Romanian writer invoked non-being more (Noica, 1992, p. 322). The same principle of "unmanifested limitlessness" (which is also the source of manifested existence) is called the *Ain Soph* in Kabbalah. As we noticed from the prose fragment studied, each being has its primordial essence (*Ain Soph*) which, through the act of creation, can develop its latent possibilities. So, the macrocosmic "limitlessness" (*Ain Soph*) sums up the individual microcosmic essences. Above this principle of limitlessness (*Ain Soph*) is the primordial "Nothingness" (*Ain*), which can be equated with the "Unknown God" of ancient Greece.

The beginning of the poem *Rugăciunea unui dac* is particularly revealing for the study of the unknown God. These verses highlight three essential aspects: the unity of God, the mention of the "kernel" of light as the source of life, and, of course, the unknowable character nature of God. The singularity and unity of the primordial God ('one was all and all was one') is clearly stated in the first stanza quoted above. Even though the One has no form, it represents the origin of multiple forms and therefore can appear in any form ('rising as a new ray from the same water' – as it is written in *Archaeus*). There, the more something *exists*, the less *it is*, and for something to be it must cease to exist (in the manifested space). The same hypothesis can be found in a comment on the pose of Hyperion in *Luceafărul*: the one who feels his immortality also knows that he 'wasn't when he was, he is when he isn't' (Marian, 1999, p. 207).

The first recognizable manifestation of the "Unknown God" is represented by the 'seed of life-giving light'. The primordial "core of light" (*Ain Soph Aur*) can be compared to the star that is born from the immensity (*Ain Soph*) of the primordial "Void" (*Ain*). Because it is absolute fullness, God appears as "Nothing" (*Ain*) to existence, and manifested existence appears as nothing in relation to God – and, despite the apparent contradiction, the two types of being are not mutually exclusive. If "That" (*Agnostos Theos*) enters the realm of

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[11] 'When absorbed in oneself, the unpenetrated one was resting'.

manifestation, that nameless reality (which is also the source of all names) becomes "This", the one that can be looked at and understood.

The fact that God is "unknown" represents an indirect reference to the multitude of names by which God can be called and, at the same time, to the way that none of these names fully reflects the ultimate nature of the divine. In addition, God is unknown because man does not know himself and therefore cannot know what is beyond him. Finally, the unknown God is the primordial source of all creation, standing above all constraints of manifested existence. As long as there is a contextual understanding of the concepts, it can be said that the "Unknown God" is simultaneous "Limitlessness" and "Void". The concept of Limitlessness (*Ain Soph*) has already been discussed, and that of Void (*Ain* – In Hebrew) should not be understood in the sense of a "lack of something", but of the presence of an "Other" that seems to be "nothing" by reference to existence.

Conclusions

Considering that fantastic art *remains a way of access to the secrets of creation* (De Solier, 1987, p. 239), its creator must be an initiate capable of perceiving and transmitting those secrets. Such an "instrument" is the genius – representing the humanization of a 'generative principle of existence' whose exceptional ability 'gives rise to a new rule, which could not be deduced from previous principles or examples' (Kant, 1981, p. 212). Because the genius writer has that 'innate disposition of the soul' by which 'nature prescribes rules to art' (p. 202), his work is unrepeatable and always retains a mystery that fascinates.

In conclusion, the relationship between Mihai Eminescu's personality and the study of Kabbalah can be seen as a "kabbalah" in itself. Apart from a few testimonies and notes in his manuscripts, most information on this subject emerges from a thorough study of his work.

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THE ANXIETY OF INFLUENCE UNBOUND
SHELLEY'S *PROMETHEUS* AND PHILIPPIDE'S *PROMETHEUS* IN THE LOOKING GLASS

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Abstract

The paper draws a brief parallel between the works of Percy Bysshe Shelley Prometheus Unbound (1820) and of the Romanian Alexandru Philippide The Banishment of Prometheus (1922). It starts from the Greek writers' image of Prometheus in Hesiod's Works and Days and Theogony and in Aeschylus' Prometheus Unbound. It also discusses Harold Bloom's theory as it analyses the potential anxiety of influence of the Greek writers on Shelley and Philippide and it shows forth this effect seen as a "revisionary ratio" and named by Bloom (1973) a tessera, which means "completion and antithesis". Both authors create a complex Prometheus character who holds multiple facets. Both authors shape Prometheus as a figure that contains the Western core of values, be they positive or negative. Prometheus actually commits the original sin for man's sake. This haughty act can be compared to the biblical theft of forbidden knowledge. The author claims that the aim of this theft and the punishment meted out to Prometheus by Zeus are destined to estrange man from nature and from God and to push man into hubris. These also kindle man's Faustian propensity which turns man into his own divinity, or which recasts the divinity according to man's own design. If Shelley's Prometheus turns out to be the Romantic hero achieving moral and intellectual perfection, being uplifted by authentic, selfless and noble goals, Philippide's Prometheus is the disillusioned, bitter hero from a well-wrought ars poetica, who seeks another mankind on whom to bestow his love and selfless goodwill gestures. His poem represents a symbol of the artist living in his ivory tower failing to be understood by his fellow beings.

Keywords: anxiety of influence; *Prometheus Unbound*, PB Shelley; *The Banishment of Prometheus*, Alexandru Philippide; Greek myth of Prometheus;

1. Introduction

The study sets out to draw a fairly brief parallel between the works of Percy Bysshe Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* (1820) and of the Romanian poet Alexandru Philippide's *The Banishment of Prometheus* (1922). The author will dwell more on the Romanian poem as Philippide's work is much less known that Shelley's masterpiece. It shows forth how Shelley recast his Prometheus in comparison to the Greek myth told by Hesiod and Aeschylus and how Philippide crafted his Prometheus out of the previous literary models: Shelley's, Hesiod's and Aeschylus' creations.

The research also strives to find out if Harold Bloom's predicament that "all writers inevitably, to some degree, adopt, manipulate or alter and assimilate certain aspects of the content or subject matter, literary style or form from their predecessors" (Abrams & Harpham, 2009, pp. 155-156) can spell out the effect of this anxiety of influence as set out by Harold Bloom (1973).

It will also attempt at classifying this effect seen as one type of a "revisionary ratio" out of six which Bloom (1973. pp. 66-69) sets up and namely a *tessera*, which means "completion and antithesis". In his original literary terminology, Bloom defines completion by explaining that a certain writer may "complete" his preceding writer's work, preserving its terms but granting them a new meaning, "as though the precursor had failed to go far enough":

> In the *tessera*, the later poet provides what his imagination tells him would complete the otherwise "truncated" precursor poem and poet, a "completion" that is as much misprision as a revisionary swerve is. I take the *Tessera* or Completion and Antithesis term *tessera* from the psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, whose own revisionary relationship to Freud might be given as an instance of *tessera* (Bloom, 1973, pp. 66-67).

To boot, the Greek word <u>*tessera*</u> actually reminds us of a small wood, stone or bone piece that completed with other matching pieces enabled one to reconstruct the whole object. Greek mystery cult rituals would employ such a *tessera* as a token of recognition. "In this sense of a completing link, the tessera represents any later poet's attempt to persuade himself (and us) that the precursor's Word would be worn out if not redeemed as a newly fulfilled and enlarged Word of the ephebe" (Bloom, 1973, p.67). As for antithesis, Bloom spells out his terminology as bearing a rhetorical thrust: "I am using the term 'antithetical' in its rhetorical meaning: the juxtaposition of contrasting ideas in balanced or parallel structures, phrases, words" (Bloom, 1973, p. 65)

This entails the fact that both Shelley and Philippide work upon the character of Prometheus already shaped by Hesiod and Aeschylus, keeping their original ideas but also reshaping them in novel ways, somewhat suggesting that the original writers stopped short of taking a stance and carrying it far enough in the first place.

That is why we shall present some features of Prometheus as seen by both Hesiod in *Theogony* and *Work and Days* and by Aeschylus in the *Prometheus Bound* before we proceed to the comments on Shelley's and Philippide's Prometheus. Both Shelley and Philippide (obviously drawing upon Shelley, too) make Prometheus over into a modern hero. The adjective "unbound" in the title implies that both Shelley and Philippide have somewhat unbound themselves from their anxious indebtedness to their Greek predecessors and here we set out to show the extent to which they are unbound. Finally, we should not forget that works of art implicitly and indirectly reflect the spirit of their time.

2. Hesiod's Prometheus

In Hesiod's *Theogony*, the story of Prometheus' (failed) attempt to deceive Zeus is featured as part of an array of events meant to glorify Zeus' power. The poem shows Zeus as he nears the accomplished status as an absolute Master (Dougherty, 2006, p. 34).

Here Prometheus challenges Zeus to an *agon* of wits, and the fact that Zeus' wins out and Prometheus loses out is put down to Zeus' superior wit. Hesiod tries a play upon words regarding Prometheus' name and shows him forth as a trickster. It is Prometheus the one who steals the fire but unfortunately he ends up bringing about more misery rather than good things to the humans. Ultimately, Hesiod suggests that the *metis* (trickery) of Prometheus bodes ill for mankind.

Hesiod's poems describe Prometheus as insightful, clever, and witty, and his foresight gift is alluded to in the *Works and Days* in his interaction with his brother Epimetheus, a name carrying an opposite meaning to Prometheus. Hesiod fails to dwell on Prometheus' own

forethought gift and apart from the episode describing Hope tucked inside Pandora's Box, Hesiod sort of glosses over the issues of Prometheus bequeathing fire to mankind.

Moreover, Hesiod in *Work and Days* considers Prometheus, the bringer of fire as the unwilling instigator or catalyst bringing about mankind's demotion from the paradisiac Golden Age to the wearisome and back-breaking Iron Age (Dougherty, 2006, p. 30).

3. Aeschylus' Prometheus

Unlike Hesiod, Aeschylus in *Prometheus Bound* stands out by skilfully handling the allegory of Hope as she remained confined to Pandora's Box after all the other evils that would pester humanity later on had escaped into the world. It is true that Aeschylus shuts out Pandora from his Prometheus work and that he makes Hope stand out from the allegorical crowd of world's ills and touts it to mankind (Dougherty, 2006, pp. 71-73).

Dougherty (2006, p. 33) is right to observe that "Prometheus' gift of hope, together with that of fire, is given in the spirit of help, as a mortal strategy for coping with imperfect knowledge and the anxiety of the things to come". Prometheus makes good his fame and name as he is the bringer of Hope and the entire humanity is in dire need of it. Aeschylus dwells on the prophetic gift of Prometheus who bestows the pledge of continuity upon mankind.

Aware of the humans' ephemeral condition, Prometheus is sincere in his attempt to give mankind hope for what is to come and makes sure that humans know how to handle fire and put their skills to good use so that they should go about their daily pursuits in a good way. Dougherty (2006, p. 33) rightfully remarks that "hope is part of the human experience – another thing that separates mankind from the omniscient gods".

Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound* fits out the springs of the clash action between Prometheus and Zeus with novel undertones. In a very theatrical way Prometheus' uproarious attitude stands up against the tyranny of Zeus. Aeschylus makes us understand that Zeus is eager to sip from the cup of immortal ambrosia and thus glutting his hunger for boundless power.

If Hesiod envisages the two opponents, Zeus and Prometheus, outdoing each other in an *agon* or battle of wits, Aeschylus has Prometheus behave like a real rebel flouting Zeus' injunctions. Moreover, we believe that Dougherty (2006, p. 31) is right to point out that "by making Zeus out to be an insecure and power-hungry tyrant, Aeschylus invokes a political designation with specific negative connotations in fifth-century Athens."

Dougherty (2006, pp. 71-73) goes on to remark that "although in its early uses the word *tyrannos* merely designated one whose sole rule was not inherited, by the fifth century, tyrants were known to be hubristic rulers with a tendency towards violence and a belief that they were a law unto themselves. Athens, in particular, was famous for its hatred of tyranny". If Hesiod's Prometheus fitted into the **trickster frame**, Aeschylus reshuffled the elements and made Prometheus out to be more of a seer than a swindler in *Prometheus Bound*. Tarnas (2018, p. 99) sees Prometheus as both the trickster, but also as the awakener.

Aeschylus' Prometheus comes across **more as a rebel than a trickster**, **a defender of humanity against the tyranny of the Zeus**. Aeschylus has Zeus hurl a threat at Prometheus that he can stamp out mankind and give rise to a new humanity and valiant Prometheus turns out to be ready to defy Zeus and stand up for the wretched humanity against Zeus' abuse of power. This is the point which Romantic poets will capitalise on as the uproarious aspect of Prometheus appeals to all the rebel-minded kindred spirits.

Unlike Hesiod, Aeschylus does not shrink back from taking advantage of the irony observable in his name at the outset of the *Prometheus Bound*. As Might sets out to leave Prometheus as he was bound to the mountain rock, he raps out an ironic line to Prometheus:

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"The Gods named you **Forethought** falsely, for you yourself need forethought to find a way to escape from this device" (Aeschylus, 2012, pp. 86–87).

We agree with Dougherty remarking that Aeschylus' Prometheus helps build one of the earliest and certainly most detailed accounts of progress in Greek literature. "I gave them fire […] from which they will learn many **skills**" (Aeschylus, 2012, p. 87). One should remark here that skill renders the polysemous Greek word **techne**, also designating the crafts and arts, a word that has spawned the range of words like 'technology' and 'technique', aspects that bespeak civilization with all its material and immaterial components.

4. Shelley's Prometheus

Shelley waters down the adversity of Prometheus and Zeus because he intends to utter his specific utopian outlook on *agape* and non-combat attitude. For this reason, Shelley means for his poem to carry the symbol of both victories over tyranny, and of humanity's freedom from political, social or religious abuse into a more harmonious and loving relationship with nature.

In the *Prometheus Unbound*, Shelley's recast Prometheus touts hope as the solution to the redemption of mankind. Penned in 1818–19 in Venice and Rome amidst its ruins and among other places and published in 1820, the *Prometheus Unbound* ranked high among Shelley's favourite works. Shelley's Prometheus is still a hero of human liberation, clearly indebted to Aeschylus' defiant titan who opposed the harsh tyranny of Zeus on behalf of mankind.

Let us see how Bloom's **revisionary ratio** works here and how Shelley's **tessera** takes shape in contradistinction to the Greek tradition of Hesiod and Aeschylus. Shelley departs from Aeschylus' model in some significant ways. Seen from the angle of thirty-thousand years of torture, Shelley's Prometheus has pin-pointed the mistake of his behaviour, and leaving the act of rebellion behind. Iapetus' son strives for getting back no more as he seeks no power for himself (Dougherty, 2006, p. 104).

Instead of the revolutionary power and technological potential of Aeschylus, the new Promethean fire is the liberating power of love which can transform the human condition. Shelley comes up with this sweeping reinterpretation of Aeschylus' homonymous lost play as Shelley blurs away the definitions of rebel and tyrant. By using the homonymous title, Shelley may admit of Aeschylus model, but he spells out in his preface that his ambition is greater than to restore the lost play. Shelley set about writing *Prometheus Unbound* showing his admiration for Aeschylus because he wrote a tragedy featuring the hero's fight against tyranny (Highet, 1985, p. 423).

Instead, he re-imagines the conclusion to the Prometheus/Jupiter conflict at the heart of the myth, clearly wanting to somewhat skirt round the ending featuring the rebel reaching a compromise with the tyrant of mankind. One specific way in which Shelley restores the Promethean figures of his predecessors is by pushing the plot of his story several years after the initial act of rebellion. The focus thus shifts away from the conflict between tyrant and rebel towards a more idealistic and constructive pattern for life without any tyrannical constraints, whether they may be of political, intellectual, or religious kind. In spite of Shelley's high-flung idealism apparent in the *Prometheus Unbound*, Bloom claims that in general "Shelley was a skeptic, and a kind of visionary materialist" (Bloom, 1973, p. 69).

Peterfreund (2002, p. 225) claims that Shelley's *tessera* (in Bloom's terms)

> is not so much directed at the plot of this Aeschylean trilogy as it is at certain habits of
> mind that Shelley takes the plot of the original to emblemize. Reconciling with Jupiter on
> his terms would mean agreeing to think like that god in categories of reified, permanent,

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despotic power and would result in Prometheus's own reification and dubious apotheosis.

And so Shelley's Prometheus is more about imagining an escape from the institution of tyranny than a lament on its limitations. Redeemed by many years of suffering, Shelley's Prometheus has become a paragon of moral and intellectual excellence, moved by authentic and noble goals.

As Shelley explains in the *Preface*, his imagery was "drawn from the operations of the human mind, and while the action of the play may be simple, the ideas involved are quite complex". In his *Preface* to *Prometheus Unbound* Shelley admits that he strays from the Aeschylus' plot, as Aeschylus has Jupiter (Zeus) and Prometheus compromise on the domination issue and Prometheus finally agrees to Jupiter's sway over the Earth. Shelley's Romantic hero puts up resistance to any compromise standing up to Jupiter's fierce will as in Act 1 he calls on Jupiter instead to "pour forth the cup of pain" (Shelley, 1959, *Preface*). Prometheus's refusal to support Jupiter's reign, which he feels it does not good to humanity, suggests that it is more heroic to actively support justice and morality for all than to reach a compromise with corrupt some kind of authority in order to achieve any personal gain.

For Shelley, the oppositional categories that have dominated political thought are formulated in a rather plain way, and the ambiguous richness of the Prometheus myth allows him to rethink them. Shelley's Prometheus revisits recent historical events and describes a better outcome, moving beyond the cycles of revolution to a vision of a **world without "thrones, altars, judgement-seats, and prisons"** (Shelley, 1959, p. 256, 3.4.164).

In this new world, these and other trappings of power, fear, and hatred "stand, not o'erthrown, but unregarded now" (Shelley, 1959, p. 256, 3.4.179). The age-old categories of tyrant and rebel, master and slave are no longer unflinching through the eternal opposition of Prometheus and Jupiter; rather they begin to blur into each other.

Certainly, Jupiter is presented as the all-powerful tyrant, but he was a rebel against his father. He is proud of the fact that his empire is built upon "Hell's coeval, fear" (Shelley, 1959, p. 256, 3.1.10). His punishments turn out to be harsh, and yet, Shelley's Jupiter also is a thrall to evil. "All spirits are enslaved who serve things evil" (Shelley, 1959, 2.4.110, p. 214).

Instead of representing the spirit of defiance in the *Prometheus Unbound*, **Prometheus stands as the symbol for passive resistance, forgiveness, and love**. By recalling the curse, Prometheus owns up to sharing Jupiter's responsibility for the troubles at the beginning of the play. His wrong actions make him an accomplice to Jupiter's tyranny, and guilty of bringing suffering to humans (Braxton, 1967, p. 13).

Shelley's Prometheus is somewhat to blame for Jupiter's tyranny because he was the one who bestowed power without wisdom on Jupiter/ Zeus, and this error in judgement makes him guilty as well. Whereas Jupiter remains a slave to his arrogance and his thirst for vengeance, Prometheus is freed by rejecting his curse. Shelley's drama thus resists Aeschylus' plan to resolve his trilogy by reconciling tyrant and rebel. For Shelley the most important concept from the Greek world was freedom. (Highet, 1985, p. 423).

In addition to recasting the characters of Prometheus and Jupiter, Shelley recasts the role of mankind in the myth, emphasizing that it was not Jupiter who intended to thwart mankind, but that man was his own enslaver and liberator. Instead of advocating revolution, Shelley looks to Prometheus to imagine a way out of the endless cycle of tyranny. He aims to create a new Golden Age where men live in a state of political equality; each king of himself:

Sceptreless, free, uncircumscribed – but man:

Equal, unclassed, tribeless and nationless;
Exempt from awe, worship, degree; the king
Over himself; just, gentle, wise – but man: (Shelley, 1959, p. 259, 3.4.194–97)

Man thus becomes an autonomous agent, a player in his own story rather than the victim of political abuse or the recipient of divine patronage (Dougherty, 2006, p. 97). By reshuffling the roles and relationships of the main characters in the Prometheus myth: Prometheus, Jupiter, and mankind, Shelley avails himself of the mythological tradition to cast doubt on the claim that a divine monarch sets up the best model for the human political universe.

Shelley dwells instead on the human capacity to change political destiny when he gives Prometheus the choice to forego a vindictive action of wreaking revenge thus preferring the path towards universal peace, equality and harmony.

Shelley reshuffles the mythological narrative to postulate equality for all and to reject violent change by bloody revolutions altogether. He is well aware of the fact that violence only begets more violence, and that mankind throws off the chains of tyranny rather than those of a particular ruling tyrant.

In the *Prometheus Unbound*, Shelley uses Prometheus to help undo the myth of patriarchal power as it had been recently embodied by the historical figure of Napoleon. For Shelley, this political act is fundamentally one of the imagination, for, as he claims in the last line of his *Defence of Poetry*, "poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world" (Shelley, 2004, p. 96).

Prometheus serves as a powerful symbol of the imagination's ability to break the chains of handed down myths and the familiar manners of imagining the world and man's place in it. (Dougherty, 2006, p. 98). For many Romantic poets, Prometheus' story contributed to the imaginative arts, shaping a new outlook on the unconventional but still gifted poet as the artful fire thief.

5. Philippide's Prometheus

In the past more than 100 years, the figure of Prometheus has inspired many writers to air their views on sundry topics of the human condition that his myth has already broached in such complexity since its creation. 20th century writers still find all aspects of his story intriguing like the theft of fire, his subsequent punishment and liberation, his creation of humans. We understand that both with Romantic and with Neoromantic poets, Prometheus stands for the glowing and transcendent spirit of the artists.

It is also the Romanian poet, Alexandru Philippide, who used this myth in the 20th century. He was born in 1900 and died in 1979. He was also a writer, critic and translator, who received the Herder prize in 1965. He read Law and Philology at the University of Jassy, Romania between 1918 and 1921. He also studied in Germany and France between 1922 and 1928 and thereafter took up positions with the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs until 1947. He published volumes of poetry: *Barren Gold* (which contains *The Banishment of Prometheus*) in 1922, *Lightning-struck Crags* in 1930, *Dreams in Roaring Times* in 1939, *The Flower from the Abyss* (short stories) in 1942, *Monologue in Babylon* in 1967 and collections of essays on literature and aesthetics.

Alexandru Philippide was a busy and fruitful translator from German, French, English and Russian. So it is easy for us to presume that he read and internalised Shelley's dramatic poem. He became a member of the Romanian Academy in 1963 and was awarded the Prize of the Romanian Writers' Union in 1977. Some Romanian critics deemed Alexandru Philippide to be a Neoromantic writer with poetic streaks bordering on Symbolism.

Philippide claims that the subjection of emotion can give rise to wilful impressionability as a poetic principle drawing upon an array of poets from Novalis to Valery. The poet believes in the infinite power of the metaphor which reveals the imaginative mechanism and "which brings about the poetic state of mind through its suggestive indeterminacy" as characterised by the Romanian critic, Tudor Vianu (1960, p. 36).

Alexandru Philippide's poem *The Banishment of Prometheus* written in 1922 (from *Barren Gold*) unfolds as a poignant monologue against an ancient Greek background. Philippide's poem follows a similar format to Shelley's work but it is much shorter than Shelley's. Prometheus, the resourceful and undaunted hero, the son of Tethys and Iapetus stands chained in shackles to Mount Elbrus in the Caucasus Mountains and bemoans his cruel destiny of a generous divinity unjustly tarnished and spurned by those for whom he was actually their first benefactor. Alexandru Philippide tries to uncover new meanings by recasting the myth of Prometheus into a 20th century mould.

Philippide picks up the narrative thread and recasts Prometheus into the image of a crucified figure that can be identified with a cosmic element doomed to an unflinching position betokening initial resignation. His attitude here stems from the ungratefulness of people wanting to stone him in order to wreaking revenge on him for they assume that it is Prometheus to blame for all Pandora's Box strings of evils.

This construal of Prometheus enables the author to weave an underground aesthetic underpinning in the guise of an **ars poetica**: like Prometheus, the poet is a solitary person destined to write perpetually like Sisyphus toiling hard never to be understood by his fellow human beings.

Alexandru Philippide provides the poetic discourse with stage directions showing forth a mob constantly breaking off Prometheus' actual monologue by their unworthy exclamations as if the rabble were even aware of their unworthy part they are playing as Zeus himself stays silent throughout.

Prometheus' anguished plight is made worse by his constant sway between two worlds and neither of them accepts him, being alien and hostile to him and unworthy of him. Demonstrating a tragic mind set, but a still bold one, Iapetus' son takes in the mob underneath him streaming from afar for whose destiny the sacrifice of his body has seemed a foregone conclusion.

Nailed into position under the scorching summer heat and the ruthless winter cold, Prometheus brazens out the fate of crucifixion with sublime aloofness in defiance of Zeus' wrath as the poet endows him with the attributes of love and generosity. Prometheus seems to be melting away into the "the old mountain, which groans" (Philippide, 1995, p. 22), as he gazes away into a distance held imprisoned by heavy "gold bars" (Philippide, 1995 p. 22), smarting direly during this martyrdom:

> I can hardly feel the vulture gnawing at me
> I can hardly feel that the gash runs deep
> My body is a crag bound to a crag (Philippide, 1995, p. 21).

The abysmal stony presence of the mountain shaken by gusty winds is shrouded by the mob's furious threats, who, once very needy, will come together here in order to stone their benefactor. It is exactly here that Philippide parts ways with the Greek tradition, availing himself of the margin as if allowed by Hesiod and Aeschylus. It is here that Philippide unbinds himself from the Greek authors' narrative plot and pulls off a **revisionary ratio** feat as Bloom would call it a **tessera**.

The Romanian poet shapes a different destiny for Prometheus, which does not only betoken comfortable resignation as it was initially shown, but also perpetual struggle. Thus Philippide adds a completion and an antithesis exactly as Bloom would call this process of casting off this essential **anxiety of influence**.

Prometheus abiding under the sway of ruthless *moira* seems to declare that he taught mankind because he loved it. The crowd's attitudes make the fiery dormant powers well up in the hero's soul, which pent-up for so long boil over into a majestic gesture. The one who was initially meant to be sacrificed rises against his doomed condition and consequently grabs the eagle and "throttles it as if it were a pigeon" and shatters the shackles as now it is only the memory of the fire brought to mankind that ties him back to humanity. Shelley's Prometheus awaits the intervention of Hercules even if this is glossed over in few lines.

Prometheus is poignantly aware of the fact that he held Zeus in contempt for the sake of petty humans who fail to show themselves worthy of the beauty of sublime gestures and though a demi-god himself, he took upon himself the doom only to save those who now scorn him (Manolescu et al, 1972, pp. 89-90).

His uplifting gesture of freeing himself foreshadows the rebirth of another, more humane God who is able to topple the old order and give rise to a new one:

> Woe, cry, I was waiting for you!
> Throb, you blood!
> You, life, shudder around in me! Crumble
> In me again, you, alarm blare
> Woe, my heart in the chest squeezes you
> Tight like a fist! (Philippide, 1995, p. 23).

The hidden invocation to the divinity makes for a heightened aesthetic effect meaning to show that heretofore ruthless Zeus, if twinned with the one he has crucified, may save mankind through displaying kindness and solidarity towards the damned ones, including Prometheus. All of a sudden it dawns upon Prometheus that his gesture is useless for mankind, which does not deserve him ("Bleat, ye, herd! / You have enough time to cry afterwards"), (Philippide, 1995, p. 24) and that he stands alone in this. With his humane and kind nature topped by an astute and cautious mind (as the Greek etymology says) Prometheus sees through the beauty of a relationship with a co-operative god only for the world to become a better one: "Break your body like a loaf in two / And toss it to mankind, as they are hungry" (Philippide, 1995, p. 23)

Prometheus believes that being locked in infinity and immortality together with Zeus would seem to him easier to bear: "Give me thy hand, Zeus! Alone thou art like me, / In thy waste and ragged heaven [...] Thou art alone, Zeus! Alone am I, too" (Philippide, 1995, p. 24).

Prometheus gesture reaching out for Zeus' brotherhood falls flat. Zeus keeps silent and passes it by. Iapetus' son struggles with the tragic dilemma of any misunderstood artist and takes refuge in the pure domain of ideas.

Prometheus' anguished plight is made worse by his constant sway between two worlds and neither of them accepts him, being alien and hostile to him and unworthy of him. If the traditional plot has Heracles free Prometheus and look on as Prometheus attends to his wounds, Al. Philippide notches up another departure from the tradition, another feat of **tessera** by having Prometheus show his real mettle and reveal his moral stamina and his outright boldness in standing up against ignorance and malice.

Iapetus' son turns then to the unworthy rabble and looks down on them implying that he no longer recognises them, for whom he incurred the wrath of Zeus and whose tarnished gesture made his sacrifice seem in vain:

And ye, famished beasts, step back!
Alms ye are seeking?... This is so: it behooves
You to have something from me, too.
(he tosses the throttled eagle to them)
Take it away! It is still fresh
It is plump and fat with immortality.
Just stand on your all fours and dig in.
You, mankind! (Philippide, 1995, p. 26).

These words seethe with anger and bespeak a great deal of disappointment making for a gaping distance between the rabble and their saviour. Prometheus hurls words of abuse at Zeus calling him sundry names: "mad god" (Philippide, 1995, p. 24), "roguish god" (Philippide, 1995, p. 25), "thief of fate" (Philippide, 1995, p. 26) and "robber of eternities" (Philippide, 1995, p. 26), making Zeus come across as a character that is uselessly scorned within the borderless world as he tries to thwart the rebellious destiny of uproarious Prometheus by enchaining him to a mountain rock.

Having said this, Prometheus pursues his journey heavenwards as an unflinching titanic creator that removes suffering at the expense of his own ailment setting out to give rise to new worlds with sublime qualities:

I am going back to immortality
To seek another mankind instead of this one;
To give it the consuming fire, too;
And shackled by new chains,
To wait for another heaven to crumble,
To be barked at by another mankind (Philippide, 1995, p. 27)

Unhappy to flaunt his pride of struggling that branded him as an outcast Prometheus heads for his exile into heavens heeding the call of the Absolute that will engulf him for good and thus he parts with his surrounding world: "and thus from banishment to banishment / I am to carry my awkward laughter around Chaos" (Philippide, 1995, p. 27).

> Far from being a defeated titan, Prometheus is the clear-headed but not indifferent Demiourgos, in whom one has discovered the ambitious seed of creation, who has become the embodiment of rebellion for the sake of freedom, continuously betrayed throughout the long historical experience of mankind (Vianu, 1960, pp. 48-49).

Like the poet in love with the Sun, Prometheus seeks to head for the Sun to win back his immortality. Iapetus' son chooses to dive into a whirlwind of light nourishing the hope that thereby he will reach the sacred dimension for which he was made as he carries aloft the spirit of outstanding nobility worthy of a Greek tragedy hero:

And now, in a seething whirlwind,
Like in a volcano let the light in me well up!
Flight, oh, to Heaven! Oh, wind, wings! To fly with!
So that I feel blind boundlessness rise in me...
Let the whirl of the swirling Sun

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Forever engulf me! (Philippide, 1995, p. 27).

Standing aloof from the mob's perception of him, the hero looks on only to understand that the mob's cries are meant for the Almighty whose fall has just become foreseeable:
"Go ahead and shout!... In your desperation lies only my cry's victory, which is constantly soaring, From heaven to heaven! From Almighty God to Almighty God!" (Philippide, 1995, p. 27).

"The void" that swallows the hero comes over to the crowd in all its terrible aspect and the too small world of the Earth is doomed to fail to find its redemption. Sublime Prometheus vanishes into the thin air of the *kosmos*, showing forth once again the idea of perpetual commitment and unconditional sacrifice.

6. Conclusions

Both authors give rise to a complex Prometheus character that contains multitudes. Both authors shape Prometheus as a figure that encapsulates the Western core of values, be they positive or negative. Sagar (2012, pp. 1-2) says that:

> The Prometheus myth lays the ground plan of what is most central in all subsequent Western history and literature. Prometheus himself subsumes God and Lucifer, Adam and Christ.(…) He seems to represent that which is indestructible in the human spirit - man's aspiration to raise himself above the condition of the brutes and become independent of both nature and the gods. If that spirit is an absolute, then it is also, for the Greeks, a *theos*, a god. Equally, he can be seen as an eternal image of the imperfection of man's nature, his greed, pride, violence, materialism, his blinkered intelligence.

We agree with Sagar (2012, p. 2) that Prometheus gift of fire bestowed upon mankind simultaneously contains the divine creative and destructive energy of the universe. This formidable energy makes man not only an empowered being, but also a vulnerable one of whom one can doubt that he is ever able to wield this power in safety. Man becomes something like Goethe's *Zauberlehrling* (the Sorcerer's Apprentice), a fragile being up against a terrible power to control.

Prometheus actually re-enacts the perpetration of original sin for man's sake. It can be likened to the biblical theft of forbidden knowledge. We also agree with Sagar when he claims that the purpose of this theft and the punishment meted out by Zeus to Prometheus are meant to sunder man from nature and from God and to egg man on to bask in the glaring light of *hubris*. This also emboldens man's Faustian spirit making man yearn to turn into his own divinity, or to recast the divinity according to his own design (Grayling, 2009, p. 64).

If Shelley's Prometheus is the political "type of the highest perfection of moral and intellectual nature, impelled by the purest and the truest motives to the best and noblest ends" (Dougherty, 2006, p. 98), Philippide's Prometheus is the disenchanted, bitter hero from a sophisticated *ars poetica*, who seeks another humanity on whom to lavish his love and selfless goodwill gestures. The poem also becomes a symbol of the artist living alone not understood by his fellow beings.

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WHY POLITICIZE THE CULTURAL GAME? (EMIL) CIORAN'S ETHOS: MYSTICISM, RELIGION AND ETHNIC PHILOSOPHY

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Abstract

The present research aims at understanding some of Emil Cioran's spiritual positions in several of his writings. The tools of analysis are the philosophical and cultural approaches, but also elements of positivist determinism, such as climate, disease, etc. The oeuvres studied belong to different periods of creation. The working hypothesis is that the essayist remained a lifelong thinker oscillating between the extreme right and the extreme left, as well as a stubborn and metaphysically rejected progressive thinker, but always obsessed with metaphysics and the transcendent. Among the commonplaces of Cioran's artistic and geopolitical critique of reality and the real are narcissism, humor, victimhood and diatribe. His work is underpinned by intuition and Utopian projection and much less by logic. Cioran becomes dangerous if treated as a programmatic philosopher, but otherwise he is a spectacular source of artistic and literary-philosophical insights; an experimental essayist, dangerous as an influencer. The fate of his thinking has been heavily marked by the ideologies of his interpreters.

Keywords: Emil Cioran; mysticism; hermeneutics; left-wing; right-wing.

> "la crítica más reciente ha desestabilizado el Yo en el que el autobiógrafo ingenuamente confía, al exponer que no es sino una ficción del lenguaje. El lenguaje es, entonces, el significante que crea el Yo que significa, y éste está tan ausente que sólo puede adivinarse, como un fantasma, entre las líneas que componen el texto"[1] (Durán Giménez-Ríco, 1993, p. 75).

Introduction

Making use of methods specific to hermeneutics and cultural-historical analysis, this article takes aim at debunking a few preconceptions that beset the interpretation of Cioran's oeuvre. No doubt there are several stages in Cioran's thinking and writing, but the most important are two: the philosophy of history and culture permeated by the Nietzschean energy of his youth, then the stage of his nihilist-melancholy exile, as detached as possible from the applied analysis of his present-day problems. In the same manner his *écriture*/ writing evolved, as it is well known, but the argument that the French language imposed a different rhythm and stylistics on him is naive. This naivety is due to the crediting of various cultural considerations issued by the essayist even though he never claimed to be a scientific authority, nor have scholars of his work used it as a source of irrefutable arguments, i.e. examples of logic and verified information. However, even those who have taken some of Cioran's statements as sound arguments have not

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[1] 'The more recent criticism has destabilized the I in which the autobiographer naively trusts, by exposing that it is nothing but a fiction of language. Language, then, is the signifier that creates the I that signifies, and this self is so absent that it can only be guessed at, like a ghost, between the lines that make up the text' (my translation).

been shy about regarding many of his other statements as aberrant speculations and many of his other statements merely likeable. Therefore, this article analyzes the work of various creative phases of the essayist and focuses on the relation to concepts and theories such as freedom, individuation, democracy, religion, politics and ideology, etc. Ciprian Vălcan emphasizes the importance of identity for Cioran, who shows horror of non-differentiation and the tyranny of the One (Vălcan, 2008, p. 168). What matters is mainly the semantic analysis and much less the formal one. Of particular interest are Cioran's considerations of Christianity-Buddhism-paganism and of political and moral values. The fundamental intention of the demonstration is to configure a portrait of a thinker-aesthete who often plays dangerously, but no more, and who builds a persona based on fickleness, on scintillating, paradoxical and stupefying formulations, on abysmal moods and cultural demonism. Cioran is a great actor, able to detach himself from various scriptural roles in his private life. An enfant terrible who has the merit of not having put himself at the service of ideologies and political and cultural correctness except sequentially and secondarily.

The times in which Cioran evolved were some of the worst in human history. Not that this history has ever been too humane...From this point of view, the essayist's views should not be treated with virulence, especially since he was not involved in any atrocity, nor did his message clearly advocate the commission of any crime. It is true, however, that his stances were in favor of the extreme right, but subsequently he not only revoked them, but condemned them himself. What is odd is that he did not firmly condemn the crimes of the far left, which were appalling and incomparably more numerous. Cioran's fear of being ostracized in the West under the mirage of leftist ideology considerably tempered his vituperative tone in his youth on political issues. He continued to be caustic in non-dangerous areas: his non-contemporary culture, religion and mysticism. This concealment also affected his philosophy, which became often nihilistic and sarcastic, if not melancholic and emphatically stylistic. As Ștefan Bolea observes, much of it is a philosophical anti-humanism disseminated by a "not-man", which would be "an alternative to Nietzsche's controversial notion of the *Übermensch*" (Bolea, 2019, p. 80). One might as well consider Dostoevsky's *underground man*. This not-man would be linked to Romantic and post-romantic literature and would manifest himself as anti-humanist. In other words, and in his own words, in order not to be blamed for the beliefs of his youth, the Romanian exile became a "home atténué", as he sarcastically called his compatriots in the newspaper *Vremea* ("Țara oamenilor atenuați" ["Country of the softened men"], 24 September 1933, my translation). The inter-war aggressive thinker became a bookish and cautious protester later on.

From the philosophy of excess (see Nicolae Țurcanu, *Cioran sau Excesul ca Filosofie* [Cioran or excess as philosophy], Limes Publishing House, Cluj, 2008), the essayist moved on to the pendulum of paradox. By hiding in paradox he has not become less proud. However, his pride remained original, rebellious-demonic-romantic, but also recognizing the elementary forms of religious life, in the sociological tradition of Émile Durkheim.

After all, Cioran's anti-humanism is authentic only insofar as it struggles with the anthropology of man as *imago Dei*. Otherwise, he shares a pro-humanism that was initially technological and imperialist, and later a-historical and intellectualist. In both cases, Cioran's metaphysics remains non-foundational (in line with the critique of metaphysics and onthotheology undertaken by Heidegger (in Horan, 2014, p. 96). Naturally, under these conditions, he will move towards the Heideggerian nothingness, towards the impersonal Buddhist Nirvana (as it was redesigned after the first 1000 years of Buddhism) and towards melancholy and loneliness (rather declared than lived).

