

BRVKENTHAL  
ACTA MVSEI  
XVI. 5

BRUKENTHALIA No. 11



2021

**BRVKENTHAL. ACTA MVSEI XVI. 5**

**BRUKENTHALIA**  
**Romanian Cultural History Review**  
**No. 11**

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## **BRVKENTHAL. ACTA MVSEI**

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# **BRUKENTHAL. ACTA MVSEI XVI. 5**

## **BRUKENTHALIA** **Romanian Cultural History Review** **No. 11**



MUZEUL  
NAȚIONAL  
BRUKENTHAL

EDITURA MUZEULUI NAȚIONAL BRUKENTHAL  
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## Editorial Policies and Instructions for Contributors

The Brukenthalia Journal proposes a subject for its new issue - **Imago Mortis: Natural Disasters, Epidemics, Massacres, Genocides, the Holocaust, the Gulag (II)**

Philosophically speaking, Antiquity seemed to “dedramatize” death, which was constructed as a denial of the being and as a punishment for human weaknesses and errors. Nevertheless, mortality in the Middle Ages generated apparently insurmountable dread and a collective obsession with the end, due to scourges – plagues, particularly the Bubonic plague during the 14<sup>th</sup> century, wars, famines, natural disasters, a low life expectancy and a profound sense of perceiving life as a mere passage. Transposed in the imagery of the Apocalypse, fear of death was a dominant state, in spite of the official agents’ best efforts to relativize death and to turn it into a natural phenomenon, inescapable as such. The official Christian discourse about death and dying was focused on the image of eschatological death, of death as the only Gateway to the Last Judgement and to Eternity. In the historical reality, fear and terror, the imagery of popular Christianity prevailed. The attitudes and sensitivities towards death and dying materialized mainly in the repulsion and horror towards physical death and the inexorable decomposition of the “sinful human flesh”. Despite the insistence of the Christian discourse and subsequently of the scientific discourse (especially the thanatological one), illness and death have been considered results of sin in the collective perceptions – antechambers of punishing human flaws through the rigors of the Inferno.

Such a representation was simultaneously the result of the junction between the pre-Christian discourse and the Vulgate of the Christian theology of sin. The only “solace” laid in the “social justice” instituted by the “equalizing” and impartial death (see the iconography of the Danse Macabre, which illustrates this social representation of death in Western Europe, as well as in the continent’s Eastern peripheries, as a product of cultural contagion). The Renaissance, followed by dissemination of the Protestant discourse on death and the decrease of mortality rates in late pre-modernity, seemed to provide more chances for the accomplishment of individual eschatology. However, death has remained, even in those contexts, the referential system according to which life has been defined.

The historian Michel Vovelle asserted that death is a complex structure of phenomena, of civilizing acts (practices, beliefs, etc.), a fluctuating socio-cultural expression, in which the ways of dying and the imaginary of death are determined by the major evolutions of the social sphere, by its dynamics, by its successive stages of growth or impasse, including crises of conscience. In such a system of relations and levels, death and dying are “lived” through the interactions that occur between the palpable reality (economic and social institutions, demography, family) on the one hand, and the representations and discourses about death, on the other. Using similar contextualizations, Vovelle describes three levels of manifestation: “death that is suffered” (which refers to collective death as a historical phenomenon studied by demographers and investigated through the questioning of quantitative sources), “death that is lived” (more complex, as it implies the analysis of the “qualitative” sources, that is, of the iconography of death, the practices and beliefs related to the funeral moment, the imaginary of post-existence) and “the discourse on death” (which, in fact, involves the “encounter” and the intertwining of the discourses that a society produces with reference to death – the official, scholarly and popular religious discourses, the secular discourse, the literary and artistic discourses, the scientific discourse).

So far, the proposed topic has benefited of a well-defined theoretical position. The widening of the historian’s area of research, of his/her documentary base, the revolution of research methodologies through the promotion of the interdisciplinary approach have made

possible the tackling of death as an object of cultural-historical investigation. First, the historians of collective mentalities carried out the quantitative evaluation of the phenomenon, then the qualitative evaluation. Furthermore, these approaches have offered a significant number of works published in a relatively short period of time. These works put forward stimulating ideas, generated by the nature of the new research topic, by the identification of historical sources and innovative methods of investigating both these recent sources and the classical quarries. Thus, in the last decades, two distinct methodological dimensions have emerged: the serial survey and the quantitative survey. The investigated sources – funeral practices, funeral homiletics, memoirs, wills, fiction writings, the funerary monument (of particular interest have been the epitaph and the specific art), the graveyard as cultural synthesis (and even institution) – have revealed particular sensitivities and manifestations of religiosity, aspects decided by the historical and cultural frameworks, as well as by the religious identity. Since the beginning of the 1970s, studies of historiography and cultural history, especially the French and Anglo-Saxon ones, have transcended the limitations of the iconographic approach of death, being concerned with the expansion of the sources of investigation and with the enrichment of methodological register through the applications of the trans-disciplinary discourse.

Throughout its institutionalized history, humanity has faced collective tragedies at times difficult to imagine. The one thing that impressed every time was the attitude towards the death of the Other, an attitude that ranged from indifference or morbid interest to compassion and altruism. Particularly in the 20<sup>th</sup> century we are surprised by the interplay between short- and long-term memory, as well as by the mystification, trivialization through routinizing, and negationism.

This research proposal takes into account the investigation of diaries, fiction, documentary and feature film, fine arts and photography, the historiographical imagery and the oral history interviews.

We are interested in investigating images of collective death, "death that is lived", the images of death during the major natural disasters and epidemics, from Antiquity to the present day, genocides previous to the Great War (and, implicitly, the extermination of several social movements), the Armenian Genocide, the Nanjing Massacre, the massacres during World War Two (Pogroms in Poland, Ukraine, Romania, Hungary; massacres in Lidice, Katyn, Ip and Treznea, the Siege of Leningrad, the Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic bombings), as well as Mao Zedong's "Cultural Revolution", the Gulag, the Red Khmer's terror, the civil war in Rwanda. We also intend to approach the topic of modern millennial fears (see the literature popularizing paranormal predictions and phenomena, the suicidal actions around the year 2000).

We welcome approaches of those episodes of natural disasters and inter-human conflicts that have resulted in the annihilation of peoples and civilizations in the name of a so-called superiority of culture and race. We are particularly interested in those imageries which seem to partly explain fatalism and axiological disbelief in humanity and progress.

Deadline for submission of accepted articles: 1<sup>st</sup> of August, 2020.

Please send your contributions to: [granceaela@gmail.com](mailto:granceaela@gmail.com), [mihaifulger@gmail.com](mailto:mihaifulger@gmail.com), [brukenthalia.journal@gmail.com](mailto:brukenthalia.journal@gmail.com), [grajdian@hiroshima-u.ac](mailto:grajdian@hiroshima-u.ac), [ancasiminamartin@gmail.com](mailto:ancasiminamartin@gmail.com)

## GUIDE FOR AUTHORS

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1. **The Brukenthalia. Review of Cultural History** scientific journal receives contributions under the form of unpublished research papers, review papers written in English. The field of interest is Cultural History. The accuracy of translation is the author's responsibility.
2. The corresponding author should clearly state in a distinct document (To whom it may concern) that the submitted manuscript has not been published, submitted or accepted elsewhere and, if collective authorship, that all authors agree with the content and the submission of the manuscript.
3. The manuscript should be submitted as a single file in \*.doc (Microsoft Word) format (or edited in Open Office) and shall contain: (1) to whom it may concern document, (2) manuscript, (3) list of illustrations and (4) tables (if required). Together with document the authors should attach \*.jpeg or \*.tiff format illustrations (legend marked inside text).
4. The manuscript should not exceed 20 pages, 4.000-15.000 words (bibliography included), written in Times New Roman (TNR), font size 11, justified, single row, 2 columns, A4 page format, 2 cm margins. The pages should not be numbered. The manuscript should contain an abstract and keywords in English and another one in Romanian (Romanian translation will be provided by editors if authors have no means under this respect).

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The submitted manuscript should be arranged as follows: (1) title, (2) author's name, (3) author's affiliation and e-mail address, (4) abstract, (5) keywords, (6) manuscript, (7) references, (8) list of illustrations, (9) tables.

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Burke 2008 Burke, Peter, What is cultural history? Cambridge, Polity Press (2008).
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Stanzel 1999 Stanzel Frank K., "Zur literarische Imagologie. Eine Einführung". In Ingomar Weiler, Waldermar Zacharasiewicz (eds.) Europäischer Völkerspiegel. Imagologisch-ethographische Studien zu den Völkertafeln des frühen 18. Jahrhunderts, Universitätsverlag C. Winter, Heidelberg (1999), p. 9-39.
  - d) Proceedings from symposiums and conferences:

Karamberopoulos, Oeconomopolulos 2004 Karamberopoulos, D., Oeconomopolulos Alexandra, Greek medical manuscripts of the period of the 16th middle 19th century. Proceedings of the 39th Congress on the History of Medicine held at Bari (2004).
  - e) Unpublished thesis or reports:

Roman 1958 Roman Petre, Grupa înmormântărilor cu ocru pe teritoriul RPR, București (1958). Thesis (manuscript).

Diaconescu et al. 2011 Diaconescu Dragoș, Dumitrescu-Chioar Florian, Natea Gheorghe, Șura Mică, com. Șura Mică, jud. Sibiu. In CCA 2011 (campania 2010) (in press).

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## **A. STUDIES**





# DESTRUCTION OF ARCHITECTURAL MONUMENTS ALONG THE HUMAN HISTORY

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**Abstract:** *Architectural monuments play a very specific role in the public eye as symbols that transform space, most often by commemorating a person or an event and are designed to inspire amazement and represent the dominant ideologies of a society. The study is based on examples of the destruction of architectural monuments in a broad historical context, from ancient Egypt to the twentieth century and early twenty-first century, the role of these exhaustive examples being to reflect the factors that led to their destruction. The circumstances surrounding the destruction of monuments from different cultures at different times in human history are diverse. The destruction of architectural monuments is largely based on the desire to annihilate, eliminate and suppress the ideological and emotional attachment that is often linked to these historical monuments, so the study raises indicators of the intentional destruction of architectural monuments as an ethical issue.*

**Keywords:** *architectural monuments, destruction, reconstruction, history, society.*

**Rezumat:** *Monumentele arhitecturale joacă un rol foarte specific în ochiul public ca simboluri care transform spațiul, cel mai adesea prin comemorarea unei persoane sau a unui eveniment și sunt concepute pentru a inspira uimire și a reprezenta ideologiile dominante ale unei societăți. Studiul se bazează pe exemple de distrugere a monumentelor arhitecturale într-un context istoric larg, de la Egiptul antic până la secolul XX și începutul secolului XXI, rolul acestor exemple exhaustive fiind acela de a reflecta factorii care au condus la distrugerea lor. Circumstanțele din jurul distrugerii monumentelor din diferite culturi în momente diferite din istoria omenirii sunt diverse. Distrugerea monumentelor arhitecturale se bazează în mare măsură pe dorința de a anihila, elimina și suprima atașamentul ideologic și emoțional care este adesea legat de aceste monumente istorice, astfel încât studiul ridică indicații de distrugere intenționată a monumentelor arhitecturale ca o problemă etică.*

**Cuvinte cheie:** *monumente arhitecturale, distrugere, reconstrucție, istorie, societate.*

## Introduction

The destruction of architectural monuments along the human history is due to natural factors, but an important role is played by man. When dealing with architectural monuments, we think that the passage of time leaves deep traces, and that natural factors play an important role in their destruction. So, fires, floods, earthquakes, rain, frost, temperature variations have led either to the demolition of buildings or to the disintegration of the materials from which they are built. Like nature that shapes, but at the same time destroys, man has built and destroyed throughout its history. Each stage in the becoming of humanity means a long series of social, economic, cultural accumulations. But in a same way it implies a long chain of denials of the values accumulated by previous generations.

Italian archaeologist Rodolfo Amedeo Lanciani, in his work about the destruction of ancient Rome, considered that a large-scale destruction of architectural monuments was due to man.

“We may grant that natural agencies have contributed their share to the demolition of ancient buildings, - fires, flood, earthquakes, and the slow but resistless processes of disintegration due to rain, frost, and variations of temperature; but such prodigious changes, such wholesale destruction, could have been accomplished only by the hand of man.” (Lanciani 2012, 7).

In 2017, at the annual meeting of the American Historical Association in Denver, historians mentioned that among the enemies of the past a decisive role is played economic

development, poverty, lack of training, and lack of resources.

“War and politics are not the only enemies of the past . . . economic development, poverty, lack of training, and lack of resources also threaten to destroy historical artifacts.” (Bokkem 2017).

The factors that led to the destruction of architectural monuments throughout human history can be divided into natural and anthropogenic factors. Natural factors include fires, floods, earthquakes, rain, frost, temperature variations. Anthropogenic factors include war, politics, religion, economic development, poverty, lack of training, and lack of resources.

The existence of many architectural monuments in the Antiquity has been reported by the historiographical sources of Diodorus Siculus, Eusebius, Pliny the Elder, Plato, Plutarch, Socrates Scholasticus. Archaeological research, but also numerous reconstructions of architectural monuments are due to these historiographical sources.

### **Egypt from Akhenaten's religious reforms to the “one million-year-old temple” of Ramses II**

The architecture of ancient Egypt includes some of the most famous structures in the world: from the Great Pyramids of Giza to the temples of Thebes. State-funded construction projects were organized for religious and commemorative purposes, but also to strengthen the Pharaoh's power.

#### *Akhetaten and the city dedicated to his god Aten*

Over 3,000 years ago, when Egypt was dominated by hundreds of gods and goddesses, a pharaoh changed everything, laying the foundations of the world's first monotheistic religion. It was so controversial that after his death his descendants tried to erase everything about his existence. Akhenaten left Thebes, then the capital of Egypt, and moved to the desert, where he built a new city dedicated to his god Aten. Akhetaten planned the city with the Great Temple of the Aten, Small Aten Temple, royal residences, records office, and government buildings in the city center (Ridley 2019, 85 – 90). Some of these buildings, such as the Aten temples, were

ordered to be built by Akhenaten on the boundary stela decreeing the city's founding (Figure 1). The new pharaoh was only interested in the new religion, the new city and the new artistic style he was promoting, very strange and different from Egyptian conventionalism. Akhenaten's religious reforms are considered the first true expression of monotheism in world history. The Amarna period is, in fact, the era of ancient Egyptian history that received the most attention, because Akhenaten's reign is seen as such a dramatic deviation from the standard of the traditional Egyptian monarchy.

With the death of Akhetaten, the cult of Aten fell out. Tutankhamun left the city of Akhetaten (Dodson 2014, 245–249) and building projects at Thebes and Karnak used *talatat* (building blocks measuring 1/2 by 1/2 by 1 ancient Egyptian cubits) from Akhenaten's buildings, which implies that Tutankhamun might have started to demolish temples dedicated to the Aten. During Horemheb's reign, the Egyptians began destroying the temples of Akhetaten and reusing the building blocks in new construction projects, including the newly restored god Amon in the temples. Horemheb's successor continued in this effort. Seti I restored the monuments of Amon and had the name of the god carved again on the inscriptions where he was removed by Akhenaten. Under Ramessides, who succeeded Seti I, Akhetaten was gradually destroyed and the building material reused throughout the country, such as in the constructions at Hermopolis. Negative attitudes toward Akhenaten were illustrated, for example, by inscriptions in the tomb of the scribe Moses (or Mess), where Akhenaten's reign is called “the time of the enemy of Akhet-Aten” (Hoffmeier 2015, 241– 243).

#### *Ramesseum*

An emblematic pharaoh of the prestigious civilization of ancient Egypt, Ramses II left an exceptional legacy. In the west of Thebes, he built one of his “million-year-old temple”, which was admired in Antiquity. Hecataeus of Abdera, then Diodorus of Sicily praised the greatness of what they called the “tomb of Osymandias”, the great sanctuary erected by Ramses II for his mortuary service and known to every visitor of Thebes as the Ramesseum. This temple and its immense outbuildings are

the subject of intensive research thanks to which we can better understand today what its real vocation was and the different cogs that allowed it to function from its foundation until its abandonment (Figure 2). Unlike the massive stone temples at Abu Simbel, the inexorable passage of three millennia has not been kind to the “one million-year-old temple” at Thebes. This was mainly due to its location right on the edge of the flood plain of the Nile, the annual flood gradually eroding the foundations of this temple. The neglect of the building and the arrival of the Christian era, when the temple was used as a Christian church, played an important role in its destruction, also. Diodorus of Sicily’s writing brings us back to bygone times when Ramesseum shone in all its splendor on the banks of the Nile:

“At its entrance there is a pylon, constructed of variegated stone, two plethra in breadth and forty-five cubits high; passing through this one enters a rectangular peristyle, built of stone, four plethra long on each side; it is supported, in place of pillars, by monolithic figures sixteen cubits high, wrought in the ancient manner as to shape; and the entire ceiling, which is two fathoms wide, consists of a single stone, which is highly decorated with stars on a blue field. Beyond this peristyle there is yet another entrance and pylon, in every respect like the one mentioned before, save that it is more richly wrought with every manner of relief; beside the entrance are three statues, each of a single block of black stone from Syene, of which one, that is seated, is the largest of any in Egypt, the foot measuring over seven cubits, while the other two at the knees of this, the one on the right and the other on the left, daughter and mother respectively, are smaller than the one first mentioned. And it is not merely for its size that this work merits approbation, but it is also marvellous by reason of its artistic quality and excellent because of the nature of the stone, since in a block of so great a size there is not a single crack or blemish to be seen.” (Diodorus Siculus 1, 47).

### **Architectural monuments in the Achaemenid Empire**

The purpose of building Persepolis was to establish a common symbol and reference for the peoples of the Empire along with the

Achaemenid dynasty, conveying significant messages and values such as peace, stability, greatness and praise to the dynastic figure of the king as protector of values. The studies in the fields of archeology, history and art history, as well as direct research of the site indicate that the Inscriptions, the bas-reliefs and the innovative architectural language express the symbolism, values and political messages of the Achaemenid dynasty (Soheil 2019, ix).

#### *Alexander the Great destroyed Persepolis*

Persepolis, the ceremonial capital of the Achaemenid Empire, was in fact a complex raised high on a walled platform, with five “palaces” or halls of varying size and grand entrances.

In 330 BC, Alexander the Great sent the main force of his army to Persepolis and destroyed it. Darius I’s construction of Persepolis was carried parallel to that of the Palace of Susa, which served as model for Persepolis. In Darius’s time, the Apadana and the Council Hall (Tripylon or the “Triple Gate”) were built, as well as the main imperial Treasury and its surroundings, which were completed during the reign of Xerxes I (Figure 3). Further construction of the buildings on the terrace continued until the downfall of the Achaemenid Empire.

Diodorus Siculus writes that:

“Alexander described it to the Macedonians as the most hateful of the cities of Asia, and gave it over to his soldiers to plunder, all but the palaces.” (Diodorus Siculus 17.70.1).

#### *The Mausoleum at Halicarnassus*

Built for Mausolus, a satrap in the Achaemenid Empire, by his wife Artemisia II of Caria, the Mausoleum at Halicarnassus (Figure 4) was erected between 353 and 350 BC in Halicarnassus (present Bodrum, Turkey) by the Greek architects Satyros and Pythius of Priene (Kostof 1985, 9). The monumental Mausoleum was decorated with sculptural reliefs created by Greek sculptors Leochares, Bryaxis, Scopas of Paros, and Timotheus. Much of the information that has been gathered about the Mausoleum and its structure has come from Pliny the Elder.

“(…) On the north and south sides it extends for 63 feet, but the length of the

façades is less, the total length of the façades and sides being 440 feet. The building rises to a height of 25 cubits and is enclosed by 36 columns. The Greek word for the surrounding colonnade is “pteron”, a “wing”. (...) For above the colonnade there is a pyramid as high again as the lower structure and tapering in 24 stages to the top of its peak. At the summit there is a four-horse chariot of marble, and this was made by Pythis. The addition of this chariot rounds off the whole work and brings it to a height of 140 feet.” (Pliny the Elder xxxvi.30-31).

It was destroyed by successive earthquakes from the twelfth to the fifteenth century. The Knights of St. John of Rhodes invaded the region and, in 1494, they decided to fortify Bodrum Castle, later known as the Castle of Saint Peter, with the stones of the Mausoleum.

### Classical architecture

#### *The Temple of Zeus at Olympia*

It is thought that the Temple of Zeus (Figure 5) was the main focus of the sanctuary during ancient times, but instead it was constructed in the years after 471 BC (Scott 2010, 183). Pausanias indicates that the temple was paid for with the victory booty from the Eleans’ final defeat of Pisa and was the biggest military commemoration in the sanctuary.

The temple was commemorating a victory where Olympia was the reward, and the temple’s construction directly served to show the control that the Eleans had over the sanctuary since their victory (Scott 2010, 184). While the Temple of Zeus, as a statement of victory, showed Olympia as exclusive, the temple, according to Scott, was also a means of Olympia showing their “links to the wider Greek world” (Scott 2010, 185). Furthermore, the Temple of Zeus served as a display of competition and rivalry among the Greeks (Scott 2010, 192).

The altar to Zeus had a huge significance, as it was built up from the ashes of all the previous sacrifices. This meant that the altar served as a display of the piety of the people of Olympia, and the extent to which they honoured Zeus Olympios.

Built in Olympia, a famous and important religious site, the Temple of Zeus aggrandized the historical significance of the area.

Pausanias tells us that the temple, and the statue within it, though made two decades apart, were funded as a result of Pisa’s defeat by the Eleans (Pausanias 5.10).

The Temple suffered damage over time due to both neglect and natural disasters. In the fifth century AD, Theodosius II enforced a ban on pagan festivals, which included the destruction and abandonment of the Temple. A century later, the remains of the Temple were completely destroyed by two earthquakes (Alexandris 2014, 2). The statue of Zeus in particular, though long since destroyed, remains relevant to modern discussion thanks to its status as one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World.

#### *The Acropolis was razed, and the Old Temple of Athena and the Older Parthenon destroyed*

In the sixth century B.C the first monumental, stone Doric Temple of Athena was built on the Acropolis and in a short time, at the end of the sixth century, another monumental temple was built here. After the Athenian victory over the Persians at Marathon in 490 B.C., yet another monumental temple was erected on the Acropolis. Ten years later, in 480 B.C., the Acropolis was captured and ruined by the Persians.

Herodotus noted in *The Histories* that, after the victory of Xerxes I at the Battle of Thermopylae, the population of Athens was evacuated, with the aid of the Allied fleet, to Aegina and Salamis. The departure of the Athenians from their own country is, according to Herodotus, related to the great serpent who lives in the temple and guards the Acropolis and who once received a cake of honey as an offering. This time the serpent had left the offering untouched, which is why the Athenians consider that their goddess has left the Acropolis.

“So the rest made sail thither, and the Athenians to their own country. Being there arrived they made a proclamation that every Athenian should save his children and servants as best he could. Thereat most of them sent their households to Troezen, and some to Aegina and Salamis. They made haste to convey all out of harm because they desired to be guided by the oracle, and for another reason, too, which was this: it is said by the Athenians that a great snake

lives in their temple, to guard the acropolis; in proof whereof they do ever duly set out a honey-cake as a monthly offering for it; this cake had ever before been consumed, but was now left untouched. When the priestess made that known, the Athenians were the readier to leave their city, deeming their goddess, too, to have deserted the acropolis. When they had conveyed all away, they returned to the fleet.” (Herodotus VIII, 41).

The small number of Athenians who barricaded themselves on the Acropolis were eventually defeated, and Xerxes then ordered Athens to be torched (Holland 2006, 305–306). The Acropolis was razed, and the Old Temple of Athena (Figure 6) and the Older Parthenon (Figure 7) destroyed (Barringer, Hurwit 2010, 295).

Herodotus describes in the pages of *The Histories* how the Persians burned the Acropolis and the temple.

“Those Persians who had come up first betook themselves to the gates, which they opened, and slew the suppliants; and when they had laid all the Athenians low, they plundered the temple and burnt the whole of the acropolis.” (Herodotus VIII.53).

In the middle of the fifth century, the Athenians under Pericles rebuilt the most famous buildings on the Acropolis the Parthenon, the Erechtheion, the Propylaea and the temple of Athena Nike.

#### *The Temple of Artemis at Ephesus*

The destruction of the second temple of Artemis at Ephesus (Figure 8) is linked to the name of Herostratus, a man with a precarious social position, a non-Ephesian, or a slave. According to tradition, the temple was set on fire by Herostratus on the day of the birth of Alexander the Great, July 21, 356 BC.

Ephesians rebuilt the temple after the death of Alexander, at their own expense. The reconstruction started in 323 BC and continued for many years, with the third temple being larger than the second.

The new Temple of Artemis survived for 600 years and appears in the tales of early Christians of Ephesus. An apocryphal story of the temple's destruction tells that the apostle John prayed publicly in the Temple of Artemis, exorcising its demons and:

“(…) of a sudden the altar of Artemis split in many pieces... and half the temple fell down.” (Mac Mullen 1984, 26).

Jordanes in *Getica* noted that, in 268 A.D., the temple was destroyed or damaged in a raid by the Goths, in the time of emperor Gallienus:

“(…), leaders of the Goths, took ship and sailed across the strait of the Hellespont to Asia. There they laid waste many populous cities and set fire to the renowned temple of Diana at Ephesus.” (Jordanes, *Getica* xx.107).