As has been said, Cioran is saved from the dangers of mischief and ridicule by humor and self-irony, and by an attachment to the fragment at the expense of system philosophy; the

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fragment intensified by metaphors *in praesentia* and *in absentia* (Garoiu, 2021, p. 12) and aiming at the oxymoronic paradox. From here, the essayist plunges into buffoonery and aphorism, his cynicism and despair not withstanding discursiveness.

The consistency of Cioran's exile is shown by the fact that he not only challenged the God of religions, but any fetish, any deification. For one thing, he derided cultural arrogance, as well as any kind of arrogance (Nica, 2016, p. 122). That is why it is saddening that almost a century after the Nietzschean excesses of the young Cioran they continue to be the favorite subject of massive doctoral theses. Such is *De Emil Cioran a Cioran, Análisis de un Discurso Político* [From Emil Cioran to Cioran, analysis of a political speech] by Corina Nicoleta Tulbure (2015), which takes the young essayist's nationalist-legionary adherence very seriously, without sufficiently documenting all the sources of the evil of that period. But the contribution is significant for highlighting the extremist leftist's hardening against opponents, as well as justifying the fearful seclusion of the exiled Cioran, the former Emil Cioran, etc.

1. The anti-Spanish Spaniard, the anti-Romanian Romanian, the melancholic vampire

The non-philosopher has constantly remained the genre that always contradicts himself or adopts perfectly opposite positions, sometimes even in the same work. That's why it is hard to make verdicts on his political or cultural positions. Cioran remains a trickster with many faces and capable of playing various roles. This does not mean that he was a mere prankster, but that his essence was hybrid and unstable to some extent. For example, in *Cuaderno de Talamanca* he relates how much he loves Spain and how little of a Spaniard he is himself.

Manuel Arranz, the translator of the *Cuaderno* considers in the *Foreword* that 'Cioran had a Spanish character, a Spanish temperament'[2] (Cioran, 2002, p. 3, my translation). From the context it could be inferred that he was an impulsive man, tormented by mystical outbursts, but also rigorous. A tragedian. But was 'Cioran a nihilistic mystic?'[3] (Cioran, 2002, p. 5, my translation) A user of mystical data for anti-mystical purposes? However, can a mystic be detached from love? 'No one has spoken more contemptuously of love than Cioran'[4] (Cioran, 2002, p. 6, my translation). Obviously, this is a gross overstatement. However, not even such a fact would make him a Christian or Hindu ascetic, but a hedonist of intellectual activity who also belongs to the realm of the erotic. For an erotic temperament he was, proof of the passion poured into defending or contesting various points of view.

On the other hand, Cioran describes himself as a nocturnal being with vampire-romantic touches, so a Nordic Gothic with a dark disposition: 'I cannot stand the sun'[5], 'Everyone is brown, but I will remain white, pale'[6] (Cioran, 2002, p. 10, my translation). However, his hyperborean mindset is only a simulation, knowing that he was a rheumatic being. Other aspects bring him closer to the vampire demon: 'I have in common with the Devil the bad mood, eternal foundation of anxiety. Like him, I am bilious by divine decree'[7] (Cioran, 2002, p. 13, my translation). Moreover, a constant in his perceptive gaze is the lack of receptivity to moral and scenic beauty, be it urban, with minor exceptions. Happiness is plebeian and unhappiness has no determined origin. The insomniac and nocturnal essayist searches everywhere for nostalgia and melancholy. For example, 'In Europe, one can only find so much daily nostalgia in Hungary'[8]

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[2] Original text: "Cioran tenía un carácter español, un temperamento español".

[3] Original text: "¿Cioran un místico nihilista?"

[4] Original text: "nadie ha hablado con mas desprecio del amor que Cioran".

[5] Original text: "yo no puedo soportar el sol".

[6] Original text: "Todo el mundo está moreno, pero yo seguiré blanco, pálido".

[7] Original text: "Tengo en común con el Diablo el mal humor, eterno fundamento de la ansiedad. Como él, soy bilioso por decreto divino".

[8] Original text: "En Europa, ya sólo se puede encontrar tanta nostalgia cotidiana en Hungría".

(Cioran, 2002, p. 20, my translation). Spain was once an aristocratic country, oblivious to material success and excessive regulation, but in the meantime, it had aligned itself with consumerist civilization. So, the excessive imperialist of his youth has turned into a nocturnal melancholic irritated by the bustle of the day and the vigor of tanned bodies. Finally, the essayist was a library creature, fragile but haunted by dreams of domination and demolition.

2. In search of the authentic Cioran

But not even a library creature was he to the end, for the creator of style was irritated by the philosophy of language and linguistics: "Meditate on anything except language"[9] (Cioran, 2002, p. 21). Systematization and abstractions do not agree with his choleric and skeptical-melancholic nature. He remains voluptuously improvisational and fragmentary, so rather a frequenter of a whimsical bibliography free of academic rigidity.

Dismayed by the doctrinal instability of Cioran's work, many researchers have focused on its stylistics, in the hope of being able to base a perfectly methodological research. Costică Brădădățan considers in *The Philosopher of Failure: Emil Cioran's Heights of Despair* that the common thread of Cioran's work, so full of contradictions, would be a stylistic, thematic and substantial one and which focuses on failure and non-integration (Brădădățan, 2002, p. 1). So he is counting on identifying some constants in this massive and comprehensive work, which shows him to be an optimistic researcher.

Other researchers have tried a less refined infiltration, namely on the pathological pathway. Alexandru Sereș reviewed Marta Petreu's book, *Despre Bolile Filosofilor. Cioran* [On the diseases of philosophers Cioran], 2008. Here he mocked the ease of such an all-explanatory approach and showed how skillfully Cioran played the role of the fancied sick man: "To the patient Cioran would be invented all the illnesses, whether real or simply imagined, of which he complained to friends and family in his letters, which he mentions in his writings, especially in his *Notebooks*: 'sore throat, sinusitis, gastritis, hypertension, prostatic hypertrophy, neurasthenia, depression, rheumatism'[10] (Sereș, 2009, p. 1, my translation). Cioran would have begun to write, and therefore to express himself culturally, as a result of his chronic insomnia. In this way, 'he knew how to make the most of his discomfort, proving himself to be a genius sufferer'[11] (Sereș, 2009, p. 2, my translation). Consequently, he seemed a hypochondriac with flashes of genius. But genius has no materialistic essence; one doesn't become brilliant if one suffers from prostatic hyperplasia.

3. No mercy between admiration and objection

Returning to Cioran's capricious nature, it is interesting to study how he exercises his admiration in *Exerciții de Admirație. Eseuri și Portrete* [Exercises in admiration. Essays and portraits]*, 1986*, especially in the chapter *Joseph de Maistre. Eseu asupra Gândirii Reacționare* [Joseph de Maistre. Essay on reactionary thought]. Cioran is a relentless label maker, i.e. a producer of verdicts without clear evidence. Any characterization he undertakes begins with a canon of epithets and conclusions almost without premises. For example, in the case of Joseph de Maistre this one would be imbued with 'the dogmatic vehemence of his contempt' (Cioran, 2012, p. 26), a monster (Cioran, 2012, p. 26) because he was against the Jansenists, the French Revolution, Protestantism, the Encyclopedia, but praised the

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[9] Original text: "Meditar sobre cualquier cosa, excepto sobre el lenguaje".

[10] Original text: "Pacientului Cioran îi sunt inventariate toate bolile, reale, sau doar închipuite, de care se plânge prietenilor și rudelor în scrisorile sale, pe care le amintește în scrierile sale, îndeosebi în *Caiete*: dureri de gât, sinuzită, gastrită, hipertensiune, hipertrofia prostatei, neurastenie, depresie, reumatism".

[11] Original text: "a știut să profite la maxim de beteșugurile sale, dovedindu-se un bolnav de geniu".

incorruptibility and erudition of the tribunals of the Inquisition (Cioran, 2012, p. 27, my translation).

Speaking of Cioran's attachments and disavowals, we are implicitly talking about the Generation of '27. 1927 was the year in which Mircea Eliade's *Itinerar Spiritual* [Spiritual Itinerary] appeared, wherein a versatile but homogeneous theme is already taking shape: "trăirismul" (a sort of ethnic existentialism, from "trai">*living*), which means also authenticism, a cult of self-expression as the supreme ethno-creative exuberance, a hunger for experiences together with the paroxysmal affirmation of personality and the flagellant activism of an `awakening` of barbaric-Levantine laziness, a kind of "ardelenism", i.e. a Transylvanian ethos *sui generis*. At the same time, the obsession with failure manifests itself. Without the slightest doubt, that generation was obsessed with spirituality. This *concordia discors*, constantly and baroquely doubled by *discordia concors,* reinforces the assertion that the whole generation was nobly doomed.

Cioran is irritated by Maistre's admiration for the Constitution, sovereignty, hereditary monarchy, papacy and "any authority consolidated by tradition" (Cioran, 2012, p. 33). This is a point of view worthy of a social anarchist. Similarly, he does not accept the argument that war could be part of a divine plan. After all, a constant in his mentality is the cultural flirtation with a metaphysics to which he does not seem to adhere. The impression is that he is much more tolerant of imperialist dictatorship than of the ontological hierarchy.

The essayist regards Maistre as a person haunted by a God of armies, hence his approach to Spanish religious art: the only Christ who might have suited him is the figure of Spanish sculpture, sanguinolent, disfigured, convulsive, and pleased to the point of delirium by His crucifixion." (Cioran, 2012, pp. 34-35). A Christ à la Mel Gibson, but performing a narcissistic performance. The delight in torture performed by Christians will remain a leitmotif in the essayist's thinking. Moreover, Cioran constantly refers to the spatial and ethnic matrix. Joseph de Maistre would have recovered divine privileges after the century of deist "philosophy" *(*Cioran, 2012, p. 35) that had abstracted and exiled the Creator, but the recovery would have been in the sense of a tyrannical Yahweh, a "terrible" God. There follows another Freudian generalization: "man loves fear to the point of frenzy" (Cioran, 2012, p. 35). Any generalization begets other possible generalizations, for example that people love the dictatorship of force, because it seems to provide security for the everyday.

4. Dooming Gnosticism and Plotinus´ theory of emanation

Concerned with the essence and nature of evil, Cioran rushes to Gnostic conclusions: "Good and Evil principles coexist and mingle in God" (Cioran, 2012, p. 35), or "The notion of God's culpability is not a gratuitous one, but necessary and perfectly compatible with the notion of His omnipotence" (Cioran, 2012, p. 36). The next move is towards Nemesis, that ancient Greek goddess who in fact controlled Olympus: "God could not avoid the influence of Evil" (Cioran, 2012, p. 36). Logic does not particularly concern him, but rather blunt, pseudo-aristocratic philosophies. Thus, evil is "the secret of our dynamism" without which "we should vegetate in that monotonous perfection of the Good which, according to Genesis, vexed Being itself." (Cioran, 2012, p. 36). A vision of a sedentary and debilitating paradise, not far from that of popular origin in the short story *Ivan Turbincă w*ritten by Ion Creangă. On the one hand, God is responsible for the existence of evil in the world; on the other hand, evil is the fuel that makes us evolve in a Bergsonian way towards the fullness of our being. In other words, God did us good against his perverse will etc.

Maistre will coin the absolutely "eminently untenable theory of the moral origin of diseases. ´If there were no moral evil on earth, there would be no physical evil´, ´...all pain is a punishment for a present or original crime´" (Cioran, 2012, p. 37). Cioran neither admits

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that spirit could influence matter, nor does he accept the existence of sin and the inheritance of its effects (Cioran, 2012, p. 37). Suffering, moreover, appears to him as senseless sadism, which was natural in a hypochondriac. The pedagogy of the soul seems to him a painful absurdity.

Cioran does not conceive that civilization could predate history, in a *sui generis* prehistory. Maistre's assertion that "the state of civilization and of knowledge in a certain sense is the natural and primitive state of man," annoys him (Cioran, 2012, p. 39). Maistre, then, takes up Jean Jacques Rousseau's romantic vision of *le bon sauvage* in a Christian sense: a lost state of paradise. Cioran agrees that the meaning of history is a descending one but does not admit an initial golden age later diluted in inferior metals. For the mature Cioran there were only mini-golden ages interspersed in the desolate historical continuum.

The issue of power in Cioran is inextricably linked to the religious one. For him, original sin, present in most of the major religions, is merely a justification for a dubious system of domination. The Doctrine of the Fall would seduce only reactionaries, insensitive to "revolutionary optimism" (Cioran, 2012, p. 40). In this era, the thinker is dressed up as a progressive activist, confident in the upward march of history. The reactionary is "conservative who has dropped the mask" (Cioran, 2012, p. 40). The conservative would be the bestial hypostasis of the reactionary. Cioran is seduced by the splendor of mankind's destiny and accuses the skeptics of "aggressive lucidity" (Cioran, 2012, p. 42). Better to adhere to the generous naivety of revolutionary thought, the tangent touching on Friedrich Schiller's distinction between naive and sentimental poetry. *Becoming* must be sustained by all means, in a vein of Bergsonian optimism and a Berdiaevian mysticism. Exactly the opposite pole of this vision will reach Cioran in his maturity.

But Cioran goes beyond the utopian limitations of the revolutionaries and shows an interest in eternity. His meta-scientific post-utopianism does not condemn Marxism, for the desire for renewal at all costs is common to both, but it surpasses it.

At the same time, Cioran is irritated by Maistre's opinion that the transfer of authority to the mob is disastrous and confirms that a leftist could never have uttered such a thing, only a rightist (Cioran, 2012, p. 42). Behold Cioran as a sympathizer of the people and an opponent of the elitists! His statements are even melodramatic: "The leftist's despair is to do battle in the name of principles that forbid him cynicism" (Cioran, 2012, p. 43). It is therefore admitted that the far left is animated by cynicism.

5. The far right touches the far left on large surfaces

The essayist's first three books also meant inflamed political, historical and cultural statements. Later, this clarity coupled with radicalism was only found with regard to Christianity and certain people or ideas in the past. So Cioran distanced himself as much as possible from the area of politics and the cultural hierarchies of his time.

Transfiguration de la Roumanie [The transfiguration of Romania], begins with a warning from the editor, although the book was published so many years after its initial appearance (2009, 1936), to a public 'mature enough and used to debating ideas'[12] (Cioran 2009, p. 7, my translation). The need for justifications was still felt; one of them being that Cioran himself would have wanted this risky youthful work published towards the end of his life (Cioran, 2009, p. 7). The publisher of Éditions de L Herne, repeatedly and timorously states that he does not agree with the ideas expressed in this book. This disclaimer is followed

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[12] Original text: "sufisamment majeur et habitue au debat d`idees."

by a *Foreword* in which Constantin Tacou also justifies the publication of the "difficult" book belonging to a 'young age folly'[13] (Cioran, 2009, p. 10, my translation).

Sixty years after the publication of Cioran's third book of essays it is mentioned that this was only a stage in Cioran's thought. Already in the 1991 edition of the book, published in Bucharest, Cioran had suppressed Chapter IV, *Collectivisme National* [National collectivism], which showed that immediately after the anti-communist Revolution in Romania for the new proto-capitalist regime the essayist remained *persona non-grata* (Cioran, 2009, p. 10).

In the *Preface*, Marta Petreu points out how the thinker had initially rejected any political adherence with contempt, preoccupied as he was with Oswald Spengler's considerations on the "end of culture" and civilization in *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* [The Decline of the West] (Cioran, 2009, pp. 13-14). The researcher highlights the focus of this unique book of systematic critique of the Romanian ethos that would have neither style nor rhythm, or in other words, the well-known inferiority complex of minor cultures (Cioran, 2009, p. 15).

A scholarship in Berlin in 1933 was enough to turn him into a follower of the Hitler-type dictatorship: elitist, ethnicist, activist (Cioran, 2009, pp. 15-16). He even comes to question the formative role of the library for young people in this interwar period, although he will remain a lifelong book lover, even if mainly a cultural critic. Caught up in the general hysteria caused above all by the danger of Soviet communism - at its origins a Western torpedo - , the young scholar goes into an irrational frenzy (Cioran, 2009, p. 16).

Between 1930 and 1933, Cioran practiced a chaotic and contradictory philosophy of culture and history under the influence of several incongruous thinkers and theorists. A major influence is the already mentioned Spengler's *Der Untergang des Abendlandes*, and due to this he makes some hazardous statements (Cioran, 2009, p. 14). Thus, Romanians would not have an "original style", although there are countless styles in popular dress, in decorations, and a Romanian architectural style. The history of the Romanians would not have 'a sufficiently fast pace'[14] (Cioran, 2009, p. 14, my translation), i.e. it had not been centered on wars of conquest and on industrial exploits.

Another source from this period is Dumitru Drăghicescu's book, *Din Psihologia Poporului Român* [The psychology of the Romanian people] (1907), which states that Romanian identity is a borrowed identity (Cioran, 2009, p. 19). The young Cioran is a great believer in civilizational modernity, with no regard for cultural depths and differences. Some other thinkers of the time also shared these ideas, and they seem to constitute a cultural prototype which constantly emerges in the technologically and administratively unsynchronized civilizations with the great powers (cf. G. Ibrăileanu, *Spiritul Critic în Cultura Românească* [The critical spirit in Romanian culture], 1909, Ștefan Zeletin, *Burghezia Română: Originea şi Rolul ei Istoric* [The Romanian bourgeoisie: Its origin and historical role], 1925, and E. Lovinescu, *Istoria Civilizaţiei Române Moderne* [The history of modern Romanian civilization], I-III, 1924-1926). All these predecessors use leftist ideas in their demonstrations (Cioran, 2009, p. 20).

Starting with 1932, Cioran began praising the dictatorship in the Bucharest weekly *Vremea* (Cioran, 2009, p. 16). This is whence the accusations of extreme right stance will issue. But he, the ultimate philosopher of contradictions, can just as well be assimilated to the extreme left. Thus, he combats the inner life in favor of political action, and politics seems to

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[13] Original text: "folie de jeunesse".
[14] Original text: "un ritm îndeajuns de trepidant".

him superior to science ("La conscience politique des etudiants", *Vremea*, no. 463, 15 Nov. 1936 (in *The transfiguration of Romania*, *Preface*, p. 17).

As with any extreme, Cioran's extremist statements are not based on demonstration and logic, but on irrationality and often on offense: 'To be Romanian means to have your blood mixed with a lot of water' (my translation)[15], *Vremea*, no. 306, 24 September, 1933, "Le pays des hommes atténués" (Cioran, 2009, p. 21).

In the case of *Pe Culmile Disperării* [On the heights of despair] (1934), his first book, this would be 'a black jubilation, a negative ecstasy'[16] (Dan C. Mihăilescu in *Revelațiile Durerii* [The revelations of pain], 1990, p. 16, my translation), written in 'the tradition of the Romantic ego, of the ill-loved who passed through Werther, Rousseau, Sénancour, steeped in Silezius and Bóhme, of the Nervalian black sun, of the Baudelairean "heautontimoroumenos", of the absinthe of a "saison en enfer", relying heavily on the Unamunian tragical feeling and the black cloak of Eminescu´s *Ode*'[17] (Mihăilescu, 1990, p. 17, my translation). Aside from the erudite-snobbish enumeration, interesting aspects could be singled out.

The critic blames the excesses of leading intellectuals on the turbulent era. Of Cioran he says that he is 'an Eminescian Dan-Dionis, fallen from God after the terrible question. His demonism, his blasphemies become twisted psalms'[18] (Mihăilescu, 1990, p. 20, my translation). So, the essayist would be haunted by pandemoniac *hubris*, but only in relation to a god who actually humiliates him. The Lautréamont-style ecstasy is imbued with sensory drunkenness of the Carmelite type and consequently a kind of German mysticism results (Mihăilescu, 1990, p. 20). Cioran is acutely sensorial, evidence of his many sufferings, and often his outbursts of rage against the superhuman self-containment of ascetics betray a possible envy.

Cioran did not enter generational journalism until 1932, after 'the stage of pure spirituality had been consumed'[19] (Mihăilescu, 1990, p. 22, my translation). At the same time, Dan C. Mihăilescu mentions 'the devastating meaning of Cioran´s messianism in the fourth decade'[20] (Mihăilescu, 1990, p. 22, my translation), without specifying the precise meaning of this "messianism". That Cioran was exasperated by the invasion of rigid professorship and parvenus in society denotes, after all, only moral purity and social naivety. As we know, he was attacking the peaks, not the rank and file. His time-bound admiration for the regimes of Hitler and Mussolini had a mystical motivation, a temporal and space-bound mysticism in order to create the best possible Leibnizian world.

6. Mysticism and politics

Commenting on the book *Tears and Saints* [Lacrimi și sfinți], 1937, republished by The University of Chicago Press in 1995, Ilinca Zarifopol-Johnston, the translator and author of the *Foreword*, takes in this assumption about the seclusion and intellectual asceticism of the essayist: "Like his saints, Cioran is now wholly an outsider" (Cioran, 1995, p. VI). But looking at the books he published as an essayist, his assiduous correspondence with academics, journalists and writers, the prizes he refused, we realize that this is another of his

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[15] Original text : "Être roumain signifie avoir le sang coupé de beaucoup d´eau".
[16] Original text: "o jubilație neagră, extaz negativ".
[17] Original text: "tradiția eului romantic, a *mal-aimé*-ilor trecuți prin Werther, Rousseau, Sénancour, muiată în Silezius și Bóhme, a soarelui negru nervalian, a 'heautontimoroumenos'-ului baudelairian, a absintului dintr-o 'saison en enfer', mizând mult pe tragicul simțământului unamunian și pe mantia neagră a *Odei* eminesciene".
[18] Original text: "un Dan-Dionis eminescian, căzut din Dumnezeu după teribila întrebare. Demonia lui, blasfemiile devin psalmi întorși".
[19] Original text: "etapa purei spiritualități se consumase".
[20] Original text: "sensul devastator al mesianismului cioranian din deceniul patru".

many playful attitudes. Ilinca Zarifopol-Johnston sees him as a "modern-day hagiographer" (Cioran, 1995, p. VI), which is an optimistic statement. She even wonders in a completely materialist spirit (here we are in the heart of an oxymoron) why a young man who is a self-confessed hedonist and politically active would invest his time in studying the lives of these saints in order to become a "heavenly interloper" (Cioran, 1995, p. VI), the answer being already suggested in the question.

Resorting to Nietzsche, both Cioran and his translator agree that sanctity would spring from the will to power and has imperialist tendencies (Cioran, 1995, p. VII). Saints would therefore be hypocrites who rely on humility to gain fame. Through assimilation, saints become existentialists *à outrance*, but conserve their naivety. As usual, Cioran contradicts himself from one sentence to the next, and Ilinca Zarifopol-Johnston believes that he actually loves saints, a love with a "shade of decadent aestheticism in it" (Cioran, 1995, p. VIII). But she also admits that such "dandified love" (Cioran, 1995, p. IX) is accompanied by "a vigorous and virulent hatred" (Cioran, 1995, p. VIII) motivated by the courage in the face of suffering bequeathed to us by the saints.

An interesting observation by the translator is that Cioran pays special attention to mystics, those who have received the "gift of tears" (Cioran, 1995, p. IX). Moreover, she quotes with diligence from the *Dictionnaire de la Spiritualité* [Dictionary of spirituality] the three types of holy tears: *penitential tears* (with the role of purification), *tears of love* or *grace*, and *tears of compassion* (increasingly present with Francis of Assisi, early 13th century) "wept for the Passion of Christ" (Cioran, 1995, p. IX). She calls this feat "a metacritical discourse on mysticism" (Cioran, 1995, p. XIII) and notes that the thinker referred mostly to Western mysticism and possibly to Far Eastern mysticism, but not at all to Orthodox mysticism. Indeed, Cioran behaves religiously as if he had no spiritual connection with his original background, never mind that he was brought up in an Orthodox priest's family. Moreover, too few studies have examined the intellectual and spiritual formation of the child and adolescent Cioran.

This "discontinuous and iconoclastic philosophical discourse on mysticism" (Cioran, 1995, p. XIV) is actually anti-Christian, as the translator admits. An explanation of this approach is offered through the prism of the generation and of the journal *Criterion*, their organ of public expression. In fact, this generation was a spiritualist one, but heterogeneous, heteroclite. Hybridized and haunted by what Mircea Vulcănescu would identify as an "agonic spirituality", i.e. "lucidity, negation, and a tragic doubt that wants itself invalidated by the revelation of a new type of man, yet to be born" (in *Tears and Saints*, p. XV). From this, Ilinca Zarifopol-Johnston, is unable to draw any conclusions other than "mystical mania" and political populism, also with a pinch of identity crisis (Cioran, 1995, p. XVI). The question is how someone who is preoccupied with spirituality can traverse an identity crisis, while an individual who relies only on perishable materialistic coordinates is fully balanced and non-populist.

One justification for the book, offered by Ilinca Zarifopol-Johnston, would be that it is a riposte to "a rebirth of mysticism in political garb" (Cioran, 1995, p. XVIII). In other words, mysticism would be guilty twice over: once for daring to confront modernity, then because it can afford to send representatives into politics where only the most materialistic citizens should have access.

Tears and Saints is also linked to *Romania′s Transfiguration* (1937), which "borrows the rhetoric of mystical discourse and applies it to the realm of politics" (Cioran, 1995, p. XVII). And here the rhetoric of a discourse is confused with the discourse itself. The Nietzschean-Cioranesque idea, therefore of anti-mystical origin, that mystics are obsessed with the will to possess God can easily be transferred to politics. But this does not mean that

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Romania was in a spiritual crisis, rather that part of the intelligentsia was experiencing a false spiritual crisis, namely that there was a minor culture in Romania generated by a pathetic - for being non-imperialist - history, and that the same intelligentsia was proposing some funambulist-mystical strategies by grossly mixing the temporal with the timelessness.

When he trumpets the breaking of the minor historical destiny through blind rage towards a great culture, Cioran is indeed Machiavellian, as his translator labels him, constantly making use of Michel de Certeau's contrived assertion that nihilism and Machiavellianism often coincide (Cioran, 1995, p. XIX). But what ideas or ideologies can't be made to coincide at some points?

On the other hand, Ilinca Zarifopol-Johnston is right when she observes the application of mystical principles in the two early books, *Transfiguration of Romania* and *Tears and Saints*, in the same way as the extreme left-right movements of the time and not only did. The young Cioran is violently utopian, but holiness and mysticism are not utopian, they do not want to impose a way of life and thinking on humanity through violence and uniformity. Excesses made in the name of mysticism are distortions of the essence of mysticism, they are actually anti-mysticism.

In a much keener manner analyses the translator the style of the book than its content: the incendiary metaphors, the erudition of the text, the ambiguity, but also the colloquial-lyrical style (Cioran, 1995, p. XXI). Fortunate is also the integration of the thinker in the family of the existentialist outlaws who hang chaotically between history and eternity, as they were brought to the stage by Unamuno (the martyr Manuel Bueno), Dostoevsky and Genet's holy killer (Cioran, 1995, p. XXI).

The translator's conclusion is that Cioran presents himself as a failed mystic touched by "bravado, a romantic, Luciferian pose" (Cioran, 1995, p. XXII). To this picture is superimposed the spite that humans would be the buffoons of an absent God. So romanticism is on full display including the characteristic Wit - *Witz* (Cioran, 1995, p. XXII).

At the same time, Cioran imitates the mystical discourse, including its temperature, without being mystical himself. A stumbling block to mysticism is the disregard of suffering perceived as revenge and humiliation on the part of the divine.

In both the realm of holiness and mysticism Cioran must be taken *cum grano salis*, but he saves himself gloriously as a postmodern poet, that is, by offering pastiches and parodies, even if the underlying crisis is genuine. Still, Cioran remains a rational intellectual, with tragic outbursts, but never truly suicidal. A thinker-poet, he proposes fictions, not political and religious solutions.

On the other hand, Cioran being an *ec-static*, even if a nihilist (so not a programmatic nihilist, i.e. almost a Caragialin "nifilist"), has the openness to admire the joy of the saints, for example the frenzied drum dance of Saint Teresa when Jesus revealed himself to her as her fiancé (Cioran, 1995, p. 4). His admiration for Spanish mysticism stems from this passion, as he himself is a passionate writer. In this sense he also admires the passionate Islamic mysticism, accompanied by music and dance, of Djelal-eddin-Rumi and Chems-eddin (Cioran, 1995, p. 5). Not very surprising, his favorite music is not sacred music: "Music make me too bold in front of God. This is what distances me from the Oriental mystics" (Cioran, 1995, p. 6). Exacerbated passion distances Cioran from the divine; hence his admiration for Western mysticism, the one based on the cult of the heart (Cioran, 1995, p. 6). In fact, most often he speaks as a man educated in the Catholic spirit.

7. Cioran's pact with some branches of Buddhism

Salvation is the main theme of the Bible, which coincides with "redemption from slavery of sin" (Maier, 2014, p. 1). In fact, Judaism, Christianity and Islam are concerned

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with this salvation of humanity in a fallen world that has already lost its meaning. Only that Judaism suggests a collective salvation for the Israelites, Christianity sees salvation as possible through faith in Jesus Christ and communion with the Eucharistic body obtained through transubstantiation, and Islam sees salvation as a gift offered in exchange for total submission to Allah (Maier, 2014, p. 1). Some forms of Buddhism add to the "techniques of salvation the steps of reincarnation.

My aim is not to discuss the similarities and differences between the various soteriological procedures, but to record what salvation would consist of in terms of identity in Buddhism.

According to the *Pāli Buddhist* scriptures, the Four Noble Truths are the first teachings preached by Gautama Buddha after he attained enlightenment. Their aim is liberation from suffering, which is what Cioran wanted. Thus, 1. life is mainly suffering or dissatisfaction (*Dukkha*), 2. the root of this suffering (*Sanndaya*) is desire or craving, 3. the cessation (*Nirodha*) of suffering is possible by renouncing desire, 4. the path (*Magga*) to freedom from suffering and the cycle of reincarnation is the practice of the Buddhist religion, which is called the Noble Eightfold Path, and the less noble one, 5. suffering is evil in itself and pointless.

Followers of Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism have a different vision of salvation from that of Christianity. Hell and heaven are the end results of a soteriological choice (Maier, 2014, p. 4). Salvation, i.e. liberation from the karmic cycle, is achieved through knowledge. Freedom from *Saṃsāra*, the cycle of death and rebirth, occurs through the attainment of maximum spirituality. So reincarnations are a kind of hell with the function of Purgatory. Towards what does one escape as prize for complete spiritualization? Towards *moksha* or *mukti* in Hinduism and towards Nirvana (*Nibbana*) in Buddhism. Liberation through spiritualization does not lead to individual happiness, but to the merging into a collective existence (Maier, 2014, p. 4). Nirvana is the opposite of ignorance (*Avidyā, Pali Avijjā*), the meeting of the liberated minds (*Citta*). Of course, the Christian heaven also contains the ultimate knowledge, revelation, only it is rather described as a space of love, perfection and worshipful spirituality for saved individuals. In Buddhism it is mostly about liberation from suffering and ignorance as negative factors and the attainment of happiness, moral perfection and freedom (Maier, 2014, p. 4). The discourse on love between redeemed individualities and on worshipping the supreme being is missing.

Emerging mainly as a protest against the priestly ritualism and sacrificial religion of the Hindu Brahmins, Buddhism emphasizes moral training and mental discipline. Siddhartha Gautama is not accessible even by revelation (Maier, 2014, p. 4). He produced the message of salvation (*Dhamma*) towards an impersonal spiritual happiness. Buddha, though represented by huge statues, is neither a god nor a savior, for he does not offer Nirvana, but only points the way. In fact, the truth is that he has ended up being worshipped like Jehovah, Jesus or Allah.

But the doctrine states otherwise: "*Theravāda* Buddhism is basically a religion without god. It does not believe in a supreme being, although it does not recognize many gods as higher beings" (Maier, 2014, p. 5). However, even these intermediary gods need salvation, for they too are prisoners of the karmic chain. The reality is that they are more spiritually advanced beings, but not gods. Their function could be similar to that of the saints who are considered so precisely because of their spirituality - that of intermediaries with the divinity for humanity. Except that in Buddhism there is no such ordering and personal divinity. The common factors between the great religions or traditions are ethics, asceticism, compassion, etc., but their soteriology is totally distinct.

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Returning to Cioran and his fascination with polytheism and freedom, as well as his horror of suffering, we note that he takes from Buddhism only certain aspects, but not the whole Buddhist message nor its liberating practices. Cioran remains an atheist who uses religious content strictly to construct his anarchic, pseudo-analytical lyrical "poems".

However, Cioran can be a religious spirit without being a religious man. His desire for absolute freedom drives him to defy all hierarchical configurations. This is why he rebukes Dostoevsky for being a coward when he charged Raskolnikov with remorse after the murder (Cioran, 1995, p. 97). But the Russian writer always redeemed his murderers through remorse and penitence. Absolute freedom, however, not only condones murder and oppression, but above all feeds on pride.

Paulo Borges, an avid Buddhist scholar, admires Cioran as a "mystical iconoclast" (Vălcan, 2015, p. 23) and as a practitioner of a 'titanic hybris of overcoming everything, the subject and oneself'[21] (Vălcan, 2015, p. 24, my translation). Yet Christianity presupposes a personalized transcendence, whereas Nirvana offers depersonalization and absorption into the universal *ātman*.

8. Imagining some pagan joy

Cioran differentiates religions more on stylistic reasoning. He later defends polytheism on the grounds that it "corresponds more realistically to the diversity of our bents and impulses" (Cioran & Brown, 1968, p. 43), i.e. his view is anthropocentric. Polytheism would support freedom of choice. This amounts to a hijacking of polytheistic religions. Pagans did not choose their gods on the basis of sympathies or whims, any more than Christians have any particular zeal for a particular saint in order to place him/her at the head of the Christian pantheon.

Faith, in Cioran's view, is a Christian invention and a not at all commendable one (Cioran & Brown, 1968, p.44). What bothers the proud essayist is that there might be beings superior to him and even worse: worthy of adoration. The old gods were more human, i.e. founded on a low mimesis: "one greeted them without having to genuflect" (Cioran & Brown, 1968, p.43). Paganism, in Cioran's view, did not condemn sin and allowed "the freedom to browse" among Gods (Cioran & Brown, 1968, p. 44) who cohabited in "admirable promiscuity" (Cioran & Brown, 1968, p. 44). Thus, Cioran's understanding of theology is one of a library delight or of a videogame setting.

The essayist has two obsessions: complete freedom of thought, although his early books show him as willing to burn at the stake those who did not think like him, and the horror of suffering. For him, suffering is excluded from having a therapeutic role in the spiritual order; paradise would be worthy of interest if it had the appearance of the Rabelaisian monastery Thélème: luxury, entertainment, refinement. The modest Cioran who was able to refuse monetary prizes (to avoid being singled out and accused of right-wing extremism?) was in fact a hedonist in disguise.

Captivating in Cioran is the symbiosis between anarchism and dictatorship. He who praises the freedom of choice between gods in polytheism recalls with functional scrupulosity the Roman law which stipulated that no new god could be worshipped in private without the cult of the new god first to have received the approval of the Senate (Cioran & Brown, 1968, p. 46). Thus, a hyper-liberty, but with approval from the lordship in much the same way as Conu Leonida's "revuluție" ("revolution") functioned in Caragiale's *Conu Leonida față cu reacțiunea* [Mr. Leonida faced the reaction] Finally, the apologist for freedom without frontiers says it directly: "Better to be a slave and have the right to worship the gods of one's choice than to be

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[21] Original text: "titanic hybris de superación de todo, del sujeto y de si mismo".

´free´ yet have no alternative to a single variety of the divine" (Cioran & Brown, 1968, p. 46). Consequently, better false multiple choices than a mono-choice liberty. Or, put it bluntly, better slavery than quintessential, hence implicitly limited, freedom.

Cioran is also a fierce defender of pagans and apostates, showing no sympathy for the atrocities suffered by Christians. Thirty years after the publication of *Tears and Saints*, his attitude became radicalized and de-lyricized in an anti-Christian direction. What he retained was the vituperative epithet: "the venomous but insipid Saint Gregory of Nazianzus" (Cioran & Brown, 1968, p. 39). The essayist sees no qualitative difference between Christianity and paganism; on the contrary, Christianity would be clearly inferior because it does not proclaim force, will to power and unlimited freedom (Cioran & Brown, 1968, p.42).

Returning to Catholicism, the organ seems to him the transcendent instrument by definition, while the cello and flute "exhibit all the human flaws, transfigured by a supernatural regret" (Cioran, 1995, p. 85).

In the field of painting, however, Cioran is fascinated by El Greco, who disrupted the anatomical perspective and three-dimensionality of Western (Spanish) religious painting by cultivating a filiform spiritualism of Byzantine origin. Curiously, we expect Cioran to be closer to the manner of Van Gogh, who is an "El Greco without God, without heaven" (Cioran, 1995, p. 85).

9. Conclusion

Speaking about the isolation of the tender cynic, I would like to recall that Cioran always said that he did not want to be famous. However, it seems that a few young people have committed suicide by reading his books, while he claimed it was not his fault that he was taken seriously. Moreover, immediately after the anti-communist revolution in Romania, the works of the Generation of '27 were massively published. The publishing house Humanitas, owned by the philosopher Gabriel Liiceanu, became rich. In order not to lose money through inflation, books that did not sell fast enough were melted down and reprinted later. Thus, toilet paper impregnated with the texts of Emil Cioran, Mircea Eliade, Constantin Noica, etc., ended up circulating on the market.

This late hour success is due also to his humor in combination with the ingenuity of a peasant. In a series of interviews with Liiceanu, Cioran tells how as a child he used to play soccer on Coasta Boacii with the human skulls dug up by the village gravedigger. Liiceanu sophisticatedly asked him if these were morbid inclinations with Freudian and Schopenhauerian overtones. Cioran answered very seriously that it was all about soccer.

Even the bad words said about him and his work contributed to his surprising fame. 'It should also be added that Cioran is currently the victim of gossip by the most ill-intentioned biographers: his life is the target of murderous literary gossip'[22] (Álvarez Lopeztello, 2022, p. 5, my translation). I would add that not only the literary gossip.

But more important to my article is the intention to produce evidence for Cioran's brilliancy in terms of paradox, oxymoron, self-contradiction, risked statements and considerations. His charm relies not only on his refined style, but also on his ability to make use of a huge amount of cultural content in a playful, pleasant or caustic way. This is the advantage of keen essay writing. Nobody should be angry with, disgusted of, enthralled by Cioran's messages. He only played a cultural game and culture should be free to generate even twisted messages as long as they are not included in the public affairs realm. Cioran is no more, no less than a gifted, far-fetched, morose, funny voice; but a voice ferociously representative for the 20th century.

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[22] "Hay que agregar además que actualmente Cioran es víctima del chismorreo de los biógrafos peor intencionados: su vida es blanco del asesino cotilleo literario."

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Anthropology

CULTURAL INTIMACY, CULTURAL DISTANCE: METHODOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF ANTHROPOLOGICAL RESEARCH INTO ROMANIANS IN POLAND

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Abstract

This study focuses on a comparison of two sets of in-depth, face-to-face interviews among Romanians living in Poland about their perceptions of the country and society, and their migrant experiences. The interviews were conducted five years apart, using the same guide, but carried out by Polish interviewers in the first case, and by a Romanian interviewer in the second. Comparative analysis of the material gained in this process reveals that, despite similar content in interviewee responses, the standing of the interviewer was by no means neutral. Crucial for the volume, type, and nature of the collected data – as well as for its interpretation – is the interviewer's identity. In this regard, the study draws on Michael's Herzfeld's concept of 'cultural intimacy' to explain the mutual reproduction of different levels of identity and to develop a framework for analyzing the interaction between the social scientists and their interlocutors.