According to Christian texts, the closing of the Temple of Artemis took place sometime in the early fifth century. How long the temple of Artemis lasted after its closure by Christians is not known, but it seems that some of the stones of the temple were used in the construction of other buildings. What is known for sure is that Cyril of Alexandria mandated the Archbishop of Constantinople John Chrysostom with the destruction of the temple.

#### **Late Antiquity and Christianity**

The most fervent Christians demanded the devastation of pagan temples and their ornaments, such as the statues of gods (for Christians, these idols were inhabited by demons). The destruction of pagan cult places could be justified as a form of purification; a law of 435 ordered authorities to demolish pagan shrines and purify them by placing there the sign of the revered Christian religion (Kahlos 2020, 172).

The circulation of material from buildings, both secular and religious, was common in Greco – Roman Antiquity:

“(…) a law of 397 permitted the reuse of materials from temples in the construction and reconstruction of wall, aqueducts, roads, and bridges. In these cases, the reuse was for civic structures, not for private use.” (Kahlos, 2020, 173).

Richard Bayliss remarked there were two different types of temple transformation. He considered that the first transformation meant that no standing material from the shrine was taken, but the church was built within the

temenos of the shrine or parts of the temple were reused.

The second transformation meant that the standing material from a sanctuary was materially restructured into a church, and thus the church preserved in situ some remnants of the temple (Kahlos 2020, 174-175).

*The Christian Emperor Constantine and his imperial policy of eradicating pagans*

In the fourth century, a few texts were written regarding the pagan sites, such as *The Life of the Emperor Constantine* (324–337) written by Eusebius of Caesarea, *The Life of the founder of monasticism, St. Anthony*, and *The Life of St. Parthenios*.

In *The Life of Constantine*, there is a narrative about the destruction of a pagan temple at the order of the emperor. This was a cave-temple dedicated to Aphrodite in Jerusalem, at the site of the Holy Sepulchre, taken down at the order of Constantine.

The measure that Constantine took in Jerusalem provided a model for other actions involving individual temples. Eusebius tried later to describe these actions as reflecting an imperial policy of eradicating pagans (Potter 2013, 276). He gave the example of three temples destroyed by the emperor in the east: one was the temple of Asclepius in Cilicia (Eusebius, 55.5–56) and two were temples dedicated to Aphrodite. The first was situated at Aphaca (Eusebius, 55) while the other two were at Heliopolis (Eusebius, 58). The temple of Asclepius in Cilicia was famous as an oracular site, while the rites at both temples of Aphrodite included sacred prostitution, these being the grounds on which Constantine had them demolished.

*The Destruction of the Sarpeum of Alexandria*

The Serapeum of Alexandria was built by Ptolemy III Euergetes (246–222 BC) and was dedicated to Serapis, who was the protector of Alexandria.

In July 325 AD, the Serapeum of Alexandria (Figure 9) was closed by order of the same Christian emperor Constantine and destroyed by a Christian crowd or by Roman soldiers in 391. The destruction of the Serapeum in Alexandria is interpreted by the scholars as representative of the triumph of Christianity and as an example of the attitude of the Christians towards pagans.

Socrates Scholasticus wrote about the destruction of the Sarpeum of Alexandria thus:

“(…) the emperor issued an order at this time for the demolition of the heathen temples in that city; (…) Then he destroyed the Serapeum, (...); the Serapeum also he showed full of extravagant superstitions, and he had the phalli of Priapus carried through the midst of the forum.” (Socrates Scholasticus XVI, 223)

Regardless of previous events, the Serapeum of Alexandria was not rebuilt. After the destruction, a monastery was established, a church for St. John the Baptist, known as Angelium or Evangelium. However, the church fell into ruin around 600 AD, being then restored by Pope Isaac of Alexandria (681-684 AD) and finally destroyed in the tenth century. In the twentieth century, a Muslim cemetery, Bāb Sidra, was located on the site.

**Architectural heritage monuments in the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century**

Even in modern and contemporary times, architectural monuments have continued to fall prey to destruction. The turbulent twentieth century has left many losses behind. Whether we are talking about the two world conflagrations, about the so-called visionary cultural movements of the communist period, interethnic wars or religious wars, the architectural heritage often suffered irreversibly.

*Architectural heritage monuments and the World War II*

During World War II, the biggest world conflagration, many historically and architecturally significant buildings were destroyed or severely damaged. Several hundred cities were destroyed, only in Germany. A few examples of architectural destruction include palaces like Berlin Palace, Monbijou Palace, and City Palace, Potsdam, churches like Dresden Frauenkirche, Berlin Cathedral, and Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church. In Poland, Nazi Germany destroyed the Old Town of Warsaw (Figure 10), with the Royal Castle, Łazienki Palace, and Ujazdowski Castle. In 1945, incendiary bombs

and shelling set the roof of Vienna's Cathedral of St. Stephen on fire. The cathedral's original larch girders were destroyed, and so were the Rollinger choir stalls, carved in 1487. In Italy, many historic buildings were destroyed or damaged during World War II, like the monastery of Monte Cassino, which was destroyed during the Battle of Monte Cassino. Fortunately, in Europe, many historical buildings destroyed or severely damaged during World War II were rebuilt after the war.

In Japan, during the Battle of Okinawa in World War II, Shuri Castle was destroyed, a palace of the Ryukyu Kingdom built in the fourteenth century. It was later reconstructed in the 1990s, but, in 2019, the main courtyard structures of the castle were again destroyed in a fire.

During the Battle of Manila in 1945, most of the unique architecture of the Philippine capital was destroyed. After the war, Manila was rebuilt in a modernist style, so much of the original architectural heritage of the city was lost forever.

#### *Architectural heritage monuments and the communist period*

The cultural movements of the communist period are felt in all the states that embraced this regime, from Europe to Asia. China can be considered one of the most critical examples. The Chinese cultural movement began under Mao Zedong in 1966 and ended in 1976, aiming at protecting the "true" communist ideology by smashing all remaining elements of capitalism in the Chinese society. Even though the government had an official policy of protecting ancient cultural monuments, artifacts and architecture of historical importance, more than 4,900 monuments were destroyed during the revolution.

In Beijing only, from August 19 on, the Red Guard started a "Destroy the Four Olds" (*po sijiu*) movement. All over the city, big posters announcing "A Declaration of War on the Old World" started with the words:

"We are the critics of the old world; we want to criticize and we want to crush all old thought, old culture, old customs and old habits." (Jiaqi, Gao 1996, 65).

Important sites in Beijing, such as Fragrant Hills, Biyun Temple, Reclining Buddha Temple, and parks near Badachu, were targets of the "Destroy the Four Olds" movement. Buddhist icons, plaques, and scrolls were destroyed and replaced by pictures of Mao Zedong. And the damage to historical sites was even more severe.

A good example of what the Chinese cultural movement meant for China's built cultural heritage is the vandalization of Confucius Cemetery. This cemetery belonged to the Kong clan, the descendants of Confucius, in Confucius' hometown Qufu in Shandong province. Confucius himself and some of his disciples are buried there, as well as more than 100,000 descendants of Confucius, who were buried there over a period of about 2,000 years. The monumental construction measure at perimeter wall reached a length of 7.5 km, enclosing an area of 3.6 square km by the late eighteenth century. During the Cultural Revolution, the cemetery suffered serious damage, when it was vandalized by a team of Red Guards.

The Dingling Mausoleum, where the Wanli emperor, together with his two empresses Wang Xijie and Dowager Xiaojing, were buried, is one of the thirteen Ming imperial tombs in Changping district. The Dingling is the only tomb of a Ming dynasty emperor that has been excavated. During the Cultural Revolution, Red Guards assaulted the Dingling Mausoleum and exhumed the remains of the Wanli Emperor and his two empresses, to be "posthumously denounced" and burned (Becker 2008, 77-79). Thousands of other valuable artifacts were destroyed in the same manner.

#### *Architectural heritage monuments and the interethnic wars*

In the Bosnian War that took place in Bosnia and Herzegovina between 1992 and 1995, numerous sites of cultural and religious heritage were destroyed. Over 600 Muslim heritage buildings were destroyed by the officials of the Republic of Srpska as a part of the ethnic cleansing campaign against the local Muslim population.

"Islamic religious heritage sites in Bosnia-Herzegovina include mosques (dzamija, mesdzid), tekkes (dervish lodges of the Sufi lay brotherhoods), turbes (shrines



marking the burial places of popular saints and martyrs), clock towers (sahat kula), medresas (Islamic theological schools), mektebs (schools for Qur'an readers), and Islamic libraries and religious archives." (Riedlmayer 2002, 9).

The best known include Mehmed Pasha Kukavica Mosque, Arnaudija Mosque, and Ferhat Pasha Mosque, all of them dating from the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian periods.

Similarly, over 250 Roman-Catholic churches were destroyed, a gesture associated with the killing of Bosnian Croats, as well as many Serbian Orthodox churches, also destroyed in the war, such as Sase Monastery, built in the thirteenth century, or Vozuća Monastery. Parts of the old city of Mostar, including the Stari Most, were destroyed during the war. Stari Most had been the symbol of the city, considered to be an exemplary piece of Balkan Islamic architecture and was commissioned by Suleyman the Magnificent in 1557.

In the case of the war in Croatia (1991-1995), more than 2,000 protected architectural monuments were damaged, most of them in the Dubrovnik area (Layton *et al.* 2001, 162). The most eloquent example of the destruction of cultural monuments took place in Vukovar. Notable damaged buildings include the eighteenth-century Eltz Mansion of the Eltz noble family. Numerous other Baroque buildings in the city center, such as the Franciscan monastery with the parish church of St. Philip and James, also fell prey to the war in Croatia.

During the Kosovo War (1998-1999), the destruction of the Islamic architectural heritage was an important component of the ethnic cleansing plan. More than 200 mosques in Kosovo were damaged or destroyed, along with other Islamic architectural heritage monuments, libraries and archives with Ottoman-era records (Herscher 2010, 13). As retaliation, the Serbian cultural sites in Kosovo were systematically destroyed in the aftermath of the Kosovo War.

"Kosovo represents a Holy Land to Serbs as well as to neighbouring Christian nations, both in its historical-national and cultural-artistic dimension and even more in the spiritual-religious context. The Serbian Orthodox Church regards Kosovo and Metohia as crucial for the national,

spiritual, cultural, Christian and theanthropic identity of the Serbs" (Avramović *et al.* 2010, 8).

#### *Architectural heritage monuments and the religious wars*

The invasion of Iraq in 2003 caused the country to destroy many archeological sites, including ancient cities such as Adab, Hatra Isin and Babylon, numerous architectural monuments, and more than 170,000 artifacts were from the Iraqi museums, that included 5,000-year-old statues.

The civil war that followed the American invasion meant for the Iraqi state the continued destruction of other historical sites, but also of other architectural heritage monuments. Thus, the Al-Askari Mosque was bombed by Sunni militants, while the Anah Minaret and the statue of Al-Mansur were bombed by Shiite militants. Numerous ancient and medieval sites and artifacts, including the ancient cities of Nimrud and Hatra, parts of the Nineveh wall, the ruins of Bash Tapia Castle and Dair Mar Elia, were then destroyed by the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria.

In Syria, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant destroyed the temples of Bel and Baalshamin, the Arc de Triomphe and other sites in Palmyra, as well as St. Elian Monastery, the Armenian Genocide Memorial Church, and ancient sculptures in the city of Raqqa.

#### *Architectural heritage monuments and natural factors*

The destructive human activity is doubled by the natural factors that result in the loss of many architectural heritage monuments.

Only in the last decades, Asian countries have faced extreme natural phenomena. Thus, in Myanmar, the Shwedagon Paya temple complex in Yangon (also known as the Great Dagon Pagoda and the Golden Pagoda), built in the sixth and tenth centuries AD, was severely damaged after Cyclone Nargis passed the region in 2008, which caused the worst natural disaster in the recorded history of Myanmar, and in Nepal the 7.8 Mw earthquake in 2015 demolished heritages in Kathmandu valley: old medieval temples and palaces in the Kathmandu, Bhaktapur and Patan Durbar Squares, the temple of Changunarayan, temples of the Pahupatinath

complex, the main stupa of Boudhanath and the temples of Swayambhunath Stupa.

### Discussion

The destruction of architectural monuments throughout human history has been and is a reality. That is why we have used examples of the destruction of architectural monuments in a broader historical context, from ancient Egypt to the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century. The exhaustive examples used also indicate a wide range of factors that led to their destruction. Without attempting to separate intentional destruction from natural destruction, we used random examples only to assess the relationship between monuments and written history.

An ethical issue is the intentional destruction of architectural monuments because they play a very important part in the public eye and the destruction seen different cultures at different times in human history takes diverse forms.

Architectural monuments play a very specific role in the public eye as symbols that transform space, most often by commemorating a person or an event, and are intended to inspire amazement and represent the dominant ideologies of a society. The city dedicated to the god Aten with the Great Temple of the Aten, the Small Aten Temple, the royal residences were constructed when the cult of Aten was the dominant system of belief in Egypt during Akhetaten's reign and were very likely meant to be viewed by servants of the temples and the elite alike, as idols to the practice of their religion. The "million-year-old temple" of Ramses II served political as well as religious ceremonial purposes and Ramses II, in erecting them, was following a tradition prescribed by the entire lineage of Egyptian rulers who had come before him.

The circumstances surrounding monument destruction from different cultures at different times in human history are diverse. The Dingling was a religious symbol that commemorated the image of the Wanli Emperor until it was completely obliterated by a political ideology without a religious agenda and no cultural connection to those who had originally constructed the Dingling.

The destruction of architectural monuments is largely based on the desire to annihilate, remove and suppress the ideological and emotional attachment that is often linked to these historical monuments, which convey a message about various figures and events in history that link or divide.

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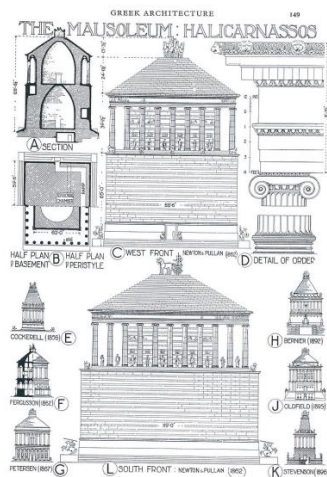


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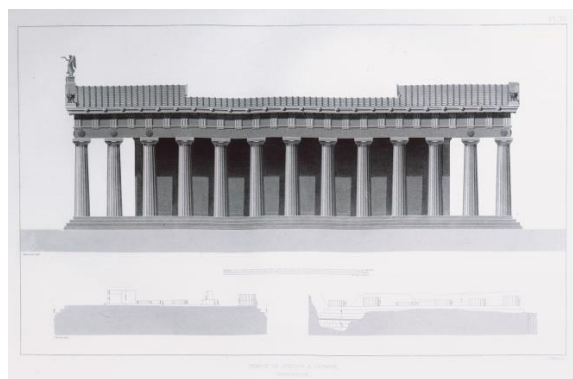


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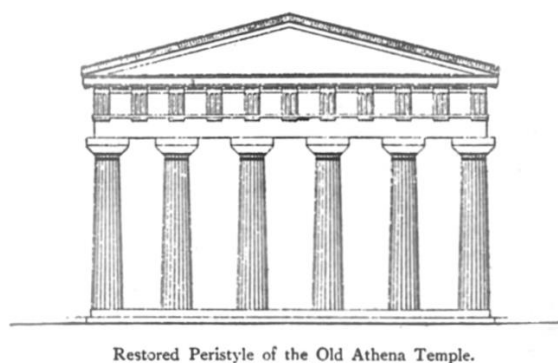


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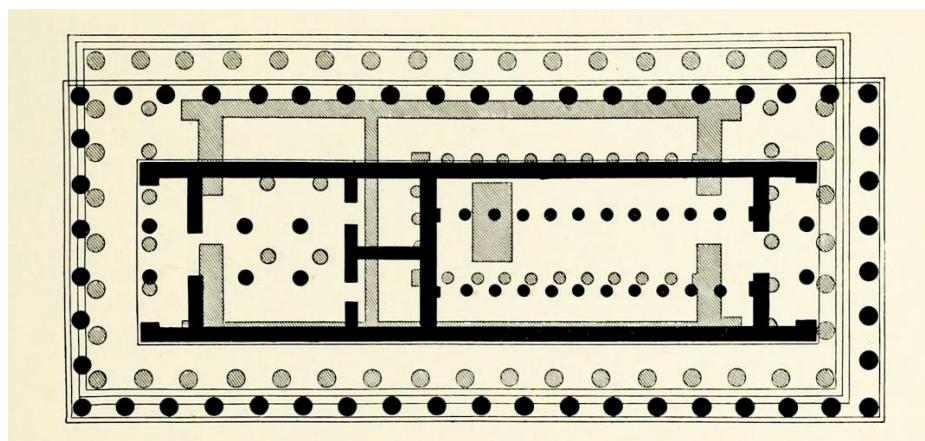


Fig. 7. The Older Parthenon (Photo: author, Maxime Collignon)

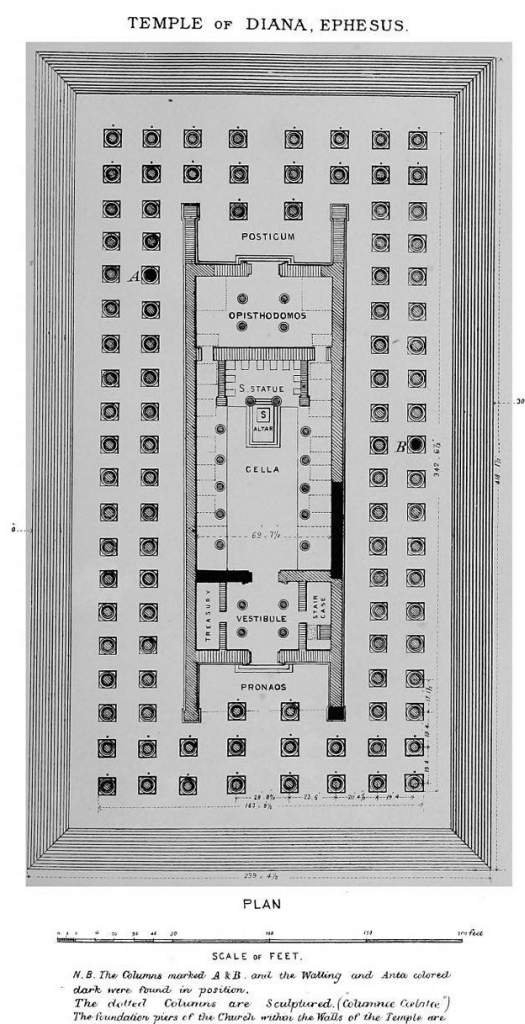


Fig. 8. Reconstructive plan of the Temple of Artemis at Ephesus (Photo: author, John Turtle Wood)



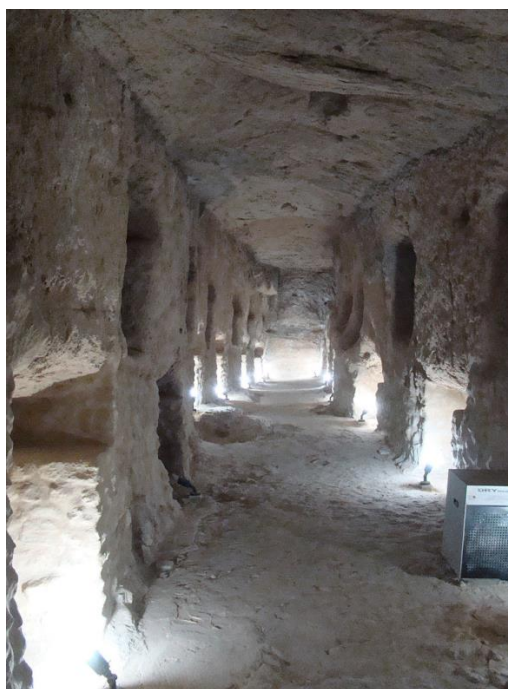


Fig. 9. The Catacombs beneath the Serapeum of Alexandria (Photo: author, Institute for the Study of the Ancient World)



Fig. 10. Old Town Market Place, Warsaw, 1945 (Photo: author, unknown)





# THE MASSACRE OF CONSTANTINOPOLITANS UNDER THE PATRONAGE OF SULTAN MEHMED II „THE CONQUERER” IN BYZANTINE AND OTTOMAN SOURCES OF THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY

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**Abstract:** *One of the most important events that changed the natural course of European history during the Middle Ages, the fall of Constantinople in 1453, is not only in the shadow of an extraordinary military confrontation but also in that of a terrible massacre to which fell victims many inhabitants of the city. Starting from the concern related to the reasons of Sultan Mehmed II to allow such a slaughter of the civilian population under his patronage, the goals of this study are to highlight the mechanisms that substantiated the massacre process, but also its social and community impact. The research methodology is based on a comparative examination of Byzantine sources, especially those from eyewitnesses of the event, but not only (Critobul of Imbros, Laonikos Chalkokondyles, Doukas, Georgios Sphrantzes), harmonized with the information provided by other works written around the time of the conquest of Constantinople by Mehmed II.*

**Keywords:** *massacre, robbery, sacrifice, casualty, the fall of Constantinople, sultan Mehmed II.*

**Rezumat:** *Unul dintre cele mai importante evenimente care au modificat cursul firesc al istoriei europene în perioada Evului Mediu, căderea Constantinopolului din anul 1453, se găsește nu doar sub umbra unei confruntări militare extraordinare, ci și sub aceea a unui masacru teribil căruia i-au căzut victime numeroși locuitori ai orașului. Pornind de la interesul legat de rațiunile sultanului Mehmed al II-lea de a îngădui un astfel de masacru al populației civile sub patronajul său, țintele studiului de față se îndreaptă către reliefarea mecanismelor care au fundamentat procesul masacrului, dar și impactul social și comunitar al acestuia. Metodologia construirii cercetării se bazează pe un studiu comparativ al surselor bizantine, mai ales cele provenind de la martorii oculari ai evenimentului, dar nu numai (Critobul din Imbros, Laonic Chalcocondil, Ducas, Georgios Sphrantzes), armonizate cu informațiile oferite de alte lucrări redactate în proximitatea momentului cuceririi Constantinopolului de către Mehmed al II-lea.*

**Cuvinte-cheie:** *masacru, jefuire, sacrificiu, victime, căderea Constantinopolului, sultanul Mehmed al II-lea.*

“It is a bitter misfortune that this hour  
has brought,  
Oh, the loud moans, tears and cries!  
When the Turks entered the noble houses,  
They broke the windows, they broke the doors  
And they removed the remains and noble girls  
from the monasteries.

How bitter, what great misfortune he  
reserved on Tuesday!

What a bitter misfortune that hour  
brought,  
When mothers were separated from their  
children, dragged like cattle and sold for ten  
bucks!” (*Threne anonymous about the fall of  
Constantinople* - this anonymous text,

undoubtedly written later, brings a distinct  
note through the dialogue between Venice and  
Constantinople; it was probably written by a  
Greek on Venetian territory and expresses his  
double loyalty to the two cities (Déroche and  
Vatin, 2016, 948).

## Introduction

The middle of the fifteenth century meant  
for the Ottoman Empire the period in which it  
experienced an accelerated development on all  
levels, while the event that led to the  
disappearance of the Byzantine Empire,  
namely the fall of Constantinople, would  
provoke a deep emotion throughout the

Christian world through the implications it had, especially from a political and religious point of view. The last hundred years of the Byzantine Empire were characterized by a progressive geographical decline, by constant threats from enemies, civil wars, but also by increasing the relative power of the Church. Reduced to a precarious existence, weakened economically, shaken by strong social and political unrest, Constantinople would collapse under the blows of the Ottomans. Even if the sovereigns of the West did nothing to save the city, the fall of Constantinople upset the whole Europe and was certainly regretted by the Latins, although they may have been even more concerned about the rise of an established Muslim state on European soil (Déroche and Vatin, 2016, 83-84). In the fifteenth century, when sultan Mehmed II appeared with his huge army, the city of Constantinople was ruined, consisting of settlements the size of a village, but there was also a much larger urban area in the east. The general population of the city, except Galata, was most likely between 40,000 and 50,000 inhabitants (Angold, 2012, 33). Until the seventh decade of the fourteenth century, the great city and its immediate vicinity had formed only a small island that was surrounded by territories under Ottoman rule, with communications at sea and its maritime trade under the control of the Italian maritime states. "Economically too the Ottoman capitals of Brusa and Adrianople had begun to overshadow the former imperial center" (Inalcik 1978, 231). On the other hand, the Ottoman advance was incessant, gaining geopolitical, military and economic rewards, but also great political and psychological prestige in both the Muslim and Christian worlds (Ágoston and Masters, 2009, 142). While the Ottomans gradually brought the Seljuk emirates of Asia Minor under their control, things were not going so well in Europe, with cities falling one by one: Didymoteichon in 1361, Philippopolis (Plovdiv) in 1363, and, most importantly, Adrianople in 1368-1369 (Jeffreys et al. 2008, 291).