Keywords: Romanians; Poland; anthropology; methodology; ethnic belonging.

1. Introduction: A Sociological and Historical Contextualization

The present article stems from a collaborative project by two researchers of different ethnicities, backgrounds, and disciplines: a Polish sociologist and a Romanian anthropologist. The study at hand offers comparative insight into two sets of face-to-face, in-depth interviews (IDIs) with Romanians living, at the time of our study, in Poland. The focus of the analysis described herein are responses gained through two sets of interviews conducted with the same scripted guide. The variances lie in a temporal gap of five years between the two sets as well as (more meaningfully) in the fact that the first round of interviewing was done by persons of Polish nationality, while the second was done by only one Romanian interviewer. The main subject of analysis is the standing of the interviewers in which concerns the volume, type, and nature of the collected data in this migratory situation, and the way in which the ethnicity of the interviewers impacts the interaction with the Romanian interviews.

The decision to focus on the relatively small Romanian community[1] in Poland was rooted, foremostly, in a methodological challenge. As ethnicity has been, for a long time, a core issue for social scientists studying international migration (Barth, 1969; Baumann, 1996; Brubaker, 2004; Joppke, 2005), we asked ourselves if and how contact between an interviewee and an interviewer of the same ethnicity – versus one of the ethnicity of the host society – affects the course of a research study and its findings. In other words, we aimed to determine to what extent our typical, qualitative, anthropological study was influenced by the ethnic belonging of the researchers, with their different cultural competences and connections.

Romanians are a community not too well known in Poland. Never have they lived in greater numbers in the country, nor have they ever formed a dense regional population like the Belarusians, Ukrainians, Lithuanians, Germans or Slovaks.[2] For a brief moment in the interwar period (1918-1939), Poland and Romania did share a common border; there were also more distant periods of history during which parts of the contemporary Romanian state belonged to the Polish crown. Yet Romanians do not constitute an official, ethnic or national minority in today's Poland, although there are 13 such recognized minorities, some of them quite small. A significant number of the Romanians currently living in Poland settled there only after Romania's joining the European Union, hence they do not form a diaspora in the proper sense of the word (see Sorescu-Marinković 2016 for the similar case of Vlachs in Eastern Serbia).

According to data offered by the Romanian Embassy in Poland, in 2014 there were about 500 ethnic Romanian citizens permanently settled in Poland, while Roma with Romanian citizenship who came to Poland briefly (during the migration peak after 2007), numbered about 4,000 persons. This puts the total number of Romanian citizens residing in Poland closer to 5,000. Over the last ten years, the development of globalized, international business has resulted in a significant increase in the number of Romanian migrants staying provisionally in Poland, but the total is still considerably less than 10,000.

Nevertheless, a recent study analyzing patterns of EU labor mobility (prepared for the 2019 Romanian Presidency of the Council of the European Union) shows that working age nationals who live abroad range from 1.0% of the population in Germany to close to 20% in Romania. In fact, this makes Romania the EU state with the highest number of nationals working outside their home country (Poland comes in second) (Alcidi & Gros, 2019, p. 7).

Consistent with statistics compiled by the Polish government and its migration services, there were 4,818 Romanian citizens registered as living in Poland in 2021. The most numerous cohort was aged between 24 and 35, among whom men (2,930) prevailed over women (1,888). The Mazowieckie (capital city) region was home to the biggest share of Romanians (1,128), followed by Dolnośląskie (701), Małopolskie (641), Wielkopolskie (345), Śląskie (315), Zachodniopomorskie (305), etc.[3]

One can also differentiate the older immigrants (arriving in Poland during the Romanian communist regime) from the newer ones (encouraged by Romania's 2007 accession into the European Union) and subsequent labor migrations to other EU countries. Furthermore, it is worth noting that Romanian speakers from the Republic of Moldova who

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[1] The present paper uses the terms *Romanians* and *Romanian community* interchangeably, and also mentions Romanian Roma and Romanians from the Republic of Moldova. By *Romanians* and *Romanian community* we refer to Romanian citizens coming from Romania and Moldova, and to persons of Romanian declared nationality from Moldova, but not to Romanian Roma.

[2] https://www.gov.pl/web/mniejszosci-narodowe-i-etniczne/mniejszosci-narodowe-i-etniczne-w-polsce-oraz-ich-jezyki (accessed October 10, 2023).

[3] https://migracje.gov.pl/statystyki/zakres/polska/typ/dokumenty/widok/tabele/rok/2021/kraj/RO/ (accessed September 20, 2021).

declare a Romanian identity often take part in cultural events or get-togethers organized by Romanians in Poland. These Moldovan citizens cherish a sense of community on the basis of common language and ethnic identity.

The historical contacts between Poland and Romania and between Poles and Romanians were much more intense than those of the 20th and 21st centuries have been. In addition to the above-described, there was a moment early in World War II, when many Poles (including members of the Polish government) fled German aggression across the border into Romania. Although receiving significant assistance there, these historical facts are almost nonexistent in the collective memory of Polish society today.

The Polish stereotype of Romania is that of a poorer and more backward country than most other European states (Radelczuk & Tomaszewska, 2018, pp. 17-20). The migration of Romanian Roma to Poland between 1995 and 2007, but also before these dates (Kapralski & Lechowski, 2018), correspondingly augmented an undesirable image of Romanian society as a whole and created confusion between Romanians and Roma, as well as transfer of stereotypes. Nevertheless, although the influx of Romanian Roma into Poland has stopped, such confusion still exists due to the presence of those who arrived earlier.

2. The Methodological Aspect of Qualitative Studies: Interview as Interaction

The interview has been widely employed as a method to improve qualitative insight in various types of research. It has been long central to the design of ethnographic studies; nevertheless, it has also been increasingly used in migration studies. Even if in this field the interview as a method rarely stands on its own, being often combined with participatory or non-participatory observation, focus group discussions or oral history and life-story data collection (Fedyuk & Zentai, 2018, pp. 171-174), conducting research with means other than the interview can prove difficult when researching individuals with liminal legal status or undocumented migrants (Anderson, 2000; Ruths & Anderson, 2010). Or, like in our case, small migrant groups, which do not form a real community or diaspora and are dispersed over a wide region.

The anthropological data gathered in the course of interpersonal contact between an interviewer and an interviewee is a consequence of the unique relationship established between the two of them, or, to use a metaphor, of the "power dance" in the research encounter, where "the interviewer is trying to place the interviewee, but at the same time, the interviewee is also trying to position the researcher" (Ryan, 2015). The anthropologist or ethnologist is engaged in a constant interpretation and reinterpretation of the data itself, but also of the idiosyncratic influence of the researcher's own features, traits, and behavior upon that data. In this dynamic approach, gender, age, class, religion, ethnicity or language are not stand-alone dimensions, but "ingredients in a complex and active mix of identities" (Ryan, 2015).

Taking two stages of interviewing as a case study, we demonstrate that the interviewer is by no means a neutral or transparent figure, but crucial in subsequent interpretation of the material collected. The social scientist's conceptual work is continuous throughout the study – both during the interview and while drawing conclusions which indubitably germinate in the scholar's own cultural background. It must nevertheless be stressed here that qualitative research, such as that described herein, is far-removed from classic, quantitative surveying of representative samples; we cannot pretend to offer comprehensive conclusions.

Nevertheless, qualitative studies based upon in-person IDIs offer several valuable advantages: 1) the questions posed are not strict and inflexible; 2) the interview is a conversation adjusted to the interviewee's way of thinking; and 3) the interviewer strives to

avoid lines of questioning that do not correspond with the interviewee's cognition and expression. Such ethnographic encounters can be interpreted as interpersonal social games with certain fixed rules at the start. The assumed rules and obligatory conventions are crucial for this interaction which is not an everyday experience (Crapanzano, 2010, p. 62). On the one hand, the interviewer intends to investigate the way in which interlocutors think and relate to their somewhat altered environment. On the other hand, however, the interlocutor simultaneously attempts to read the intentions and expectations of the interviewer and to establish a personal connection.

Naturally, our assumptions and expectations varied with reference to the two sets of interviews, conducted by a Polish or, respectively, a Romanian interviewer. Though the premises behind the IDIs remained the same, our initial hypothesis with respect to potential interlocutors was that the information obtained and the degree of interviewee openness would be rather different. We expected a significant disparity in the level of comfort experienced by an interlocutor when responding to a Romanian or to a Pole. Consequently, the depth of the information received and the emotional value added would be lesser or greater depending upon the interviewer's ethnicity and language. Taking into account the subject matter (Romanian reactions to and reflections on life in Poland), it was anticipated, on the one hand, that the familiarity interviewees would sense with a Romanian researcher – a cultural and social closeness – would offer chances for increased sincerity and emotive expressiveness with the interviewer. On the other hand, in interactions with Polish researchers, we supposed that the "playscript" would usher in more elements of formal convention implying politeness and distance (Turner, 1996). In other words, we expected that, with interviewers seen as representing Polish society, certain social conventions affecting the life of a Romanian migrant – especially guest-host relations – would hamper free expression.

The concept of *cultural intimacy* comes in very handy here: it expresses those aspects of cultural identity that are occasionally considered a source of external embarrassment, but nevertheless provide insiders with a sense of a (local, ethnic, national, etc.) "us," affording comfort, understanding, and self-reflexive, ontological security (Herzfeld, 2005). Cultural intimacy helps illuminate how nation-states present themselves internationally and how they understand themselves domestically. In other words, it explains the mutual reproduction of different levels of identity. Here, the concept is applied not to states, but to individuals in order to develop a framework for analyzing the interaction between social scientists and their interlocutors who are Romanians in Poland.

Sociological and anthropological studies conducted in various contexts provide convincing examples of how the cognitive and interpretative processes of researchers – who are culturally intimate or, to the contrary, distant from the ethnic communities upon which a study is focused – influence the course and findings of that investigation. Such an example is the research conducted among Sakha (Yakuts) or Buryats in Siberia (Głowacka-Grajper, Nowicka & Połeć, 2013) where the information obtained differed greatly depending on whether the interviewer was a Pole or a Russian. Judith Okely also wrote about her reservations that her scholarly material about Travelers was mainly the result of her position as a "stranger," as an outsider (Okely, 1983). Sociolinguistic and anthropological research among Romance language-speaking communities of the Balkans conducted by a Polish researcher (Nowicka, 2021), and by a Romanian one – much closer, linguistically and culturally, to the communities in question (Sorescu-Marinković, 2008) – have also yielded diverse evidence and findings.

A recent anthropological research conducted by a Polish researcher among Polish migrants to Norway explores the significance of *cultural intimacy* in migrants' lives (Pawlak, 2015). In the same time, the study reflects on and tries to assess the position of the researcher

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in conducting fieldwork among his co-nationals, expressing subjective dilemmas which entail important elements of objectified cultural recognition: "There is something peculiar and yet very significant in conducting anthropological fieldwork among one's co-nationals living in a migratory situation, which cannot be simple understood in terms of employed research methods and theories. As an anthropologist of polish background, living and working with Polish migrants, I found myself wondering who am I during this fieldwork? Am I a researcher or perhaps a migrant? How am I perceived by Norwegians? Am I yet *another* Pole? And what about my co-nationals? Am I included as one of them (us)? Or perhaps, in their view, I am rather an outsider, despite the same national belonging?" (Pawlak, 2015, p. 242).

3. Methodology

In the spirit of social anthropology, our research was conducted via the classic, qualitative technique of face-to-face interviews. All of these – both in the first and second stage of the study – were of a similarly casual nature and followed the same interview guide. Questions were open-ended and concerned the reasons for and circumstances of interviewees' moving from Romania to Poland, their motives for settling in Poland, the image they had of the country and its inhabitants before arriving, how that changed once they were in Poland, their interactions with Poles, perceived differences between the two cultures, and acquisition of the Polish language.

Substantively important for our analysis is the longitudinal aspect (a half-decade interval), but especially the ethnonational aspect (Polish interviewers in the first phase; a Romanian interviewer in the second). On one level, we will present and analyze the views expressed by interviewees, but on another level and to a greater extent, we will be delving deeply into the effects of the interviewer-interviewee relationship on the results of a qualitative study. Further into the text, we will compare the images drawn as a result of both sets of interviews – again, conducted with the same technique and guide, but in different languages and by a person of different or the same ethnicity.

In the earlier research, interviews were conducted either in English or, less often, in Polish, always by a person of Polish nationality, either by the first author of this text or one of four sociology students from the University of Warsaw. The interviewees were Romanian immigrants, usually working and/or studying in Poland, although sometimes settled and living in this country longer.

Thus, twenty recordings (none exceeding an hour) were made during the 2013/2014 academic year, with twenty persons aged 22 to 35 at the time. Five years later, in 2018, six recordings were made in Romanian by the second author. All interviews in this second phase of our study lasted between 1.5 and 3.5 hours. The six interviewees were aged 28 to 40 at the time, were of different educational and professional backgrounds, and came from different regions of Romania or the Republic of Moldova. They had been living in Poland for 2 to 14 years, but only two were considering a permanent stay.

4. Comparative Analysis

It has been shown that, in a migratory situation, national identity strongly intersects with social class, producing different social and cultural sets of migration practices and constructing different kinds of habitus (Pawlak, 2015, pp. 245-246). Even if our interlocutors come from diverse cultural backgrounds and belong to different social classes and therefore their pragmatic choices and views on life in the new environment greatly differ, we will not focus on these important differences in the present study, but will discuss the interviewee responses to questions posed by the interviewers in both stages of this study. The focus will

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be on the differences in the answers provided at the time – discrepancies stemming from the interaction of interviewees with a researcher of the same or different ethnicity, speaking in the mother tongue or a second language.

It is important to add that the two surveys were conducted in completely different political environments (different governments with different immigration policies and therefore a different public discourse on immigrants), which could have further influenced the interpretations and responses of the interviewees. Nevertheless, it is beyond the scope of our study to delve on this topic, which might become the focus of a separate paper.

4.1. Stage one Interviews: Polish Interviewer, Romanian Interviewee

The reasons given for temporary or permanent migration to Poland were myriad. These included education, an employment offer, the encouragement of friends, simply chance, or, sometimes, love and marriage. Many of our mostly young interlocutors had already traveled extensively, mostly in Europe, but also in the United States; some had even stayed longer outside Romania. Nevertheless, student exchanges manifested a bit differently than moving for employment:

> Yes, I am here with an Erasmus grant. You know, mostly through friends. Several of my friends have already been to Poland on Erasmus. I heard a lot from them about your country, a lot of interesting, cool things. That's why I decided: 'Why not, why not Poland?' And that's how I chose Poland.[4] (I1, EN, 2014)

The Erasmus program was also the reason for the extended stay in Poland of an interlocutor specializing in genetics:

> I have been living here for two years, hmm… I live here, I study and work. I found myself in Poland thanks to Erasmus; I liked it and stayed here for longer. I had some friends here before, they told me a lot about the country, and finally I decided that it would be the best place to go on an Erasmus grant. Poland is different from Romania, you can't hide it. I mean, the culture is quite similar in my opinion, but in general our countries are different. I am also not far from home in Poland, I can go to Romania from time to time. So overall I like it here. It is different, but there are also many similar things. I like Poland. (I1, EN, 2014)

The geneticist also pointed out that, upon arrival, she knew nothing about Poland:

> My friends from Poland persuaded me and I came here without any special preparation. As you can see, I stayed longer, so my friends were right and I think I made the right decision, even though I knew almost nothing about Poland before. (I2, EN, 2014)

This lack of prior knowledge about the country surfaced in all the interviews, without exception. One interviewee claimed that, for the average Romanian, Poland is a northern country – located somewhere very far away, like Finland. He chuckled, calculating the distance between Oradea (northwest Romania) and Bucharest (the capital city) at 600 km, and then between Oradea and Warsaw, the capital of Poland, at 700 km. And yet, in the perception of Romanians, the first city is relatively close, while the second is very far away.

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[4] The interviewees were anonymous; the interviews were not published anywhere except this article. In the brackets at the end of each interview transcript the following information is given: number of the interviewee as assigned by the interviewer, initials of the interviewer, and year of the interview.

Such reactions are also associated with surprise and an otherness sensed in both the external appearance of the cities, as well as in the customs and character of the people. Poland sounded like an interesting country, but the decision to come was also influenced by practical considerations. For some of our interlocutors, Poland was attractive because of the lower cost of living, and, at other times, by the relative territorial proximity. Sometimes it quickly turned out, while a student was already in Poland, that it was possible to take up work in his or her academic field, and that the level of development in that discipline was much higher in Poland than in Romania:

> I chose Poland because I heard a lot of good things about it, the school here had a program that interested me and it was cheaper here than in other countries. (I3, EN, 2014)

Indicative plans for the future – thoughts about leaving or staying – seem to be important for the adaptation process in Poland. How important it is to feel rooted in the workplace is evidenced by following statement:

> I don't know, I can't say right now [whether I will stay]. It depends on several factors. For now, I work here, I have a contract, I've been working here for a year – we'll see how things develop. I do not rule out that I will stay in Poland for longer if I can still count on a job here. (I3, EN, 2014)

The first contact with Poland was sometimes described as shocking. As one young scholar described it, the shock concerned the sound of the language, on the one hand, and the climate, on the other:

> I must admit that, at first, I was very surprised by the language and, above all, by the weather. I don't like the Polish weather; I think it's terribly cold here. Coming back to the language, at first, I had great difficulty distinguishing any words. For me everything sounds the same in Polish: one big word, from start to finish [laughter]. I remember my first arrival in Poland. It was August, I flew from Romania quite lightly dressed, and it turned out that it was only 15 degrees Celsius in Poland. It was a real shock for me. I was really very cold; I never thought that I would need a jacket during the summer holiday. I had to borrow warmer clothes from friends quickly. So my first day in Poland is mostly associated with cold. (I4, EN, 2014)

Romanian workers employed in Poland, whose coming to this country was a last minute decision, emphasized their complete lack of knowledge about the country before their arrival:

> Poland was a black spot for us, we knew virtually nothing about it. Apart from that, we found out that we had a job in Poland just before Christmas, and two months later we were already in Poland. Everything happened so fast. (I11, EN, 2014)

At other times, the will to better prepare for the trip, an interest in the country, and even a desire to learn Polish were emphasized:

> I had little time to move – actually, after a month I found myself here. I didn't have time to prepare; it's impossible to learn Polish in a month. I didn't speak any Slavic language, so I bought a course in Polish online, but I didn't have time to study the culture for that. (I4, EN, 2014)

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The first difficulties appeared upon arrival and were primarily connected with communication (i.e., misunderstandings, lack of language fluency), as well as with idealization of Poland as a highly developed country (i.e., inflated expectations):

I already had a bachelor's degree and was looking for a job, and I didn't panic. At first, I said to myself, I know German, English, Spanish, French, for God's sake. This is a European city. And yet it turned out that it took me several months to find a job. (I8, EN, 2014)

The language barrier was frequently assessed as particularly unpleasant and a hindrance in everyday life:

I had no idea that the language barrier would have such a big impact on my life. I think that's the hardest thing for a foreigner. (I4, EN, 2014)

The fact that older Poles generally do not know English was sometimes considered a reason why they were not as helpful to foreigners as young people:

Older people in Poland, if they hear that you only speak English, usually just run away [laughter]. That is, they will usually smile, say they don't speak English, or just yell 'I don't know' and run away. (I12, EN, 2014)

Precisely with regards to helpfulness to foreigners, this same interviewee pointed further to a significant difference between Polish and Romanian society:

In Romania, on the other hand, if you ask an elderly woman for directions, she will stop. Regardless whether you only speak English, she will start speaking Romanian, sometimes even half an hour. And even though she knows you don't understand her, she will explain anyway because she just wants to help. (I9, EN, 2014)

Numerous sources of problems in communication with Poles and Polish institutions were also pointed out. The myth of high development envisions a place where everyone in society is perfectly fluent in English. The poorer than expected level of English – treated by our interlocutors as a gauge of a country's civilizational level – was reflected in some bitterness. Situations were described in which a lack of contact and interaction were seen as not simply rooted in a lack of English on the part of a Polish person, but intentional ill will:

Not that many people speak English. Or they don't want to speak English. We've seen it more than once, for example, in a shopping mall. You go and ask: 'Do you speak English?' and the answer is: 'No, I don't speak English.' Exactly. And it's in very fluent English, so it's clear that it's a lack of desire to talk in English. (I15, EN, 2014)

In this description of an unpleasant situation, intuited was an aversion to foreigners in general, xenophobic tendencies, but also a malicious reaction to the client's question. Romanians who have lived in Poland for longer shared advice for newcomers:

First of all, let them leave the house and not sit on Skype all day long. It depends, but anyone who stays here for more than two years should start learning the language, you cannot do without it. There are people who have lived here for over two and a

half years and still cannot speak a word of Polish. It won't get them anywhere. (I20, EN, 2014)

Our interlocutors also pointed directly to unpleasant psychological features among Poles, mainly the distance Poles maintain vis-à-vis foreigners. A consequence of that is difficulties in establishing contact and friendship. There are reasons why Romanians living in Poland seek out other Romanians:

Sometimes I feel lonely here, even if I talk to Romanians every day or meet Romanians. (I19, EN, 2014)

Relations with Poles were rated (at best) as proper, but far from turning into friendship:

There are a few people with whom I have a good relationship, but I can't say that we are friends. Few people here speak English well. My Polish is also not good enough for me to have a relaxed, fluent, fun conversation. (I11, EN, 2014)

Another recurrent topic in the interviews was ignorance in Polish society about Romania and Romanians, including an identification of Romanians with Romani people:

I am aware that this stereotype still exists in Poland, but in my opinion, it comes from the Poles' little knowledge about Romania. I have the impression that Poles attribute all the bad features of Gypsies to Romanians, and in most cases, they do not even distinguish between us. But fortunately, not everyone. Besides, I started noticing that, in a way, I educate Poles. I got used to the fact that I constantly have to explain that a Romanian woman is not the same as a Gypsy woman. (I5, EN, 2014)

Over decades, at the level of Polish society, the ethnonyms *Romanian* and *Roma* (*Rumun* and *Romowie* respectively, in Polish) have become interchangeable, most probably due to the fact that the majority of post-1989, Romani immigrants came to Poland from Romania and, at the same time, that the majority of Romanian immigrants in Poland were Roma.

The stereotyping of the Romani people therefore transferred to the Romanians as a nation. This has persisted into the present, and many Poles are still confused as to the difference between Romanians and Roma. Still, another interlocutor saw differences in the perception of Romanians in Poland among the educated people with whom she worked, and among beauty salon employees who typically identified Romanians with Gypsies.

Nevertheless, one can also find elements of a positive image of Poland and Poles in the stage one interviews. A perceived similarity between Poles and Romanians was sometimes emphasized. Generally, however, Poland was presented as a country several years ahead of Romania in terms of development. For example, the exactness of a bus timetable in Poland and the lack of it in Romania were pointed out. There were also traces of a very high assessment of Poland as a whole as well as the city in which the interviewees lived. Sometimes these positive differences outweighed the similarities:

As for the city and the country, I really liked it. Compared to Romania… Of course, that's not a good thing for us as Romanians, so to speak, but it is just a much more developed country. Much cleaner. We like a lot of things here. (I11, EN, 2014)

I was delighted, I was in Gdańsk, can you imagine? I couldn't believe it, it was so beautiful. We don't have such places. Maybe Brașov, but that's just one city. (I22, EN, 2014)

In addition to the higher level of civilization, modern, healthy habits (e.g., a lot of people riding a bike or jogging), as well as the diligence and helpfulness of Poles were pointed out, too:

Poles work really hard, and they take work very seriously. They are very open, friendly, although some say that Poles are introverts, that the Polish society is very closed. I think that if you make friends with them, they will be very helpful, friendly towards you. (I19, EN, 2014)

Distance and an initial aloofness were repeated several times in Romanian opinions about Poles. This occasionally became a dominant narrative:

At first, I thought that our cultures were very similar, that we have a lot of similar traditions. However, the serious differences start when we talk about people. In my opinion, Poles are very closed, distrustful of others. In Romania, we make friends very quickly: we like to cuddle with other people, we kiss on the cheek to say hello, everyone seems to be much more open. In Poland, yes, people are rather positive, but they need to get to know the other person well. At the beginning, Poles keep their distance, but once they get to know someone well, they are extremely friendly. It's completely different than in Romania, but I'm used to it and I find Poles to be nice people. (I8, EN, 2014)

Certain characteristics of Polish behavior evoked admiration. Modesty was one virtue, especially when compared to boastfulness among Romanians:

I mean, just because you have something it doesn't mean you have to show it. (I10, EN, 2014)

Another positive Polish feature mentioned by the young Romanian wife of a Pole are the family ties that are still maintained, by young people as well:

At least from what I've seen, family is very important. I mean, even the way you organize your holidays and all that, the family has much more to say than in Romania. I think that my generation in Romania is more independent and individual; people go to college and they don't care. Here people still come back to their families to visit grandma and grandpa; it is very important. I don't know how many of my friends visit their grandmas, but here it's very important. I don't know where it comes from [laughter] and how you do it, but it's amazing. (I7, EN, 2014)

As for some Polish customs, Romanians found it difficult to attune themselves to a few:

Something I had to get used to was the cold handshake for a greeting. In Romania, only the president or the mayor shakes hands; in Romania we kiss [on the cheek], you come very close and… Here I was surprised, I never thought that I would shake hands with friends and friends of friends. (I16, EN, 2014)

Another young interviewee liked the custom of kissing a woman's hand in Poland, similar to that in Romania. She emphasized a certain, attractive type of male politeness on the part of Poles:

I just remembered one more important thing: Polish men are, in my opinion, much more polite than Romanians. I'll give you an example. In Poland, when I go somewhere with someone, I can always count on the man to open the door for me and let me in first. This also happens in Romania, but rather in formal situations, at official meetings. However, there is nothing to count on when you go somewhere – for example, with friends from the university. Then guys tend to go in first [laughter]. And not because they are rude, it's just the way it is in Romania. (I15, EN, 2014)

Finally, at the end of the earlier-cited response that implied a seemingly hostile (especially towards foreigners) nature among Poles, there was a softening of that opinion, and an indication that this woman was getting used to these less desirable features in her personal life. A Pole's wife, living in Poland for several years, gave advice to her compatriots living in Poland:

There's no point in missing home because we can't avoid this longing. We have to get used to the fact that we live here, and we can do more than talk on Skype with mom and dad, we can go outside and discover new things. For example, I started taking pictures of smaller and bigger cities in Poland, and people look at these pictures and say, 'Oh my God, have you been there? How did you get there? Is it expensive? What can you can eat there?' and so on. But it also gives information that there is a good festival or that there is a good concert. (I18, EN, 2014)

4.2. Stage Two Interviews: Romanian Interviewer, Romanian Interviewee

As pointed out earlier, when the person conducting the interview was also Romanian, our interlocutors enjoyed a sense of cultural intimacy in speaking with her. Both partners in the conversation shared the same ethnicity, national identity, and language; raised in the same country, they shared the same cultural heritage, too. Moreover, encountering each other in Poland, they could relate to one another on yet another level: they are both strangers in a strange land, something that minimizes differences (e.g., education, political views etc.). Finally, interlocutors often discovered other parallels with the researcher's life which acted as a trigger for conversation. Establishing a bond were factors such as similar age, having a small child, coming from the same place in Romania, having a spouse of another nationality, having studied or worked abroad, being interested in the same cultural events, etc.

The reasons Romanians mentioned for coming to Poland were again diverse, ranging from following one's partner to starting a university program. However, the majority of interviewees admitted that the dynamic labor market of this country enticed them to choose Poland. Typically, they were offered a well-paid job here:

I spent two years in the Netherlands until I finished my studies and tried to find a job abroad, I didn't want to come back home. After sending in 1,100-1,300 applications, I found this job [in Warsaw]. So, I struggled a lot to arrive here in Poland and this was the first serious job I got. (I1, ASM, 2018)

Nevertheless, a dynamic labor market also has its downside. Some Romanians here felt as though they were "living at an airport," where people constantly come and go. Such a situation renders long-term relations rather difficult.

All the interviewees stressed that they had not specifically intended to come to Poland, but had arrived in this country more or less by chance:

I did not necessarily want to come to Poland. No. I just wanted to get a job. A workplace. (I4, ASM, 2018)

It doesn't mean I personally chose Poland because all my life I have dreamed of going to Poland and working there, living there and so on. It was rather a pleasant surprise, in the end. (I2, ASM, 2018)

As was the case in the first set, a complete lack of knowledge about the country was a motif repeated in all these interviews without exception: "I knew there was a country called Poland with a red and white flag. That was all I knew. Nothing more about Poland."

None of them chose Poland because of the place itself, but because the possibilities it offered:

No, I didn't come because of the country, I simply came because the MA program was here. I applied for the Masters. I was not interested in the place, you know. (I4, ASM, 2018)

Some even went so far as to say that nobody would willingly and with forethought choose to come to Poland:

Well, I don't think that somebody can come with his luggage: I leave for Poland, I want to settle there. They only come because they know somebody; they come because they have something already arranged. I don't think it ever happened that somebody came here to visit and liked Poland so much as to want to stay. (I2, ASM, 2018)

Furthermore, some of our interlocutors admitted that, apart from not really knowing any facts about Poland, they only had a stereotypical image of it before coming:

Zero! Zero. I didn't know a thing, I have never been to Poland until I first came here. I knew what everybody who only has stereotypes in his head knows: I knew it was cold, I knew vodka, I knew Pope John Paul II, Copernicus and Lewandowski. (I1, ASM, 2018)

I thought it was a post-soviet country, that it looked like all other post-soviet countries, probably not too far away from Romania, maybe a bit like Serbia, something like that. So not too far away, I thought. But when I arrived here, I saw it was not like that. (I2, ASM, 2018)

The cooler climate, mentioned in the first stage interviews as one of the greatest shocks upon arrival, was also raised by most of the second stage interviewees. Contact with cold weather is presented by some interlocutors as a real, initial shock:

The first year when I arrived here, I remember it was so cold [laughter]. In 2011 it was extremely cold. I tell you honestly, on July 17, I will never forget it, on July 17, I wanted to turn the heating on. (I5, ASM, 2018)

Apart from the weather, another shock (this time, cultural) noted by interviewees was experiencing Polish habits they found puzzling. Such an example is heavy drinking, be it at weddings or outings:

Polish weddings are totally different [from Romanian ones]. You drink from night till morning, from the afternoon till morning. It's not like with us, with menus. You have only one menu. Let's say there are some appetizers, ok? After that, you drink. No, first you drink when you arrive there. Then you have the appetizers, then you drink again. (I4, ASM, 2018)

In the first place, they drink a lot. That you must know. Vodka. So, this is a standard thing. Vodka is a must. (I1, ASM, 2018)

In speaking of difficulties and obstacles associated with life in Poland, most interviewees again mentioned the language barrier:

I went to private classes, but it didn't work. I bought some books, but it's more difficult alone. I bought Duolingo, but I learn from my girlfriend the most. (I1, ASM, 2018)

I didn't have the ambition, I lacked a serious motivation from the start to learn Polish at a high level and now, to be honest, I am sorry. I started feeling sorry after three years already. (I2, ASM, 2018)

Even if this seems less serious a problem today, one interviewee went on to explain that, at the multinational company which was her workplace, she had heard complaints from Polish employees that everybody should speak Polish, and no job announcements should be made in English. Another interviewee felt that she was rejected during all job interviews because her knowledge of Polish was imperfect.

In any case, there are several other, more serious hardships about which interlocutors spoke. As one man described, he moved to Warsaw due to a promised position at a university. Yet, after working for a few months, he was not compensated financially:

After three months of working without a salary and sending letters which were rougher and rougher… I did not speak Polish by then and the negotiations were ever tougher. A bunch of lies, a bunch of promises. After that, we started sending letters with the help of a lawyer, we started suing them. It was the most difficult year of my life. I think it was a very tough encounter with reality. (I3, ASM, 2018)

Another person noted that it is very difficult for foreigners to get employed in Polish academia. His criticism, however, went even further and became more general and cutting:

Poland is a very ethnocentric and xenophobic country. And xenophobia is part of the public discourse. Even their left wing is frequently ethnocentric and nationalist. […] Foreigners are invisible in Poland. In fact, the Poles make them invisible. (I4, ASM, 2018)

Notwithstanding the above, positive impressions about Poland prevail. Several interviewees claimed that life is more comfortable in Poland (at least for families with small children), the living standard is higher than in Romania, and things are generally less expensive:

As far as the development level is concerned, Poland rather reminds me of Germany, of the big cities in Germany. A totally different level. My first impression. Then, when we started to live, to make a living here, it continued to be a pleasant surprise [laughter]. Life is very comfortable here, I would say. I have also visited the country, so I am not only talking about Warsaw, which I find to be a very comfortable city, although it is very big. If you look at it like that, it is a very big city. But you don't feel you are living in such a big city. It doesn't give you the feeling Moscow or Bucharest gives you. (I2, ASM, 2018)

Interlocutors also praised Poland's natural environment, very diverse landscape, and touristic sites. Some interviewees were shocked to discover a country much more beautiful than they imagined:

I was too far away to be interested in Poland in any way because I had this wrong impression that Poland looked like Romania, I didn't think it was any better, a post-soviet country, full stop. I would have not come to Poland, even as a tourist, because I thought there were so many other countries I needed to visit first. But when I arrived here and found myself on Plac Zamkowy, with this view over the city, over the river, with this big stadium, Narodowy, it took my breath away. It took my breath away. I said: 'It's a different city from what I was expecting to see.' (I2, ASM, 2018)

When it comes to expressing an opinion about Poles themselves, social distance and a reluctance to open up to foreigners were, as in the first stage interviews, observed by all interlocutors. However, one remarked that drinking opens Poles up:

They are much more open when they drink. Because generally, as a nation, they are, how shall I put it… they are more closed. And they have this social distance. You should speak in a certain way, address in a certain way, you know. After that, they open up, when they drink. While the people from the South are different. They speak a lot all the time. (I4, ASM, 2018)

Touching on more detailed perceptions of the Poles as a people, as well as similarities to and differences from Romanians, opinions varied considerably – ranging from approval to irony, from openly positive to negative attitudes. One interviewee observed that, in his opinion, Poles and Romanians are very similar with regards to their mentality which he saw as affected by comparable historical circumstances:

They are very close to Romanians. They, the Poles, were like us, Romanians: between Germans and Russians. So even mentally we understand each other. I look at a Pole and we talk about something, this topic on the news these days, the Holocaust. We resonate. We understand each other. We are two storm-beaten people. Hardened. Which have endured many hardships. But we arrived here and we understand each other. (I1, ASM, 2018)

When I arrived here [after the Netherlands], the change was amazing, I felt like home. The people are like us, they have similar holidays, the food is similar, they have the same style. They meet, go out, rejoice together, call you to join them; they accept, if you invite them at your home. I threw parties in my house, so house parties, not to go out in town. I went to my girlfriend's tens of times. With everything it implies: her grandmother, kissing each other. I also had her over at my place, in Cluj, it was all the

same. So we are very similar and this is something I have felt a lot of times. (I1, ASM, 2018)

One man mentioned the civic spirit and attitude which characterizes both peoples, and which he admired:

I also lived in France, I studied there as well. Both they [the Poles] and we and the French have this thing with the protests. If we don't like something, we go out on the streets. (I3, ASM, 2018)

Another interviewee assessed differences between Poles and Romanians in favor of the Poles – praising a national pride he felt was absent in Romania:

The Poles have a much better-established national pride. In the public discourse, as well. In their public discourses you don't see that much of what you see or hear [on] the radio with us, for example. (I4, ASM, 2018)

Nonetheless, other interviewees were highly critical of Poles in comparison with Romanians. In one opinion, Romanians are much more resourceful and skillful, which is why they represent an important work force in Europe, while Poles are not that inventive and quick-witted:

We, Romanians, educated or not, are an important work force in Europe. If this thing is round and you are not educated, you just make it round yourself. When the Poles work and you explain them something, […] they do as they know, even if it's wrong. They do as they think fit. Never differently. They cannot use their brain to simplify their work. (I6, ASM, 2018)

The critical attitude towards the Poles was sometimes extreme, while the Romanian self-image was very strong:

[The Poles'] brain functions until a certain moment and after that it stops. You can try to teach them anything, they don't have the capacity to absorb it. I have a Pole who's been working with us for about two years. He couldn't learn to do more than one thing. Even though he had the possibility to learn. While we [Romanians] are universal. (I5, ASM, 2018)

Curiously, the same man who expressed the most critical opinion about the host society (considered dimwitted and unresourceful) also pointed out a general flaw in the Romanian nation (seen as the most jealous on Earth):

The disadvantage is that 90% of Romanians are envious. They have envy in their blood. From my point of view, Romanians are the most envious nation [laughter]. (I5, ASM, 2018)

Continuing, this interlocutor criticized Romanians living abroad for not teaching their children the homeland language, and those living in Romania for their obsolete mentality and lethargy, lacking the desire or drive to fix wrongs. In fact, this line of criticism towards Romanians and Romania was, in fact, a theme running through all the stage two interviews. Speaking to a Romanian researcher, it was a given that details of corruption affairs and about the Romanian mentality required no explication. It was easier to express such things.

This same interviewees, married to a Polish woman, spotlighted vast differences in mentality between Romanians and Poles – something he saw as the reason for a high rate of divorce among such couples. He further suggested that Polish culture is all-encompassing and highly conservative; he characterized Poland as ethnocentric and xenophobic.

In contrast, when speaking of the way Romanians are perceived in Poland, the experiences of our interviewees differed greatly between themselves. One of them said that Romanians are well regarded in Poland – unlike in other countries where Romanians have a bad reputation:

> Here, in the worst case, you are regarded as something exotic. Because not many of us come here. Here we do not necessarily have a reputation of thieves. Many times, Ewa [his girlfriend] tells me that I have the tendency to become defensive when I talk about Romanians. And I always feel the need to take the side of my country. And she tells me: 'Relax, there's no need to do it.' (I1, ASM, 2018)

Another interviewee blamed Poles for stereotyping Romanians:

> I've been repeatedly trying to get documents here. To no avail. Because nobody wants to help you, no landlords… When you want to rent housing, when they hear you are Romanian, they hang up on you. Because Romanians in Europe, or, better said, in the world, have their history. When a foreigner hears you're Romanian, they say: 'He's a thief.' (I6, ASM, 2018)

Interestingly, even if nearly all the interviewees mentioned the differing state religions of the two countries – Orthodoxy in Romania and Roman Catholicism in Poland – this was not considered an obstacle by anyone. On the contrary, interviewees highlighted the many similarities between the two confessions; driven by curiosity, they sometimes visited a Catholic church. The one thing which came as a surprise was that in nearly every household in Poland a portrait of the Pope hung on the wall:

> There is not a single house in Poland which doesn't have a picture of Pope John Paul II. Either above the fireplace, or in the kitchen. He is everywhere. There isn't a single village in Poland which doesn't have a street called Pope John Paul II. (I1, ASM, 2018)

5. Discussion and Conclusions

Despite a number of resemblances in the content, the responses in the two sets of interviews illustrate that the position of the interviewer is by no means neutral and transparent. Indeed, it is crucial for the volume, type, and nature of the material collected; it is also key in the interpretation of that data. Social scientists are, in a sense, singular "data processors": possessing emotions built upon the cornerstones of an individual socialization and life experience, they also possess the general values and customs drawn from their own culture and ethnicity. Experienced researchers know how to control their reactions, nevertheless their interpretation of the same culture, behavior or relationship might greatly differ.

Confronting our initial hypothesis – that the material obtained would significantly differ between the two cases – it was only partly proven right. In fact, the material we gathered from responses to the same questions, but posed five years apart by researchers first of Polish and then of Romanian ethnicity, was relatively similar. There are lots of resemblances in the reflections concerning what is inherent in Polish nature, the behavior and attitudes of Poles towards foreigners, as well as comparisons of life in Poland and Romania. Frankly, the

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consistency of information and opinions was not surprising, given that the interviews were carried out according to the same guide during both stages. Conversations piloted (more or less) identically elicited analogous responses.

Nonetheless, what was at variance when comparing the two stages was the emotional atmosphere during the interviews. In the first set, information was provided in a matter-of-fact and descriptive form; in the second, a cultural intimacy with the interviewer colored the information with a clearly emotive tint. The degree of openness was relatively lower during the stage one interviews. After all, they were conducted in English or Polish (neither being the interviewees' mother tongue), by Polish researchers who were members of the host society. In the course of the stage two interviews – conducted in a shared mother tongue with an interviewer of the same ethnicity who was also outside the homeland – interlocutors were (expectedly) much more open and ready to confide in her.

Evidencing this was that the stage two interviews were generally much longer. Moreover, interviewees were keen on asking questions of the researcher herself. The cultural intimacy between (in this case) two Romanians turned interviews into dialogues, into conversations: the exchange was not one-way, but reciprocal. The emotional content of these interviews was very high and included many personal, even intimate details, which the interlocutors felt at ease to disclose to the anthropologist. Interlocutors wanted to talk more about home, about Romania, and less about Poland – even if the topic, which was earlier communicated to them, was their experience in Poland.

The "play script," as the interview guide was originally designed, anticipated more elements of convention implying politeness and social distance. Nevertheless, even if the image of Polish society offered by stage one interviewees was somehow limited by the conventional rules of guest-host relations, there were, in the end, relatively few elements of politeness. Poles were described as cold, indifferent, and requiring much time before entering into a friendship. These characteristics appeared without exception, even if the criticism was present in a more mild form in the first set of interviews, and more emphasized in the second set.

As expected, the critical attitude of the interviewees towards the host society was more pronounced in the second set of interviews. Nevertheless, a more critical stance towards Romania (the homeland) and Romanian compatriots was also present – something absent from responses in the first set. This might point to Romania continuing to be (noticeably) more important for our interviewees than a likely temporary migration to Poland. The fact that the interviewees and interviewer shared a cultural background made explanations and clarifications unnecessary as much was acknowledged and understood by both parties. Thus, although the duration of the stage two interviews was longer, the pace of the conversation was faster and the details provided were much richer.

One observable difference between the stage one and stage two interviews is reproachment of the Polish, host society for misperceiving Romani people as Romanians – and thus negatively stereotyping Romanians as a nation. Such a critique emerged clearly in the first set of interviews, but transmuted in the second set into a general reference to xenophobia among Poles, without a single, explicit mention of Romani people. On the one hand, this might be due to the different time frames of the interviews, and the fact that, by the time of stage two, Romanian Roma were not as visible in Poland as before. On the other hand, the general, European identification of Roma with Romanians after the fall of the communism was so pregnant and debated in Romanian public discourse in the first decade of the 21st century that interviewees did not find it necessary to raise the issue with a Romanian interviewer, but did feel a need to explain with a Polish one.

As noted earlier, social anthropology studies have proved that the interviewer is never perceived neutrally by interviewees. Yet there is a spectrum: the researcher can be seen as

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someone socially closer or more distant, somebody more or less nice, pleasant, and helpful; the anthropologist can be culturally similar or strange. Ethnic or national closeness and intimacy play a special role – particularly when dealing with disempowered groups such as emigrants. On the one hand, as we have shown herein, a cultural intimacy between the interviewer and interviewees – in this case, dialogues conducted in Romanian, by a Romanian – leads to more resonant emotional content. On the other hand, the different ethnicity and social context in stage one – interviews conducted in English or Polish by a Pole inside Poland – were apt to stir assumptions that the interviewer is more knowledgeable about internal, Polish affairs. Quite naturally, interlocutors in the first set tended to provide more detailed answers on Polish topics. Therefore, although the responses gathered were relatively comparable across both sets, subtle, yet observable differences surfaced depending on the interviewer.

Finally, one last observation should be made. Though Poland and Romania are territorially close, have even shared a border at points in history, and did experience communist absolutism that lasted long decades after 1945, actual knowledge about each other is extremely limited, bordering on ignorance. The highly formulaic image and the dearth of background information that Romanians have before they migrate to Poland shatter the stereotype (which Westerners might hold) of a single, culturally homogenous Soviet Bloc. This is one more piece of evidence that the watchword behind the Iron Curtain was not always uniformity: the countries in the Eastern Bloc were not only cut off from Western Europe and the world, but also from each other. That seclusion and separation is reflected in the responses we collected. Polish opinion generally maintains that communist rule was less strict and sharp in Poland than in other communist countries, such as Czechoslovakia, Hungary or Romania; Poles are generally aware of the more intensive political opposition in their homeland than elsewhere in Eastern Europe. Awareness of the plight of other Soviet Bloc states, however, did not, by and large, translate into a more profound interest in those countries. The most knowledgeable about Romanian history and the presence of Romanians in Poland are Polish mountaineers and tourists, who have always delighted in the wonderful landscapes, ethnographic diversity, and cultural richness of Romania.

All things considered, however, despite variances in the quality of interviewer-interviewee relations, a fundamental level of communication was established in both situations. Similar basic information, as well as interesting, particularized material concerning the Romanian emigrant experience in Poland was imparted: migrant adaptation to a foreign society through generalization and interpretation of discrete experiences, and subsequent adjustment to increasingly better understood collective circumstances. This goes to show once more that a single identity is not sufficient to secure a special position for the interviewer and speaks against oversimplified categorizations of insider/outsider in migration research (Fedyuk & Zentai 2018: 189), advocating for a more nuanced approach to the position and identity of the researcher. This is valid especially in situations like this, which imply and where the interview touches upon extremely complex social, political, cultural and historical factors.

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THE LEGACY OF A 20TH-CENTURY CLERIC: A CATHOLIC PRIEST'S ECONOMIC CHRONICLES ANTHROPOLOGICAL INSIGHTS FROM WRITTEN DOCUMENTS

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Abstract

This study focuses on a unique collection of personal economic records and additional documents from the 20th century, belonging to a Catholic priest from Satu Mare County, Romania. The material is exceptional, as it represents a rare collection of written documents from the Hungarian-speaking region of the 20th century, authored by a Catholic priest. These records provide an in-depth look into the life of a priest, who, despite his clerical duties, maintained a strong connection to farming, a legacy from his farmer-herdsman parents of Swabian descent. The economic records, which span from 1949 to the 1960s, offer insights into the priest's personal and economic life. They include narratives about managing a parish, engaging in farming activities, and handling personal financial transactions. These documents not only reflect his efforts to balance religious responsibilities with agricultural interests but also illuminate the socio-economic conditions of the time. The study explores the priest's economic decisions, the value he placed on different assets, and his understanding of wealth in a changing society. It also examines the broader context of peasant embourgeoisement in 20th-century Romania, highlighting how a priest and his family navigated the transition from a traditional peasant lifestyle to a more bourgeois existence. This transition is evidenced by their adoption of modern goods and technologies, changes in family dynamics, and shifts in career strategies, reflecting the complex interplay between personal, economic, and social factors during a period of significant societal change. Overall, the paper offers a micro-historical perspective on the life of this 20th-century priest, providing valuable insights into his unique experiences and the broader socio-economic transformations of the era.

Keywords: anthropology of writing, economic records, 20th Century Romania, clerical and agricultural life

1. Introduction

In the first half of the 20th century, a novel paradigm emerged within the French Annales School, redirecting the focus of social science researchers towards previously unconventional sources. These included diaries, memoirs, correspondence, or economic journals that documented daily events, offering a new perspective that was termed as micro, or small-scale. Research with a micro-historical perspective has turned to sources that were previously not given much importance in academic discourse. Researchers such as Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie (1975), Carlo Ginzburg (1992) or Natalie Zemon Davies (1983) have drawn the attention of historians and anthropologists to the everyday life of the lower, peripheral groups.[1] Although there were some early attempts to study private correspondence (Znaniecki-Thomas, 2006, first edition 1918-20), the study of ordinary people's

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[1] On the emergence and early use of the concept of microhistory: Ginzburg, Tedeschi & Tedeschi, (1993).

correspondence was later reinvigorated by the micro-historical turn. There have been excellent summaries on the subject, such as American letter writing (Henkin, 2006), French, Italian, and Spanish correspondence (Lyons, 2012), or more recently, the European history of women's letter writing (Monagle, James, Garrioch & Caine, 2023). This change of perspective had a great impact on the social sciences of the various national languages. In the Hungarian language area, researchers have been exploring written sources since the 1950s, such as serf letters (Balázs, 1951), soldiers' letters (Imreh, 1964; Karacs, 1993; Bene, 1999; Kokó, 1999), written sources is folk literature in general (Imreh, 1960; Bellon, 1971; Hoppál – Küllős, 1972; Forrai, 1987; Keszeg, 1997), documents of folk medicine (Bényei, 1976; Gulyás, 1992), wills (Bene, 1989), letters in verse (Albert, 1999), peasant notebooks in verse (Farkas, 1999), manuscript prayers (Barna, 1987), craftsmen's manuscripts (Bathó, 1997), religious letters (Frauhammer, 1999), recipe books, cookery books (Geszti, 1999, Vékony, 1998), groomsmen's books (Horváth, 1994), autobiographies of ordinary people (Küllős, 2000, Szikszai, 2016), economic diaries (Mohay, 1994), private peasant letters (Szili, 2000, Borbély, 2006, Prikler, 2021) or the issue of publishing folk texts (Barna, 2003), to name but a few examples. The present study applies this research paradigm in terms of source exploration.

The anthropological research discussed in this paper builds on a very fortunate situation: it is based on economic records that have survived in a collection of personal documents compiled in the 20th century. The document collection under study is unique in the region, with 2,400 documents on paper, handwritten or typed, preserved in a personal archive. The economic records discussed in this study are part of this rich source material.

2. Mihály Tyukodi: From Peasant Roots to Priesthood

Mihály Tyukodi, the author and collector of the documents in question, represented the first generation of intellectuals in his family. From the documents he left behind, we can say that his way of life and mentality did not completely break away from that of his farmer-herdsman parents and, more importantly, that Mihály tried to make use of this knowledge throughout his life. Mihály and his family came from a village in Satu Mare County, Romania. The family tree can be traced back to the middle of the 19th century from the family registry extracts left behind. The marriage of Mihály's parents, Mihály Kind and Maria Reich, took place on February 2, 1902. They had nine children, Mihály being the fifth in the line. The family, which had been speaking only Hungarian by the early 20th century, decided in the early 1940s to change their Swabian surname to Hungarian.[2] The family took the name Tyukodi in early 1942.

Mihály Kind Jr., our protagonist was born in 1916 in Căpleni (Romania) and died in 1997 in Alba Iulia. His parents were farmers, descendants of the Swabian settlers settled here in the 18th century by the Counts of Károlyi. Until 1930 the family lived by working on their own land, and as Mihály writes, they were among the wealthiest families in the village. They were farmers, originally one of the families that employed the poorer families of the village to work their land. But in 1930 they suddenly lost most of their land. Mihály tells us that from then on, they were very poor, and that his parents had difficulty providing for the family.

Mihály grew up in this Swabian village in Satu Mare County, but he did not continue his parents' way of life, instead, he chose to become a priest. Although he worked as a priest and teacher until the end of his life, he used the knowledge he had brought from home: in addition to his parish work, he also worked in agriculture, animal husbandry and viticulture.

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[2] About the economic nationalization processes from 1867 to 1944 in the Satu-Mare region, the borderland between Hungary and Romania, see Blomqvist 2014.

Looking at his story of life, it is clear that farming played a greater role in his life at certain times.

The source material for the present study is Mihály Tyukodi's economic records, which have not yet been published, and other documents containing farming information.[3] Mihály Tyukodi's records are unique in their kind, as there is no known collection of written documents of such magnitude from the Hungarian-speaking region of the 20th century, left behind by a Catholic priest. This paper examines how a non-agricultural person raised by farming parents tried to farm in the 20th century, what were the assets of economic value to him, what were the sources of his income, what material or intellectual assets he used his income for. We will also examine what Mihály Tyukodi and those around him considered wealth to be, what were the measures of poverty and, finally, to what extent the family's lifestyle in the 20th century could be considered a phase of peasant embourgeoisement.

3. Crisis and Record-Keeping: Understanding Mihály Tyukodi's Financial Documentation

A prominent part of written sources comprises collections of personal written texts, which raise at least two questions: firstly, they are an interesting subject for research into the writing habitus, and secondly, they are a record of a bygone era, thus offering insights into how society functioned during that period.

Mihály Tyukodi's first economic records date from 1949 and were made in his first place of ministry, where Mihály was no longer an assistant pastor, but the head of the parish. It was then that he really started his career and was economically independent for the first time. In 1950 the records were interrupted, as Mihály went to prison from 1950 to 1953.[4] The second set of notes, dating 1954-55, is no longer a diary-like narrative text like the previous one, but a series of columns of expenses and receipts in a booklet. The third set of records dates from the 1960s, from 1966 and 1967, a series of data preserved also in a booklet, in which the author recorded income and expenditure for 18 months.

The economic records preserved in the collection of documents under study are not systematic enough to allow us to follow the economic activity of the target person continuously and over the long term, as has been done in some known Hungarian ethnographic research.[5] The research question arises, therefore, that if these records are not systematic, why were these the years in which Mihály recorded his expenditure and income? The question is relevant, as it seems that it was important for Mihály Tyukodi to keep accurate track of his finances in some periods and not in others.

My answer consists of two parts. One reason for the periodicity of the records is that the compiler of the records was not a farmer, small producer or trader who intended to live from the goods he produced or their sale, and therefore it was not necessary for him to keep track of his expenditure and income. On the other hand, a closer look at the years shows that all these years were a crisis for Mihály. Let us take them in turn.

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[3] The books based on the 2400 documents left behind by Mihály Tyukodi are: Szikszai, 2020; Szikszai, 2021a; Szikszai, 2022; Szikszai, 2023.

[4] Mihály Tyukodi was detained by the Romanian communist authorities in 1950. For an in-depth analysis of the Catholic Church's circumstances in communist Romania, refer to: Bozgan, (2000); Tismăneanu, Dobrincu & Vasile, (eds.), (2007); Catalan, (1999), Șincan, A. (2013).

[5] See Mohay 1994, with a detailed historical and scientific overview of the topic (Mohay, 1994, pp. 3-24). It is worth pointing out here that, although the summary work by Tamás Mohay is at first glance methodologically close to the present work in the sense that it analyses written economic records, the present work departs from it in several respects. One of the differences is that in the work referred to the collector took the documents personally from the informant and also used the informant's verbal comments, while in the case of Mihály Tyukodi we had access to the documents left behind by the informant long after his death.

The second half of the forties represented a crisis in that in 1947, for the first time, the young Mihály Tyukodi was faced with the responsibility of running a parish. As a teacher and assistant pastor, he had previously had an insight into parish finances, but he did not make the day-to-day decisions. He noted that he was aware that his new role entailed new responsibilities. From 1947 onwards, therefore, we can assume this motivation behind his efforts to keep records of his managerial activities.

Another observation can also be made here. For this we need to look more closely at the first booklet in which Mihály wrote his notes. These notes, dating from 1949, have survived in an older hardcover booklet. The first part of the booklet already contained similar data written earlier, economic records from 1892 to 1898. It is not clear from the texts who originally owned this booklet in the 19th century, but it is clear that the records refer to the household of a large farmer, as servants and two coachmen are mentioned. It was in this booklet that Mihály began writing his own text in 1947. Apparently, Mihály had consulted the booklet and read the old records. When we consider how he got the idea to record his economic progress, we cannot point to a pattern from his parents' house - he does not mention a single word about knowing anyone in his family or his environment taking notes. His decision to keep records of his farming may have been influenced by this booklet. I think it is safe to say that this set of economic records from 1892 to 1898 served as a model for the young Mihály.

The years 1954-55 were again a time of crisis. Mihály Tyukodi returned home from prison in 1953. He returned to the village where he had served before his years in prison, but his job was in serious trouble. The deacon to whom his parish belonged asked the communist authorities to confirm Mihály in his former position in the village Sâi, but the authorities refused to approve it. Mihály lived in Sâi, the village where he had lived before his years in prison, but he had no official appointment. Eventually, the deacon resolved his application by temporarily appointing Mihály as his own assistant pastor, for which he did not need to ask permission from the authorities. This crisis was resolved when Bishop Áron Márton was released from prison in the spring of 1955, and in the autumn of the same year he appointed Mihály as a theology teacher. Mihály then moved to Alba Iulia, and his economic records were interrupted, as he did not have to make responsible economic decisions in this place.

The third crisis had to do with settling in new stations in the 1960s. In 1965, Mihály left the seminary and served as priest for a few months in Ocna Şugatag, and from August 1967 he worked in Beltiug. 1966-67 was therefore another challenging period, as he was again responsible for taking day-to-day economic decisions, and the new start of the economic diary was linked to this.

As we have seen above, the crisis years were therefore the years when Mihály paid more attention to his finances and wanted to make them clearer for himself, so he kept records. In addition to these three sources, there are other texts in the material which contain information on economic decisions, processes and activities. An important additional source are the letters from the collection, which sometimes contain more detailed descriptions of Mihály's everyday money and goods transactions, his practice of balancing income and expenditure, or his habit of borrowing money. The notes in the letters are not only about the financial situation of an individual, family or community, but also about their relationship to goods and money, the unwritten rules about them, the behaviors they considered appropriate, their goals, their saving practices, their values and interests.

Mihály Tyukodi was not a farmer. He was raised by peasant parents, then he graduated in Catholic theology in 1942 and worked as a religious education teacher, priest and theology teacher. But farming was a lifelong preoccupation of his: while carrying out his priestly duties, he tried to live and farm in the village as much as possible. With few

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exceptions, he served in rural parishes, and by his own admission he preferred to serve in the village rather than the city. It is also clear from his writings that he loved to do this work: he loved living in the village, he loved working on the farm, and he loved tending his vineyard more than anything else. He was able to apply for a driving license at the age of seventy and not give up after the first, second or third failed test, because he planned to drive to his vineyard, far from the village, to cultivate the vines. On May 6, 1981, he wrote in a letter: 'I have much joy in my farmstead. My farm has many joys. I have many pleasures in my vineyard. Hens, ducks and their broods. I often think of Horatius: *Beatus ille, qui procul negotiis paterna rura exercet*: he who cultivates the land away from troubles is the happy one.'[6]

Mihály's farming activities were given greater or lesser importance in his income depending on where he lived and what his financial situation was, but we also see that he could not make a living from farming alone, even when he decided to do so – when already as being retired.

And now let's look at the challenges posed by the research resources. Our first finding with the sources is that the records are not consistent: categories do not appear in the same form in successive months, so it is sometimes difficult to infer the type of expenditure from an abbreviation. Individual items are not recorded regularly either - for example, there are periods when one presumably received a salary every month, but this was not always recorded. Sometimes he only recorded the name of the person and not the basis on which he received money from them or gave money to them. With all this in mind, we will begin to discuss the records for 1947-48, 1954, 1966 and 1967, noting that although these figures only approximate the true situation, they do paint a picture of the conditions at the time.

a. 1947-48

In the first booklet, Mihály writes in narrative mode about his economic situation. In his first few sentences he tells us how much money he had to start with and what his plans were. We learn that he started his career on 9 October 1948, when he had approximately 17,000 lei.[7] He does not say where this money came from. He planned to order their meals from a family in the village, and lists the names of the women who supplied the parish with food in the first months. He adds that in the first month a woman from the village supplied it 'as a favour'. In the meantime, a cantor was added to the group, and a seminarian on holiday joined them, so they had to employ a cook. They bought a litre of milk a day, which cost them approximately 1,000 lei a month. At this point, it is worth looking again at the starting capital: if a litre of milk a day cost 1,000 lei a month, the starting capital of 17,000 lei that he mentions cannot have been that much.

The next change came in January, when they got a cow. It is not clear from the text exactly who received it, how and from whom, but Mihály records only that 'in January it was indicated that we would receive a cow'. They made butter from the milk, sold it and made money. This gave them 'a big boost' because, as he writes, 'the food tasted different'. He mentions in particular how delicious their curdled milk was.[8] As a result, their income and expenditure 'normalized', i.e. they achieved a balance.[9] In the meantime, they received another cow and gave it to a parish priest to keep.

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[6] Our translation, the original text: "Sok örömöm van a majorságomban. Tyúkok, kacsák, és a költéseik. Horatius jár sokszor az eszemben: Beatus ille, qui procul negotiis paterna rura exercet: aki távol a gondoktól földet művel, az a boldog." (Mihály Tyukodi, letter, 6 may 1986)

[7] Although he wrote in Hungarian, he uses the Romanian name for money ("leu", plural "lei").

[8] Our translation, the original text: "Januárban jelezték, hogy kapunk 1 tehenet, mindjárt ki is hozta Tom Mihály kurátorom. Nagyszerűt lendített rajtunk. Más lett az ételek íze." (Mihály Tyukodi, economic note, 1949).

[9] The original text: "Kiadásaink és bevételeink normalizálódtak." (Mihály Tyukodi, economic note, 1949).

Another turnaround came in March, when they were visited by the bishop's secretary. It seems that until then, the small farm had focused exclusively on livestock, but the secretary argued that this strategy was not appropriate and that Mihály should also look at the land. The secretary promised an advance on seeds. The former parish administrator took charge of the land, which they wanted to cultivate with the villagers. Mihály also describes how the people expected to receive 2/3 share for their work, and as the parish promised them less than this, some of them "stirred up tension". In the spring they sowed wheat, oats, barley, potatoes, sunflowers, poppies, corn and sugar cane. Later Mihály also mentions turnips and hemp. Meanwhile, he indicates that a third cow was being added and he planned to send half of the yield in butter to the centre. He notes that the first calf would be his, the second two would be theirs (he doesn't name who), and the rest so in rotation. He started delivering butter in May, with deliveries of 1.5-2 kg. In May, he also recorded that he bought a cart of hay from the teacher for 3,500 lei, which he considered expensive, but he had no choice because there was not enough rain and the pasture was not suitable. In May, he received a loan of 10,000 lei until 1 October, and in the meantime, he got his loan back. He also noted in May that he lent 1.5 liters of sour cream to the wife of an acquaintance. He donated a kilo of the butter to a Romanian engineer because, he wrote, it was his name day.

In March 1949, Mihály told his parents that they were soon to have a fourth cow, and that he was to become a four-cow farmer, which, as the text makes clear, filled him with pride. This comment is very important: the son who works in his first parish does not write to his parents about his priestly duties and achievements, but he is proud of his achievements as a farmer and the wealth he has gained here.

In his booklet Mihály sometimes wrote down the names of people who were at work, working on the parish land. He noted the names of the butter churners separately, which suggests that villagers also went to churn and were paid in butter, according to his entries, in half and half.

In May, he bought 6 goslings and set two hens. At the end of June he hatched 22 chickens. A Romanian woman also gave chickens to him as a gift, and he recorded that three of them had been stolen one night. He complained that the beet had not sprouted, and was replaced by sunflower and beans in another place. Then, at the end of June, he was pleased to write that the new crop had sprouted and the rows were showing. In July and August he kept a record of how much butter he had sold to whom. It seems he was able to sell 3-4 kg of butter a week - he probably produced double that and half went to the churner.

Mihály continued his notes in early October, saying that harvesting had begun. 109 bags of potatoes were harvested. The maize was still being harvested, but there were already 20 bags. He reported that he had sent one of his cows home, presumably this is why he made much less butter in September, only 3 kg. In early October they had 4 piglets. He said the piglets were nice. The farm manager was paid: he received the piglet, a hundredweight of wheat, a hundredweight of grain, and one additional batch is illegible. He would also receive 4 hundredweights of corn, 4 hundredweights of grain and salt. The name of the last item is also illegible, perhaps it is petroleum. From this note we can infer that although the records were made by Mihály and he considered himself a farmer with four cows, the farm was not run by him but by a person in charge who was paid in produce for this work. In mid-October, Mihály paid three instalments of his tax, 2,482 lei each. A fourth instalment of the same amount was still outstanding. He had also paid 1,200 lei in municipal tax.

A letter from the 1940s reveals the difficult economic situation of the Satu Mare region in the post-war years, and exactly where the locals saw the border between poverty and wealth at that moment. In this letter from the 1940s, Mihály's sister wrote that poverty in her village was so great that half the village could not afford to slaughter pigs. The text tells

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us that in this village, the economic situation was considered acceptable when a family slaughtered pigs at the beginning of winter. If the family was better off, they would slaughter several pigs in the same winter, but each family would have liked to slaughter one. The pig slaughter provided the family with the fat for cooking and the meat for the next six months to a year. In addition to the fat, the letters also mention smoked meat, sausages and bacon, all of which were produced during the pig slaughter. Mihály's sister points out that at this time families were so impoverished that they could not save enough money to buy a pig. This small text passage highlights how a community imagines its own – economic – well-being and what is considered by popular opinion to be poverty at a given moment.

The chapter on the 1940s concludes with another interesting story. On 24 March 1949, an acquaintance sent a letter to Mihály from the village Mezőfény. After thanking him for his kind remembrance (the date indicates that Mihály probably greeted him on his name day), he answered Mihály's questions and gave him farming advice. Mihály wanted to farm in his first years of independence, and wanted to try growing new crops. But he needed advice on this, so he wrote to a friend. They mentioned "honey reed", but they probably did not mean sugar cane but sweet sorghum. Gedeon Rásonyi Papp writes in 1943 that the sweet sorghum spread after 1936, after Gaszton Lublováry, a resident of Miskolc, sent 20 grains to Szilveszter Bergendy, then editor of magazine entitled "Gyümölcskultúra" [Fruit Culture], who helped the plant spread within a few years. It was then that it was named "méznád / honey reed" (Rásonyi Papp 1943). There is no indication in the records whether Mihály eventually tried the plant. However, he did not give up the idea of introducing new plants: he tried to grow melons in Beltiug, but his attempts were not clearly successful: in 1974 he complained that his melons did not like the rain, but the vines grew very well. He tried melons later, as he sometimes mentions melons ripening in his garden, and we know that in 1980, when he was living in the village Giungi, he was given some delicious watermelon, yellow and sugar melon seeds by someone.

b. 1954

In 1954, Mihály recorded his income and expenses in a booklet – the income until August, expenses until July. These notes were no longer written in narrative form, as before, but in two columns, side by side, recording expenditure and income. The January 1954 notes show that part of Mihály's income came from his priestly activities: mass intentions[10], baptisms, and church salary. The intentions were partly paid for by the local people, in which case he mostly listed a price of 5-5 lei per intention. On some occasion he wrote 12 lei next to a name, but he did not indicate the number of intentions. In 1954 he usually recorded 1-2 masses per person, and among the names there are three Romanian names: Gheorghe, Virgil, Petru. He received a larger sum from his fellow priest János Dobos, 157 lei for 19 mass intentions that he had to perform.

Income from baptisms in 1954, in brackets the amount of income: January (8 lei), February (one baptism and two initiations[11] paid in one, 17 lei), April (12 lei), May (7 lei), June (40+3+10 lei, and 30 lei for initiation and baptism), July (45 lei for one baptism, 4 intentions and one initiation, and 10+10 lei for baptism). Only one funeral was recorded this year, in June 25 lei for a funeral and a requiem.

In January 1954, Mihály received 82 lei for 60 litres of wine and sold butter worth 25 lei. He also assisted someone in bookbinding – unfortunately, he does not give details of this, but only wrote the name of the village Borlești next to the item, and recorded income of 10

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[10] Mass intentions: masses that people paid for and in which the priest prayed for the intention of the faithful to be fulfilled.
[11] It mentions the initiations only in this year, but it is not clear from the records exactly what this meant.

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lei. Borlești and the book(binding) also appear in the following months, in 1954 for approximately 135 lei. The amount is only approximate because in three cases he received the same amount for bookbinding and mass intention and did not record the sum for each item.

Butter continued to be a source of income for him in the remaining months of 1954: after 25 lei in January, he recorded 146 lei in February, 50 lei in March and 80 lei in April, a total of 301 lei of butter income for the year.

One of the interesting entries in 1954 concerns telegrams. In March Mihály sent a telegram for Joseph's day and paid 5 lei for it, and then in May he sent a telegram for which he paid 15 lei, but here unfortunately he did not record to whom or for what occasion he sent it. The price of the telegram depended on the length of the text, and the fact that he paid more for the telegram in May than in March suggests that he sent a longer text to someone. The data is valuable not so much because of its cost but because of the cultural significance of the communication practice.

As for expenditure: in 1954, only a small amount of expenditure is included which does not cover everyday needs. There are no major purchases or expenditures, and looking at the annual data, it seems that Mihály tried to buy only the most essential items. As for food, sugar, rice, oil appear twice, veal and beef once in the annual list. In May, he gave 10 lei for vanilla - the only time a spice or flavoring other than salt appears on the lists. He also bought soap, needles and ashtrays once, in March. There are, however, some mail-related expenses: in January he bought envelopes for 10.80 lei, in February he bought two pencils for 1.5 lei, in March ink for 1 lei, and in May he recorded an expense of 6 lei as postage. In July he paid 10 lei for photographs. He bought corn for 100 lei in January and gave his brother 400 lei for corn in February. The amounts of money given to family members are regularly present, and these are the larger expenses: as we have just seen, he gave money to one of his brothers for corn in February, another brother 34 lei in January, 200 lei in February and also 500 lei in March, his mother 50 lei in March, his aunt 40 lei for a trip in the same month, and 124 lei to the aunt a month later, also for a trip. He gave 70 lei for a coat in February and 235 in July. He paid a fine on his identity card in April 1954, 35 lei - he does not give details of what happened, one can only speculate whether he lost it or renewed the expired document too late.

c. 1966-67

In 1966-67, he kept the same notes as in the previous booklet. In 1966, in addition to his church salary (1659 lei), Mihály's sources of income were baptisms, weddings, funeral fees, and a state salary (he called it a state allowance, 553 lei per month). Only in December did he record income from farming: in December he had an income of 900 lei from the sale of hay.

The income for January 1967 includes the church monthly salary (1635 lei), the state monthly salary (545 lei), a wedding fee (75 lei), 125 lei from mass intentions and 500 lei from the sale of hay. In the following month, in addition to salaries, he recorded income of 100 lei from two funerals and 300 lei for hay. In March, in addition to salaries, he had income of 240 lei from the sale of eggs. In the following months - until August, while the records last - the only income was from salaries and church services (weddings, funerals).

Between 1966-67, the expenditure side shows a high value tangible asset, and this is no coincidence. Between 1955-65 Mihály worked at the theological seminary and had no particular need for household goods during this period. However, from 1966 he started to work again in a parish and the acquisition of capital goods can be linked to this change.

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In March 1966 he bought a typewriter for 1500 lei. This was a considerable sum, since his church salary at that time was 1659 lei a month. In November 1966, he bought straps, 4 stainless steel knives, 4 forks, 4 small spoons, 4 spoons, a meat shovel, a tray, a cutlery holder and an ashtray, all the items that a household would need. The ashtray was a particular item because he did not smoke cigarettes and was constantly trying to dissuade his close friends from smoking. Two of his brothers smoked cigarettes. By 1966 only his brother the cantor was still alive, but he rarely visited Mihály, so there was no need to buy an ashtray. He must have bought the ashtray with other guests in mind. He also bought a rubber helmet – probably for a bicycle, a luggage rack – probably also for the bicycle, a knife, a rosary and finally an electric iron. The following month he bought a vacuum cleaner for 1000 lei.

In January 1967, he bought a washing machine (1185 lei), then in May a bed, bedside table (1300 lei), duvet (153 lei), blanket (80 lei). A bed would reappear on the list in June, and in August he bought a wardrobe and table (1500 lei), 4 chairs (226 lei) and a stove (950 lei) – the latter probably related to his move to Beltiug. In August, he bought shoe polish (4 lei), toothpaste (3 lei), shaving soap (1 lei), and bluing powder (3 lei). He also bought other small items this year: in February he bought pruning shears (56 lei), a saw (10 lei), a loudspeaker (300 lei), in August a bucket (25 lei). He could not have needed a loudspeaker at home himself, he never wrote that he used one at home, but later it is mentioned that he used one at church. Just as he wrote about the soap he bought in February that he bought it for the church. In April it cost 205 lei to repair his bicycle. Also in April he donated 1000 lei to a church, the entry indicates that it may have been the church where his brother worked.

In May 1967, he gave 500 lei to his sister and wrote that he was giving it for shirts and clothes. This sister often sewed clothes for him – in this case she had to buy materials for Mihály. In February, Mihály bought a pig for 2485 lei.

Food also appears in his 1967 lists: the most common are bread, milk, margarine, sugar, flour, veal (18 lei), other meats (144 lei), noodles (7, 4, 16 lei), and drinks, such as wine and brandy (300 lei) in March, wine (95 lei) in April, beer (105 lei) in June, rum (3 lei) in July, and soda (20 lei) in August. In May, he bought cakes for children (105 lei), but he doesn't go into any more detail than that. Several times he bought maize, maize flour, oats and wheat, and once he wrote next to one of them that it was for the chickens. In May he also bought petroleum, matches and sugar at the same time (20 lei).

The list may seem like a dull enumeration, but there are some purchases where it is worth looking behind the data. One of the entries above says that in June 1966, Mihály Tyukodi spent 105 lei on beer. To better understand the text, let us start from a statement made by Mihály in 1965, when he writes: 'Where do I put my money? I have never gone into a confectioner's shop to eat an ice cream in my life. I have never had a glass of beer to buy for myself. Well, I hardly spend a penny on myself. I'm saving. So where does my money go? I don't know.'[12] He wrote these lines to his sister on 14 February 1965. In his letter he was arguing that he was living a frugal life, but now he had to buy clothes for himself, and he clearly felt he had to justify that. In the justification, he explains that he spends very little and that his spending never involves what he considers to be luxury items, such as ice cream or beer.[13] Here, then, the discourse is an argument in which he distances himself from a comfortable, spending lifestyle and emphasizes his own strict money management and frugal lifestyle.

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[12] Our translation, the original text: "Hát hova teszem a pénzemet? Még életemben be nem mentem egy cukrászdába, hogy egy fagylaltot megegyem. Egy pohár sört meg nem ittam, hogy magamnak vegyem azt. Hát én tényleg alig költök magamra egy lejt. Spórolok. Hová megy hát a pénzem? Nem tudom." (Mihály Tyukodi, letter, 14 february 1965).
[13] I wrote about this in more detail in Szikszai 2020. 163-165.

An examination of Mihály's economic entries, however, adds another dimension to the interpretation. Notwithstanding the above quoted statement, one of Mihály's budget tables includes beer as an expense, since in June 1967 an item called 'beer drink'[14] is listed on the expenditure page, as we have seen, to the value of 105 lei. One could say that, lo and behold, Mihály Tyukodi did buy himself a beer. Before interpreting the text, however, let us bear in mind that in the course of our research we are confronted with information from a variety of sources. One type of information is that which is told to the researcher by the data provider. In our case, this corresponds to the primary disclosures in the texts of letters and memos. The other source of information comes from observation: the researcher not only listens to what the data provider says, but also observes what the data provider does. In our case, however, there can be no observation of the informants, as these documents are about events in the 1950s and 1960s. In our case, what we can do is to compare the information found in different texts. It so happens that the data within each text appears to be contradictory, at least at first glance. However, let's explore how the story described above developed.

As we have seen, the record does not say on what occasion Mihály bought the beer, but the amount of the expenditure is thought-provoking. It is a relatively large amount, not the price of a bottle of beer, which suggests that Mihály bought a large quantity of beer. But why would someone suddenly buy a large quantity of beer?

We can rule out Mihály's personal celebrations. His birthday was on 1 July, which is close enough to the beer purchase in June, but knowing the full documentary evidence, we can safely reject this hypothesis. Mihály never celebrated his birthday, neither before nor after that year. Apart from his sisters, no one ever greeted him on his birthday, nor did they know the date of his birthday. His sisters only greeted him, in passing, when they sent him a letter on those very days. But they did not even sent Mihály a letter or other greetings especially for this day. Instead of his birthday, Mihály used to celebrate his name-day. Everyone knew when to greet him by his name. On his name day, many people wrote to him, and sometimes he was visited by friends and colleagues – yet, this detail offers no assistance in addressing our current issue: his name day was at the end of September, and the beer was bought in June.

We know that in June 1967, Mihály was a parish priest in the village Ocna Șugatag. He moved to Beltiug in the same year, but not before mid-August, where he served for 9 years. In June, therefore, we find Mihály still in Ocna Șugatag, and after knowing the location, it is worth checking whether there may have been a larger celebration in Ocna Șugatag in June 1967. And indeed, in Ocna Șugatag the church feast of St Peter and St Paul the Apostles is on 26 June, and this is most likely the key to the solution. We can reasonably assume that the reason for the purchase of beer was the festive treat for the priests who came to the pilgrimage feast.

And here we can return to his original statement, when Mihály claims that he never consumed beer he had personally purchased. We will never know whether Mihály consumed even one glass of the beer he bought at the time, but it is clear that beer appears in the expenditure, and that was on the table on this festive occasion.

4. The family as an economic unit

The above-mentioned documents, the records of a Catholic priest, are not only about a person, their author, but also provide the reader with information about the society in which the documents were written, about the families, their way of life, their mentality. Mihály

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[14] Our translation, the original text: "sörital" (Mihály Tyukodi, economic note, 1967).

lived far away from his parents and siblings, yet until the 1980s, when his generation retired, they lived as if they were one extended family, even when they moved to distant settlements. While he lived in the settlements like Satu Mare, Sâi, Alba Iulia, Ocna Șugatag, Beltiug, Tășnad, Giungi, and the village Ady Endre, his siblings lived in Căpleni, Carei, Târgu Mureș, Zalău, and one later of them in Hungary. After a while, every summer they held an annual meeting of the siblings, which meant that on a pre-arranged day they would gather and spend the day talking. It was not only the correspondence that bound them together in the intervening period but also the fact that these scattered siblings thought of themselves as a large family and built their strategies accordingly. For example, the care of the children of siblings who had several children was sometimes taken over by the sisters pursuing an ecclesiastical career: they took the children and raised them for years, and Mihály sending monthly sums to these sisters to care for the children. Together they also decided on major investments, such as the renovation of the parental home. They consulted when one or other of the siblings was about to make a major investment, such as buying a washing machine or a sewing machine. They put pressure on each other when they felt that money was going in the wrong direction, for example, when they disapproved of someone wanting to spend money on house renovations instead of buying school clothes for the children.[15] The extended family thus functioned as a unit in which, despite disagreements, major economic and financial decisions were made together.

5. Anthropological Insights from Written Documents

In the 1960s, the accumulation of wealth in backyard goods made possible a second wave of peasant embourgeoisement, or at least this is how Hungarian ethnographic research interprets this period when discussing the economic processes of the Carpathian Basin.[16] Reading the economic documents in Mihály Tyukodi's papers, I wondered whether this process could be observed in the case of Mihály's extended family[17], whether we could speak of peasant embourgeoisement[18] in their case. At the end of the research, my answer is that this process began in this family during their generation but was not completed.