The internal conflicts between the different factions of the Byzantine aristocracy also had an important contribution to the destabilization of the Byzantine state from an economic-financial, political, but also social or military point of view. These conflicts materialized in

no less than three civil wars during the fourteenth century, which featured members of the ruling family of Palaiologos. Very serious was the fact that the main political factors involved in these conflicts requested, on several occasions, the support of external forces (Venice, Genoa, the Bulgarian state, the Serbian state, the emirate, then the Ottoman Empire), which facilitated either the extension of privileges which they already enjoyed, in some situations, or the conquest of Byzantine territories in other cases.

Undoubtedly, in the last century of the evolution of the Byzantine state, it was the Turks who would hit it continuously. After the occupation of the territories of Asia Minor, they moved to Europe in 1354 and organized the systematic conquest of the interior of the Balkan Peninsula, culminating in the blockade imposed on Constantinople by sultan Baiazid for eight years, most likely beginning from the spring of 1394. Given that, in 1396, the Crusade of Nicopolis failed, only Timur Lenk's attacks and then his victory at Ankara in 1402, followed by internal power struggles in the Ottoman state, kept the Byzantine Empire alive for half a century. But even this period was marked by confrontations, such as the actions of sultan Murad II, who tried to besiege Constantinople again, but without success (1422), and, a few years later, he managed to occupy Thessaloniki (1430), the second city of the empire, which had been ceded by the Byzantines to the Venetians as early as 1423, provided that they took responsibility for its defense.

The siege of Constantinople can be said to have been the hardest battle between the Byzantines and the Ottomans, and it was the sultan who isolated the city and managed to remove any chance of help for the Byzantines. Practically, from this moment, a series of treaties followed: on September 10, 1451, the treaty with Venice, ill-disposed towards the basileus and thinking only of a war against Genoa with the help of Alfonso of Naples; on November 20, the treaty with Iancu de Hunedoara, voivode of Transylvania, in which the sultan promised not to build new fortifications on the Danube and not hinder the relations of the prince of Wallachia, Vladislav with Hungary. Then followed two military diversions, one in Morea in October 1452, where the sultan decided to prevent the despots from helping Constantinople, and

another in Albania, which was occupied by Alfonso de Napoli's troops, whose crusade plans were threatening (summer 1452 - April 1453). Following this, Mehmed II again achieved his goal, which was to keep Scanderbeg occupied and to prevent any action on his part in favor of Constantinople (Bréhier, 1978, 494). It was also the sultan who decided to ensure maximum control over the Bosphorus, and in this sense, he built the fortress on the European shore of Rouméli-Hissar. He ordered the construction of the largest warships on the coast "and he made the largest cannons that we, at that time, had ever heard of being made anywhere" (Chalkokondyles, 2014, 171). He first sent commander-in-chief Sarazia to take with him all the cannons and war machines, but especially the big cannon, which is said „to pull this cannon required seventy pairs of oxen and about two thousand men" (Chalkokondyles, 2014, 173; Kivami, 2016, 1071), and afterwards the sultan appeared before the city with his great army.

### A Survey of the Sources

The sources used for this research are historical works, contemporary to the events mentioned and which have a great authority from the perspective of the researched topic, especially in terms of the information they provide and the influence they had on the ideas of that time. As I said before, because the period we are studying is based on a very large number of sources, this gave us the opportunity to make a selection and choose the most representative works to achieve the proposed objectives. First of all, we rely on the works of historians who provide the most important details about the tragic events of this period, which deeply marked the writings of Georgios Sphrantzes, Doukas, Laonikos Chalkokondyles or Kritoboulos of Imbros. In addition, although he does not write in Greek, but in Latin, from the perspective of our topic, the information provided by Isidore of Kiev is also very important.

The work of Georgios Sphrantzes, *Memories*, is one of the most important and covers the period 1401-1476. He began at the age of 16 and a half to enter the personal service of the Byzantine emperors, to whom he was very devoted, a true confidant in both personal and professional lives. He was the trusted person of the last three Byzantine

emperors, and his writing is marked by the position he had at the Byzantine court, by the experience gained in the service of the three emperors, but also by the events of 1453, thus becoming a very important eyewitness.

Another source used in this paper is the writing of Doukas. From his chronicle, it can be seen that Doukas, a high dignitary at the court of a Latin lord, was a good Byzantine and, although he was born and lived under foreign rule, he had a Greek religious and lay education. From the way Doukas presents his history, it is known that he was influenced by ancient and Byzantine historians. His work marks important events, which is why it begins with a very short series of great moments, the years of Adam to Alexie Comnen, then it moves on to the succession of Byzantine emperors to John V Palaeologus, showing only under which of them the Byzantine territories were conquered by the Turks. But when it begins with the description of the battle of Ankara in 1402 until the conquest of Lesbos by the Turks in 1462, the Doukas chronicle is a well-informed Turkish-Byzantine history with significant forays into Serbian, Hungarian, Romanian, Genoese and Venetian history.

Another writing used in this study, a source that gives us a lot of information is the work of Kritoboulos of Imbros called *Istoriai*. The work is divided into five books and is dedicated to the first sixteen years of the reign of Mehmed II, more specifically the years 1451-1467. It is obvious that the historian focuses his narrative not on the Byzantine state, but on the events that occurred in the Ottoman Empire and, especially, on the figure of Mehmed II, to whom he addresses only words of praise and to whom are attributed the virtues of the Byzantine sovereign. However, it is not clear to us whether the historian was an eyewitness to the events or not, because neither in this work nor in others is this mentioned.

A work of great significance for this study belongs to Laonikos Chalkokondyles, translated in an older edition by Vasile Grecu, but also in a newer edition of Anthony Kaldellis. His work, *The Histories*, contains 10 books preceded by an introduction and covers a period of almost two hundred years (1298-1463). In the centre of his work, as in that of the historian Kritoboulos of Imbros, is not the Byzantine Empire, but the beginnings and rise

of the Ottoman state, about which he has much information, knowing precise details about the administration and revenues of the Ottoman Empire.

Relevant information about the siege and conquest of Constantinople by the Turks is also provided by the correspondence of Isidore of Kiev, a Byzantine whose letters were written in Latin. After the Council of Ferrara-Florence (1438-1439), he entered the service of the papacy and later became cardinal of the Roman Church. In October 1452, Isidore was in Constantinople, as papal legate, to prepare the official proclamation of the union of the Churches in the Byzantine capital, a necessary condition for the help that the West was to give to the Byzantines (Déroche and Vatin, 2016, 76-77). Like Georgios Sphrantzes, Isidore of Kiev witnessed the conquest of the Byzantine capital by the Turks, and for this reason the information in his letters is very important for the purposes of this study.

Last but not least, in order to have complete knowledge of the whole event, we set out to pay attention to some Ottoman sources, as important as the Byzantine ones. Just as we chose among the Byzantine sources those that best describe the tragic event presented in these lines, the same happened among the Ottoman sources, choosing the authors who talk about the fall of Constantinople, about the image of sultan Mehmed II, but also of how the Byzantines were seen through Ottoman eyes. For this purpose, I used the works of Aşıkpaşazade, Tursun Bey, Oruç, the Enveri poetry, but also a *fetihname* (commandment).

### **The Massacre in the Eyes of the Contemporaries**

The massacre of the Byzantine population and the plunder of the city of Constantinople are said to have been some of the most horrible things ever encountered. From the very beginning of the siege, the evil thoughts of Sultan Mehmed II towards the once great city can be seen. During the speech in which he tried to urge his soldiers to fight, the sultan seeks to show them why he wants this city and what he would offer them if they managed to conquer it. Thus, after speaking in beautiful terms about Constantine's city, he begins with a list of valuable objects, such as "holy objects and jewels of all kinds, made of gold and silver, precious stones and pearls of

great value and infinitely more brilliant vestments" (Kritoboulos of Imbros, 1963, 122). Then he continues with what they will see among the Byzantine population, saying that they will surely find "chosen and very many men and of a great race... and very many and very beautiful women, young and good looking and good virgins ready to marry, noble and with chosen ancestry" (Kritoboulos of Imbros, 1963, 122).

However, it should be noted that Sultan Mehmed II always respected the Muslim Holy Law, the *shari'a* and, being a Muslim ruler who had faith in Allah, he had to act accordingly, without violating it. The *Shari'a* law is, in fact, a decree that said that if a community of *ahl al-kitab* ("People of the Book", more precisely Christians and Jews) strongly reject the invitation to surrender and continue to resist rather than give up, they will be treated as *mushrik's* (that is "those who admit partners [to God]", in other words, the polytheists). When they are subdued by force—*'anwatan, qahran* - they will have no more rights, their goods will be given to prey, and both they and their children and those related to them will be reduced to slavery (Inalcik, 1978, 232). This is also what happened to the Byzantines. Mehmed II, who always wanted the city of Constantinople as the future capital of his empire, sought to have it in his hands in all its splendor, not as a pile of ruins. In this regard, he addressed a series of invitations to Emperor Constantine to hand over the city safely, thus respecting a precept of the Muslim Holy Law. He also initiated these invitations because he did not want to plunder the city, since, if he had conquered it he would have had to act according to the Holy Law and thus it would have resulted in destruction, robbery, and massacre.

An Ottoman source states that the sultan clearly established what belonged to him and what his troops would receive after the robbery, as follows: "The stones and the land of the city and everything related to the city belongs to me; all other goods and property, prisoners and foodstuffs are booty for the troops" (Inalcik, 1978, 233). In the work of the historian Ducas we find a similar reference to that in the Ottoman source, in which it is clearly shown that the sultan wanted nothing but the walls and buildings of the city, and the other goods and fortunes would return to his people - "let it be your

gain!” (Doukas, 1958, 350). The sultan’s major goal was to bring the Byzantine state under Islamic religious and secular law, but at the same time he wanted it to remain a cosmopolitan empire, as was Byzantium (Kinross, 2019, 90). Both Ottoman and Byzantine sources tell us about the sultan’s deep sadness when he saw the city robbed and plundered, and in the following lines we will summarize what the massacre of the Byzantine population and the city of Constantinople meant economically, socially, religiously, following what the Ottomans chose after this catastrophe.

“When the Muslims entered the fortress, the timpani burst. / Without limit the Franks are killed and the Greeks too. / Without limit, Muslims seize goods and treasures. / The adversary’s suffering proved futile. / Cut off the head of the great tekfur, / The finishing touches were put on Istanbul” (Enveri, 2016, 356). *Tekfur* was a title used in the early Ottoman period for independent or semi-independent Christian leaders or for local Byzantine leaders in Asia Minor or Thrace. In the above lines, there seems to be a reference to the Byzantine emperor. When the Ottomans entered the city it was a disaster, as they created panic and confusion among the Byzantines. They were divided into several detachments, some going to the most famous houses, others to the holy places, others to public buildings and private houses, robbing, killing, humiliating people, trampling on the holy relics. They feared that the city had several defenders and therefore, “for fear of those before them, they killed whoever they grabbed” (Doukas, 1958, 360). The image was terrifying, with all the streets of the city full of blood, corpses, butchered people, other people mourning, still praying and hoping to be safe from “the power of the evil forerunner of the Antichrist, the turk Mehmed” (Isidore of Kiev, „Lettre au doge de Venise Francesco Foscari”, 642). This was a real crime and a real catastrophe because from the moment “he entered, this miserable dog, with his satanic army, in this holy city, like a roaring lion” for three days people were captured and killed, children were forced to deny their Christian faith, mothers were separated from their babies, young girls were raped, young boys were humiliated, and, moreover, “he robbed and devastated churches, emptied monasteries, desecrated altars” (Isidore of Kiev, „Première

lettre au pape Nicolas V”, 600). It is noteworthy, however, that when the Ottomans invaded Constantinople, the Byzantines fought until the last moment to defeat them and not take their city. Being brave men, they fought “and died on behalf of their country” (Chalkokondyles, 2014, 197; Tursun 2016, 212), rather than see their families and compatriots in captivity. However, many of the brave defenders died in battle and did not get to see their homeland enslaved and devastated.

Given that the city of Constantinople had been very large, extremely rich, “magnificent, illustrious, deeply divine” (Isidore of Kiev, „Lettre au cardinal Bessarion”, 2016, 595), the Ottomans had what to rob and plunder. They started with private homes, which they considered the richest and where they thought they could find the most precious objects. And after plundering them, they left a flag at the entrance to show that the house had been completely emptied. Even those inside the houses were taken and turned into slaves, and whoever did not surrender was instantly killed, as was the case with many infants who “were thought to be worthless” (Runciman, 1971, 162). The precious things that the Ottomans managed to seize show us with certainty that the city of Constantine had been one of the richest, and over time the emperors had struggled and managed to bring it to its most flourishing heights. Only its time had passed, and from now on all those precious goods were to be enjoyed by those who killed and trampled on corpses and who had managed to confiscate everything, “gold and silver vessels, the most valuable jewelry, the finest fabrics” (Tursun, 2016, 216) and many other things.