The Hungarian ethnographic literature has extensively researched the concepts of peasant, peasantry[19], here we highlight only two of them. Imre Kovách emphasizes the means of production and the control over economic decisions when he defines the peasantry: "'Peasant' should be understood as a small farmer who does not necessarily own the means of production, but has real control over decisions, their application and implementation" (Kovách, 2010, p. 239). As Mihály Sárkány puts it, peasants are:

> agricultural producers who, in addition to their agricultural production, may also engage in other work (e.g. fishing, handicrafts) and carry out their productive activities in societies in which they have the possibility of owning the labor and tools necessary for their own reproduction, but whose general conditions of work are owned either by the

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[15] For details on joint family decisions, see Szikszai M. 2020. 168-181.

[16] Thus, Tamás Mohay (Mohay 1994. 171.) refers to the sixties.

[17] Some of Mihály's siblings stayed in their native village and worked in agriculture and animal husbandry, some of his sisters became nuns, one brother became a cantor, and as we have seen, he himself became a priest.

[18] For more on the topic, see Erdei, 1987; Kovách, 2010; Laki, 2021. There was a debate about to what extent the social processes observed in Hungary during the seventies and eighties can be considered as embourgeoisement (Laki, 2021, p. 15-26).

[19] See Szabó, 1965; Hoffmann, 1998; Faragó, 1999. Regarding the history of the concept of peasantry and the disappearance of peasantry, for a summary see: Kovách, 2010.

state or by individual persons who, by virtue of their ownership, appropriate part of the goods they produce (Sárkány, 1983, p. 31).[20]

On this basis, we can consider Mihály's parents' members of the peasant class. However, the situation is different for Mihály and his siblings' generation.

In the subsequent sections, this paper investigates whether we can characterize Mihály Tyukodi and his family's situation as one of embourgeoisement, using the criteria outlined by Gyula Benda (1991, p. 169). Benda classifies the changes that can be observed during the process of embourgeoisement into four groups.

The first such change is the change of economic mentality, the emergence of an entrepreneurial mentality, which implies that the traditional peasant becomes a farmer (Benda, 1991, p. 172). However, in Tyukodi Mihály's case, we cannot speak of becoming a farmer: he imagined farming in the model of his parents, in the model of the period of their life when they were big farmers, but this was only an image of an ideal state and an aspiration for Mihály. He was constrained in this by his profession and qualifications, on the one hand, and by the socialist-minded economic establishment, on the other, but it is also very likely that his skills and abilities would not have qualified him to be a farmer. We recall that in 1949, when he was very proud of being a farmer with four cows, he could not actually develop a real farming strategy, and the visit of the bishop's secretary made him realize that, beside livestock, he would have to do something about the land as well. He then hired a competent person to run the farm. And this was still true later: farming was a nice activity for him, but he could never think of it as an entrepreneurial activity. In this sense, Mihály was already too much of a first-generation intellectual and, as such, a good example of embourgeoisement.

The second change can be traced to the level of individualization: the interest in new forms of social and family life accompanies this change (Benda, 1991, p. 172). From the data available to us, we can say that this is not clearly happening in Mihály's micro-environment. This generation insisted on maintaining and operating the previous family structure, even when many of them lived in urban areas and it was more difficult to implement decisions at the extended family level. But while they tried to maintain extended family planning at the cost of conflicts, their way of life did change: those siblings who moved to the city read literary journals and knew foreign languages – Mihály, for example, read French, German, Latin, Romanian and Hungarian. They all had a small library at home, reading novels, poetry and history books. They liked music, meaning classical music and church music. We can say that the conditions of this category were partially met.

The third change relates to the process of becoming a citizen, and the main actor in this process is the individual who has changed from being subjected to a landlord to becoming a member of the nation. For our protagonists, the first few decades of the 20th century were very turbulent in this respect, as they alternated between one state and another during the world wars, and then, when the borders of the country stabilized, they found themselves in a double minority as Swabians assimilated into Hungarians: after the Second World War, they lived as a religious and ethnic minority in the predominantly Orthodox Romanian state. By the mid-20th century, the Swabian farmers living on the former Károlyi

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[20] Our translation, the original text: "(…) a parasztságot most a következőképpen definiáljuk: a parasztok mezőgazdasági termelők, akik mezőgazdasági termelésük mellett végezhetnek egyéb munkát is (pl. halászat, kézműipar), és termelőtevékenységüket olyan társadalmakban folytatják, amelyekben lehetőségük van a saját újratermelésükhöz szükséges munkaerőnek és munkaeszközöknek birtoklására, de általános munkafeltételeiknek tulajdonosa vagy az állam, vagy egyes jogi személyek, akik tulajdonosi helyzetük alapján az általuk termelt javak egy részét elsajátítják."

estates had become first-generation intellectuals with Romanian citizenship, claiming to belong to the Hungarian ethnic group.

Fourthly, Gyula Benda considers the change in lifestyle and mentality to be the area where embourgeoisement can be observed, and this includes family planning, the change in child rearing and urbanization.

The economic records presented in the first half of the study provide the most information on the way of life. In terms of lifestyle, until 1960 Mihály's siblings who remained in the village followed the lifestyle of their parents, farming and rearing livestock. In 1960, on the pressure of the communist authorities, most of them joined the collective farm system, which put their budding individual farming aspirations on hold for good. The other group of brothers and sisters turned to a church career, and, in addition, they obtained diplomas as teachers and nurses. They thus moved away from the parental model.

From the data presented above, we have also seen that a change in material goods took place from the mid-20th century onwards: from the 1950s and 1960s, the goods purchased changed and the use of new material goods spread in the extended family. Electricity was introduced in Mihály's home village in the 1960s. From the mid-20th century onwards, the family bought radios, washing machines and sewing machines, while Mihály bought and used a typewriter, washing machine, radios and tape recorders. From the 1960s onwards, the family also began to use the telephone. Beyond the devices, it is also worth considering the aspect of general literacy: as we have seen, those of Mihály's siblings who had a higher level of education got in an urban environment, regularly ordered and read literary and cultural magazines, regularly corresponded, read books, had a basic musical literacy, and in this they also differed from their farmer-keeper parents and siblings – a distinction that is palpable even when we know that Mihály's father was a member of the local brass band.

When we talk about lifestyle, we cannot omit housing-related issues. In the region of the city of Carei, where this family lived, bathrooms were not a compulsory part of the home in the 1960s. In 1964, Mihály's brother was preparing to partition off a kitchen area from the room where he and his young family lived, and the flat thus created was to be given to an elderly lady, who would then take over the flat she had been using, consisting of a room, a large kitchen and a pantry. A bathroom is not mentioned as part of any of the apartments. In 1979 Mihály was able to renovate a vacant village house he had bought a long time ago in preparation for his retirement, and at that time he added a bathroom, which he saw as a novelty, a step towards modernity.

The career strategies of Mihály and his siblings can also be seen as an aspiration to bourgeoisie, in the sense that they turned away from their parents' peasant-herdsman lifestyle by entering intellectual careers. These young people saw a career in the church as the only way to move away from the peasant lifestyle. Mihály's eldest brother went to theology (and died young as a student), his other brother became a cantor and he himself a priest. Three of his sisters turned to monastic orders, two of them graduated as teachers during their novitiate, one became a nurse. Of the three sisters, one eventually chose a civil life and got married. The other two sisters continued to consider themselves nuns after the banning of the monastic orders in Romania in 1948 and used their nun's names in correspondence. In their case, a shift from peasant life to a working life can be traced[21], as one of them worked as a teacher, later as a sacristan, then in an office, and the other as a hospital nurse.

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[21] Ferenc Erdei indicates that the peasant bourgeoisie "transforms the former peasant farmers and peasant workers towards the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie on the one hand, and towards the working class on the other" (Erdei: 1987: 41).

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However, at the level of their values, they did not fully move away from the lifestyle offered by the city: yes, as intellectuals they read literature and read newspapers, but they did not embrace the entertainment or socialization opportunities offered by the city. Nor did they adapt to the urban lifestyle on a culinary level: they did not like the food from the shops, like the noodles and the meat, but stuck to the food grown in the village and, if they could, they tried to slaughter pigs every year as city dwellers, as was the custom in their home village. They adhered to the religious practices they had been socialized to in their home village as children and later perfected in theology and monastic orders. They also adhered to the concept of the extended family and had a very strong sense of family responsibility. It can be said that peasant values continued to play a very important role in shaping their values and their framework of life, and only later, in the upbringing of their children, were new aspirations discovered. The education of the next generation was of paramount importance, and a great deal of time and money was devoted to promoting their educational advancement. It was believed that education, schooling was an opportunity for children to break out of what was then a less valuable model of life as farmers and herdsmen, and as such was a process towards embourgeoisement.

6. Conclusions

The data for the period under discussion can therefore be interpreted as the beginning of embourgeoisement, but they do not clearly point towards the end of this process. The economic system in Romania made it impossible for a small entrepreneurial class to emerge from the mid-20th century onwards, and the ambitions of this family as farmers remained rather modest. The change in mentality and lifestyle is partial: on the one hand, they embrace certain achievements of intellectualism, not interpreted in too broad terms, but at the same time they cling to such things as the traditional family ties, the culinary customs of their home village, and the values and mentality acquired in their childhood socialization environment form the basis of their values. The change in the means of production does introduce the use of new, modern objects into their value system, the perception of these new objects as values, but the process stops at the level where modern tools replace the tools of the traditional peasant household, no big, spectacular breakthrough occurs at the level of mentality. The mentality of this generation has not yet been radically transformed, but there remains a strong basis of respect for the values of the peasant culture of the peasant farmer-keeper. It could be said that the political system of the 20th century in Romania and the resulting economic and social structure mean that the process of embourgeoisement seems to be a protracted one and will probably only be completed in the next generation.

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HISTORIOGRAPHIC IMAGINARY AND HYPOTHESES OF HEREDITY IN THE CONFIGURATION OF ROMANIAN CULTURAL IDENTITY

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Abstract

This paper analyses the ways in which Romanian culture struggles to forge, at the level of historical and cultural discourse, an identity, a "personality", and a specificity. It observes, within the process of forging its identity through a series of avatars, the discursive strategies through which specificity is revealed as an essential form of national uniqueness as well as the compensatory trends of identity fabrication. The paper also attempts to highlight the forms of historical and literary mystification through which, over time, Romanian culture responded to complexes related to its age, identity, belatedness, heredity, legitimacy, etc. Thus, the analysis reveals that, in essence, all the efforts, complexes and myths through which an identity was negotiated at the level of the histories of literature and Romanian historiographical texts betray, in fact, the same spectrum of the Identity-Otherness dialectic. Romanian culture, like other emerging cultures, was forced, first to survive and, later, in order to have a potential for prosperity, to define itself as a distinct entity by relating to the surrounding cultural reality, its growth and evolution taking place either under the sign of antagonism (i.e. a refusal of allogeneic import), or under that of synchronism (as permeabilization with regard to foreign influence), but, necessarily, as a reference to the Other. Moreover, the paper highlights, at the discursive level, the two main poles that have obsessively polarized the questions of descent and heredity within Romanian culture: its Roman and Dacian ancestries. The nuanced intentions underpinning the cultural need for international recognition by means of belonging as well as differentiation are discussed in the process.

Keywords: identity; Otherness; heredity mythmaking; Romanian historiography; imaginary.

1. Introduction

Given the competitive nature of the geo-political arena, the emergence of modern nations was subject, almost involuntarily, to a Manichean grid that betrays a perpetual conflict between national identity and *Otherness*. Initially, national adversities were translated into annexationist, invasive, usurping, colonial, and hegemonic dynamics, essentially everything that involved the threat to territorial integrity and the destruction of state unity. These, in turn, lead, by summoning the need for defence, to processes of identity configuration, delimitation and barricading by proclaiming not only the right to *be*, but also the right to *be different*. *Pro patria mori* became an axiom alongside the temptation of national ideologies to demonise foreignness.

In this regard, Simona Nicoară conducts an interesting analysis of the term "nation" in *Enciclopedia imaginariilor din România* [Encyclopedia of Imaginaries in Romania]. The author notes that in the Middle Ages, the term was used in a narrow sense to designate the representatives of ethnolinguistic communities from other places:

> The word *natio* appeared in academic language, for example, in the Parisian university environment created in the 12th century. The reception of students from other regions of France or other European spaces led to the need to give them a certain identity, to place them in a "nation". Also grouped into "nations" were medieval merchants who worked in an area other than their country of origin (Nicoară, 2020, p. 144, our translation).[1]

It can thus be observed that the very evolution of the term reveals, within the concept of nation, the fusion of two antagonistic realities: nation as identity and nation as *Otherness*. This paper does not intend to detail the chronology of the formation of nation-states or the history of the concept. However, it will attempt to show that, against the background of Romantic messianism, the modern understanding of the nation-state is being developed, understood from a social, democratic, and legal perspective as well as in the historical-genealogical context of a defining identity based on ethnos, language, culture, and collective memory. The "awakening" of emerging nations and their dislocation from multinational imperial conglomerates feeds the imperative of linguistic, ethnic, customary individuality, reiterated by Vico, Rousseau, Herder, Hölderlin, Fichte, Kant, etc.

2. National Histories, Between Identity and Otherness

In terms of historical mentality, the nation responds to its social, political, and demographic circumstances by projecting its own unity outwards, towards the Other, towards the antagonist. The small European nations have been strengthened by refusing to allow themselves to be satellited or looked down upon by the surrounding powers. The term "historical mentality" also comprises those collective forms of representation and self-representation which, derived from the national imaginary, sum up the hopes, expectations, desires, needs, convictions, behaviours, solidarities which feed the need for unity and coherence. These attitudes and desires emerged in the 19th century in the form of national consciousness and spirit. One of the common denominators through which the ideal of unity as a bastion against alien adversity is achieved is the stamp of heredity, of millennial unity, and one of the conditions of millennial unity is continuity:

> The formation of each nation has been perceived as a restoration of a unity lost over the centuries. The consciousness of a pre-existing unity is anchored in history, going back to its most distant origins. […] The family tree of the nation goes back to the Golden Age of beginnings, considered to be the foundation of unity (Nicoară, 2020, p. 151, our translation).[2]

To demonstrate their unity, coherence and the antiquity that corroborates them, the historical mentality and collective consensus of European nations converge towards the elaboration of commonplaces, of myths that exemplify the origins crowned by glorious ancestors, by national heroes and the subsequent triumph of their own nations in the context of historical harshness. National historiographies are the preferred frameworks in which demonstrations of this kind flourish, endowed with both a foundational and a pedagogical, instructive role. Beyond the legitimising historical stakes, the above-mentioned texts set in motion the mnemonic mechanisms of the collective consciousness in which past models are

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[1] Original text: "Cuvântul *natio* a apărut în limbajul universitar, de pildă, în mediul universitar parizian creat în secolul al XII-lea. Primirea unor studenți proveniți din alte regiuni franceze sau din alte spații europene a condus spre nevoia de a le atribui o anume identitate, de a-i încadra într-o 'națiune'. Tot pe 'națiuni' au fost grupați negustorii medievali care își desfășurau activitatea într-un spațiu diferit de țara de origine".

[2] Original text: "Formarea fiecărei națiuni a fost percepută ca o restaurare a unei unități pierdute de-a lungul secolelor. Conștiința unei unități preexistente se ancorează în istorie, coborând până la originile ei cele mai îndepărtate. [...] Arborele genealogic al națiunii coboară până la Vârsta de Aur a începuturilor, considerată a fi fondatoare a unității".

sedimented as examples of future threats to national integrity. This creates a series of places of memory, repositories of myths, stories, founding legends, cultural, linguistic, and ethnographic heritage through which national identity is consecrated and celebrated. The glorious past, marked by unity and continuity, is matched by a destiny, seen through the prism of the spiritual and moral dimension of a nation. Culturally, the nation is like a historical being, following a messianic path that is the result of an indisputable past.

Beyond the socio-political and geographical factors that determine the formation and evolution of a nation, the concomitant need to define it as a distinct cultural entity has been identified. The nation, as a geo-political reality, is not self-sufficient. To truly exist, to define itself and to distinguish itself from similar realities, it must configure an identity for itself, a way of being and a purpose, the modes of identity construction essentially summing up the way in which the nation conceptually represents itself as a historical, social, cultural, and literary entity. Shaping the identity of the modern nation-state often takes place at a textual level (i.e. national histories, histories of national literatures, literary or political writings, etc.) and is necessarily a matter of negotiation, since any form of self-representation implies a reference to *something* or *someone*. This negotiation takes place between identity and Otherness, which means that national identity projections are almost always constructed based on a binary schema, on the polarity between *Self and Other*, with their variety of avatars: good/specific/ethnic versus evil/foreign/barbaric. Given that, in parallel with the factual existence of a nation (as a geo-political entity), its identity is shaped in an ideational sense, we can turn our attention both to the ways in which the latter is managed and to the modulations and distortions that intervene in the process of self-representation, seen here as subjective discourse.

It is known that the nation inescapably exists within history. It is interesting to see how exactly it is configured as a historical reality or as a narrative of formative chronology. We can certainly speak of a historiographical imaginary that is revealed in the texts of literary historians, and we can distinguish at its heart one of the main modes of identity narration. Far from constituting a disinterested account of the events that mark the genesis, evolution and configuration of a nation, the content of histories betrays those hallmarks of conscious or unconscious auctorial subjectivity, the parasitic nuances and various distortions that appear in the process of writing.

The Romanian case is no exception. The crystallisation of a coherent identity is the result of the same process of preferential calibration between ethnogony (understood here in close connection with mythogenesis) and ethnogenesis. Conceived somewhere at the crossroads between myth and reality of events, Romanian histories assertively perpetuate common assumptions about national birth, origin, specificity, and threats. The process of "legend-making" thus operates on the various levels of a national identity, leading to a reordering of the course of history in the collective mind (while retaining a grain of truth) and projecting representative pictures that create a kind of national synopsis. We thus encounter mythical-heroic characters (sometimes hyperboles of flesh-and-blood persons, at other times totally absent from documented history), founding fathers, Daco-Roman ancestors and founding legends as well as those "ogres" of history meant to describe the allogenic factor, foreign invasions, annexationist powers, and various other forms of relating to *Otherness* (through the priming of an instinct of self-definition through difference). Its avatars are transposed into as many sketches of secular friends or enemies, barbarians or good neighbours that prompt us to assert the existence of an imaginary of *Otherness* carefully linked to that of one's own identity.

It became clear that the legitimating assertions concerning not only the right to be, to exist independently but also the right to be different are based on the governing ideas of

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unity, continuity, and origins. The desire to fabricate and signal a social, political, cultural, and even geographical identity entails the reiteration of ethnogonic myths.

The need for unity (understood above all as stability) is matched by the need for uniqueness, the latter being the main factor in building a specific spiritual constellation. Far from being constituted *in a vacuum*, nations share common linguistic, historical, religious, and cultural roots beyond their political and geographical boundaries. As for the origins of the Romanians (like those of other European peoples), it can be noted that they are the result of processes of ethnocultural settling and linguistic merging that took place in the wider area of Eastern Romanity. A linguistic and customary matrix of identity is thus created, to which is added, over time, the stamp of other linguistic communities whose influences are stratified throughout the territory in question.

From the cradle of common origins, myths and legends about the founding of the Romanian Principalities emerge similar to the ethnogonic narratives of other neighbouring peoples, sprouts of a common folkloric substratum that narrates ritual hunting expeditions (for example, Dragoș's "dismounting").

3. Hypotheses of Heredity: Majestic Dacians and Noble Romans

Similar changes occur in the laboratory of myths about heredity and descent. Sensing the link between antiquity and legitimacy, or rather between antiquity and a certain form of nobility, historiographical discourse (as well as histories of Romanian literature, as will be seen in the following) has oscillated between Latin descent and the "hearth" of ancient Dacia. In the Romanian lands, through the *descriptio* genre and the works of the Greek-Catholic elite, the main coordinates of genesis and continuity are thus established, configuring one of the facets of a self-image mainly represented historically and linguistically. The self-proclamation of the Romanians as direct descendants of Rome and heirs of Western Latinity establishes an important landmark in the constellation of national identity. The theory of Latinity advocated by Micu, Șincai and Maior, as well as the linguistic and cultural efforts of the Școala Ardeleană [Transylvanian School] to proclaim the purity of Roman origins are all ways in which 18th- and 19th-century Romanian society resorted to the past as a mark of national specificity.

Another important axis of identity is the space of ancient Dacia as an original territory, to which the fertile imaginary attributes mythical-heroic dimensions and a generative role. The stability acquired through a spiritual existence defined between these two poles functions, at least at the level of the collective mind, as a shield against secular enemies but also against the hereditary ones that have threatened the country over time.

The 17th and 18th centuries constitute, in Romanian culture, a period dedicated to proving the Romanian's Roman origin and Latin descent as a herald of ethnic individuality, as an illustration of noble character, a mark of antiquity and therefore of identity legitimacy. Late humanism in Romanian culture is, from a certain point of view, enslaved to a compensatory and demonstrative impetus bound to reveal a unity and a historical continuity perceived as heritage.

Based on the analysis that Mircea Martin dedicates to Călinescu's text, *Istoria Literaturii Române de la Origini până în Prezent* [The history of Romanian literature from its origins to the present], a tendency to deepen or rather to lengthen the historical thread to find deeper roots for Romanian culture than those of Latinity can be identified. By attempting to establish the coordinates of the genesis of the Romanian people in a history of literature, Călinescu undertakes a rhetorical revival of abyssal ancestries that have the same role of attesting to a kind of immemorial authenticity and historical authority as the recourse to Latin descent:

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Neither historical data nor ethnological examination confirms our youth. We are basically Getae, and the Getae are one of the oldest indigenous peoples of Europe, contemporary with the Greeks, the Celts and the Italic groups that predated the Roman Empire. This Roman Empire found an ancient state here, fought it and took it with difficulty. As always in the long tumultuous history of our country, due to its geographical location, we have endured the blows, absorbing the allogenic element (Martin, 1981, 2018, p. 76, our translation). [3]

Thus, by virtue of a primordial Getic nucleus, the Romanian people fall within a succession of the Roman spirit, which, in Călinescu's view, it has a duty to perpetuate naturally, without "anachronistic mimicry". "Being Romanian" is defined explicitly at the crossroads between an ancient territorialism and "foreign Romanesque models", its relationship with the latter being one of natural correspondence and not mimicry, since the Romanian people's very antiquity would make such mimicry impossible (and anachronistic).

Călinescu emphasizes the fundamental importance of the Latin background from which a form of historical dignity associated with the Romanian culture is derived. However, the language draws its strength from the mixture of heterogeneous values. Although Latinity is unequivocally defined as the dominant element in Romanian culture, there is also the hypothesis of heterogeneous potentialities against the background of Latin clarity, those immixtures of the Thracian-Slavic background which, together with the strongly represented literary Dacian element, constitute unused creative possibilities. Consequently, a second generative space emerges, in which the Romanian culture defines its identity: ancient Dacia, a land of the unknown and the fabulous, a place imagined as being almost outside history, but with deep mythical resonances. The "absolute" Dacia takes shape in literary terms in a setting that is often invented or borrowed, sometimes imagined at the crossroads with other spaces, such as that of the Northern Olympus or the Asian world.

The argument of age is reiterated and detailed by Călinescu from the vantage point of literary, or rather linguistic, achievements. Analysing the case of Creangă, the critic postulates the existence of a secular, anonymous amalgamation from which the author benefits and by virtue of which he can speak the language of millions of peasants: "Creangă is one, but 'one expressing all', he took the national language to new heights of expressiveness, but he would not have succeeded without the anonymous secular amalgamation that preceded him" (Martin, 1981, 2018, p. 107). The strength of this type of argument lies more in the idea of placing authors within a line of descent, themselves bearers of an ancestral value base, than in the identification of a causal relationship between talent and literary success. The emergence of an author such as Creangă would not have been possible, in this line of thought, without the antiquity of the language and without the expressive values that derive from this characteristic:

Writers like Creangă can only appear where the word is old, difficult to submerge, almost equivocal, and where experience has condensed into still formulas, all known to

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[3] Original text: "Nici datele istoriei, nici examenul etnologic nu confirmă tinerețea noastră. Noi sîntem în fond geți, și geții reprezintă unul din cele mai vechi popoare autohtone ale Europei, contemporane cu grecii, cu celții, cu grupurile italice anterioare Imperiului Roman. Acest Imperiu Roman găsea aici un stat vechi, se lupta cu el și-l răpunea cu greu. Ca întotdeauna îndelungul zbuciumatei noastre istorii, prin așezarea geografică, noi am suportat izbirile, absorbind elementul alogen".

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everyone, so that the literary work is almost only a rekindling of elements that have been melted by use (Martin, 1981, 2018, p. 108, our translation).[4]

Also, in Călinescu's conception, antiquity can be demonstrated by a sort of "physiognomy" of agrarian peoples and by certain character or personality traits: conservative, defensive, and regressive tendencies. The clear indifference of the Romanian peasant to the surrounding peoples is undeniable proof of an unwavering and calm awareness of his own antiquity in relation to the more or less recent appearance of other peoples: 'We are true natives of impressive antiquity'[5] (Călinescu, 1941, p. 886, our translation). The antinomy also seems to take shape at the behavioural level, as Călinescu distinguishes between the defensive, silent, retractile, indifferent autochthonism of ancient peoples and those new, migrant peoples that are 'noisy, gesticulating, with a great aptitude for 'civilisation''[6] (Călinescu, 1941, p. 887, our translation).

Given Spengler's view that the emergence of a civilisation is, in fact, the result of an entire evolutionary process, Călinescu associates civilisation with the last phase in the development of culture, namely its "old age" and challenges its association with indices of youth or recentness. Mircea Martin (1981, 2018) considers that the author avoids characterising Romanian culture as oriental precisely in order not to dissociate it, from a spiritual point of view, from Europe or the West, to which it is linked by echoes and original virtualities. Another essential influence of the West on Romanian culture is the evolution of literature which, in Călinescu's view, coincides with the discovery of the West. One mention is, however, important: although the discovery of literature facilitated by contact with the West may be considered a recent phenomenon in Romanian culture, this does not suggest the recentness of Romanian culture any more than the absence of literature in any way mirrors the absence of culture.

Analysing the way in which Romanian culture defines itself in relation to a Dacian ancestral background and noble Latin descent, it can be observed that ancient Dacia is recovered, through books, in the context of Romanticism and in the atmosphere of nation-building marked by the revolutionary impetus of creating an identity by challenging the hegemony of empires. Until then, however, the birth of the Romanian people was supported by an exclusively Latin thesis, perpetuated and transformed into a programme by scholars such as Dimitrie Cantemir or Nicolae Costin and members of the Transylvanian School. The Dacians are claimed as ancestors in the Romantic context of the 19th century, as a form of rejection of the dominant tradition of Latinism, in militant, utopian writings that convey nostalgia for a mythical, original past, characterised by unity and moral purity. The importance of the archaic ethnic substratum attributed to the Dacian space lies in postulating a significant difference between the Romanian culture and other neo-Latin peoples. Basing the discourse of identity on the idea of national specificity is a movement typical of the nation-states in the period of European Romanticism and is based on appealing to the collective memory of the folkloric substratum understood as a repository of the past.

Imagining the Dacians leads to the illustration of stereotypes of the "barbarian", the bearer of pure original axiology, the representative of a civilisation that was not touched by allogenic elements. The construction of the framework for integrating Dacia and its inhabitants into national history, both historiographically and in literature, is based on

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[4] Original text: "Scriitori ca Creangă nu pot apărea decît acolo unde cuvîntul e bătrîn, greu de subînţelesuri, aproape echivoc şi unde experienţa s-a condensat în formule nemişcătoare, tuturor cunoscute, aşa încît opera literară să fie aproape numai o reaprindere a unor elemente tocite de uz".
[5] Original text: "Suntem nişte adevăraţi autohtoni de o impresionantă vechime".
[6] Original text: "Popoarele noi migrante sunt dimpotrivă sgomotoase, gesticulante şi au o vădită predilecţie pentru ʿcivilizaţie'".

highlighting stereotypes that respond to the need for association with origins marked by morality, purity, and heroism:

> The general tendency is to fix an image, which will persist for a long time, loaded with all the stereotypes present in ancient works, taken as such, as long as they served to build national consciousness and ideology. The need for prestigious origins characterised by heroism (and possibly tragedy - the figure of King Decebalus), which individualise the Romanians, develops the picture of the "moral barbarian", warrior and believer in immortality. The Dacians thus join, with their own profile and semantic baggage, the Romans in the gallery of the founding ancestors of the nation, of the national epic in the making (Florea, 2020, p. 35, our translation)[7].

As protagonists of the founding national myth, the Dacians are reconstructed in the collective imagination in the form of schematic, stereotypical arrangements, which are, however, detached from factual reality. The scientific recovery of Dacian civilisation contrasts the mythical image of an ahistorical space, designed in such a way as to correspond to the different representational needs of Romanian culture. The image of ancient Dacia works as a substructure of Romanian culture insofar as it helps to highlight, through the thesis of the inheritance of a glorious culture and epoch, characteristics, and values (heroism, morality, faith, hardiness, industriousness) contrasting with the unconventional realities of Romanian culture.

The second essential element that defines Romanian culture as a culture of legacy is the culture and civilisation of classical antiquity, which evokes an idealized image of ancient Rome. Rome is a common place for the Neo-Latin peoples and is a catalyst for ethnic identity, guaranteeing, through its supposed superiority and civilising action, the noble character of the cultures that descend from it:

> At the level of the collective mind, this sustained interest in the heritage of classical antiquity has gradually led to the imposition of an idealized image of republican and imperial Rome as the source of most of the structures, practices, and concepts that define modern European culture and civilisation. Consequently, the gradual expansion of the Roman Empire over vast areas of temperate Europe, northern Africa and the Near East, and the consequences of this expansion for the conquered populations as well as those in the surrounding territories, have long been interpreted in terms of the supposed civilizing mission of an inevitably superior culture (Egri & Rustoiu, 2020, p. 51).

Ancient Rome thus becomes an interpretative model that takes on ideological values in several empires in the medieval or even modern periods. Considering themselves the rightful heirs or continuators of a superior civilisational framework, the Byzantine, Russian, British and German Empires reiterate Roman symbols in their own quests for asserting authority. The idealised image of Rome thus underpins the mythology of the origins of many modern European nations, illustrating, at a social and political level, the association with a prestigious past and the organic continuity of an ancestral space. Against the backdrop of the dismantling of feudal structures of social and identity consolidation, the myths of Latin descent act as factors of social and political cohesion.

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[7] Original text: "Tendinţa generală este de a fixa o imagine, care va persista mult timp, încărcată cu toate stereotipurile prezente în operele antice, luate ca atare, atâta vreme cât serveau la construcţia conştiinţei şi ideologiei naţionale. Nevoia unor origini prestigioase caracterizate de eroism (şi, eventual, de tragism - figura regelui Decebal), care să-i individualizeze pe români, developează fotografia 'barbarului moral', războinic şi adept al credinţei în nemurire. Dacii se alătură astfel, cu profilul şi bagajul semnificant proprii, romanilor în galeria strămoşilor fondatori ai naţiunii, ai epopeii naţionale în curs de constituire".

Just as the space of ancient Dacia is defined chronologically as a glorious era from which lessons and models can be drawn, the space of ancient Rome inspires the creation of mythical genealogies 'that start from real or legendary founding heroes or the existence of a clearly defined ancestral space from a historical, ethnographic and linguistic point of view, which has allowed an uninterrupted evolution of the nation'[8] (Egri & Rustoiu, 2020, p. 54, our translation).

The existence of two ethnogonic versions in Romania can be observed: on the one hand, the Latinist strand of the myth, dominant during the Renaissance and among the Enlightenment scholars of the 18th century, by virtue of which the Romanians are decreed official descendants of the Romans, and on the other hand, the autochthonous strand of the myth, in which the Dacians become the unique and exemplary ancestors of the Romanians, while the Roman occupation is considered to be only a passing episode, albeit with linguistic consequences, but not in terms of an essential change in national identity:

> This version of the myth emerged in the Romantic period of the 19th century, and was later revived first in the interwar period, and then in the Communist nationalism of the last decades of the 20th century, and still has effects to this day (Egri & Rustoiu, 2020, p. 56, our translation)[9]

Affinity, in the course of history, with one of the two versions, depends on the social and cultural needs of the period in question. Interest in the pre-Roman stage of national identity is thus fuelled on the one hand by the need for a national specificity which the Latin origin no longer satisfied, given that it was a common element of several European nations, and on the other hand by the need to contrast inherited character traits (the image of brave, noble Dacians) to Roman imperialism:

> This attitude can partly be explained by the Romantic authors' preference for exemplary heroes, original myths and ancient traditions, but also by a reaction against Roman imperialism, perceived as an *avant la lettre* version of the domineering policy of the Habsburg Empire (Egri & Rustoiu, 2020, p. 61, our translation).[10]

The interest in Latin descent as a fundamental episode in the historical evolution of the nation (illustrated by events such as the conquest of Dacia by Trajan or the essential role of the Romans in the genesis of the Romanian people) finds its explanation in the need to assert an authority fuelled by Roman superiority, which in turn attests to an exceptional identity background of the Romanian nation which, although it has faced unfavourable allogenic factors throughout history, is certainly capable of progress. The middle way, which still exists today in some history or even Romanian literature textbooks, is illustrated by the fusion of the two spaces, by the birth of the Romanian people in a Dacian-Roman, collaborative version.

The cultural and even spiritual identity of the Romanians must be determined beyond the certainties of genesis, unity, and continuity and in relation to the two great areas of cultural, linguistic, political, and religious influence: East and West. As powerful

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[8] Original text: ″care pornesc de la eroi fondatori reali ori legendari sau existența unui spațiu ancestral clar definit din punct de vedere istoric, etnografic și lingvistic, care a permis o evoluție neîntreruptă a națiunii″.

[9] Original text: "Această versiune a mitului a apărut în perioada romantică a secolului al XIX-lea, fiind ulterior resuscitată mai întâi în perioada interbelică, iar apoi și în perioada naționalismului comunist al ultimelor decade ale secolului XX, având încă efecte până astăzi".

[10] Original text: "Această atitudine poate fi explicată parțial prin preferința autorilor romantici pentru eroii exemplari, miturile originare și tradițiile străvechi, dar și printr-o reacție împotriva imperialismului roman, perceput ca o versiune avant la lettre a politicii dominatoare a Imperiului Habsburgic".

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representations of *Otherness* (it remains to be seen whether they can be defined as beneficial or destructive), both areas give rise to oscillating affinities and perplexities in the collective mind. Confronted with the description of the "Western race with Eastern habits" and affected, on the one hand, by the consequences or, rather, the spectre of the long Ottoman occupation and the Phanariot regime in the Principality and, on the other hand, by the danger of the Western mirage and the loss of identity through the adoption of a *modus vivendi* ill-suited to its national specificity, Romanian culture tries to highlight those elements of the two cultures that could benefit it.

An interesting analysis of the founding mythologies in the Romanian space is proposed by Lucian Boia (1997, 2011) in *Istorie şi Mit în Conştiinţa Românească* [History and myth in Romanian consciousness]. The historian identifies three neuralgic points in the historiographic composition of identity: origins, continuity, and unity, by virtue of which a perspective on the "stranger", on *Otherness* is formulated.

Legitimisation through recourse to origins is a stage common to all forms of community, from early to modern nations. The deeply ideologized question of origins is a nodal point in which the consciousness of a community is constructed. Far from representing *a priori*, an axiomatic, objective reality, origins represent a choice in which a specific ideological background and the "agenda" of a community come together. They are not, in Boia's view, correct or incorrect, but they illustrate a specific vision of history from a particular vantage point in the present. The founding myths that irrigate Romanian consciousness represent, in their turn, the personalization of quasi-universal categories, aiming at justifying the present through the past and, therefore, through its origins, and of inculcating coherence into the time axis thus created. Based on the principle of external interventions, exploited through their potential to propel initially amorphous or empty spaces into existence, origins are essentially *ex nihilo*, fundamentally new creations. Once created, the foundation is personified by the introduction into the narrative of an exceptional character, who confers archetypal nobility, transcendentality and sacredness. The origins acquire, even in their later, secularised interpretations, a mystical significance that eternalises them and elevates them above history. Two of the founding myths that polarised and later unified the debate on the origins of the Romanians are the aforementioned Roman and Dacian myths. The Roman founding myth marks the beginning of the modern era, positing the rise of the Romanian Principalities as a continuation of the original founding act, namely the "rise" of Trajan. With the departure of Romanian historiography from the Slavonic stage, the cultural-historical landmarks move towards the epicentre of Rome and Roman origins, a strong argument in favour of the individuality of the Romanian Principalities which, once thus framed, invest themselves with prestige and nobility. The extreme perspectives, such as that of the members of the Transylvanian School, who argued for the exclusive nature of the Latin influence in the formation of the Romanian people, were, however, confronted with the problem of the Dacian element and its existence or contribution. The members of the Transylvanian School tried to explain the disappearance, absence, or non-participation of the Dacians in the formation of the Romanian people either by their extermination, by their expulsion from Dacia or by civilisational incompatibility, i.e. their being unfit for fusion (Petru Maior, for example, develops a whole line of reasoning designed to explain why Roman nobles would not have married or procreated with female Dacian barbarians). Due to their Roman filiation, the Romanians appeared to the West to hold an equal position, acculturation in their case being not a loan but a return to their origins, to the civilisational matrix of the West.

During the Phanariot reigns, historiography in the Romanian Principalities opens up to the potential of a Daco-Roman fusion. The transition of the view of the Dacians from

being an undesirable element to representing the epitome of the spirit of freedom and sacrifice is manifested especially within the Romantic revolutionary generation, for whom Dacian virtues were admirable and worth following. Sacrifice for the fatherland, the courage to choose death over slavery, and the example of Decebalus are all elements through which the Dacian background is heroised. The Romantics contribute to the illustration of the Dacian theme, not necessarily as a founding element but rather as a mythical and prehistoric ancestral background whose bravery has a powerful echo.

The synthesis between the Roman and the Dacian elements occurs with the historical events that consolidate the Romanian space as an independent entity: the foundation of Romania, its independence, and the proclamation of the Kingdom. Therefore, the argument of Roman descent as a seal of nobility and purity is no longer a critical position to be supported. Romanian historiography began to recognise the Dacian background as a founding element and to reconcile the Western sources, by virtue of which the Romanian people were related, along Latin lines, to the "sister nations" and the indigenous sources, namely the Dacians. In his work entitled *Istoria Românilor din cele mai Vechi Timpuri până la Moartea Regelui Carol I* [The history of Romanians from the earliest times until the death of King Carol I], Constantin Giurescu raises certain questions:

> Some of the popular beliefs, the incantations, the old folk remedies, must have an ancient origin. Is our "wake", in the archaic form in which it still appears, in some remote corners of the country, like Vrancea, a form that shows joy rather than sorrow, with masks, with games, with jokes, a legacy of that time? (Giurescu, 1943, p. 61).[11]

The combination of the Dacian and Roman contribution to the formation of the Romanian people thus begins to be illustrated in the areas of etymology and archaeology, but also at the poetic level.

The question of continuity is, to the same extent as that of origin, a "burning question" of Romanian historical consciousness. While discussions on ethnogenesis seem to ask the question "Who do we come from?", those on continuity focus on the circumscription of the geographical area of Romanian existence, thus on the question "Where do we come from?". The hypotheses diverge and, in Boia's view, run the risk of inappropriate exaggerations, such as that of the extension of the Romanian people over a significant part of Central and South-Eastern Europe or its positioning south of the Danube, 'completely outside the country where they live today'[12] (Boia, 1997, 2011, p. 189, our translation). Political continuity is of similar interest, historiographically, as ethnic continuity. Noting the perpetuation in time and space of a Romanian element that is not self-sufficient and that has been subject to various foreign rulers, is not an optimal solution. Added to this is the complex of "backwardness" felt by Romanians, the millennial lack of a Romanian state and, therefore, of a political tradition that can be compared to that of its neighbouring nations.