Byzantine sources mention that the Ottomans managed to bring out of the city a lot of gold, silver and other precious stones, clothes of all kinds, carpets that they took to their camp, “so that in one day this camp became extremely wealthy with respect to distinguished men, property, and other types of prosperity, and many of the janissaries did not know what to do with their current good fortune” (Chalkokondyles, 2014, 199; Aşıkpaşazade, 2016, 347). Other mentions of the goods they plundered can be found in Ottoman sources, which in turn mention gold, silver, clothing, but in which we find other information about pearls and rubies that were

sold “at the price of glass or brass” (Tursun, 2016, 216; Chalkokondyles, 2014, 199). Because the Ottomans had no idea of their value, they also managed to sell gold and silver at the price of copper and tin. In other words, what these people achieved had not been seen in other times, that is, to move from “*scarcity and poverty to the height of wealth and luxury*” (Tursun, 2016, 216) and also what this city had managed to accumulate since its establishment “had now moved into the hands of the Ottomans” (Oruç, 2016, 1029).

Of course, knowing that there were people in the city who were very faithful, but also educated and cultured people, the Ottomans did not hesitate for a moment and decided to take as prey the history and literature books, and, from churches or houses, religious books. They decided to scatter them everywhere in the West and the East, for nothing. Dozens of books, be they historical works, the writings of Aristotle or Plato, or theological books “were sold only for a gold coin” (Doukas, 1958, 392). With the Gospels they decided to do something else: after extracting their gold and silver, “they sold some and threw others away” (Doukas, 1958, 392). Some of the rarest books were piled up and, because no one had been found to pay the negligible price, they were “thrown directly into the fire” (Babinger 1978, 97). What is certain is that the Ottomans were so greedy that they came to take as prey “the books dedicated to the divine service”, the ornaments and chalices in the churches, “the books of canon law” or others related to “holy theology” (Nicolas V, „Bulle en faveur de Girolamo de Milan, vicaire general des Franciscains”, 744).

Three days after conquering and ordering the city to be plundered, the sultan sent the fleet away and each ship left for its city, loaded with precious objects and clothing, gold and silver vessels, books, but also slaves, priests and laity, monks and nuns. And the tents in the camp were also full of the most valuable objects and slaves. For Christians, the image was disastrous, and the Ottomans arrogantly displayed the objects they had plundered, because anyone could see among the barbarians one “wearing a hierarch’s sakkos”, another wearing “a golden epitachelion”, others “sitting at feasts and eating various fruits from the holy vessels and

drink wine from the holy cups” (Doukas, 1958, 390-392).

For Kritoboulos of Imbros, in Constantinople there were only handsome people, brave and fighting men, beautiful and hardworking women, mothers devoted to their children and more, and all these people suffered because of the atrocities committed by the Ottomans after the conquest of the city. The Turks caused a real disaster, for young and noble women who had not crossed the thresholds of their courts, beautiful and decent virgins, whom men had not seen before, were now forcibly removed from their homes, shamelessly abducted, abused and raped. The Turks with their swords rushed at them without mercy, “like beasts with bloody hands and the wild eyes of murderers”, dragging victims from their shelters or catching others while they were still asleep, like wild beasts (Kritoboulos of Imbros, 1963, 142). Venerable monks were pulled by their gray hair and beaten mercilessly, and virgin nuns who had dedicated their lives to God were forcibly removed from their cells or from the churches where they had taken refuge, then mocked, slapped, and beaten. The children were separated from their parents, some of them even tortured, the babies were also victims of the villains, being ripped from their mothers’ breasts, and newly-wed brides were separated from their husbands (Kritoboulos of Imbros, 1963, 142).

Not only the houses and palaces were looted, churches and monasteries were also vandalized, some icons thrown on the ground or on fire, others broken, holy vessels shattered, melted or used “as drinking cups for their drunkenness” (Kritoboulos of Imbros, 1963, 142). The Ottomans considered that both the objects taken and the Byzantine prisoners were of equal value, which is why many young girls and rich young men, but also other high-ranking people, were torn and stripped of their expensive clothes, while the Turks “who had captured them were arguing with each other over how to divide their prey” (Runciman, 1971, 163).

Thus, many people were taken out of the city and not “by oxen, cattle or any other sweet and domestic animal, but by a herd of wild beasts from the forests, raw and untamed” (Isidore of Kiev, „Lettre au cardinal Bessarion”, 2016, 594). The Ottomans managed to fill their camp, in addition to

goods, with women, men shouting at each other, as well as “children who were dumbstruck at this catastrophe” (Chalkokondyles, 2014, 199; Oruç, 2016, 1029). There were three days of disastrous looting and robbery, days in which so many people were killed, a lot of prisoners were taken, many virgins dedicated to divine worship were raped and many women were forced into adultery. The most tragic thing is that the Turks had no mercy on the children, so there were “many babies snatched from their parents! How many others were cruelly killed in their lap! How many forced separations!” (Isidore of Kiev „Première lettre au pape Nicolas V”, 600).

One of the most painful images ever seen was the one inside the Great Church, where, besides the nuns and monks, many people had taken refuge, and they prayed for an end to the misfortune that befell them. Finding the doors locked, the Turks “tore them down with axes, entering the church” (Doukas, 1958, 366; Babinger, 1978, 94; Bréhier, 1946, 505) where they dragged the fugitives into slavery. “These profane and unbelievers” stormed the “admirable church of Saint Sophia, which even the temple of Solomon does not equal” (Leonard of Chios, “Lettre au pape Nicolas V”, 725), with no respect for the saints and began destroying everything in their path, smashing icons or, worse, “scatter[ing] with a sacrilegious hand the relics of the saints” (Leonard of Chios, „Lettre au pape Nicolas V”, 725; Kritoboulos of Imbros, 1963, 142), so that there was no one left to honor the faith of Christ. The narratives continue with the indescribable view of all those people dragged and beaten, all the noble women who dedicated their whole lives to God being pulled by their hair, or the children who cried and shouted for help. The infidels were said to be looking for the most beautiful nuns and, when they caught them, “their breasts and chest were revealed and their arms raised” (Doukas, 1958, 366). Virgins were seized, whom the sun had not seen, not even their father, and, if they did resist, they were beaten with rods. Some younger nuns who wanted to stay honest to the end and not break their oath to God preferred to die in agony by throwing themselves into wells. The older monks and nuns, however, respected the old traditions of obedience and did not oppose the Turks (Runciman, 1971, 163).

The climax of the profanation was reached when the Good Lord was mocked, all the holy vessels thrown on the ground and trampled, but one could also see “the divine blood and body of Christ shed and thrown on the ground” (Sphrantzes, 1966, 431). The infidels snatched all the sacred objects, the holy relics, the vessels and threw them away as if they were ordinary things. They trampled on the Gospels, the holy books, laughed at the Christian faith and ceremonies, and sang hymns to Mehmed. They rushed upon the sacred icons which they plucked from the walls or from the altar, their ornaments were taken from them, and some were thrown into the fire, while others were broken to pieces. And after removing the ornaments, they made beds and tables out of them, and with the golden silk cloths of the priests “they covered the horses, and others ate on them” (Sphrantzes, 1966, 431-433). The looters even took the chandeliers, candles, candlesticks, as well as the holy vessels from the treasury, all being made of gold and silver, but also of other precious materials. They broke all the jewelry boxes with their axes and shared the treasures in them, many treasures, “new and old, that there has never been a City in the centuries so abundantly provided” (Leonard of Chios, “Lettre au pape Nicolas V”, 725). They marched with the crucifix in mockery, booed, insulted, and then shouted in mockery: “«Behold the God of Christians»”. Commentarors lament: “Oh, the patience of God! You would be angry, good Jesus, you who suffer indignantly from all these insults because of our sins, comments one of the contemporaries of the events” (Leonard of Chios, “Lettre au pape Nicolas V”, 726). As proof, Turks are said to have used the altars as tables, and when they had finished eating them, they used them “to feed the horses or as beds on which to attack boys and girls” (Babinger, 1978, 93). Again, the holy and divine books are reported to have been either thrown into the fire or trampled with all the hatred carried by the Turks. However, most of them were sold for nothing just for “a gain of two or three silver”, and sometimes for a few coins (Kritoboulos of Imbros, 1963, 142-144). The admirable temples of God, all the marble buildings were crushed and shattered, reduced “to the status of haunts of bandits and synagogues for the perverse Mehmed, with great dishonor for the Christian religion”



(Isidore of Kiev, "Lettre au doge de Venise Francesco Foscari", 642-643).

### Conclusion

The sources conclude that no one will ever be able to list all the goods, furniture and objects that the Turks scattered. What is certain is that once this victory was achieved, the Turks did nothing but massacre the Byzantine population, plunder everything in their path, all in order to "purify the churches, take out the cross and the bell and turn the temples of idolaters into mosques for the people of Islam" (Mehmed II, 2016, 751). Crosses thrown on the bottom of the sea, raped women, deflowered virgins, young people stained with infamy, mocked nuns and monks, the screams and cries of children, the wails of desperate parents, no one could do anything about any of these atrocities, no one made a sound and no one could tell more about misfortune than the Byzantines. "How many churches plundered and devastated, how many monasteries emptied, how many altars desecrated, how many trampled relics or icons and holy vessels thrown away". Finally, "how many blatant and detestable outrages against the Supreme God and the Christian religion perpetrated impudently by these dogs, minions of the perfidious Muhammad!" (Isidore of Kiev, "Première lettre au pape Nicolas V", 600). All those who saw or heard of this misfortune only continued to mourn the capture of a memorable and precious city.

When all stopped, sultan Mehmed entered the city and went straight to the Great Church, where he recited the prayer, then entered the sanctuary, ascended the altar, and trampled it underfoot. According to historians, "these two symbolic gestures closed a more than millennial history and became the starting point of a new era" (Bréhier, 1946, 505). Because "never have we heard that such a great crime was committed, neither by the very bloodthirsty Nero, nor by Thyestes, who made a father eat his own children" (Isidore of Kiev, "Lettre au doge de Venise Francesco Foscari", 643). Making a comparison between the conquest of Constantinople and the conquest of Thessalonica in 1430 by Murad II, one can see clear similarities between those, although the massacre and looting of 1453 was much harsher. In 1430 and 1453, both sultans subjected the cities to plunder and robbery, mocking women, men, children, monks, and looting many objects of great value. However, the most important resemblance can be seen in the mentality of the two sultans, both saying to their fighters: "Behold, I give you all that is in this city: men, women, children, silver and gold; leave me only the city" (Doukas, 1958, 250).

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## LIFE DURING THE PLAGUE IN TRANSYLVANIA OF THE 16TH-18TH CENTURIES

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**Abstract:** *The study analyses the way in which plague epidemics of the 16th-18th centuries marked peoples' lives. The analysis is based on numerous Transylvanian documents: memoirs, diaries, drafts, letters, testaments, official documents. In the 16<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries, the plague had affected the Transylvanian inhabitants frequently. The first question that our research addresses is why the plague had been the most feared of all epidemics. The peoples' sufferings during the plague were amplified by the famine and sometimes the war that triggered the calamity and favoured its spread. During the plague, fear and suspicion generated by the helplessness in front of the disease that killed relatives, friends, and communities, had reached unprecedented height and was felt for decades. The plague years had become chronological landmarks surrounded by extreme and contradictory measures at the individual and collective level. Among the consequences, we mention running away from one locality to another, which was meant to avoid the disease, instead it contributed to its spread throughout the country, the stigma of persons or social groups considered guilty for the spread of the plague, linked with the incapacity to fight the local abuses in an attempt to re-establish order in a region plundered by thieves. Plague epidemics of the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century had a special impact on the demographic development disrupting the population growth between 1665 and 1675, a phenomenon that followed the war losses of 1658-1662. The data show that from that moment on, the dimension of an average family did not surpass five persons till 1720. The quarantine system was developed and perfected during the 18<sup>th</sup> century and applying strictly the quarantine rules contributed to the decrease of the number of infected people and intensity of the plague epidemics in Transylvania, given the periodical return of the scourge in the extra-Carpathian space. More than any other outbreak, the plague determined important changes in the human profile. Fear, suspicion born in that context influenced relationships between people and between communities. However, regardless of the deep wounds left by the plague, hope and people's desire to come back to normalcy could not be beaten. The analysis of the way in which plague epidemics shaped the profile of the people is of great interest, especially given the fact that the outbreak was mentioned at the same time in Transylvania, Wallachia and Moldova.*