In addition to the tendencies of exaggeration or disagreement with reality that he reveals in the construction of the avatars of the Romanian space, Boia notes the overestimation of historical means to the detriment of linguistic ones and the recourse to archaeology in elucidating the problem of continuity. This can only be inaccurate since the formation of the Romanian people is ineluctably linked to the emergence of language, and if

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[11] Original text : "O parte din credințele populare, din descântece, din leacurile băbești, trebue să aibă o străveche origina daca. Să fie „priveghiul" nostru, în forma arhaică în care apare el încă, în unele colțuri retrase ale țării, ca în Vrancea, forma care arata mai de grabă bucurie decât întristare, cu măști, cu jocuri, cu glume, o moștenire a acelei vremi ?"

[12] Original text: "cu totul în afara țării unde trăiesc astăzi".

the discovery of vestiges attests to the continuity of life, it does not necessarily support Roman continuity, but rather that of the population in general.

An essential archetype in identity building is unity. One of the strongest manifestations of the ideal of unity in the geo-political arena is consolidated at the level of nation-states emerging in the 19th century. The nation thus becomes the central concern of the entire historical process, and national sentiment becomes an essential value. In the Romanian area, there is a polarisation of the historical perspective between the desire to discover the argument of unity in the past and the accusation of the past's lack of national solidarity. Regardless of the perspective, the Romanian national idea prevails, valorised either as a glorious past or, anecdotally, as a history of shortcomings. In the second half of the 19th century, the need arose to scientifically substantiate or argue the unity of peoples and, more recently, of nations having their own destiny and moral and spiritual traits. Thus, the analysis of the psychology of peoples appeared as a fertile ground for a nation like Romania, which has achieved unity late and with difficulty. The need to define unity within national borders and, at the same time, to illustrate those elements by which the Romanian people distinguish themselves from other peoples is combined with the desire to elucidate the inferior position of the Romanians in relation to the West and the solutions that would guarantee a future in keeping with the brilliance of their origins.

In his lucid analyses in *Din Psihologia Poporului Român* [From the psychology of the Romanian people], the sociologist Dumitru Drăghicescu (PhD candidate at the Sorbonne, under the coordination of the well-known sociologist Émile Durkheim), illustrates some of the ways of self-representation and of relating to *Otherness*. Viewing Romanian culture and society as the result of a mixture of peoples (Dacians, Greeks, Romans, Scythians, Gauls, Cumaeans, Goths, Huns, Slavs, Hungarians, Turks, Russians, French, etc.), the author tries to identify the mark that each influence leaves on national spirituality. In periods of independence from foreign powers, the "Romanian soul" is marked by 'a hard-working, steadfast will, at the same time violent and prudent, and by a simple but vigorous and systematic intelligence, a lively imagination, nourished by a very deep religious feeling'[13] (Drăghicescu, 1907, p. 203, our translation). However, while historical-political traumas such as the Ottoman domination caused 'the loss of positive attributes, the destruction of the will and the unbending character of the Romanian people, the destruction of the Romanian reigns and the frequent change of rulers'[14] (Drăghicescu, 1907, p. 218, our translation). The sociologist's method is in keeping with the spirit of the moment. The Romanian soul is the culmination of the ethnicities that participate in or influence the Romanian synthesis. Therefore, to define the Romanian spirit, it is enough to put together the Romanic, Dacian and Slavic characteristics and to adhere to the hypothesis of psychological determinism:

> A people of shepherds and less so of ploughmen, the Romanians were cruel and violent. Having a will of iron, being stubborn, impulsive, often self-controlled, often unrestrained and changeable, they had to be bold beyond measure, courageous, undaunted by death, and inspired by the spirit of freedom and courage, which most often also divided them, seldom allowing them to unite. Disciplined and organised or undisciplined and anarchic, depending on the circumstances, both tendencies were ingrained in their souls from the cradle, for they had inherited both from their particular ethnic origins. The intelligence of the Romanians, in this age, should have been very rich, in any case it was lively, bold, and easy-going, it evinced a sense of generality and organization and a bent for

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[13] Original text: "voinţă harnică, statornică, în acelaşi timp violentă, dar prudentă şi printr-o inteligenţă simplă, dar viguroasă şi sistematică, o imaginaţie vie, hrănită de un sentiment religios foarte adânc".
[14] Original text: "pierderea însuşirilor pozitive, nimicirea voinţei şi neatârnării poporului român, punerea domniilor române la mezat şi prea repedea schimbare a Domnilor".

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observation from which comes humour and mocking satire (Drăghicescu, 1907, p. 179, our translation).[15]

Just as there are formative, constructive influences, there are, in Drăghicescu's view, also influences that have altered the character of the Romanian people, such as Turkish or Greek influences. While the East is demonised and considered deeply harmful because it instilled attitudes such as laziness, carelessness, resignation or fatalism, the combination of the qualities inherited from the Dacians, Romans, Slavs and the West brings out the best in Romanians. The sociologist's argument clearly leans towards Western and French spirituality, which creates a fertile ground for interwar autochthonous contestations. The historical marginality of the Romanians, whether viewed sarcastically or taken at face value, becomes the premise of a timeless Romanian spirit: 'What is there to criticize if this is who we are? What is there to criticize if we don't want to metamorphose into Westerners anyway, but only want to remain Romanian?'[16] (Boia, 1997, 2011, p. 900, our translation). Romanian spirituality is clearly outlined in the vision of writers such as Blaga, Vulcănescu, and Călinescu, while other interpretations have regionally delineated the psychological and spiritual characteristics of Romanians. We briefly mention here the works of Ibrăileanu (*Spiritul Critic în Cultura Română* [The critical spirit in Romanian culture]) and Lovinescu (*Istoria Civilizației Române Moderne* [The history of modern Romanian civilisation]), who distinguish between two types of spirituality: Moldavian and Greater Wallachian. While Ibrăileanu dissociates based on socio-historical determinism, Lovinescu starts from psychological and racial considerations and distinguishes between the creative propensity of Moldovans by virtue of their contemplativeness and the pragmatism of the people of the mountains. For Boia, the danger of ethnopsychology lies precisely in the freedom it offers in drawing any kind of conclusion, which can prove both the inconsistency and the homogeneity of the Romanian nation.

Constantin Rădulescu-Motru's work entitled *Pshihologia Poporului Român* [The psychology of the Romanian people] is also indebted to ethnopsychology. The writer sees in the Romanian mentality a group consciousness, or rather a herd mentality. Influenced by the crowd, by what others say, the Romanian appears to Motru to have a gregarious soul, lacking in self-sacrifice, in a state dependent on tradition and circumstances. An essential distinction must be made between gregariousness and solidarity, since the latter concept, which is completely absent in the case of the Romanian people, presupposes self-knowledge and the harmony acquired by virtue of this knowledge, while the former illustrates the mechanical passivity of young peoples, susceptible to being influenced, to giving way to imitation, to a lack of resilience in the face of the Other:

> We imitate like sheep the deeds around us and only show energy when we are in a group. In war we fight willingly, for there we stand shoulder to shoulder, but in professional work we are careless, for here each is left to his own duty. We have not the courage of our opinions, when it comes to defending them individually, but we are the most

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[15] Original text: "Popor de păstori și ceva mai puțin de plugari, Românii erau cruzi și violenți. Având o voință de fier, încăpățânată, impulsivă, adesea stăpână pe sine, adesea neînfrânată, schimbătoare, ei au trebuit să fie îndrăzneți peste măsură, curajoși, nepăsători de moarte și însuflețiți de spiritul de libertate și de neatâmare, care cel mai adesea și dezbina, arareori le îngăduia să se unească. Disciplinați și organizați sau lipsiți de disciplină, anarhici, după împrejurări, amândouă aceste porniri erau sădite din leagăn în sufletul lor, căci pe amândouă le moșteniseră de la neamuri etnice deosebite. Inteligența românilor, în această epocă, ar fi trebuit să fie foarte bogată, în tot cazul ea era vioaie, îndrăzneață, scăpărătoare, avea simțul generalității și al organizării și aplecarea spre observație din care rezultă umorul, satira batjocoritoare".

[16] Original text: "Ce mai este de criticat dacă așa suntem noi? Ce mai este de criticat dacă oricum nu dorim să ne metamorfozăm în occidentali, ci vrem doar să rămânem români?"

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susceptible people, when it comes to speaking in a group, and as a group (Rădulescu-Motru, 1937, 1999, p. 44, our translation).[17]

Motru criticises the volatility with which Romanian society goes through nationalist crises without self-examination and giving in to the temptation to blame other cultures for its shortcomings. However, what the author calls "gregariousness" turns out, in retrospect, to be a shield against the potential dissolution caused by the differentiation of personalities. Only in this way, Motru believes, have Romanians managed to maintain the unity of their language, their nation and their culture. The force of imitation becomes a catalyst in the face of adverse circumstances, and the form of existence as a group and not as individuals has enabled the Romanian people to face threats successfully. However, in the face of the future, gregariousness will no longer be enough because as things begin to change, the Romanian people will need a new soul, crystallised in an original culture, presided over by strong individualities.

In the search for the Romanian soul, the Other cannot be ignored. It is part of an archetypal structure of the community imaginary, regardless of the people under scrutiny. Romanian history reacts to the presence of *Otherness* either from the isolated angle of a rural community or from the perspective of a space influenced by foreign masters and models. Whatever the case, the distinction between Romanians and "the others" is strongly felt, either in a favourable sense or as an attack on national values. Although the pressure of foreigners on the Romanian territory is demonstrable and historically attested, it is hyperbolised at the level of the imagination, generating the complex of the besieged fortress that idiosyncratically marks Romanian mentality. The country's history is, in palimpsest, the history of centuries-old struggles for ethnic, spiritual, and state survival. While the Romanian people remain identical to themselves, the role of the enemy has a changing cast, ranging from the Ottomans to the Hungarians, to the Greeks or to the entire Eastern space. The myth resulting from the struggle for independence fulfils, not only at the level of historical discourse but also at the literary level, the triple function of highlighting the heroism and courage of the Romanians, of justifying the historical gap through the need to counter countless aggressions, and of illustrating the essential role that the Romanians played in defending the West from the Ottoman invasions, by virtue of which the West's duty towards the Romanians is also claimed.

The truth is, however, that Romanians are part of a European cultural area that has simply been left behind. It is, however, understandable that in the face of an immutable reality, the answers should be sought elsewhere.

For Drăghicescu, the degeneration of the Romanian people is produced along Oriental, especially Ottoman, lines. The explanation varies, from ethno-psychological and social considerations to observations of a vestiary nature. Not only Turkish corruption and sloth but also the specific type of clothing that suggests to the sociologist a lazy, superficial lifestyle of torpor and uninterrupted rest are to be condemned:

> Even if our forefathers had wanted to break away from their life of insensitivity, of sleepy torpor and laziness, even if they had wanted to wake up and work, to start doing something, these garments would have prevented and discouraged them. With wide,

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[17] Original text: "Imităm ca oile faptele din jurul nostru și nu arătăm o energie decât când suntem în grup. La război ne luptăm voinicește, fiindcă acolo suntem umăr la umăr, dar la munca profesională suntem neglijenți, fiindcă aici fiecare este lăsat pe seama datoriei sale proprii. Nu avem curajul părerilor noastre, când este să ni le apărăm fiecare în parte, dar suntem poporul cel mai susceptibil, când este să ne rostim în grup, și ca grup".

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long, split sleeves that hinder and paralyze the hands, it is not possible to be active and energetic (Drăghicescu, 1907, p. 340, our translation).[18]

With westernization, two competing myths appear in Romania. The French myth, embraced by the Romanian elites who look to their Latin "sister" in the West, is recognisable both in the aforementioned work by Drăghicescu, for whom the closeness to the French soul implies a clarification, smoothing and brightening of the Romanian soul, and in Pompiliu Eliade's remarkable study, *De L'influence Française sur L'esprit Public en Roumanie* [On the French influence on public spirit in Romania], in which the author considers modern Romanian civilisation to be a result of French contribution. Eliade considers that, before the contact with and subsequent influence of the French, the Romanian countries existed neither for history nor for civilisation. Therefore, contact with France cannot be a rebirth, but a birth in the true sense of the word. For more than a century, the French myth played a role in shaping Romanian culture, contributing to the formation of the intellectual elite. The German counter-myth, the second great Western landmark in Romanian culture, emerged in the second half of the 19th century, with the end of a period of political effervescence and the need for a new balance. While some intellectuals appreciated the French order, harmony, and balance, criticising the chaos and confusion of the German intelligence, others found solutions in German culture in line with the aspirations of the Romanian people. As the choice of an influential minority, the German myth constitutes a cultural and political preference for men of culture like Titu Maiorescu, P.P. Carp or Mihai Eminescu.

Conclusion

Nations, as identity projections, were initially constructed as narratives of genesis, evolution, maturity and finally decline, by means of organic images and by assuming a profoundly typological and (often Manichaean) characterological grid. These narratives allowed for the subsequent distribution of villains and heroes roles: "Indeed, the story could be cast in different generic forms, and assume the shape of a divine comedy, a Bildungsroman, a drama of destiny, or even a national Golgotha" (Neubauer, 2004, p. 9).

The process of recovery or fabrication is matched, as the case may be, by a complementary process of adjusting national histories with an illustrative role in order to preserve the coherence of an ideal profile and to eliminate elements that could destroy the integrity of the epos. At this point, it is interesting to recall Ernest Renan's statement about the creation of a nation:

Oblivion, and even historical error I would say, are an essential factor in the creation of a nation, and so the progress of historical studies is often a danger to nationality. Historical investigation, in fact, sheds light on the acts of violence that have occurred at the origin of all political formations, even those whose consequences have been most beneficial (Renan, 1882, 1997, p. 27, our translation).[19]

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[18] Original text: "Chiar dacă ar fi vrut strămoşii noştri s-o rupă cu traiul lor de nesimţire, de toropeală adormită şi de trândăvie, chiar de ar fi vrut ei să se trezească şi să lucreze, să înceapă ceva, îmbrăcămintea aceasta i-ar fi împiedicat şi i-ar fi descurajat. Cu nişte mâneci largi, lungi şi despicate, cari împiedică şi paralizează mâinile, este peste putinţă de a fi activ şi energic".

[19] Original text: "L'oubli, et je dirai même l'erreur historique, sont un facteur essentiel de la création d'une nation, et c'est ainsi que le progrès des études historiques est souvent pour la nationalité un danger. L'investigation historique, en effet, remet en lumière les faits de violence qui se sont passés à l'origine de toutes les formations politiques, même de celles dont les conséquences ont été les plus bienfaisantes".

The recovery process works insofar as it is doubled by a creative effort which, by transforming the nation into a collective character, assigns to it an appropriate representation in the field of imagined communities and a coherent, causal history that conforms to the panegyric image.

The appeal to cultural forefathers such as the Roman Empire or the Dacian Kingdom as a significant argument for originality, translated here as national specificity, is also part of the same discussion of forms of representativeness. The discussion of a nation's hereditary substrate is carried out as an emphasis of autochthony, which, however, is based on the paradox of the common cultural heritage of the East-Central European area, nurtured, to a large extent, by the same topos, due to the permeability of linguistic barriers and topographical proximity, so that the argument of originality becomes everyone's and at the same time nobody's, due to the difficulty of identifying the historical-cultural origin of one's cultural specificity.

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History

THE SWEDISH FREEMASON LARS VON ENGESTRÖM
AND HIS DESCRIPTION OF TRANSYLVANIA

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Abstract

This study highlights one of the oldest and most beautiful bridges between the Kingdom of Sweden and the Romanian Lands in the 18th century. The analysis concerns Count Lars of Engeström, freemason, rector of the University of Lund, diplomat, and envoy of the Kingdom of Sweden in Vienna within the Habsburg Empire. In this capacity, he was able to obtain valuable information about the uprising led by Horea, Cloşca and Crişan in Transylvania in 1784. It was a rebellion that shook the reign of Emperor Joseph II. For this reason, its retaliation was commensurate. Thus, recounting a dramatic episode from the pre-modern history of the Romanians, Lars von Engeström left to posterity a beautiful fresco of Transylvania. He spoke about ethnic and confessional diversity, about the Romanian Roma, about the people living here and their problems. There is no definitive information confirming that he actually visited Transylvania. Nevertheless, the famous Swedish diplomat remains the greatest Northern European scholar to write about this 18th century Transylvanian uprising which was unique in its intercontinental resonance and had significant repercussions in the Swedish press of that era.

Keywords: Lars von Engeström; Freemasonry; Transylvania; Romanity; Horea's uprising of 1784.

1. A Diplomatic Freemason and Scholar in the Service of his Nation

The biography of one of the most famous Freemasons of the 18th century, Count Lars von Engeström (1751-1826), is remarkable. The famous Swedish statesman and diplomat was, in fact, the only scholar in Northern Europe to write during the Age of Enlightenment about Transylvania and about Horea's uprising of 1784. As is well known, this dramatic moment in the history of the province had an intercontinental resonance (Edroiu, 1976), and Count von Engeström distinguished himself as its erudite chronicler.

But before this moment, which brought him closer to the Romanians and their history, the story of Lars von Engeström's life and work is marked by many significant stages. In 1793 he became an honorary member of the Royal Academy of Sciences, History and Antiquities. As diplomat and scholar, he was Foreign Minister of the Kingdom of Sweden between 1809-1824, and Rector of the Lund University between 1810-1824.

The Swedish authorities sent him to Vienna between 1782-1787, to Warsaw between 1788-1792, to London between 1793-1795, and again to Vienna in 1795. At the end of his diplomatic career, he was elected member of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences in 1810 (Cristea & Edroiu, 2001, pp. XI-XXV).

From his personal life we know that he was the son of Bishop Johan Engeström and Margaret Benzelstierna, daughter of Archbishop Jacob Benzelius of Bureätten. He also had seven brothers: Jacob, Jonas, Gustaf, Johan, Maria Beata, Ulrika and Adolph Engeström. After completing his law studies at the Lund University at the age of 19, he decided to work in the chancellery of King Adolf Frederik.[1]

He initially worked at the Kingdom Archives for 12 years. He came here on the recommendations of his uncle, Secretary of State M. Benzelstierna, and of his brother Jacob von Engeström who at that time was a high official of the Kingdom of Sweden. Lars von Engeström was recommended to work in the archives as it was seen as a good gateway to a future career in the Royal Chancellery. Like his young colleague F. W. Ehrenheim, he showed great dedication to the service, and he maintained a keen interest for the Royal Archives throughout his life (Svenskt Biografiskt Lexicon)[2].

Then, having gained the confidence of the political authorities of the time, he was allowed to begin his diplomatic career. In 1782, as mentioned above, he was sent as an envoy to the Habsburg Empire in Vienna and then to Warsaw. He had to ensure that Poland would side with Sweden against Russia in the so-called Russian War of Swedish King Gustav III (1746-1792).

In November 1787, after five years at the Swedish embassy in Vienna, Count Engeström was appointed chargé d'affaires in Warsaw. This was an extremely important position as the Kingdom of Sweden's break with Russia became more and more imminent. Lars von Engeström skilfully penetrated the upper echelons of Polish politics. He also gained early access to influential Polish circles and played a prominent role not only in social life but also in Polish domestic politicy (Svenskt Biografiskt Lexicon).

One of the reasons for his ample networking was that Lars von Engeström, as a renowned Freemason, was able to build up valuable relationships. One of his closest friends was Count I. Potocki himself, who was Grand Master of the Polish Freemasonry. With the outbreak of war between the Kingdom of Sweden and Russia in 1788, Count vom Engeström was given the task of organising resistance against the Russian influence in Warsaw mainly represented by the Russian foreign minister, Count Stackelberg (Svenskt Biografiskt Lexicon).

2. The Russo-Swedish War of 1788-1790

The Russo-Swedish War lasted from 1788 to 1790. The conflict was actually initiated by King Gustav III himself for domestic political reasons. At that time King Gustav III faced strong opposition from the nobility and the Riksdag (parliament), and he felt that in case of war even his opponents would have to support him (Svenskt Biografiskt Lexicon).

Certain Western powers, including Britain, Prussia, and the United Provinces, were alarmed by Russia's numerous victories in the Russo-Turkish War of 1787-1792. Consequently, they advocated for a conflict in Northern Europe to divert the attention of Russia's Catherine II from the southern theater of operations (Svenskt Biografiskt Lexicon).

Therefore, at the instigation of the Western powers, Gustav III concluded an alliance with the Ottoman Empire in the summer of 1788. At the same time, a tailor of the Royal Opera House in Stockholm was ordered to prepare Russian military uniforms. These were to be used during an exchange of fire at Puumala, a Swedish outpost on the Russian-Swedish border (Svenskt Biografiskt Lexicon).

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[1] Adolf Frederick (1710-1771) was King of Sweden from 1751 until his death. He was the son of Christian August of Holstein-Gottorp and Albertina Frederica of Baden-Durlach. Between 1727-1750 Prince Adolf Frederick was Prince of Lübeck and Administrator of Holstein-Kiel during the minority of his nephew, Duke Karl Peter Ulrich. He became Peter III of Russia. In 1743 he was chosen as heir to the Swedish throne by the Hut faction in order to obtain better terms in the Peace of Turku with Empress Elisabeth of Russia, who had chosen her nephew as her heir. Adolf Frederick became king on 25 March 1751.

[2] See Lars von Engeström's biography: https://sok.riksarkivet.se/sbl/mobil/Artikel/16158.

This fake attack, which caused a scandal in Stockholm, gave King Gustav III an excuse to declare war on Russia. The original Swedish plan was to launch a naval attack on Sankt Petersburg. As one Swedish army advanced through Finland, a second army, accompanied by a Swedish flotilla, would move along the coast of the Gulf of Finland. Then a third army, embarked on the Swedish fleet, was to land at Oranienbaum and march on towards Sankt Petersburg (Svenskt Biografiskt Lexicon).

The Russian Baltic fleet, commanded by Samuel Karlovich Greig, met the Swedish fleet in the battle of Hogland on 17 July 1788. The battle was tactically indecisive and prevented the Swedes from landing. The news of this strategic failure increased the unpopularity of the war in Sweden and the revolt of the Finnish officers. For its part, Denmark declared war on Sweden in order to honour its alliance treaty with Russia (Svenskt Biografiskt Lexicon).

A Norwegian army briefly invaded Sweden, but after several battles it was decided to sign the peace of July 1789 thanks to the diplomatic intervention of Great Britain and Prussia. This led Denmark to declare its neutrality in the Russo-Swedish conflict. At sea, the Russian and Swedish fleets met again in Öland on 25 July 1789. The battle was again undecided. Ground operations in Finland were reduced in intensity (Svenskt Biografiskt Lexicon).

In addition, Gustav III's opponents wielded considerable influence, compelling the king to heavily rely on his navy. In 1790, Gustav III devised a new landing plan, this time near Vyborg, but the Swedish fleet suffered defeat in the Battle of Reval on May 13th.

Under these conditions, the Swedish fleet retreated to Vyborg Bay, where the Russian fleet under Vasili Yakovlevich Chitchagov blockaded it for a month. On 4 July 1790 the Swedes broke the Russian blockade in the gigantic battle of Vyborg Bay, but the price they paid was high. They lost 7 ships of the line and 3 frigates to only 2 Russian ships. Part of the Swedish fleet retreated to Sveaborg for repairs, while the rest took up a defensive position. On 9 July, an impetuous Russian attack ended in disaster in the battle of Svensksund. The Russians lost 7,400 men and more than half of their ships of the line (a third of their entire fleet).

This great Swedish victory forced Russia to negotiate peace, which the Grand Chancellor signed on 14 August 1790 the Treaty of Värälä. The two countries thus returned to their pre-war situation. All in all, the Russo-Swedish War of 1788-1790 was almost insignificant for the rulers of the two countries. Catherine II found all this a minor distraction as most of her ground forces were engaged in the war against the Ottoman Empire. She was also more concerned with the revolutions in Poland and France. For King Gustav III, war was the ideal way to solve his internal problems.

3. Further Diplomatic Missions and Family

On several occasions in this tense wartime context, Lars von Engeström strongly expressed his disgust and fear of Russia. He saw it as a constant threat to the external and internal freedom of small neighbouring states. He was particularly sympathetic to Poland, which at the time was fiercely defending itself against Russian aggression. Gustav III's war against this country became a veritable national crusade for the Count of Engeström (Lagerqvist, 2003, pp. 107-126).

When King Gustav III of Sweden was assassinated in the Stockholm Opera House in 1792, Lars von Engeström was recalled to Sweden. On this occasion, the government of King Gustav IV Adolf (Lagerqvist, 2003, pp. 107-126) appointed him Chancellor of the Court and at the same time a member of the Committee for General Affairs of the Kingdom.

It was not long before he fell out of favour with Gustav Adolf Reuterholm, who held a powerful position in the government, because of the latter's intransigence. In 1793, Count Engeström was removed from political office and sent to London as Sweden's envoy. He remained there for two years, after which he was appointed ambassador to Vienna. He never

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took up the post, however, as the Austrian government declared him *persona non grata* because of his sympathies for France. Lars von Engeström was repeatedly suspected of Jacobinism and accused of being sympathetic to French culture and people (Lagerqvist, 2003, pp. 107-126).

Between 1796-1798 he decided to remain in Germany without a diplomatic appointment, and between 1798-1803 he was sent to the Prussian court. After that, he received no further government commissions and moved to his estate in Prussian Poland. He had acquired the estate through his marriage to Rozalia Drya-Chlapowska in 1790.

In 1876, Elof Tegnér decided to publish two volumes of Lars von Engeström's memoirs, which became very popular at the time (Tegnér, 1876). The diplomat began his memoirs by emphasising that 'I entered the service with a firm determination to earn my way to the highest dignity in the kingdom, and that by hard work, for I was not prepared for intrigues'[3] (Tegnér, 1876, our translation).

Among other things, these notes show the enthusiasm with which Count Engeström devoted himself to the leadership of Lund University, where he was Rector. He established several new departments, but also supported the existing ones, such as the department of Natural History. He was also a great promoter of academic activity, showing complete empathy and openness towards both teachers and students. Despite his many efforts, he did not succeed in creating a secure material and economic base to ensure the development he so strongly promoted (Tegnér, 1876, pp. 11).

Teachers' salaries were generally very low and there were no fixed stipends fees for new positions. For this reason, academic life during Count Engeström's reign was often described by many as a "brilliant mess". The university's most famous professors, such as Tegnér, who later published his memoirs, were forced to leave for financial reasons.

Lars von Engeström showed great esteem and respect for the scholars and scientists of his time. He tried to support young writers as much as he could and offered scholarships to those with a vocation for teaching. To others he facilitated the publication and distribution of literary and scientific works. He also took a keen interest in archaeological research.

In this respect, he established cordial relations with great names in the field such as J. Hallenberg and N. H. Sjöborg from Lund (Tegnér, 1876, pp. 15). They were concerned with the supervision and preservation of the Swedish nation's antiquities. Because of his passion for archaeology and history, Count von Engeström commissioned E. G. Geijer (Tegnér, 1876, pp. 20) to write a comprehensive history of the Kingdom of Sweden as early as 1812. In fact, Lars von Engeström had been collecting vital sources on the country's past since his days at the Kingdom Archives.

During his many missions, he devoted a great deal of time to organising and studying older diplomatic documents and preserving those acquired on the spot. He also sought to promote the publication of historical documents of importance for his country's past (Tegnér, 1876, pp. 31). One of his closest collaborators was J. G. Liljegren, who was both a scholar and an archivist.

He was given a privileged place at the Kingdom Archives and the Royal Library by the Count of Engeström. While there, he was responsible for cataloguing and preserving important works and manuscripts. With Liljegren's assistance, Lars von Engeström made significant contributions to Swedish archival history. Together they saved entire collections of documents from destruction, which later became part of the national archival heritage (Tegnér, 1876, pp. 45).

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[3] The original form of the Swedish text is: "Jag gick in i tjänst med en fast beslutsamhet att förtjäna min väg till den högsta värdigheten i riket, och det genom hårt arbete, för jag var inte förberedd för intriger."

Lars von Engeström's last years in Sweden were marked by political adversity, serious illness and family difficulties. Of his four children, three daughters died young, while his only son, Gustaf Stanislaus von Engeström, caused him many disappointments. His frivolity left him with enormous debts, which were eventually paid off by Lars von Engeström himself.

Count Engeström's Polish-born wife was unhappy in Sweden, so he decided to resign his post and move to his wife's home country. When he left, he said goodbye to all his colleagues from Lund University in a familiar and touching way, embracing each of his professors. He died at his Polish estate in Jankowice (a few kilometres west of Poznan) and was buried in a church chapel at Ceradz.

He was remembered by his contemporaries as a scholar of unusually tall and imposing stature, giving a strong impression of manhood and power. He had handsome features, a good-natured and straightforward manner, but was often irascible and harsh. Many remembered him as a particularly pleasant conversationalist, but not easy to bear in moments of anger (Tegnér, 1876, pp. 60).

In the exercise of his duties, Count Engeström was subject to much criticism, especially in the last years of his life. Many considered him despotic, capricious and lacking in objectivity. Others, younger subordinates saw him as a great personality whom they revered for his culture and scholarship.

4. Count Lars von Engeström's Collections and Library

It was on the basis of these qualities that Lars von Engeström compiled not only his memoirs, but also his literary collection, which covered practically all fields of research, especially history, using letters and documents from his extensive archive. To these were added other sources that highlighted his outstanding education in fundamental fields such as international law, statistics, geography and political economy (Tegnér, 1876, pp. 72).

During his extensive travels, he seized every opportunity to enrich his collections. He constantly added books, as well as maps, engravings and art works, to his vast library, which became a reference center in Northern Europe. Many of these rare publications he acquired in Vienna, Berlin, Paris, Poznan and Hanover (Tegnér, 1876, pp. 90).

Before departing the Kingdom of Sweden permanently, Count Lars von Engeström made many arrangements for his personal library collection. According to his will, all new acquisitions were to be maintained in good condition and made accessible to those interested in utilizing them for the advancement of the kingdom's culture and history. He also requested that the library be placed under the supervision of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, with the librarian obligated to submit an annual report on their activities (Tegnér, 1876, pp 102).

After nearly 60 years as a private library, Engeström's library became state property. In 1864, Count Engeström's grandson obtained permission to sell the house and to donate the collections to the Royal Library and National Museum in Stockholm. However, due to space constraints, the approximately 15,000 books and manuscripts that arrived at the Royal Library had to be accommodated in rented premises. The books, which had been greatly reduced in number by the sale of duplicates, were then incorporated into the rest of the library's holdings. The manuscripts were kept as a separate unit (Tegnér, 1876, pp. 119).

Of all his personal manuscripts, the most valuable for the pre-modern history of Romania is his diplomatic correspondence from his time as ambassador in Vienna. It is this correspondence that provides valuable information not only about the Horea, Cloșca and Crișan rebellions of 1784, but also a veritable fresco of Transylvania and its realities in the second half of the 18th century.

This fresco was painted with great erudition by the Count of Engeström. If we look at Transylvania through his eyes, we will discover many truths told with detachment and

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objectivity. Thus, here, we find the necessary motivation to reflect further and delve deeper into all that occurred in this province during the Age of Enlightenment and Reason.

5. The Romanity of Romanians and Count Lars von Engeström's Description of Transylvania

The diplomat Count Lars of Engeström was one of the first Swedes to emphasise, in the fourth quarter of the 18th century, the Romanity of the Transylvanian Romanians and the Latinity of their language. A century before, between 1656-1658, the Swedish pastor and diplomat Conrad Iacob Hiltebrandt had passed several times through Transylvania, providing valuable data about the people he encountered and the events he witnessed (Mehedinți-Beiean, 2012). Yet Engeström's remarks provide the perspective of an enlightened scholar and Freemason concerning the origins and history of peoples, as well as the significant importance attributed to education and schooling.

The Viennese diplomatic correspondence of Count Lars von Engeström is kept at the Swedish National Archives in Stockholm (Fond Lars von Engeström). This collection contains 312 and 382 pages of archive documents signed by Lars of Engeström himself. They include minutes and reports from the years 1784 and 1785 (Cristea & Edroiu, 2001, pp. 6-7). Among all these sources, it is worth mentioning the report of 11 May/5 April 1785, in which the Count of Engeström speaks about the Latinity of the Romanians and regarding the rest of the population, specifically the other ethnic groups residing in the multiethnic province of the Great Autonomous Principality of Transylvania under Habsburg suzerainty (Cristea & Edroiu, 2001, pp. 6-7).

The renowned diplomat points out and highlights the important fact that Transylvania, like Hungary, was not inhabited by a single nation, but by several peoples of different origins, distinguishing themselves by their own mother tongue. The Transylvanian nations were of two kinds: the rightful masters forming the privileged nations and the tolerated nations. The privileged nations were the Szeklers, Hungarians and Saxons (Germans), and the tolerated nations were the Romanians, Armenians, Greeks, Jews, Poles, Russians, Bulgarians, Serbs, Slavs and Gypsies (Cosma, 2018; Cosma, 2015).

As for the Romanians, Count Lars von Engeström indicates that they were of Roman descent, tracing their origins to the colonists dispatched to Dacia by Emperor Trajan following the conquest of the country. Regarding the language spoken by the Romanians, Count Engeström notes that it bears similarity to Latin, which proves theirs genetic link to the Romans (Cristea, 2001, pp. 143-170).

Despite their noble origins, in Engeström's description, most Romanians are depicted as serfs (iobaggiones, coloni), predominantly working on the estates of the Hungarians, but also on those of the Saxons and Szeklers, unable to depart without the consent of their masters.

Count Engeström's description of the Romanians is not lacking in physical features: 'Romanians are not very tall, but they are sturdy, strong and well-built, they have black hair and burning black eyes, they are agile, courageous, presumptuous, vindictive, enterprising, superstitious, because they are ignorant and therefore fanatical as soon as it comes to faith [...]'[4] (Cristea, 2001, pp. 143-170, our translation).

In this account, it is easy to see the emphasis that the famous diplomat places on the idea of Romanianness, on the origins of the Romanians, on their national characteristics, but also on the need for enlightenment through culture as a solution to ignorance and superstition. In 1785, when Count Engeström advocated for the Latinisation of the Romanians in

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[4] The original form of the Swedish text is: "Rumänerna är inte särskilt långa, men de är robusta, starka och välbyggda, de har svart hår och brinnande svarta ögon, de är smidiga, modiga, övermodiga, hämndlystna, driftiga, vidskepliga eftersom de är okunniga och därför fanatiska så fort det handlar om tro […]"

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Transylvania, the cultural movement known as the famous 'Transylvanian School' [Școala Ardeleană] was in its mature phase.

As early as 11 October 1754, the Romanian Greek-Catholic Church Bishop Petru Pavel Aron signed the founding decree for the establishment in the Central-Transylvania town of Blaj the first systematic and modern schools, having Romanian as the teaching languge. These schools, which Bishop Aron considered to be 'fountains of the gifts', formed the first Enlightenment core of the Romanian culture (Câmpeanu, Dörner & Varga, 2008). [5]

This primary phase of founding schools was followed by the phase of elaboration and affirmation of the national ideology promoted by the 'Transylvanian School'. This marked the historical and philological victory of the Latinist movement, based on the significant contribution of the four leading figures of the Transylvanian School: Samuil Micu (1745-1806), Petru Maior (1756-1821), Gheorghe Șincai (1754-1816) and Ioan Budai Deleanu (1760-1820).

The great representatives of the 'Transylvanian School' authored significant works written not only in the Latin language, the 'lingua franca' of the time, but also in the vernacular Romanian language, approaching the first systematic grammar books of the Romanian language (Samuil Micu, *Elementa linguae Daco-Romanae sive Valachicae*, 1780; Petru Maior, *Ortographia Româna și Latino-Valachica una cum Clavi qua Penetralia Originationis Vocum Reserantur* [Romanian and Latin-Valachian spelling], 1819, the translation into Romanian of the Gospel (Gheorghe Șincai, *Biblia din Blaj* [The Blaj Bible], 1789; Samuil Micu, *Biblia* [The Bible], 1795), the first Romanian ABC (Gheorghe Șincai, *Abecedar* [Abecedarian]) and school books of geography, logic, philosophy (Samuil Micu's *De obște gheografie* [Geography for the people], 1795; *Loghica adecă Partea cea Cuvântătoare a Filosofiei* [Logic, i.e. the eloquent part of philosophy], 1799; *Legile Firei, Ithica și Politica sau Filosofiia cea Lucrătoare* [Laws of nature and politics or working philosophy], 1800), a Romanian-Latin dictionary (Samuil Micu, 1806)[6], Romanian history books (Gheorghe Șincai, *Hronica Românilor și a mai multor Neamuri în cât au fost ele Amestecate cu Românii, cât Lucrurile, Întâmplările și Faptele Unora față de ale Altora nu se Pot scrie pre Înțeles, din mai multe Mii de Autori, în Cursul a Treizeci și Patru de Ani Culese* [Chronicle of the Romans and other nations][7], 1811; Petru Maior, *Istoria pentru începutul Românilor în Dachia* [History for early Romanians in Dachia], 1812), church history (Petru Maior, *Istoria Bisericii Românilor atât a cestor Dincoace, Precum și a celor Dincolo de Dunăre* [The history of the Romanian Church both on this side and on the other side of the Danube], 1813), dictionaries (Ioan Budai Deleanu, *Lexicon Românesc-Nemțesc și Nemțesc-Românesc* [German-Romanian and German-Romanian lexicon], 1818), translations of law books (Ioan Budai Deleanu's translations into Romanian: *Rândueala Judecătorească de Obște* [Judicial order for the people], 1787; *Pravila de Obște asupra Faptelor Rele și Pedepsirea lor* [The public law on evil deeds and their punishment], 1788; *Carte de Pravilă ce Cuprinde Legile asupra Faptelor Rele* [Book of laws for bad deeds], 1807; *Codul Penal* [Penal code]; *Codul civil* [Civil code], 1812).

The philological masterpiece of the *Transylvania School* is the so-called *Lexicon of Buda*, published in 1825 as the first quadrilingual dictionary of the Romanian language: *Lesicon románescu-látinescu-ungurescu-nemțescu quare de mai multi autori, in cursul' a trideci, si mai multoru ani s'au lucratu* [Romanian-Latin-Hungarian-German lexicon that has been worked out by several authors during 30 or more years].

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[5] See also the syntheses: Fugariu, F. (Ed.). (1983). *Școala Ardeleană*, vol. I–II, critical edition, notes, bibliography and glossary by Florea Fugariu, introduction by Dumitru Ghișe and Pompiliu Teodor. București: Edit. Minerva

[6] The original form of the title of the dictionary is ''Dictionarium valachico-latino-germanico-hungaricum''.

[7] English translation: 'The chronicle of the Romanians and of other peoples insofar as they were mixed with the Romanians, as the things, events and facts of the one regarding the other cannot be written as if everyone understands them, from several thousand authors, gathered over the course of thirty-four years'.

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6. Enlightenment and Swedish Freemasonry

Count Engeström's connection with ideas such as the origin of a people and his preoccupation with the idea of the enlightenment of the people highlights above all the specific cultural environment of the country of origin in which he consolidated his professional vocation. At the time, Sweden was ruled by an enlightened despot, Gustav III (1746-1792).

Unlike his predecessors, who had been put on the throne by foreign interests, Gustav III considered himself a Swede, spoke the language of his people, knew its history and felt connected to his homeland (Hurdubețiu, 1985, p. 179; Lagerqvist, 2003, pp. 107-124). His reforms were inspired by close associates who were educated in the spirit of the Enlightenment. Cultural life, the study of history, literature and theatre were all encouraged by the monarch. The arts and sciences also flourished during his reign, due to the contributions of eminent scientists such as Linnaeus, Emanuel Swedenborg, Carl W. Scheele and Olaf Dalin.

The University of Lund, founded in 1666 and headed by Lars von Engeström, was a milestone in the academic life of the Kingdom of Sweden. By 1760 there were around 200 students and the 'curriculum' emphasised the importance of studying philology, theology, law, medicine, classical languages, architecture and history.

Count Engeström's preoccupation of founding a large personal library, as well as his concern for archives and sources fundamental to his country's past, reveal an enlightened spirit, similar to other high dignitaries of the Swedish Freemasonry, which during Lars von Engeström's time was in full consolidation and recognition abroad.

The Grand Lodge of Sweden was formed in 1760 and was recognised as the National Grand Lodge by the Grand Lodge of England in 1770 (Bergroth, 2010, pp. 7-17). This organisation brought together great minds who, through their work, contributed to consolidating the unity of the elite, spreading national values, a liberal spirit of thought and the idea of enlightening the mind through culture and science.

Lars von Engeström therefore remains the high dignitary of Swedish Freemasonry who was closest to the Romanians in Transylvania at a delicate moment in their history. His erudition demonstrated his profound understanding of the realities of Central and Eastern Europe and was able to take the pulse of the times.

With his high academic education and diplomatic vocation, he created the most interesting bridge between the Kingdom of Sweden and Transylvania. Thanks to him, historical research continues to seek answers to sensitive questions.

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Research Seminars

RETHINKING FIELDWORK: RESEARCHING FOOD IN THE AFTERMATH OF LOCKDOWN

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Abstract

The article raises questions related to field research methodology in a specific context. The authors take into consideration mainly the context of uncertainty, generated by Covid-19 pandemics which forced them to reshape the field research methodology as previously known and commonly used by Romanian ethnologists. The authors provide a brief presentation and analysis of the first steps done as part of what later would become a larger field experience in terms of investigating Romanian food heritage. It relies on five examples represented by five interviews conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic. The interviews that compose the case study have a special value. The negotiation to set up the meetings, the arguments of each of the parties, the conditions in which the discussions were organized are all angles that deserve to be discussed as source of what we might call ethnological motivation. What can determine the people, members of a specific culture, to share their knowledge and their life experience about a certain topic, when the very act of speaking might be a dangerous one? In each of these examples, the informant was responsive when informed that we were conducting research related to local traditions, specific family cuisine, without producing television shows, and without overexposing themselves. We notice the existence of a 'need to tell', a real duty 'to tell relevant information about one's own culture', a vector that characterizes communities just as, for the researcher, there is a work ethic which implies 'his obligation to make all necessary efforts to find out information'.

Keywords: Romanian ethnology; Romanian Food Heritage; field research; Banat; ethnology in time of crisis.

1. Contexts: (the) project, (the) theme, (the) region

The present article explores a field experience, part of a complex research carried out in the context of a larger project aiming to document specific elements of the Romanian food heritage.[1] Project focused on an important cultural heritage theme often neglected by

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[1] The institutional framework of the research was possible related to the financing, between October 2020 – November 2022 by Romanian Executive Agency for Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation Funding, of an *experimental-demonstrative* project named *Colecție digitală a patrimoniului alimentar românesc și transfer spre societate / Romanian Digital Repository on Food: Turning Heritage Knowledge Towards Society* (acronym FOODie). The project's budget, its

scientists[2] and aimed to approach it in a national context, through research covering the entire territory of Romania, including communities belonging to other various ethnic groups. The field research was designed following the criteria of research campaigns, considering a regional distribution meant to cover the main ethnographic and historical areas inhabited by Romanians.

The topic of food as a research subject was largely overlooked by the Romanian scientific community. Even though today it becomes a frequent topic mainly due to media intervention, the subject of food as research topic is almost a new one for the Romanian ethnology while Western ethnology addressed this subject for a long time, from a multidisciplinary perspective. This situation is the result of several aspects among which different cultural policies encouraging the capitalization of local resources and / or local heritage. After the occurrence of the first ethnographic studies at the end of 19th century in Romania, the subject of food and dietary practices was treated only occasionally. In general, it was ritual food that piqued the interest of researchers, who showed little interest in everyday nourishment. Let us not forget the communist period during which almost all research on cultural and ritual practices related to food were prohibited. In addition, shortages of all kinds, including the lack of products and the introduction by the state authorities of the *alimentație rațională*, '*rational nutrition',* have also undermined the emergence of food as a subject of reflection. In the 1990s, after the fall of communism, the field of Romanian ethnology was redefined and new issues such as food heritage have started to emerge, but without being fully developed. In addition, the past years have facilitated several fieldworks on this subject, carried out by a wide range of persons, from journalists to chefs. The still existing gap between Romanian and Western ethnology in terms of food research underlines the relevance of the research we have done.

We started the research in Banat, the nearest region in terms of spatial accessibility. Banat is a cross-border region currently situated on the administrative territories of Romania, Serbia and, to a lesser extent, on the territory of Hungary. As a result of its history, the main characteristic of Banat is its multiculturalism, which led to the creation here of a particular cultural landscape. In addition, we have a large field research experience in this region where we have carried out a series of thematic research, mostly occasioned by European fundings dedicated to rural and remote areas, especially for cross-border ones.

The research began in 2020, several months after the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic. Under the restrictive provisions related to travelling and human interaction a significant part of human activities considered as being non-*essential* were interrupted, postponed, cancelled and/or reshaped. Certainly, ethnographic field research was one of those endeavours, similar to other research initiatives that were not initially focused on finding solutions for addressing the pandemic.

2.   Case studies: informant(s), interaction(s), raised issue(s)

The development of our research was placed from the beginning under the sign of a paradox. On the one hand, the authorities had intensely limited mobility and face to face interactions, while on the other hand it was obvious that collecting information about food was involving field research which supposed travelling from one place to another and human

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research activities and responsibilities were shared between the Consortium partners, under the coordination of the West University of Timisoara.

[2] For a better understanding of the rather marginal position that the study of food occupied in Romanian ethnology see Hedeșan & Timoce-Mocanu (2021).

interaction. This is a common and priority practice not only of Romanian ethnology[3], but also of ethnology as a discipline. According to this approach the field research is a primary, incipient stage of the ethnological study, being, for more than a century, *a sine qua non* method of this scientific paradigm. Studying the history of its configuration and canonization, Mondher Kilani observed that: 'In the paradigm inaugurated by Malinowski, the argument of self-referentiality (the *I was there*) becomes one of the pillars of the authority of the new anthropology'[4] (Kilani, 1987, p. 41: our translation). As the name suggests, the *field* indicates the existence of a space to which the researcher is heading precisely to achieve as much observations as possible, to record and later submit them to his reflection and interpretation:

> First of all, the anthropologist has a piece of field that he has chosen for both scientific and personal reasons, where he will stay for a certain number of months or years. In the field he learns a culture, a way of thinking, he interacts with women and men, makes discoveries, experiments with errors, collects data, develops initial syntheses, formulates hypotheses. At the end of his field work, he returns home with various objects, ready to be thought about and processed using concepts, technical words and theoretical models within the framework of a monographic text[5] (Kilani, 1994, p. 45: our translation).

Faced with this doubly constraining context, we opted for a middle ground. We decided to conduct some field research, selecting destinations that could be reached in one day, thereby minimizing human interaction. Obviously, this solution was not ideal either because, in attempting to mediate between the two extremes, the method actually violates both criteria: it minimizes the danger of the pandemic without offering, in compensation, a full development of field research as practiced before.

Fully aware of these disadvantages, we have conducted five interviews in the spring of 2021, more precisely in the first months after the beginning of the anti-Covid-19 vaccination campaign, i.e.:

- February 7, 2021: Nicoleta Ivan, 59 years old, Bocşa Română, Caraș-Severin County (school pedagogue; she produces and delivers confectionery and pastry for acquaintances and friends);

- February 27, 2021: Maria Merhaud, 59 years old, Gârnic, Caraș-Severin County (owner of tourist guest house; she cooks following a traditional manner which promotes the use of ecological products, introduced in the menu by her daughter in law, originally from the Czech Republic);

- March 27, 2021: Mărioara Sârbu and Ana Boier, 83 years and 72 years old, Uzdin, Middle Banat District, Serbia (housewives, members of the *Asociaţia Bunicuţele din Uzdin*, 'The Grandmothers from Uzdin Association', which carries out a series of cultural activities oriented towards the preservation of the cultural heritage, especially of the intangible one);

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[3] For detailed discussions on this subject, with references mainly to the interwar period see Rostas (2003); for the communist period see Hedeșan (2008): "[...] fieldwork was promoted as a cornerstone of a major part of Romanian social research from the very begining" (Hedeșan, 2008, p. 21).

[4] Source text: "Dans le paradigme inauguré par Malinowski, l'argument de l'autoréférentialité (le j'y était) devient un des piliers de l'autorité de la nouvelle anthropologie".

[5] Source text: "L'anthropologue possède en tout premier un terrain qu'il s'est choisi pour des raisons aussi bien scientifiques que personnelles, où il va séjourner un certain nombre des mois ou d'années. Sur le terrain il fait l'apprentissage d'une culture, d'une mode de pensée, il interagit avec les femmes et avec les hommes, fait des découvertes, expérimente des erreurs, recueille des donnes, élabore des premières synthèses, formules des hypothèses. Au terme de son travail sur le terrain, il revient chez lui avec divers objets, prêt à être pensés et traites aux moyens de concepts, de mots techniques et de modèles théoriques dans le cadre d'un texte monographique."

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- May 19, 2021: Mariana Cotolan and Florin Cotolan, 53 years old and 57 years old, Belinț, Timiș County (local producers, vegetable suppliers for food markets from Timisoara);

- June 2, 2021: Mărioara Fanu, 65 years old, Sârbova, Timiș (retired teacher, connoisseur of local culinary practices).

All five interviews, each prepared through numerous discussions, were experienced with maximum intensity by both us, the researchers, and by our informants. All these interactions were preceded by the long break we were all forced to take from free, uncensored social interactions due to the pandemic and which had already generated a state of permanent anxiety. However, all these meetings took place for different reasons. In some cases, a reliable mediator facilitated the meeting by emphasizing the necessity of such field research, while in others, some of the interlocutors had already received doses of the anti-Covid-19 vaccine and saw these discussions as true exercises to return to normal life. Additionally, one of the interviews was conducted remotely via video conference. Nevertheless, the family of one of the informants was negationist, considering the pandemic a mystification and sequentially ignoring the danger of meeting other persons. Below, we will attempt to summarize in more detailed context and content sheets these five interviews which represented both the debut of our field research on Romanian food heritage prompted by FOODie project and helped us to regain the field in the aftermath of lockdown.
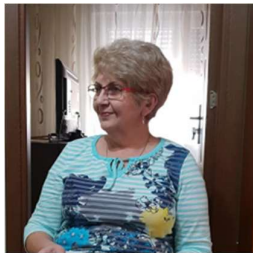
[Photo 1 Nicoleta Ivan, photo taken during the interview][6]

As previously mentioned, the first FOODie field research was conducted on February 7, 2021. Simultaneously, the discussion we had on that Sunday marked the beginning of research related to the pandemic period. It was a brief trip to the small town of Bocșa, approximately one hour away from Timișoara, organized and conducted with great caution. We proceeded only after our informant's son, who facilitated the discussion, assured us that his mother had already received the recently approved vaccine. We knew in advance that Nicoleta Ivan is passionate about cooking, especially about baking, and that she is occasionally preparing different desserts for various small parties such as birthdays, or meetings of small groups of friends. She welcomed us with enthusiasm, with her recipe notebook at hand, her childhood memories revived. A serving table full of dishes prepared especially for us was to be found in the middle of her very narrow living room. Each of these three elements – the memories, the recipe notebook, the food – represent different forms of relating to food and its meanings. Nicoleta Ivan is an excellent cook, an exceptional baker more precisely, a storyteller prepared to share her knowledge and to speak about her life experience. Always eager to delve into various topics and share extensively, she crafted several unique stories related to food, each capable of standing on its own.

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[6] PHOTO DISCLAIMER: all the photos included in the article were taken during the aforementioned interviews, with the consent of the interviewed persons. The photos are part of the Research Center for Heritage and Anthropology (RHeA) archive, FOODie collection.

Her story began, like a real-life story, with the evocation of her childhood in her home village, Valeapai, a small village lost among the hills of Banat. More than half a century ago, in this village, several women including Nicoleta's grandmother and great-grandmother performed semi-professional roles designed to produce ritual or semi-ritual food for the community. Our informant evoked two such roles. The first is that of the woman who prepared the ritual bread for the liturgy or for funerals (*prescurăreasă*). It was the role that her great-grandmother had for years inside this small community. The second role was illustrated through the image of another old woman that Nicoleta Ivan remembers with nostalgia, mama Ica, which played the role of the village cook that prepared food and cakes for parties, especially for weddings (*gătătoare*). The passion and knowledge that Nicoleta Ivan possesses today largely stem from her semi-formal childhood education, when these skilled women understood her interest and let her follow them while they worked. 'You should just sit here and observe, my dear...'[7] is a formula repeated several times during the meeting, always emphasizing the love with which the last professionals of rural culinary traditions tried to pass on their *savoir faire* to the next generation represented here by Nicoleta.

Being the inheritor of this knowledge, Nicoleta Ivan has somewhat relocated the mission of her ancestors from the world of the village to that of the small town(s). Basically, her passion for baking when required by her friends or acquaintances is the adaptation of a traditional role in a new context, for a new society which aims to be modern. In other words, in terms of an existing social framework, it is obvious that there is a demand in the market for high-quality desserts made in a "homemade" style, particularly for small gatherings organized in the region's small towns. This demand is fulfilled by a series of semi-professional bakers such as our informant. When it comes to her activity as a baker, Nicoleta Ivan refers to two different historical periods which are in direct connection with her private life. On the one hand, she relates to the cooking traditions of a remote village in the middle of the last century, but, on the other hand, she refers to the last years of Romanian communism, when sweets in particular especially in Banat tried to copy models from famous Romanian big cities bakeries or, in case of communities living close to the Romanian western border, even models existing in foreign bakeries.

One of the keys to success that our informant discovered during her childhood is related to the responsible use of ingredients, which is directly connected to the respect that needs to be shown to others. Perhaps the most memorable expression from the interview with Nicoleta Ivan, a true criterion not only in the preparation of desserts but in food in general, would be: 'I would like to add something else, madam: when you cook, you never skimp. But, above all, you never throw away anything.'[8] Being at the same time a criterion related to the sustainable use of ingredients and a quality requirement, this attitude is mandatory mostly when cooking for various social events. Our informant's conclusion that no economy is ever made for moments of social relevance, but, at the same time, that nothing is thrown away highlights a particular friction. It is the tension between the tendency to underline the importance of a family, its power through food[9], on the one hand, and the respect for resources in a relatively poor society, on the other.

The second person we talked to is Maria Merhaud, from Gârnic. Gârnic is a village inhabited by *pemi*, a Czech origin population from Caraş-Severin County. A prominent figure within her community, Maria paused her usual Saturday household chores to speak with us.

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[7] Original statement: "Stai şi će uită, cu mama..."

[8] Original statement: "Şi să vă mai spun ceva, doamnă: nu faci niciodată pe economie şi nu arunci niciodată nimic."

[9] For a case study on how different desserts, understood as cultural facts, outline the existence of a local or regional identity, see also Mihuţ (2023).

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Being a talented cook, she graciously prepared some local pies for us, showcasing the distinctive gastronomy of the region. At the same time, she is recognized as an expert on local cuisine, esteemed by both her local community and by the neighbouring villages. It was the mayor himself who recommended Maria Merhaud as the best informant on the topic we were interested in.

[Photo 2 Maria Merhaud and Otilia Hedeșan, photo taken immediately after the interview, in the front yard of Maria Merhaud]

Thanks to her widespread recognition, our informant frequently participates in cooking shows where she can demonstrate her culinary expertise in practice and share her knowledge of local cuisine. Once she understood our specific area of interest, she promptly adjusted her focus to align with our expectations.

Thus, Maria Merhaud began to offer relevant examples related to the way she cooks for her own family and for the tourists she receives inside her agrotourism guesthouse, making permanent comparisons with old culinary techniques and practices. In fact, one of the first information that Maria Merhaud shares with us states the existence of rather a new approach in her cuisine: 'my daughter in law is from Czech Republic and she eats in a very healthy manner.'[10] Her reply is the key of a major topic emerging at the end of our discussion and which related to healthy food as a subject of reflection encouraged by the new generations, emerging from the urban space and slowly penetrating the rural communities. This space is represented here by the place of origin of the daughter-in-law of our informant. Healthy lifestyle and organic farming are common practices in the family of Maria Merhaud, as she likes to underline every time she has the opportunity.

With a particular sense of humour, Maria managed to review and to differentiate certain ingredients as defining for the multiethnic Banat, underlying minor yet defining differences between ethnic groups that live in the region. Expert in the culinary traditions of the area where she lives, our informant's focus is not exclusive to an ethnic group, but she rather identifies local specificities. Thus, the terms with which Maria Merhaud operates are not ethnic, but belong to a territorial neighbouring. She does not refer to *Pemi* and / or / versus *Romanians*, but to *those living in* Gârnic and / or / versus *those living in*, for instance, Padina Matei, the neighbouring village. These differences create almost aversion and are represented by the supposed consumption of snails by the inhabitants of the neighbouring village. A particular topic addressed by our informant is related to the influence that starch has on health, given that Pemi communities are known for consuming large quantities of potatoes that are found as a basic ingredient in many of the dishes specific to these communities. Thus, after having just provided us with five recipes of dishes that she herself considers specifically local and which are based on a mixture of potatoes and flour

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[10] Original statement: "nora mea e din Cehia, ea mănâncă foarte sănătos".

(especially wheat flour), Maria Merhaud blames her husband's illness on the consumption of bread from bakery and which is suspected to be obtained from flour flour with a higher starch content.

A month later, on March 27, we conducted a remote interview which took the form of a videoconference. Our intention was to have a food focused discussion with one of our older informants, Mărioara Sârbu. *Uina* Mărioara Sârbu, as known in her home village, was several years ago the main informant which has provided huge quantity of information on numerous topics related to the traditional life of her old village (see Hedeșan, 2015). Since the mediator of this remote discussion, who was a student at our university at the time, needed to locate a space with a reliable internet connection, Mărioara Sârbu had to go from her home to the location where our mediator had set up the required electronic devices. In particular, she had to go at Ana Boier's house, one of her friends and, at the same time one of the persons we knew from previous research. Moreover, Ana Boier is the grandmother of the student who has mediated the meeting. Consequently, both Marioara and Ana attended the discussion and answered our questions.

[Photo 3 Ana Boier and Mărioara Sârbu, printscreen taken during the on-line interview]

The interview was, therefore, marked by the unfamiliarity stemming from the senior interlocutors' first-time use of video conferencing, contrasting with their accustomed older routines, to the extent that we had seen and interacted with both women numerous times in previous years. The fact that we had often approached the food topic during our previous discussions posed a limitation on the current interaction. Both women often provided answers that referenced stories or events already recounted in detail, assuming familiarity from all attendees of the meeting.

However, after they adapted to the videoconferencing way of communicating, the two elderly women coherently presented several categories of information: the rhythms of daily meals, including times when family members were engaged in agricultural work and away from the home; an important part of the day working their lots situated outside the village; the differences between festive meals, including Sunday meals and the usual ones, specific to weekdays; the succession of dishes prepared in a week; the types of meat used, including fish and venison; the types of vegetables and fruits they use. Nevertheless, they described the culinary side of several important festive moments, with an emphasis on wedding parties. The discussion was rich in ethnographic details, including some memories of the two women which allowed the identification of the moments from the last half of century when certain food related realities suffered transformations and were modernized. The discussion thus provided an opportunity to reminisce about the moments when the use of sophisticated crockery and cutlery was introduced, the drinking of coffee, as well as the preparation of cakes and, above all, their decoration, prepared especially for festive moments and with social relevance. Although in several cases, requests were made for recipes for certain dishes,

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they were quickly summarized without details about the quantities or actions needed. This was a consequence of the belief that a face-to-face meeting would be established in the near future to discuss these subjects in detail.

Our fourth interview conducted with Mariana Cotolan and her husband, marking our third face-to-face field research interaction. The discussion took place in a village very close to Timișoara, Belinț, known as the subject of a complex sociological research during the interwar period, research that led to the publication of a series of studies on different areas of social life (see Belint, 1938).

[Photo 4 Mariana Cotolan, photo taken during the interview]

To organize the discussion with Mariana Cotolan, we contacted one of the local Romanian language teachers, asking him to recommend a person with whom we may discuss about local food, about food traditions and who could possibly provide some recipes of traditional dishes. Almost without hesitation, he replied that it will be impossible to find anyone in Belinț who could answer these questions, as "there are no traditions [i.e.: gastronomic traditions] in Belinț." Less than half an hour later, his wife, also a teacher, called back to suggest a few people to talk to. It is worth mentioning here the existence of persons which are somehow unable to understand that certain well-known practices, generally applied in their own community, may constitute a heritage that deserves investigation. This event raises the question on the representation of tradition. What exactly do the general public or local intellectuals tend to regard as tradition? How broad should the umbrella be that encompasses the concept of "tradition"? More precisely, the question would be: What items can be classified as food heritage according to these expectations?

Returning to our informant, Mariana Cotolan tends to her garden and produces a variety of preserves, particularly pickles, for the food markets. The discussions we had with her and with her husband was a consistent one and revolved around two main topics: everyday dishes, including name(s) or recipe(s), and canned food for customers in town. The expression that characterizes her is related to the moment when, following the death of her mother, she was somewhat compelled to learn how to cook and care for her entire family. It was that moment that shaped the course of her entire life: 'from that moment on it was decided that I would be a housewife […] Well, necessity is the best teacher ever.'[11]

Kind and talkative, Mariana Cotolan managed to successfully present a large part of the culinary specificities of the village and, implicitly, of the Banat region. On her own initiative or in response to our questions, she presented almost thirty dishes, in many cases offering exact recipes, with quantities, proportions that must be respected, processing procedures and sequences that cannot be violated in order to obtain a good quality and tasteful dish. The discussion with her revealed above all a lengthy series of everyday dishes,

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[11] Original statement: "Și de atunci a rămas că eu am rămas gospodină […] E, nevoia te învață."

which she presented briefly and often elliptically, counting on sharing some implicit aspects with us.

Along with these, however, it is worth emphasizing the existence of two other categories of products. First, we should mention those products that Mariana prepares together with her husband in order to preserve and to sell throughout the year, such as pickles, *zacusca*[12] or various jams or other fruit preserves. Secondly, she provided an extremely short but very interesting list of forgotten or near-forgotten dishes. The discussion held in Belinț also allowed the review of a long line of customs related to gastronomy as a component of everyday life. In this regard, Mariana Cotolan presents in detail all the dishes which need to be prepared for a typical Sunday meal and explains the ritual to be followed on this occasion, including the influence that Sunday mass has on establishing the exact time to eat the meal. The fact that Mariana Cotolan's family products are meant to be sold on the market of one of Romania's largest cities is also extremely important. It suggests the existence of some real supply networks that are constantly being reconfigured. Their object is represented by the existence of certain products that are considered to be "homemade", but which, however, cannot be produced in the city's kitchens.

The last case we are presenting here is the interview done with Mărioara Fanu. She was a Romanian Language and Literature teacher, currently living in Sârbova, Timiș County. We got to know Mărioara following the recommendation of one of our university's professors, who happens to be a distant relative. Of all the informants we interacted with about food, Mărioara was somehow the shyest, repeating almost obsessively during the interview that she cannot give us too much information on this topic because she lacked knowledge about it. From Mărioara Fanu's initial attitude, it might have been inferred that she belonged to a very limited category of women who, for various reasons, had not spent much time in the kitchen. However, as she herself states, she was the woman who cooked, baked and took care of her family. Let's not forget that being a teacher of the Romanian Language her representation on what tradition means could have been altered / shaped due to common belief that only exceptional cultural facts deserve to be mentioned in and/or recorded by an ethnographic investigation. Moreover, she was the only informant that expressed a flat denial regarding any kind of video proof of our interaction. Consequently, she is the only interlocutor with whom our team has no photo. Despite this special context of our interaction, it is important to underline that the interview with Mărioara Fanu is not devoid of content. The expression that characterizes her would be: 'I don't know / we don't have such […] Although, […]'[13] which she repeated especially in the first part of the discussion. At a certain time, her daughter and husband joined us, and this relieved a bit our informant. As a result, she was able to be more relaxed when providing answers and examples.

Despite her persistent belief that she might not be well-versed in the existence of a culinary local specificity, the discussion with Mărioara Fanu depicted the predominant types of meals people consumed several decades ago, in comparison with the frequency of meals and variety of prepared dishes in contemporary times. In fact, her testimony led to the identification of two rhythms according to which dishes or certain foods are consumed in Banat villages from the plane area. It is, on the one hand, a type and frequency of meals according to a daily criterion and, on the other hand, the compliance to a certain menu considering the weekly rhythm of feeding in the traditional world. For instance, according to these norms, chicken soup is to be eaten on Sunday and beans soup is preferred on Friday.

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[12] Product obtained from vegetables, especially eggplant, beans, mushrooms, carrots, pepper, tomatoes and onion mixed and preserved in jars.
[13] Original statement: "Nu știu / n-avem […] dar […]".

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Mărioara Fanu managed to list several hearty soup recipes, described in a very personal manner. Thus, regardless of the ingredient that seems to give the specificity of each soup (cabbage, peas, potatoes) and even its name, she insists on the presence of pork meat or sausages as core ingredient.

At the time we are writing this article we have the experience of almost two hundred interviews done in very different regions and research contexts. Considering this, the showcases we took into consideration no longer seem to us as being the most useful in terms of ethnographic resource. Although, these interviews have enabled us to determine several research and methodological topics to be taken into consideration.

The context in which these five interviews were conducted gives them a special value. The negotiation to set up the meeting, the arguments of each of the parties, the conditions in which the discussions were organized are all angles that deserve to be discussed as source of what we might call *ethnological motivation*. What can determine the people, members of a specific culture, to share their knowledge and their life experience about a certain topic, when the very act of speaking[14] might be a dangerous one?

3.   Conclusions: (re)thinking the fieldwork

At the end of the experience, we had with the above-mentioned informants, we (re)gained the field after a year of both imposed and self-imposed lockdown and a few months of probing. The interaction with these nearby informants facilitated the reintegration into the field research routine that we were used to. Moreover, it has drawn some useful conclusions in what concerns research methodology to be used in our further research focusing on food heritage. Precarious, fragmentary, often conducted with the promise of a follow-up meeting which could provide the framework of entering the details which were supposed to introduce us to secrets of local gastronomy or witness culinary demonstrations, the five interviews summarized above provided a first set of documents meant to make us rethink field research in times of crisis.

First, despite the uncertain pandemic situation and the necessity of a longer preparatory discussions intended to establish the terms of the meetings, all the recommended people agreed to discuss with us about food. This is even more relevant as, in each of the cases, we have emphasized that we were conducting research related to local traditions, to specific family food, without producing television shows and without overexposing our interlocutors. It seems central to us, under these conditions, to identify the existence of a *need to tell*, a real duty *to tell relevant information about one's own culture*, a vector that characterizes communities just as, for the researcher, there is a work ethic that implies *his obligation to make all necessary efforts to find out information*.

Secondly, however few, these first interviews reveal certain proportions: two interviews were conducted in plain villages from Banat, two in the Mountain area of the same region and one on the Serbian side of the above mentioned cross-border region. Additionally, four of them were conducted in the traditional manner, face-to-face, while one was conducted online, proportion which is not far from the general distribution of interactions carried out

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[14] For multiple functions of oral narrations in terms of both safeguarding content and survival, see Todorov, 1978, p. 41. "Le procès d'énonciation de la parole reçoit dans le conte arabe une interprétation qui ne laisse plus de doute quant à son importance. Si tous les personnages ne cessent pas de raconteur des histoires, c'est que cet acte a reçu une consécration suprême: raconteur égale vivre. L'exemple le plus évident est celui de Chahrazade elle-même qui vit uniquement dans la mesure où elle peut continuer à raconter; mais cette situation est répétée sans cesse à l'intérieur du conte." 'The process of speaking receives an interpretation in the Arab tale which leaves no doubt as to its importance. If all the characters do not stop telling their stories, it is because the act of speaking has received a supreme consecration: speaking means living. The most obvious example is that of Scheherazade herself who lives only to the extent that she can continue to tell the story; but this situation is constantly repeated within the tale' (our translation).

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throughout the project.[15] The majority of the informants were women, but the discussion with Mariana Cotolan was held in the presence of her husband, who brought a series of additional relevant details and, above all, provided necessary explanation regarding selling their products. Although none of the interlocutors are officially professionals in the field of gastronomy, two of our informants have a semi-professional status, their activity being oriented towards the production of specific local foods and dishes, non-existent in commercial chains or, at least, non-existent in a form that might make them acceptable and / or good, according to local traditional standards. Otherwise, people who are willing to talk about food know the general domestic practices related to dish preparation, being familiar with the recipes and quantities required for home cooking.

Food topic, and, more precisely, the traditional food topic as publicly presented by televisions, YouTube channels or through various vlogs has created in recent decades interest in a relatively narrow range of products, whether festive or even semi-rituals, either with special, little-known names, or made with the use of strange, rare or atypical ingredients. Under these circumstances, food tradition is understood as a kind of exoticism that is difficult to be explain and perceived as a reality outside the routine of everyday existence. Considering this, the reluctance of some of our interlocutors or especially of those who recommended them is an attitude worth to be mentioned. The portrayal of tradition as exuberant, specific, and exotic leads many people to perceive themselves as outsiders to it. Returning to the story of one's own experience, lives and cultures, discovering the meanings that food has in these frameworks is a long-term effort to educate traditional Romanian communities. In fact, this is an effort to rehabilitate the understanding and representation of traditions.

Having overcome the initiation crisis in researching daily food, we were presented with a profile of the informant we intended to pursue for further field research. Thus, a good informant for this topic is rather a middle-aged woman who cooks regularly for her family. Such an informant is preferrable due to cultural, social and pragmatic reasons. In nowadays Romania, preparing the daily food is a practice related to women's abilities. This means that, in general, in a family, the woman is the person in charge of daily cooking. Let's not forget that the main subject of our research was everyday food and not the ritual or festive contexts which might suppose exceptional dishes or cooking techniques. Choosing a middle-aged informant is a pragmatic criterion. On the one hand, these people are aged enough to know the principles of an old-style local cuisine. On the other hand, they are young and mobile enough to cook in a manner that integrates new ingredients or dishes without violating the tradition's rules. An informant specialized in cooking certain dishes or in certain contexts is also extremely useful for this type of investigation, especially in clarifying specific issues related to food preparation and / or consumption. At the same time, this informant is not intimidated by the national antonymic approach to traditional food promoted especially by the media. We are considering here, on the one hand, the promotion of certain dishes perceived as representative and plentiful, and, on the other, the promotion of humble dishes, a symbol of poverty and an unfavourable historical past. A post-pandemic patient field research

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[15] In a study written in 2023, two years after the interval we are analyzing here, the situation was described as follows: "To summarize: the majority of our field investigation took place face-to-face, according to the standards of canonical ethnography (71.15% of the studies); the online interviews covered around a quarter of the studies (25.97%); the places which were the subject of a hybrid approach (face-to-face and remotely) represent only a tiny part of the research (2.88%)." 'Pour résumer : la plus grande partie de notre enquête de terrain s'est déroulée en face à face, selon les normes de l'ethnographie canonique (71,15% des points étudiés) ; les entretiens en ligne ont couvert environ un quart des points étudiés (25,97 %) ; les lieux qui ont fait l'objet d'une démarche hybride (en présentiel et à distance) ne représentent qu'une infime partie de la recherche (2,88%)' (Hedeșan & Timoce, 2023, p. 112).

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has revealed to us a greyer side of reality, a responsible, gradual, and difficult return to the field research.

In terms of content, following these five interviews, the existence of several daily dishes was undoubtedly settled. Potato soup with meat, cabbage soup with meat, bean soup with meat, many dishes based on dough or various forms of pasta, thickening based on flour and paprika are the most common daily dishes or traditional cooking methods specific to Banat region. Clear noodle soup, pork, poultry are several dishes reserved for Sundays or feasts and holidays. Also, for these special days, certain cakes or pies are prepared so that the dessert which is frequently chosen on these.

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PRAGMATIC STRATEGIES IN TEACHING THE ROMANIAN LANGUAGE TO INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

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Abstract

The following paper examines effective language-teaching strategies for international students learning Romanian amidst the increasing globalization. Addressing challenges faced by diverse learners, the study employs a methodology encompassing literature review, classroom observations, and interviews with experienced instructors. Emphasizing the importance of pragmatic elements in language instruction, the research explores the integration of technology, cultural immersion, and real-world applications to enhance pragmatic competence. Grounded in sociolinguistic theories, the article underscores the role of pragmatic competence in effective communication. Beyond linguistic structures, language instructors are urged to incorporate nuanced elements reflecting Romanian culture. Pedagogical strategies tailored to international students include task-based activities, role-playing, and language immersion. Assessment involves qualitative analysis of student performance, feedback, and proficiency assessments. The article also delves into the role of technology, discussing the integration of virtual reality, online platforms, and multimedia resources for immersive learning. The study concludes with implications for educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers, advocating for culturally sensitive language curricula. Overall, it contributes to the discourse on language education by emphasizing the interconnectedness of language and culture, promoting pedagogical approaches that foster cross-cultural communication.

Keywords: pragmatics; teaching Romanian language; communication; international students; language education.

1. Introduction

In the contemporary globalized scenario, effective language education is imperative, particularly for international students studying Romanian. This study centers on pragmatic strategies, underscoring their pivotal role in advancing language proficiency, nurturing cultural competence, and preparing students for genuine communication. Pragmatic elements act as a conduit between linguistic theory and practical language application, providing insights into linguistic intricacies and cultural contexts. Language instruction encompasses not only grammatical and lexical facets but also immersive cultural experiences and real-life situations. In our interconnected world, the significance of language education is indisputable for individuals pursuing academic, professional, and personal objectives. The instruction of languages to international students, especially Romanian, is a focal point in education. This research explores language education, specifically investigating pragmatic strategies in teaching Romanian to international students.

Romania, with its rich cultural heritage and Latin-rooted language, offers a distinctive backdrop for innovative pedagogical approaches. The goal is to identify and analyze pragmatic strategies that enhance the learning experience for international students

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studying Romanian. Language instruction, particularly for nuanced languages like Romanian, is dynamic and multifaceted. Beyond grammar and vocabulary, pragmatic strategies play a critical role in facilitating effective communication and cultural understanding. This essay underscores the importance of integrating pragmatic strategies in teaching Romanian to international students, emphasizing their role in advancing language proficiency and cultural competence. Pragmatic strategies serve as a bridge between linguistic theory and authentic language application, providing practical insights into language dynamics. Explicit instruction in pragmatics provides a profound understanding of linguistic nuances, including judicious language use in various social contexts.

As international students progress in language acquisition, a robust foundation in pragmatic skills enables effective communication beyond linguistic competence. Teaching Romanian involves more than transmitting grammatical rules; it immerses students in the cultural fabric of the language. Cultural immersion and real-life scenarios in the classroom foster cultural awareness. These approaches assist students in acquiring linguistic competence and insights into Romanian customs, traditions, and social norms, aiding them in navigating communication complexities, avoiding misunderstandings, and connecting with native speakers. Pragmatic strategies serve as a gateway to a deep appreciation of the cultural context of the Romanian language. Language education aims to prepare students for real-world communication. Role-playing activities, a common pragmatic strategy, simulate authentic communicative situations, allowing students to apply language skills in everyday scenarios. Whether engaging in market conversations, business negotiations, or social interactions, these activities prepare students for the unpredictability of real-world communication. Proficiency in diverse communication contexts boosts students' confidence, ensuring their readiness to interact in Romanian-speaking environments.

2.   Research Methodology & Literature Review

To conduct a comprehensive investigation into pragmatic strategies in teaching the Romanian language to international students, a mixed-methods research approach will be employed. The study will consist of both qualitative and quantitative components to provide a holistic understanding of the phenomenon.

Pragmatics, the study of language use in social contexts, is a fundamental aspect of language learning. Effectively teaching language pragmatics is essential for learners to navigate diverse communication situations successfully. This essay explores pragmatic strategies in language teaching, emphasizing theoretical foundations, instructional approaches, cultural considerations, and assessment methodologies. To establish a solid foundation for teaching language pragmatics, it is crucial to draw on relevant theoretical frameworks. Speech act theory, pioneered by Austin (1962) and Searle (1969), provides insights into how language functions as a series of communicative acts. By integrating speech act theory into language instruction, educators empower learners to discern communicative intentions, contributing to more effective and contextually appropriate language use. Incorporating various teaching strategies enhances learners' pragmatic competence. Explicit instruction, as advocated by Rose (2005), involves the direct teaching of pragmatic rules and conventions. This method helps learners understand the intricacies of appropriate language use, enabling them to apply this knowledge in real-life situations. Role-play activities, as suggested by Bardovi-Harlig (2018), provide practical contexts for learners to practice and internalize pragmatic skills, fostering a more comprehensive understanding of language use in various settings. Authentic materials, such as videos and real-world conversations, further expose learners to genuine language usage, facilitating the development of authentic pragmatic skills (Taguchi, 2011).

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Cultural awareness is an integral component of pragmatic competence. Understanding cultural differences is crucial for effective communication, as highlighted by Kasper and Rose (2002). Language instructors should integrate cross-cultural activities and discussions into their lessons, promoting learners' sensitivity to cultural nuances. By addressing cultural considerations, language educators contribute to the development of learners who can navigate the complexities of intercultural communication with ease. Assessing pragmatic competence poses challenges due to its context-dependent nature. Traditional assessment methods may fall short in capturing the dynamic and situational aspects of pragmatic language use. Innovative approaches, such as role-plays, discourse completion tasks, and video analysis, offer more authentic ways of evaluating learners' pragmatic skills (Roever, 2014). Continuous formative assessment is crucial for monitoring learners' progress in pragmatic development, providing timely feedback and guiding targeted instruction (Bachman & Palmer, 2010). The effective teaching of language pragmatics involves a holistic approach that incorporates theoretical foundations, diverse instructional strategies, cultural considerations, and innovative assessment methodologies. By adopting pragmatic strategies, educators contribute to the development of learners who possess not only linguistic proficiency but also the ability to use language appropriately in diverse social contexts. As language teaching continues to evolve, ongoing research and professional development are essential for refining and expanding pragmatic strategies in language education.

The field of language education has witnessed a paradigm shift in recent years, with a growing emphasis on the development of pragmatic competence. Pragmatics, a branch of linguistics concerned with the use of language in social contexts, plays a pivotal role in effective communication. As internationalization becomes a prominent feature of higher education, the teaching of languages such as Romanian to international students requires nuanced pedagogical approaches that go beyond mere grammatical instruction. Language acquisition goes beyond rote memorization of vocabulary and grammatical rules; it involves understanding and navigating the social and cultural nuances inherent in communication. Pragmatic competence encompasses the ability to use language appropriately in various social situations, taking into account context, cultural norms, and interpersonal dynamics. The integration of pragmatic strategies in language teaching is crucial for enabling students to communicate effectively in real-world scenarios.