**Keywords:** *epidemic, plague, Transylvania, mortality, fear, suspicion, quarantine.*

**Rezumat:** *Studiul urmărește cercetarea modului în care epidemiile de ciumă din secolele XVI-XVIII au marcat viața oamenilor. Analiza se bazează pe numeroase documente din Transilvania: memorii, jurnale, conșcripții, corespondență, testamente, acte oficiale. În secolele XVI-XVIII ciuma s-a abătut frecvent asupra locuitorilor din Transilvania. O primă întrebare la care se caută răspuns este de ce ciuma a fost cea mai temută dintre epidemii. Suferințele oamenilor din timpul epidemiilor de ciumă erau amplificate de foametea și uneori de războiul care declanșaseră flagelul și favorizau răspândirea acestuia și apariția altor afecțiuni. În timpul molimei teama și suspiciunea, generate de neputința în fața bolii care ucidea rude, prieteni, comunități, au cunoscut valori fără precedent și au fost resimțite câteva decenii. Pentru mulți anii cu ciumă au devenit repere cronologice. Aceste sentimente adesea au dus la reacții extreme și măsuri contradictorii atât la nivel individual cât și din partea autorităților. Printre acestea trebuie menționate fuga dintr-o localitate în alta, care era menită să fie fuga din calea bolii, dar în realitate contribuia la împrăștierea ei în toată țara, stigmatizarea unor indivizi sau a unor grupuri considerați vinovați pentru răspândirea bolii, incapacitatea de a combate abuzurile manifestate pe plan local, de a restabili ordinea într-o țară în care grupurile de tâlhari jefuiau și ucideau. Epidemiile de ciumă din a doua jumătate a secolului al XVII-lea au avut un impact deosebit asupra dezvoltării demografice întrerupând refacerea populației din anii 1665-1675, fenomen ce a urmat după pierderile din timpul războiului din 1658-1662. Datele urbariale arată că*

*din acest moment dimensiunea medie a unei familii nu a depășit 5 persoane până prin 1720. În secolul al XVIII-lea s-a dezvoltat și perfecționat sistemul de carantine, iar aplicarea, cu deosebită strictețe, a măsurilor de izolare a contribuit la diminuarea numărului și intensității epidemiilor de ciumă din Transilvania în condițiile în care flagelul revenea periodic cu mare putere în spațiul extracarpatic. Ciuma, mai mult ca oricare dintre molieme, a determinat schimbări importante în profilul uman. Teama, suspiciunea născute din pricina acestui flagel au influențat relațiile dintre oameni, dintre comunități. Este adevărat că oricât de adânci erau rănile lăsate de mortalitatea foarte ridicată acestea nu puteau înfrânge speranța, dorința oamenilor de a reveni la normalitate. Analiza modului în care epidemiile de ciumă și-au pus amprenta asupra profilului oamenilor prezintă interes mare în contextul în care flagelul erau adesea menționat simultan în Transilvania, Țara Românească și Moldova.*

**Cuvinte cheie:** *epidemie, ciumă, Transilvania, mortalitate, teamă, suspiciune, carantină.*

### **Illness, epidemics and doctors in Transylvania**

Transylvanian population of the 16<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries faced many diseases. Some of them were contagious, while others were linked to daily life. However, they all brought suffering and in most cases death. At the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Massimo Milanese, a nurse at the Jesuit College in Cluj, noticed the huge number of sick people of all ages who suffered numerous illnesses:

“Children and boys that were in my care in the past 16 months, when the sick people started to come to the College, were so many that I could not count, as it was the case of men and women, whose number was, if I am not mistaken, greater than 150. Among them, three quarters were women: widows, married and virgins, suffering from fever, dropsy, children’s sickness, spleen, stomach ache, nausea, paralysis, palpitations and heart conditions, gout, colic, bleedings, severe headaches, wounds, old and new abscesses... and any other illness that may be found in hospitals. Among these, some died, others were healed (or) are still sick in bed, as God wanted, or they deserved, or my stupidity contributed to it.” (Holban 1971, 127-128).

In addition to the above list, Girolamo Fanfonio wrote about the lung diseases (“father Peter spits blood”) in June 1586 when famine and plague were haunting the land (Holban 1971, 130).

In the following decades there is more information about various diseases, many of them being difficult to identify due to vague descriptions. Identified or not, they spread fear among people who tried to get well, to save their beloved by any means. Milanese was

impressed by the great number of people who sought his help. Healers from villages and towns, tried as witches, also mentioned many people who hoped for healing. Despair and fear were enormous. Healers who did not manage to heal their sick were frequently condemned to burning at the stake after cruel tortures; the best outcome was banishing them from the area (Solcan, 2019, 127-135).

Witnesses from the witches trials talked about newborns who died after several days, babies who remained crippled or died in torments, men and women who were suffering from various illnesses. Many people who approached the healers were simple people, while the elites relied on doctors who graduated from European universities to ease their pain and to save them. Numerous sources remind of sicknesses and mention the fear of death. János Kemény, Georg Kraus, Miklós Bethlen, Mihály Cserei, as well as travellers, missionaries wrote about diseases in Transylvania, Wallachia and Moldova.

Some of the mentioned illnesses were contagious, such as smallpox, dysentery, typhoid, and scurvy. The information regarding these epidemics is scarce and refers to isolated cases. Smallpox was mentioned by chroniclers after the Rákóczi family was affected by it. Prince György Rákóczi II was mutilated by the disease, while his brother Sigismund and his wife died in 1651-1652 (Kraus 1965, 144, 431).

Miklós Bethlen wrote in his memoirs that he had suffered from smallpox when he was ten years and a half, in 1653. That is the source that certifies that the disease was common. Moreover, we have mentions about the way doctors treated it:

“If it is true what doctors say about smallpox being a lasting damage of the ill blood from the mother’s womb and that the nature must cleanse once or twice through it, then that is the reason why one in a thousand people survive, even with great danger...” (Bethlen 2004, 69).

The smallpox epidemic of 1708-1709 in Brasov was remembered by Mihály Cserei who was a refugee during the war. In 1708 his three daughters and one son of four years old fell ill. Three children were healed, but the youngest daughter died after complications (pulmonary edema) (Cserei 1983, 415). After a year, his son died of smallpox, “after a terrible suffering that lasted 13 days” (Cserei 1983, 435). Typhus and typhoid fever are also mentioned by writers or chroniclers of the period (Kraus, 1965, 44-145, 431; Cserei 1983, 435).

Miklós Bethlen offers information about dysentery, describing the loss of two daughters (of two and three years old) and other members of the family and servants falling ill (28 people) in July 1673 (Bethlen 2004, 127). The epidemic lasted till the autumn of 1675 when it is mentioned in Sibiu (Sigerus 1997, 30). Bethlen’s account points out the limited knowledge about the disease. Thus, doctor János Tolnai of Cluj, doctor of biology and professor, a renowned physician, diagnosed the girls with “lots of roundworms” (Bethlen 2004, 127).

Although these contagious diseases affected families, they were briefly mentioned as if they concerned only several people and their families. The magnitude of the diseases, the measures to prevent their spread were rarely noted. Thus, Valentin Segesvári wrote about the smallpox epidemic of Cluj in 1628: “many children and lads were sick of smallpox and both children and lads died.” (Segesvári 1990, 157). Cserei briefly indicated that in 1709, he was unable to participate at his son’s funeral in Aita Mare because he was sick of typhus and he was not allowed to leave the city (Cserei 1983, 435). He also wrote several pages about the plague.

Prestigious physicians, such as the aforementioned Tolnai of Cluj, who studied in Frankfurt (Bethlen 2004, 127; Fata 2006, 319), Lucas Zeulus of Braşov (Cserei 1983, 435), when called to the sick, were convinced that they would get better.

### **The plague in Transylvania**

The only disease that put people on the run was the plague. Lots of plague epidemics hit Transylvania along the centuries. Starting with the 16th century and till the end of the 18th century documents mention epidemics in 1510-1511, 1553-1554, 1574-1575, 1585-1586, 1602-1603, 1636-1637, 1646-1648, 1660-64, 1675-1678, 1706, 1709-1711, 1717-1719, 1737-1739, 1742-1743, 1755-1757, then in 1770-1771 and 1786 at the southern border (Cernovodeanu 1993, 46, 51, 53, 56, 78, 83, 84, 90, 93, 129, 131-135, 140-144, 148-149, 154, 162, 170).

This contagion came back time and again in the same space. At the end of the 16th century, Giovanni Botero pointed out that in Transylvania “plague ravaged frequently” (Holban 1972, 574). It is probable that other contagious diseases were also present at the same time, but rarely did someone write about them. Cserei noted that in 1708-1709 Brasov was ravaged by plague, smallpox and typhus at the same time. Johannes Albrich, a doctor from Brasov remarked that during the plague epidemic of 1717-1719, there were death cases caused by pulmonary tuberculosis, dropsy, seizure and chickenpox (Andron 2004, 210). All these harsh aspects of daily life contributed to less fear than the plague, which frightened the population and determined the authorities to take actions for preventing the contagion.

Usually the largest plague epidemics broke out during the famine periods. Drought, floods and frost caused the destruction of the harvest, contributing to a food crisis and then plague. Another factor that favoured the outburst and spread of epidemics were the wars. In Transylvania, the plague, economic crises, famine and war overlapped at the beginning of the 17th century, in 1660-1662 and in the first decades of the 18th century. At the beginning of the 17th century, a political crisis after Michael the Great’s death influenced the economy of the region. Other military conflicts affected the area in the same period, such as the anti-Ottoman fight of the Romanian principalities in 1658-1662, led by György Rákóczi II, Mihnea III, Gheorghe Ştefan and Constantin Şerban. At the beginning of the 18th century, Rákóczi’s War of Independence (1703-1711) and the Austro-Turkish war (1716-1718) contributed to the

expansion of epidemics and dramatic growth of mortality along with natural calamities.

The chroniclers and writers of the period provide scarce data, but all agree that there were numerous victims. Francisc Nagy Szabo notes in his memoirs about the period when he was five years old: "In 1586 there was a terrifying plague that killed many people." (Gáll-Mihăilescu 1993, 72). The previous year was marked by high prices. According to Massimo Milanesi, "That wretched people had fought for many months with the plague and famine; uniting their forces, they had no moment of rest." (Holban 1971, 123) Such images were frequent in the writings of the 16th-18th centuries.

Francisc Nagy Szabo witnessed the events of 1601-1603. He told the story of his flight, fearing soldiers who were plundering and killing and of a terrible famine and plague: "in the same year of 1602, death began to haunt, as around Christmas there was a horrible plague and plenty died of famine and plague" (Gáll-Mihăilescu 1993, 116). In the following year, "high prices were due to the plague and war, and Hungarian outlaws were robbing on the roads and mountain passings, killing savagely the refugees and robbing everyone, letting travellers die of hunger." (Gáll-Mihăilescu 1993, 127).

Transylvanian inhabitants faced two more epidemics caused by the lack of food in 1636-1637 and 1646-1648, described by Georg Kraus' chronicle (Kraus, 1965, 87-101, 121-129).

During the anti-Ottoman war of 1658-1662 similar events repeated. Low harvest, epizootic disease, war battles in the principality, amplified by the intervention of the Ottoman and imperial troops led to years of famine, soldiers and thieves looting, then epidemics of dysentery and plague that decimated the armies and inhabitants. János Szalárdi highlighted the fact that in 1661 the "plague dominated the land." (Szalárdi 1853, 626). At the beginning of 1662, the intensity of the plague was lower, but in May, G. Krauss was indicating that "the plague started to haunt powerfully again in parts of the country. Thus it lasted three years and killed many young people." (Kraus, 1965, 312-329, 370, 431, 436, 445, 451-452, 493).

János Szalárdi indicated in his chronicle that the plague spread in the imperial army that came to support János Kemény. Around 8.000

soldiers died on their way from Cluj to Tisa and many were left undressed and unburied (Szalárdi 1853, 628).

Data of the land register of 1663-1665 show that around a quarter of the villagers and town inhabitants disappeared (Solcan 2006, 28; Solcan 2010, 54). Some died, while others wandered through the region.

The famine and epidemic of 1676-1680 was deeply imbedded in the memory of the survivors. All the epidemics were signalled in all three Romanian principalities – Transylvania, Wallachia and Moldova. Frequently Transylvanian inhabitants appreciated that the disease came over the mountains, brought by the merchants and wandering people that circulated between the states. This epidemic played a role in the demographic evolution of Transylvania and probably in the case of Wallachia and Moldova as well; it interrupted the population growth of 1665-1675, right after the losses of 1658-1662. Land registers show that until 1720 the average number of family members maintained at five people. Economic and political crises, epidemics that followed at the end of the 17th century and the beginning of the 18th century allowed no demographic growth, being linked to fear, flight, suspicion and death.

The Imperial troops entrance in the summer of 1687 brought scarcity to the inhabitants by the destruction of grain fields and vineyards. Town inhabitants were most affected. In his diary, Peter Brozer noted the damages brought by the soldiers in the summer and autumn of 1687, while in 1688-1693 "they [Austrian soldiers] stayed around and tormented us." (Brozer 1990, 219).