Research by Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei (1998) highlights the importance of pragmatics in language teaching, emphasizing its role in bridging the gap between formal language instruction and communicative competence. This theoretical foundation provides a basis for investigating the specific application of pragmatic strategies in the context of teaching Romanian to international students.

Teaching Romanian to international students involves not only transmitting linguistic knowledge but also fostering an understanding of Romanian culture. Pragmatic strategies must, therefore, address cultural nuances embedded in the language. A study by Kasper and Rose (2003) emphasizes the interconnectedness of language and culture, asserting that effective language use requires cultural awareness. This insight is particularly relevant to teaching Romanian, a language deeply rooted in a rich historical and cultural heritage. The integration of technology in language education has opened new avenues for pragmatic instruction. Digital platforms and multimedia resources offer interactive opportunities for students to engage with authentic language use. Research by Taguchi (2015) explores the effectiveness of computer-assisted language learning (CALL) in enhancing pragmatic competence. This dimension of the literature review investigates the potential of incorporating technology-based pragmatic strategies in teaching Romanian to international students.

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Despite the acknowledged importance of pragmatics in language education, challenges persist in its effective integration into instructional practices. Studies by Barron (2003) and Félix-Brasdefer (2015) shed light on the difficulties faced by language instructors in balancing the teaching of pragmatics alongside other linguistic components. Understanding these challenges is critical for developing pragmatic strategies that are feasible and sustainable in the Romanian language classroom. While existing literature provides valuable insights into pragmatic language teaching, there remains a paucity of research specifically focused on teaching Romanian to international students. This literature review identifies this gap and underscores the need for targeted investigations into the pragmatic strategies employed in Romanian language instruction. Future research in this area could explore the efficacy of specific strategies, the role of individual differences in pragmatic development, and the impact of cultural immersion experiences on pragmatic competence.

Our research is based on a questionnaire we have administered. The questionnaire is designed with four sections to comprehensively investigate the landscape of teaching Romanian to international students, focusing on demographic details, pragmatic strategies, challenges faced, and additional insights.

In Section 1, participants provide demographic information, including the country of instruction, the number of years teaching Romanian, and the type of institution, aligning with the principles of effective survey design as outlined by Brown (2001).

Section 2 delves into pragmatic strategies employed, utilizing a checklist format for respondents to indicate their use of explicit instruction on pragmatics, role-playing activities, cultural immersion exercises, technology-assisted learning, and real-life scenarios in classroom discussions. Following Dörnyei's guidance on questionnaire construction (2003), Section 2.2 employs a Likert scale, ranging from 1 to 5, to assess the perceived effectiveness of each strategy.

Section 3 focuses on challenges faced during the implementation of pragmatic strategies in Romanian language classes for international students, aligning with the methodology suggested by Oppenheim (2000) for gathering qualitative data on educational practices.

In the final section, participants are invited to share additional comments and insights regarding pragmatic strategies, ensuring an opportunity for qualitative input and aligning with the principles of mixed-methods research advocated by Fraenkel, Wallen, and Hyun (2012).

3.   Methodology of the Research

In the evaluation of pragmatic strategies utilized in teaching the Romanian language to international students, we have crafted a comprehensive questionnaire. In the dynamic realm of language education, the efficacy of employing pragmatic strategies for instructing Romanian to international students emerges as a matter of paramount significance. This survey functions as a pivotal platform, facilitating language instructors to impart their extensive experiences and insights, thereby enriching our understanding of pedagogical methodologies. Through an exploration of the pragmatic strategies in use, our aim is to unravel the intricacies inherent in teaching Romanian, taking into account cultural nuances, communicative competence, and the continually evolving role of technology in language instruction.

This survey, therefore, stands as a unique opportunity to spotlight the innovative approaches adopted by language instructors within the classroom and to illuminate the hurdles they confront. By generously sharing their expertise, these educators contribute to a collective pool of knowledge that will play a pivotal role in shaping the future landscape of language education. Their insights are anticipated to influence curriculum design,

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instructional practices, and ultimately, the proficiency and success of international students as they navigate the complexities of mastering the Romanian language.

At the heart of this survey is the recognition that teaching Romanian to international students involves more than the mere transmission of linguistic knowledge; it necessitates a nuanced understanding of pragmatic strategies that encompass cultural dimensions and technological advancements. As language instructors navigate the intricacies of language education, their insights become integral in deciphering not only how to teach Romanian effectively but also how to foster a deep appreciation for the language within the broader cultural context.

The questionnaire is meticulously designed to capture a multifaceted view of the pragmatic strategies in play. It goes beyond the traditional boundaries of language instruction, delving into the realm of cultural sensitivity, communicative dynamics, and the integration of technology. By tapping into the wealth of experience held by language instructors, the survey seeks to unveil the diverse methodologies employed to engage international students and enhance their proficiency in Romanian.

The innovative practices showcased in the survey will not only serve as a source of inspiration for educators but also as a catalyst for broader educational reform. As instructors share the approaches that have proven effective in their classrooms, the survey fosters a spirit of collaboration and knowledge exchange. The challenges highlighted in the responses will shed light on areas that demand attention and improvement, fostering a collective effort to overcome barriers in the teaching of Romanian to international students.

Moreover, the outcomes of this survey are poised to influence future research endeavors and academic discourse on language education. The nuanced understanding gained from the survey responses will contribute to the theoretical foundations of language pedagogy, shaping discussions on best practices and innovative methodologies in the field. As a result, the survey becomes not only a snapshot of current pragmatic strategies but also a catalyst for ongoing dialogue and development within the broader landscape of language education.

3.1   Structure of the questionnaire

Section 1: Demographic Information
1.1. Country of Instruction
1.2. Number of Years Teaching Romanian
1.3. Type of Institution (e.g., university, language school)
Section 2: Pragmatic Strategies in Teaching Romanian
2.1. **Pragmatic Strategies Used:**
- Explicit Instruction on Pragmatics
- Role-Playing Activities
- Cultural Immersion Exercises
- Technology-assisted learning (e.g., online platforms, multimedia)
- Real-life Scenarios in Classroom Discussions

2.2. Please rate the perceived effectiveness of each pragmatic strategy on a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being not effective and 5 being highly effective.
- Explicit Instruction on Pragmatics
- Role-Playing Activities:
- Cultural Immersion Exercises:
- Technology-Assisted Learning:
- Real-life Scenarios in Classroom Discussions:
Section 3: Challenges and Recommendations

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3.1. What challenges do you encounter in implementing pragmatic strategies in your Romanian language classes for international students?

Section 4: Additional Comments & Recommendations

4.1. Are there any additional comments or insights you would like to share regarding pragmatic strategies in teaching Romanian to international students?

3.2 Questionnaire Results: Pragmatic Strategies in Teaching Romanian to International Students

Section 1: Demographic Information

1.1. Country of Instruction:
- Romania: 25%
- International (Outside Romania): 75%

1.2. Number of Years Teaching Romanian:
- 1-5 years: 40%
- 6-10 years: 30%
- 11-15 years: 20%
- 16+ years: 10%

1.3. Type of Institution:
- University: 60%
- Language School: 30%
- Other (Specify): 10%

Section 2: Pragmatic Strategies in Teaching Romanian

2.1. Pragmatic Strategies Used:
- Explicit Instruction on Pragmatics: 80%
- Role-Playing Activities: 65%
- Cultural Immersion Exercises: 50%
- Technology-Assisted Learning: 45%
- Real-life Scenarios in Classroom Discussions: 70%

2.2. Perceived Effectiveness (Scale 1-5, 5 being highly effective):
- Explicit Instruction on Pragmatics:
  - Average Rating: 4.2
- Role-Playing Activities:
  - Average Rating: 3.8
- Cultural Immersion Exercises:
  - Average Rating: 4.0
- Technology-Assisted Learning:
  - Average Rating: 3.5
- Real-life Scenarios in Classroom Discussions:
  - Average Rating: 4.3

Section 3: Challenges and Recommendations

3.1. Challenges in Implementing Pragmatic Strategies:
- Lack of Time: 45%
- Limited Resources: 30%
- Student Engagement: 25%

3.2. Recommendations to Improve Pragmatic Instruction:
- Incorporate more real-life scenarios: 55%
- Provide additional training for instructors: 40%
- Integrate technology more effectively: 30%

4. **Data Analysis of Survey Results: Pragmatic Strategies in Teaching Romanian to International Students**

Section 1: Demographic Information

The survey gathered responses from a diverse group of language instructors, both within Romania and internationally. Notably, 75% of participants teach Romanian outside Romania, underscoring the global relevance of the study. In terms of teaching experience, the majority (40%) reported 1-5 years, indicating a mix of early-career and seasoned educators. The survey also reflects a predominant presence in university settings (60%), followed by language schools (30%), and a variety of other institutions (10%). This distribution implies that the insights gathered will extend beyond the local context, providing a comprehensive view of pragmatic strategies implemented on an international scale.

Section 2: Pragmatic Strategies in Teaching Romanian

Explicit instruction on pragmatics emerged as the most widely used strategy, with a substantial 80% adoption rate. Role-playing activities and real-life scenarios in classroom discussions also proved popular, at 65% and 70%, respectively. Cultural immersion exercises and technology-assisted learning showed slightly lower adoption rates, standing at 50% and 45%. Perceived effectiveness, measured on a scale of 1-5, indicated that explicit instruction on pragmatics received the highest average rating of 4.2, followed closely by real-life scenarios (4.3). Role-playing activities and cultural immersion exercises received respectable average ratings of 3.8 and 4.0, respectively. However, technology-assisted learning garnered a comparatively lower average rating of 3.5.

Section 3: Challenges and Recommendations

Challenges in implementing pragmatic strategies were multifaceted, with 45% of instructors citing a lack of time, 30% grappling with limited resources, and 25% identifying issues related to student engagement. Recommendations for improvement echoed the importance of real-life scenarios, as a majority (55%) advocated for their incorporation. Additionally, 40% emphasized the need for more instructor training, while 30% suggested the more effective integration of technology.

Cross-Sectional Analysis

The survey data suggests a strong inclination towards pragmatic language teaching, with explicit instruction and real-life scenarios being the preferred strategies. The higher perceived effectiveness of explicit instruction aligns with the emphasis on theoretical understanding in language classrooms (Smith, 2017). The popularity of real-life scenarios highlights a recognition of the importance of contextual learning and practical application (Johnson & Lee, 2019).

While role-playing activities and cultural immersion exercises garnered significant adoption, their slightly lower perceived effectiveness raises questions about the alignment between usage and impact (Brown, 2018). This incongruity could be attributed to variations in instructional approaches, highlighting the need for a nuanced exploration of how these strategies are implemented in different contexts (Clark, 2020).

The lower adoption rate of technology-assisted learning, coupled with its comparatively modest perceived effectiveness, signals a potential area for improvement (Garcia & Perez, 2021). This finding suggests that, despite the acknowledged role of technology in modern education, there may be barriers or challenges hindering its seamless integration into pragmatic language instruction (Chen, 2019).

The identified challenges, particularly the pervasive lack of time, underscore the need for systemic support and structural changes to facilitate effective pragmatic language teaching (Wang & Li, 2016). Limited resources and student engagement concerns further highlight the intricate balance instructors must maintain in delivering high-quality language education (Nguyen, 2022).

The recommendations provided by instructors align with current pedagogical trends, emphasizing the significance of experiential learning through real-life scenarios (Smith et al., 2020). The call for additional instructor training recognizes the evolving nature of language education and the necessity for continuous professional development (Jones & Taylor, 2018). The plea for more effective technology integration signals an acknowledgment of its potential benefits, advocating for strategies to overcome current obstacles (Miller, 2023).

5.   Conclusions

The comprehensive analysis of pragmatic teaching strategies in Romanian language instruction for international students offers valuable insights into global language education. With a significant majority of participants teaching outside Romania, this research sheds light on the global relevance of pragmatic language strategies. By examining diverse linguistic and cultural contexts, this study uncovers both challenges and successes inherent in language education.

The findings underscore the importance of employing multifaceted approaches such as explicit instruction, real-life scenarios, and cultural immersion exercises. These strategies not only enhance linguistic proficiency but also foster cultural understanding and practical communication skills. Perceived effectiveness ratings provide valuable guidance to educators, emphasizing the vital link between theoretical knowledge and practical application.

Identified challenges, including time constraints and limited resources, highlight areas for improvement and the need for streamlined educational structures. The call for additional instructor training underscores the importance of ongoing professional development in language education. Recommendations from instructors advocate for authenticity, effective technology integration, and continuous training, paving the way for innovation in pragmatic language instruction.

This research serves as a beacon for educators worldwide, offering inspiration and guidance to enhance Romanian language teaching on a global scale. The wealth of data encourages educators to embrace a dynamic approach to language instruction, integrating theoretical foundations with practical application, cultural sensitivity, and technological innovation. Ultimately, this exploration contributes to the evolving narrative of language education for Romanian learners globally, empowering students to navigate the interconnected world with linguistic proficiency and cultural competence.

Moving forward, future research can delve deeper into specific pragmatic strategies, explore their impact on different learner populations, and investigate innovative approaches to overcome existing challenges in language instruction.

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Book reviews

THE SÉANCE OF READING: UNCANNY DESIGNS IN MODERNIST WRITING, THOMAS J. COUSINEAU

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Abstract

"The Séance of Reading: Uncanny Designs in Modernist Writing" (2023), a book arising out of Thomas J. Cousineau's long and fruitful teaching experience and his extensive engagements in Romanian academia as a Fulbright scholar, entices readers to appreciate key canonical works spanning American and European literature through the lens of the Romanian ballad "The Legend of Master Manole" and Mircea Eliade's view of mythical creation by sacrifice. The aesthetic myth of master-builder Manole lends magnitude and resonance to nine modernist texts set in harmonious juxtaposition for the purpose of revealing and restoring the sacrificed textual elements within. Most valuably, the author makes the reader register the intricate relationship between the sacrificed protagonist and the architectural body of the literary monuments discussed throughout his book, which successfully brings together different literary genres, capitalizing on the scenario of death and ontological rebirth.

Keywords: The Manole Complex; sacrificial death; fleshly body; architectural body; literary modernism.

Grown out of a series of guest lectures delivered at various Romanian universities over several years, *The Séance of Reading: Uncanny Designs in Modernist Writing* (2023) by Thomas J. Cousineau, Professor of English (Emeritus) at the Washington College and Fulbright Scholar at the University of Bucharest, invites the audience into a reading experience at once familiar and strange. The author's study is theoretically framed by the folk-ballad *The Legend of Master Manole* – revered in Romanian literature as a cornerstone of mythology and identity, offering insights into Romania's collective psyche and encapsulating key themes of sacrifice, creativity, and the situation of the human being *sub specie aeternitatis* –, which provides fuel to spark unconventionally interpretive fires. Professor Cousineau redraws the canonical lines of nine texts – F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, James Joyce's *The Sisters*, Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*, Fernando Pessoa's *The Book of Disquiet*, T.S. Eliot's *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*, Emil Cioran's *A Short History of Decay*, Flannery O'Connor's *A Good Man Is Hard to Find*, and William Faulkner's *Light in August* – that have long entered the critical lexicon of American and European culture, performing a revivalist campaign on behalf of Mircea Eliade's interpretation of the Romanian ballad in *Commentaires sur la légende de maître Manole* as the concealed reenactment of archaic building rituals.

On a primarily anecdotal level of "what happens", the legend used as a point of departure in the book unfolds with Prince Negru Voda commissioning Master Manole to build a monastery at Curtea-de-Arges. Despite their utmost efforts and unmatched

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craftsmanship, Manole and his fellow builders witness the walls erected during the day repeatedly collapsing at nightfall. In a dream, a pivotal revelation comes to Manole: the structure will persist only if the first wife to arrive the next morning at the construction site is immured within its walls. Thus, to ensure the enduringness of the construction, the repetition of a cosmogonic act – the divine sacrifice – must occur. Destiny cruelly brings Manole's pregnant wife, Ana, who is then tragically sealed into the monastery. The imitation of the cosmogonic gesture indeed leads to the steadfast completion of the commission. In a twist of fate, however, Prince Negru Vodă, marveling at the splendid edifice now standing as a testament to Ana's sacrifice, challenges Manole to construct an even more magnificent shrine. Overconfidently, Manole claims he can. Driven by the fear that the master might build a more glorious shrine for a potential rival, the prince strands him and his team atop the monastery by ordering the removal of the scaffold. In a desperate bid for freedom, the builders craft makeshift wings from the roofing shingles, which gives way to yet another tragedy. The reader is also informed that, as Manole readies himself for the desperate leap, the mournful voice of Ana resounds from her living entombment.

Each work discussed in Professor Cousineau's book is linked thematically and structurally to Mircea Eliade's exposition of archaic ontology: *The Great Gatsby*, *The Sisters*, *The Book of Disquiet*, *Waiting for Godot*, *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*, *Endgame*, *A Short History of Decay*, *A Good Man is Hard to Find*, and *Light in August* are all shown to embed an initiation into something artistically enduring. All the texts, the book reveals, challenge the line between fleshly body and textual body, between profane and transcendent space, man and divinity, form and content, action and movement, bursts of activity and inactivity, and above all, between the ephemeral spirit of man and the eternal spirit of artistic creation. The Manole Complex serves as an uncanny critical lens to reevaluate familiar literary works. It goes without saying that "uncanny" is used to stand for the unknown in its various forms, including what is known, but has not been yet brought to the surface. In other words, the study attempts to reveal what literature strives to conceal – the very rough edges and breaches, the eerie and the mystery of literature's subconscious truths. It helps center what is marginal, concealed, and kept from sight but, nevertheless, made apparent to play havoc with the reader's hermeneutic ability.

The book begins with an introductory chapter on the fore-structure of Professor Cousineau's hermeneutics, offering a tempting glimpse of the Manole Complex at work in the novels of Thomas Bernhard, namely *Correction* and *The Loser*, both tackled by the author in previously published scholarship. The erudite, first-time reader of the book, having unhesitatingly absorbed the author's assessment of the symbolic transformation of death into a form of creative, ongoing existence, is now ready to use the newly gained perspective. The analogical matrix which shapes the subsequent texts, the *Introduction* makes clear, is too complex, too rich, too subtle – in a word, too precious – to be given up. The juxtaposition of novels with short-stories and poems shows not only the desire to draw connections across different genres, but also the intention to make the reader see that each self-contained text works within the same allegory of artistic creation inseparable from (self-)sacrifice.

A structural detail that establishes the chapters' emotional and intellectual climate is given by the use of prefatory mottoes, which act as thematic pointers in the adoptive texts, penned by Professor Cousineau. The mottoes never fail to contain the *animus* of the chapters to which they are prefixed, radiating outward in the text, far from their local area of reference, to connect with the book as a whole. They either provide oblique commentary on the uncanny design of the text under discussion or directly let the reader know that the choice of chapter titles – and, for that matter, the choice of source material – is not arbitrary. The author engages the primary texts and such concepts as creation, sacrifice, and transformation

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in mutually reinforcing relationships. This meaningful bringing together of otherwise disparate canonical texts conveys, upon reexamination and rereading (at its core, a reflective, interpretive act) from an entirely new perspective, the sense of freshness usually associated with first readings (by definition, linear and curious). In this sense, Thomas J. Cousineau's book postulates not only a reader but a re-reader sensitive to unpredictable intertextual associations. For this reason, *The Séance of Reading: Uncanny Designs in Modernist Writing* is not just an academically dense, carefully researched and constructed book meticulously guiding the audience's discovery of already known texts from a different vantage point and intertextual frame, which indeed facilitates the harmonious convergence of folklore and modernist literature. It is, above all, an invitation to close reading and rereading.

Within the bulk of the first chapter – *Fixing Things in "The Great Gatsby"* – the author combines theoretical sophistication and critical acumen to show how the form of Fitzgerald's novel mirrors its content. The sacrifice of personal identity and values for the illusory achievement of the American Dream is reflected by plot manipulations and the rewriting undertaken by the premier chronicler of the Roaring Twenties. The activity of "fixing" – an essential tool for the reenactment of the archaic building-rituals inscribed in the Manole Legend – becomes the be-all and end-all of the novel: on the one hand, the characters are bent on duplicitous self-fixing and concealment; on the other hand, the Jazz Age storyteller's own latent, hidden sources (John Keats's poetry, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*) endow the text with a symbolic-intertextual dimension that enriches and anchors – or "fixes", as it were – the narrative and, ultimately, Fitzgerald's own life, as the chapter aptly shows. The second chapter, titled *Being Scrupulous in "The Sisters"*, uncovers the secrets or quasi-secrets hidden in plain sight in James Joyce's short story, by the author's own admission. The Manole Complex has become yet again a thematic and structural device. The analysis is clustered around the word "scrupulous", which transforms the work into a "pretext" for exploring Joyce's own scrupulousness – his own meticulous search for the "mot juste" and the perfect word order. The lexical item ambivalently embodies both affliction and technique. This interplay between personal affliction and authorial technique, as the author explains, emerges in the use of three Joycean lexemes – *paralysis*, *gnomon*, and *simony* – which help the reader understand Father Flynn – and Joyce, by extrapolation – in a less arcane, impenetrable way. What is "uncanny" about Father Flynn becomes "uncanny" in a larger sense in the narrative. The chapter does not fail to mention that Joyce involves the reader in a similarly agonizing ritual: reading is always an assembling of clues. From this standpoint, *The Sisters* is a parable twice over: not only does it have secrets, but it uses secrecy – at least insofar as secrecy and the convergence between corruption and construction coincide – as its main organizing factor. The third chapter deals with Fernando Pessoa's literary monument, *The Book of Disquiet*, coupling it with another stand-in for Mircea Eliade's "mortal body" endowed with a "soul" through sacrifice – namely, the guidebook *Lisbon: What Every Tourist Should See*.

The subsequent chapter offers the reader an exploratory expedition into Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, a staple of world theater and college literature classrooms. The relation between dramatizing and performing, on the one hand, and fiction, on the other hand, takes center stage here. The author, updating the flourishing school of Beckett criticism, describes his own encounter with a German production of the post-World War II play under discussion, in Paris, 1976. The transformation of waiting – a personal plight – into the theatrical technique of pausing not only informs the essay but energizes it. The whole section celebrates the tension between purposeful doing undertaken by the characters and purposeless doing staged by the actors, between activity and inactivity, and between extrinsic and intrinsic expectations of reward in *Godot*. Beckett's characters are shown getting into shape,

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as it were, for the biggest wait, the perfect doing, contending with an indifferent God who may or may not reward them for their service. In the absence of grand actions sweeping across the stage or the script, *stasis* looms large in *Godot*, illuminating the encounter with nothingness and muteness out in the void. The combination of narrative subservience and performative autonomy becomes clearer still when readers explore the Beckettian landscape, situated between two poles: waiting versus doing while waiting. The latter is mainly a staging area, an antechamber between the main space, devoted entirely to the interminableness of waiting, which recreates the ontological position of humankind. Overall, the chapter allows the author to examine the transformative and sacrificial nature of creative endeavor in a play about a seemingly uneventful "waiting". Cousineau skillfully shows that the play is not a static construction but a masterful orchestration of movements. Meaning results from the semiotic properties of the theater, the language of the characters, the dramatization of the interactions. The interplay between action and its deferral, suspense and its interruption become the focus of attention. This is what Professor Cousineau is *doing* for the readers who approach the play with an essentially literary sensibility in *Doing It in "Waiting for Godot"*: he sets the fictional and the real apart, theatricalizing *Godot*, uncovering its rhythm and choreography, its movement and gestures, illuminating the use of both language and silence, movement and stillness. The framework announced in the *Introduction* becomes apparent again: when the shield of language gives way, silence ensues. Language becomes a sculptural act by which stillness and pausing are alternately contained and liberated.

The next chapter casts light on J. Alfred Prufrock's turning back to his personal past, which functions, as in previous chapters, as a window into the poem's symbolic-intertextual dimension. The text exploits two complementary impulses: the return to one's personal memories as a prerequisite for a return to literary tradition. The author clarifies that T. S. Eliot displaces the mortal body of his human fellow – the Prufrockian type – into the architectural body of a work of art. The chapter also discusses the Dantean and Shakespearean allusions, which furnish an essential fiber of significance in Eliot's poem, set in turn-of-the-century Boston. The chapter – and, for that matter, the subsequent ones – succeeds in making the reader conscious of the "library" in the poem, of the intended and unintended wealth of intertextual material contained. A careful reading of T. S. Eliot's poem within the frames of Dante's *Inferno* and Shakespeare's *Hamlet* will certainly lead to the discovery of interpretive possibilities that a first reading, by hypothesis unaware of the intertexts, would have missed. *Turning back* to literary ancestors to weave them into new textual tapestries is, thus, another example that can profitably be (re)read with the Manole Complex in mind. Once again, a personal predicament is used as a wellspring of creative imagination. The next four chapters also cleverly suggest that the architecture of the text becomes, in a sense, inexorably expansive.

The sixth chapter focuses on another "literary monument" – *Endgame* – where Beckett, as in *Godot*, transforms the "war" in which the characters are involved into the "cantata" performed by the actors, delving into the meaningful moves made by the absurdist dramatist to create the illusion of control. A different chapter is subsequently concerned with Emil Cioran's assimilation of the sacrificial pattern in *A Short History of Decay*, in which the Romanian-born philosopher converts the prophetic dream of transfiguration announced in *Transfiguration de la Roumanie* into an anti-prophetic approach, signifying a move from a nationalistic focus to a larger, existential contemplation. Chapter 8 addresses the uncanny design of another piece of modern literature capitalizing on the dynamics between violence and ultimate grace, between earthly death and divine creation – Flannery O'Connor's *A Good Man is Hard to Find* – to describe yet another transformation of personal predicament (being a misfit, a bad seed) into the architectural body of a masterpiece. The keyword "misfit" not

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only acts as a defining feature of the Misfit himself, but as an interpretive paradigm of the "telling of the tale", a compass for navigating the multiplicity and complexity of the story. Professor Cousineau highlights the presence of incongruities and ironies in the narrative, both of which create "unbridgeable" discrepancies. The final chapter, where the author comes full circle to his opening gambit, has William Faulkner's *Light in August* joining the tail end of the queue of sacrificial reenactments. To examine the character of Joe Christmas is to make sense of his creator's arrangement of episodes and the network of voices embedded in the novel, all attempting to define him. The central figure of *Light in August* – whose life is constantly *framed* by inputs from Faulkner (or, more accurately, the novel's ambiguous authorial voice), the reader, and the character himself – is sacrificed so that the static structure of the novel is celebrated – or, better, reborn – as a frame-tale. Framing within the novel is, thus, transformed into an aesthetic technique.

Thomas J. Cousineau is able, in a search for hidden, tantalizingly elusive forms of post-existence resulting from actual physical death, to open up the nine masterpieces of literary modernism revisited in his book to the seductive charm of what he terms the return of the "Manole Complex": the death of literary protagonists or ancestors is always linked to a second, non-physical birth ritually created by the artist. This is the aesthetic link that chains a literary work in relation to both its predecessors and its creator. The author's probing of sacrificial acts for the sake of artistic creation in the context of American-European interaction plots a path through a refreshing tangle of inter- and cross-cultural cues. Examining the presentation of aesthetic myth against the backdrop of literary modernism, Thomas J. Cousineau shows that key canonical texts spanning American and European literature incorporate sacrificial metaphors and the ritual transformation of characters into architectural elements. Serving, as it does, both specialists and non-specialists, *The Séance of Reading: Uncanny Designs in Modernist Writing* is aimed at all readers of literature. However, since the book is an innovative reading of texts targeting most concern, on the one hand, on overt and covert parallels between literary works and past tradition and, on the other hand, on the artifice that turns death into rebirth through a confrontation with ritual, it will prove particularly valuable to students and scholars of modern and comparative literature, as well as to aficionados of symbolic anthropology. Undoubtedly, *The Séance of Reading* lends itself to multiple pedagogical agendas. Most importantly, nevertheless, this intriguing book can be read for mere pleasure. The reader postulated by its author is invited to take stock of one of the major - if often ignored - possibilities opened by the text: death is inconceivable if it is not related to a new form of non-being, to a creative spirit that lives on. Death is not an abyss but an initiation into a cosmologically enduring existence.

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AN OVERVIEW ON THE 20TH-CENTURY CENTRAL-EUROPEAN NOVEL

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Abstract

Over the past century, the history of Romanian literature has been dominated by nationalist approaches, necessary for the consolidation of a stable cultural identity. However, the concept of cultural identity involves changing and migratory components as well, many related to its links with other cultural identities, each of them with its own literature. This book review provides insights into the scholarly significance of Dicționarul Romanului Central-European din Secolul XX [The dictionary of Central European novel in the 20th century] coordinated by Adriana Babeți and edited by Oana Fotache, understood as a project that maps a transnational literary phenomenon. The study is examined for its uniqueness, specific linguistic diversity and multicultural scope: 250 entries about works initially published in one of the fourteen languages spoken in the region, including French and English as international languages, either part of the canon or more marginal and less known. Other reasons include its adequate combination of analysis and synthesis; the extensive team research carried out over three decades; and its socio-political relevance nowadays. The review highlights the historical, cultural, and academic contexts in which the dictionary was published, the avatars of the concept of Central Europe, several characteristics of the Central-European novel, and details about its structure, sections and features. The presentation mentions a few limitations about the availability of the titles in the languages of the region and the admitted gender imbalance and indicates several research audiences possibly interested in alternative ways of approaching novels in the context of globalization.

Keywords: literary history; Central Europe; novel studies; cultural geography; transnational studies.

In the 1990s, following the fall of the Berlin Wall, a group of scholars from Timișoara, Romania, launched a research project titled *The Third Europe*, an alternative perspective to the East-versus-West dichotomy, aimed at exploring the literature, culture and history of Central Europe. Initiated in the multicultural region of Banat and emerged before the accession of Romania to the European Union, the project has generated a series of international conferences, publications of original work, translations of renowned titles and, more recently, an international literary festival. Although appreciated among specialists from the country and from abroad, its real avant-guard influence has become more visible in 2022 when Polirom decided to publish *Dicționarul Romanului Central-European din Secolul XX* [The dictionary of Central European novel in the 20th century], an international effort of building a post-1989 regional intercultural identity and a comparative literary history that transcends frontiers, showing many of the similarities and differences between the national literatures of the area. Just as the Danube River gathers waters from nineteen countries, this dictionary gathers narrative threads from Central European countries to weave an engaging literary tapestry of the 20th century. It aims to reflect the profound impact of transnational

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phenomena such as war, totalitarianism, and mass migration on both personal subjectivity and collective memory.

Initiated as an individual undertaking in the spring of 1992, during an international conference held at the Rutgers University, Newark, USA, and transformed into a collaborative venture over the next three decades, the dictionary coordinated by Adriana Babeți, professor of comparative literature at the West University of Timișoara, and edited by Oana Fotache, professor of literary theory at the University of Bucharest, begins with an extensive introduction outlining the background and the stages of the project, the characteristics of the Central European novel and its possible audiences. This introduction is followed by over 250 entries about novels and 197 biographical entries about novelists, along with a chronology, a list of 70 contributors, a general bibliography, an index of authors and works, an index of names and a thematic index. In 2023, the editorial project received the Special Prize of the Writers' Union of Romania and the Titu Maiorescu Award offered by the National Museum of Romanian Literature.

In the introduction, Adriana Babeți explains some of the historical and geographical meanings of the concept named *Central Europe*, the theoretical contexts in which it has developed as well as the research methods and the selection criteria of the novels. Rather than presenting an essentialist definition, the author explores the various manifestations and hybrid nature of the concept, incorporating perspectives from numerous writers, historians, and researchers that delve into its relevance as a flexible organizing principle within the field of literary studies: Mitteleuropa, Zentraleuropa, Zwischeneuropa, New Europe, Eastern Europe, Median Europe, Middle Europe, the Other Europe, Central East Europe, East Central Europe, Central and South-Eastern Europe, even Kakania or the New Babylon. In essence, Central Europe, much like the region of Banat, is renowned for its multiethnic history and paradoxical identity rooted in linguistic, cultural, and religious diversity. It is characterized by the fragility of its borders, the shifting of political power centers, tensions between cosmopolitan impulses and national traditions, the politicization of literature and the arts etc. At times, in contrast to other areas of Central Europe, the region of Banat, where the dictionary originated, boasts distinct positive attributes. These include less pronounced clashes between diverse identities, a broader and more varied range of interculturality, hybridity and cultural transfer. Additionally, it possesses a cultural landscape conducive to experimentation, suitable for economic, social and technological policies, and a notable interest for innovation.

Unlike territories, however, novels transcend geographical boundaries and ethnic limitations, many of them illustrate how frontiers have been internalized, processed and transformed, contributing to the formation of new identities. Besides being part of a certain national heritage, they have become or may very well become part of regional and world literature through the regular practice of translation. It must be mentioned that the chosen novels are not only works privileged by the national or international canon, but also niche, atypical and marginalized works, censored or drawer novels, novels published abroad, postponed, unfinished or posthumous novels, with distinct themes and aesthetics typologies, relevant to the project.

From a linguistic point of view, the works were initially published in one of the following languages, which reflects the connections between the local and the global literary arenas: Czech, Croatian, English, French, German, Hebrew, Italian, Hungarian, Polish, Romanian, Serbian, Slovakian, Slovenian and Yiddish. In addition, the dictionary takes the limitations of the linguistic criterion into account, highlighting, for example, the changing relationship of Croatian, Serbian and Serbo-Croatian over the last decades, the nature of Yiddish as a fusion between Hebrew and German, the statute of the bilingual and trilingual

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writers of the region and the condition of the minority writers, with all the linguistic shifts that may have been involved in the process of producing literary works.

Almost all the selected novels have been translated into languages of international circulation and a third have been adapted for the screen at least once, which demonstrates strong ties with world literature and the larger domain of cinematography. Among the 197 authors, 12 have been honored with the Nobel Prize for Literature and 25 are included in the list of canonical authors compiled by the American critic Harold Bloom. From a local point of view, almost two thirds of the novels are available in Romanian, ready to be compared and contrasted, an aspect that needs further research and translation when considering their availability in the other languages of the region. From a different angle, translating the dictionary into another language would likely involve certain adaptations regarding the selection of the novels and the translations available through interregional exchanges. Moreover, when considering the criterion of gender, only about 10% of the novelists are women, which may be the result of women's poorer representation in the intellectual and literary spheres of society during the 20th century, but also the consequence of the current selection.

One of the most notable features of the dictionary is the thematic index, which facilitates the identification of novels dealing with certain historical topics like imperial influences, revolutions, the First or the Second World War, the Holocaust or the Communism. Additionally, the index aids in pinpointing novels set in particular cities, provinces or rural areas, those focused on childhood or school years, those depicting a journey (such as uprooting, deportation or exile), those staging crises, scapegoating, suicides, murders, love affairs or family relationships. Moreover, it highlights novels addressing themes of sexuality and prostitution, specific ethnic groups or certain professions (such as clerks, doctors, engineers, informers, journalists, officers, priests, servants, teachers, traders, workers, writers etc.). The index also distinguishes between diaries, autobiographies, utopias, dystopias, parodies, parables, and fantasies, and categorizes novels as romantic, realist, grotesque, modern or postmodern, among other classifications.

When readers first open the dictionary, one of the first questions they may have is: What are some defining characteristics of the Central European novel? Without attempting to provide an exhaustive answer, Adriana Babeți argues that it involves a particular manner of individual and collective engagement with temporality, encompassing experiences of disasters and periodic reconfigurations of identity. From a historical viewpoint, it has emerged as a result of a power mechanism: the absence of political independence in the smaller countries of the region was offset by the mobilizing force of cultural imagination. At the same time, the overemphasis on literature has also been the consequence of the irrepressible desire to stay connected with Western values. Furthermore, akin to other regions, the novel as a genre has functioned as support for political emancipation, a pedagogical instrument and a way to metabolize the ideologies of modernity while articulating historical consciousness.

The concept of "the past that has not passed" suggests a tense relationship between memory and history, characterized by a blend of apprehension and nostalgia regarding the individual and the collective past. Given these circumstances, the critic proposes six therapeutic solutions apparent in one form or another within these novels: to face the terrible past; to glorify the past; to parody the mythologies of the past; to be indifferent about the past; to miniaturize the past; to be circumspect about the future when linking it with the past. From a psycho-social perspective, Babeți emphasizes that the identity crises often represented in the Central European novel are rooted not only in the abyss of the self (to echo the developments of psychoanalysis), but also in the social, cultural and historical context (to

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echo the economic and political ideologies of the century), with a focus on masculinity and Jewishness, on the one hand, and a marked interest in the transformation of institutions like the monarchy, the state, the army, on the one hand, and the school and the family, on the other hand.

Half a century of cultural exchange and research regarding literary topography and comparative studies at the West University of Timișoara, with prominent figures in the field such as Cornel Ungureanu, the author of *The Mitteleuropa of the Peripheries* (2002) and *Central Europe: The Geography of an Illusion* (2004), and Marcel Cornis-Pope, who, together with John Neubauer, edited the four-volume *History of the Literary Cultures of East-Central Europe: Junctures and Disjunctures in the 19th and the 20th Centuries* (2004-2010), have left their mark on the framework and the content of this dictionary. Although the majority of contributors are Romanian, with some residing abroad as academics, diplomats, researchers, translators or journalists, there is also representation from minority groups such as Hungarian, Polish, Czech, German, Serbian, French and others. What is evident is their generous hermeneutic approach, open to cultural otherness and the linguistically diverse literatures of the region.

It has probably become obvious so far that the dictionary is addressed to those interested in fields such as literary history, comparative studies, literary sociology, reception theory, cultural studies, geocriticism, multiculturalism, world literature, political history, spatial narratology, psychogeography, distant reading and other connected domains.

The overall impression is that of an immense multilingual literary beehive, meant to stimulate analytical and exploratory re-readings of the 20th-century novel from Central Europe. The dictionary is part of the contemporary trend in literary history that cultivates transnational perspectives, diminishing the importance of national frontiers and historical moments, while favoring intercultural relationships and temporal spans. It represents a shift in paradigm, focused on multinodal networks and rhizomatic outlooks, which, as the coordinator contends, does not necessarily imply a superior approach, but remains pertinent in the context of glocalization, the advance of the internet, the need for recontextualizations and for pinpointing resemblances and differences, interferences and interactions, evolutions and discontinuities, often prone to modification and open to innovation.

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Dr Sorin Ciutacu earned his combined honours in English and Latin Philology and his PhD on an English Semantics and Philosophy topic at the University of Bucharest, Romania in 1986 and 1999, respectively. He also earned a Master Degree in Political Sociology from the West University of Timişoara, Romania in 2002.
He has held different research scholarships from sundry European universities and Erasmus grants and has spent academic time and/or taught in: Cambridge, Oxford, Birmingham, Edinburgh, London, Amsterdam, Utrecht, Brussels, Gent, Paris, Heidelberg, Bonn, Berlin, Frankfurt am Main, Vienna, Zagreb, Aveiro, Madrid, Catania, Bari, Sassari, Rome etc.
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Alexandru Foitoş is currently a PhD student at the Faculty of Letters, History and Theology, West University of Timişoara. His major interest is academic research in fields such as Romanian Literature (Modernity and Avant-Garde), Stylistics and Poetics, but also the use of digital tools and quantitative studies in domains such as Literature, Stylistics or Poetic Lexicography. His doctoral thesis, supervised by Prof. Dr. Habil. Florica Bodiştean, focuses on the marginal(ized) Romanian avant-

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