In other regions, such as Țara Făgărașului, the requests of the new authorities and abuses of the local officials determined numerous families to emigrate (Solcan, 2004, 277-282).

The year 1690 brought the Tatar invasion, locusts, floods, then Rákóczi's War of Independence in 1703-1711 and thus Transylvania had new years of economic and political crisis. A devastating plague epidemic broke out in 1708.

The chronicler Mihály Cserei described the rapid spread of the disease in 1708; it was believed that it was brought from Wallachia and Moldova, then it spread in Gheorgheni, then to Sighisoara. Some wanderers were responsible for bringing it, then some fur

merchants. Shortly after the chronicler passed away, his family and neighbours died, and the plague covered Sighișoara entirely (Cserei 1983, 432).

In Cluj, where there were around 4.500 dead, the disease was thought to be brought by a man who went to the pharmacy. The pharmacist and his servants died immediately after the visit (Cserei 1983, 443). In Sibiu, some Greek merchants were considered responsible. Their host's wife and children died in the following three days, then the plague spread throughout the city.

In all the cases of the 16th-18th centuries, the image of sudden death is present after the contact with the guilty person. It is possible that the population was infected and those responsible for bringing the disease remained unknown.

In the case of the 1708-1709 epidemic, Mihály Cserei presented the causes of the plague, but forgot to link them to the army circulation, the wandering people and to Rákóczi's War of Independence that covered the entire principality from Satu Mare to Făgăraș.

One of the greatest droughts took place in 1716-1717. In his versified history, Peter Apor showed that in 1718 there was an "unprecedented heat,/ Unheard famine, unheard expense." It happened during the peasants' raids of 1717 that "deserted Bistrița, Solnocul, Dăbâca/ Plundered Cluj and Chioar." The plague broke out at the same time in Sibiu area and spread quickly in Mediaș, then in Țara Făgărașului – "because of that we all lived in fear." It was a justified fear, because shortly after the plague expanded from Brașov and Țara Bârsei to Trei Scaune where the author lived. As Apor said, over 100.000 people died in Transylvania at that time and "many villages and localities remained nearly empty." (Szádeczky 1903, 296-299).

Peter Apor considered that the plague was over after ten years, in 1720 (Szádeczky 1903, 300). The Transylvanian people must have felt that the plague lasted ten years, as after the epidemic of 1709-1711 the flood, the famine and the great plague of 1717-1720 followed. This long presence of the disease was remarked by the travellers. For example, captain Friedrich Schwanz von Springfels wrote referring to the years 1720-1723 that the "plague always lurks" in Transylvania, Banat,

Serbia, Bulgaria and Montenegro (Holban 1997, 47). Everything took place under the continuous threat of war: Rákóczi's War of Independence, then the Tatar attacks during the Austro-Turk war of 1716-1718.

The analysis of the way in which the plague epidemics affected the people is of great interest in the context when the disease is mentioned at the same time in Transylvania, Wallachia and Moldova. It was natural if we think of the frequency and diversity of relations between the inhabitants of these three principalities. The Transylvanian case is better represented in the documents and writings of the period.

The number of people who died because of the plague and other epidemics was huge. During the epidemic of 1553-1554 in Brașov, which was a city of 10.000 inhabitants, according to contemporary sources, around 7.000 people died, of which 3.000 city inhabitants and 4.000 from the suburbs. In Sibiu, in 1554, out of 6.500-7.000 inhabitants, 3.200 people died, according to the parish register. (Cernovodeanu 1993, 51) In the Maramures villages around 35% of the households remained empty. (Ardelean 2017)

In 1585, in Oradea the "plague haunts horribly... 100 people are buried daily and we know that it is not far from ours, a mile away", was writing the Jesuit G.P. Campani who was in Cluj. (Holban 1971, 87). In 1660-1662 the land register noted that at least a quarter of the population of the villages and towns perished of war, famine and plague.

There is more information about the famine and plague of 1717-1720. We may assess that there were over 100.000 victims if we add the deceased from Bistrița, based on Peter Apor numbers. Data from the registers of Brașov and Țara Bârsei show that 17.458 people died back then, of which 4.689 (26.86%) were teenagers and 6.487 (37.16%) were children. During the same period in Mediaș 256 (26.02%) children died out of 759 (Cernovodeanu 1993, 143-144).

Johann Albrich, the doctor from Brașov, wrote that the "contagious virus" attacked children, young people, women, those of sanguin or phlegmatic type and poor people. Then the disease killed "different people, regardless of age and material status." He also pointed out that there were people who did not fall ill though they lived with the sick ones (Andron 2004, 21).



The plague epidemics came back in Transylvania of the 18th century: 1737-1739, 1756-1757, and in 1770-1771 and 1785 they were limited to the borders with Wallachia and Moldova. The magnitude of these epidemics is unknown.

Unfortunately, during the plague epidemic, people were also affected by other diseases but we lack sufficient information on that matter. We conclude that there was a dysentery outbreak in 1602 and 1661 (Armbruster, 1980, 398; Kraus, 1965, 431), in 1709 there were typhus and smallpox (Cserei 1983, 435). Cserei knew in 1709 that smallpox was the forerunner of the plague (Cserei 1983, 432).

Doctor Johann Albricht concluded that during the plague epidemic of 1717-1719 many people died of pulmonary tuberculosis, dropsy, seizure and smallpox (Andron 2004, 21). They affected both the inhabitants and soldiers that crossed the land in the military conflicts.

### Facing the plague

Though the epidemics that hit the Transylvanian population were aplenty in the 16th-18th centuries, the most feared were those of the plague. We aim at analysing the way it influenced people's lives by generating a fear that was comparable only with the fear of war.

As presented above, Transylvania suffered multiple times of the plague outburst. Every time the number of the victims was high, taking into account the number of inhabitants. People witnessed their relatives, neighbours, friends and elites die. No one could be certain that the plague would not take their life as well. Tens of thousand of people died, among which Iancu de Hunedoara (1456), lady Despina (Sibiu, 1554), Gaspar Heltai (1574) and one son of János Kemény (1661), rulers of the neighbouring countries (Ioan and Nicolae Mavrocordat), some magistrates of the cities, well-known doctors, such as Paulus Kyr (Aba Iulia 1588), clergy etc.

Cluj inhabitants wrote diaries, describing the tragedy of the families hit by the plague. Thus, the judge of Cluj, János Linczigh lost two children of nine and thirteen years old during the epidemic of 1645-1646, while in August-September 1661 four of his children (three to sixteen years old) died. (Linczigh 1990, 189-194) Martin Auner wrote with great

grief that during the devastating plague of 1678 he lost all his relatives: on September 1 he lost his brother-in-law, Stefan Tobias, on September 8 died his nephew, his elder sister's son, and Stefan Tobias' son, on September 23 his younger sister passed away, Stefan Tobias' wife and on September 30 their daughter (Auner 1990, 215-216). The plague took the lives of a family with two children.

The plague was more virulent in the cities, but the villagers were not spared either. During some epidemics, entire villages disappeared. For example, Turda Nou remained depopulated in 1601 during the plague and the battle between the supporters of Sigismund Báthory and the imperial troops led by George Basta. Many inhabitants took refuge in the church and were killed, their goods were plundered and the survivors ran away or died of the plague, as it is shown in a document from August 9, 1619 (Kiss 1994/b, 145).

### *Fleeing the deadly disease*

The land registers noted after every epidemic the empty lands after the decease of entire families, as it was the case of Comana estate from Țara Făgărașului in 1637 (Prodan 1970, 454, 457). Other people fled out of the fear of the disease. The village Ghirisa on the Ardud estate (Satu Mare) was empty even after a decade from the death of its inhabitants of the plague in the middle of the 16th century. (Prodan 1968, 265)

In 1738 a traveller described the journey from the Sebeșul Săsesc to Sibiu: "we found a village where most of the inhabitants fled fearing the plague, finding shelter high in the mountains or in the neighbouring woods." (Holban 1997, 222).

Flight was a tough decision. Mihály Cserei, who was in Brasov in 1709, wrote:

"if someone among us dies of the plague, the others are to be locked in the house and we must die of hunger. If we go to the villages, especially in the spring, the thieves would kill us either way." (Cserei 1983, 433-434).

The sources show that in general the elites left for remote dwellings. This habit perpetuated over the centuries. At the beginning of the 17th century, Francisc Nagy Szabo wrote that "people from the city (Țârgu Mureș) fled again wherever, while the simple

people stayed or wandered through the nearby villages.” (Gáll-Mihăilescu 1993, 110).

A century later, the same scenes took place during the epidemic of 1709-1710. The memoirs mentioned the flight of inhabitants searching for safety despite the interdictions announced by the authorities. A report from 1720-1730 about the Transylvanian situation showed that during Rákóczi's War of Independence the nobles fled to the fortified Saxon cities, while the villages remained empty (Szádeczky 1898, no. 1580/358).

However, that represented a progress, as in the 17th century the local authorities were more prudent and refused the newcomers, imposing isolation. The merchant Georg Franz Kreybich mentioned:

“In 1710 I fell ill at the fair that was held daily at Câmpulung. On the 1st of August being ill I left for Sibiu and on the 8th of August the plague broke and in one night five households were infected and 15 people died at once. Then it was decided that healthy people should search for certain places. The majority of the population fled from the city and found refuge in other villages or towns. I had to be carried and left with five carriages to Brasov, but when the commander found out that plague broke out in Sibiu, ordered for us to be sent back, beyond the forest for a six week quarantine. Because commander's feldsher visited me, made some blood tests and assured the commander that it was nothing contagious, only fever. That is why I obtained the permission to be out of the city, informing of my whereabouts. They sent me to the garden of my host, not far from the city, at a mansion where I felt better after spending there the period 12 August – 1 September. Then I was permitted to enter the city where I lied till March before healing from my illness.” (Holban 1983, 129).

The issue of people leaving their settlements was controversial. People were more and more convinced by the contagious character of the disease and still moved their sick people from one town to another or in other villages nearby, hoping that the plague didn't reach that area. That happened both in 1586 (Holban 1971, 143) and in the 18th century.

The fact that people were aware of the contagious nature of the disease but were uncertain if someone among them was infected or not. M. Milanese was carried from the monastery in Alba Iulia on 11 of July 1586 because he was feeling unwell:

“father administrator and I were hurrying to Alba Iulia – he was in the back part of the carriage, while I was in the front – and because we were not received in the city, the surgeon of the city called us in the middle of the fields nearby, he let half a pound of our sick blood and then we returned home extremely relieved.” (Holban 1971, 142).

Wandering life was very difficult and upon their return people found their homes ravaged if not demolished on the authorities' order or after the thieves' robbery. Adam Golarowski's description refers to the refugees from Galati area, but the life of Transylvanian wanderers was not probably much different. He met them on the bank of the Prut River, where they built houses of the reeds: “plenty of people, young men and women, old men, carriages and oxen that were grazing. Those who were still healthy got out of the village, as merely all inhabitants out of two hundred huts died.” (Holban 1997, 421).

A report from 1719 of Transylvanian authorities showed that during the last year people “ate wood, straws, buds, acorns, carriages.” (Szádeczky 1898, no. 1497/231).

#### *Doctors' position and treatments*

The fear was amplified by the doctors' incapacity to save the sick people. Efforts had been made to search the causes and healing possibilities, books with medical prescriptions circulated, studies were written by Johannes Salzmänn (Sibiu 1510) Sebastian Pauschner (Sibiu, 1530), Paulus Kyr (Braşov, 1551) Francisc Pápai Páriz (1690) de Samuel Köleseri (Cluj, 1719), Ferenc Soós (Cluj, 1720), Adam Chenot (1770) etc. All prescription books that circulated in Transylvania included cure against the plague. Unfortunately, the recommended treatments were inefficient. This was due to the level of medicine and pharmacy of the 16th-18th centuries. Doctors were convinced that the disease was caused by the changes of the climate – very cold or hot years, or very humid

years, as well as dry air, polluted by the stagnant waters, all sorts of nature abnormalities, such as roses and elderberries flooding twice a year, as it was noted in 1577 by Benedek Mogioró of Huedin (*Bánfihunyadi*) (Dézsi 1918, 194).

Recommended treatments included juice of black radish, horseradish, radish, mugwort, bitter herb mixed with vinegar, juice of red onion baked with a medicine with opium. István Ujhelyi wrote that he tried the remedies and many were helped by them (Újhelyi 1989, no 127, 373, 427-430/304, 320, 324).

Other doctors, such as Sebastian Pauschner from Sibiu prescribed wine, rose water or five blueberries every morning. Another beneficial treatment was blood letting. (Cheşcu 2014) Smoking the homes with dried manure or mugwort, or pine seeds, dried marjoram was also recommended (Újhelyi 1989, 422/324).

People put half of a freshly cut pigeon over the lump, or poultice of boiled whites or poultice of lard, baked red onion, pine wax and yellow wax mixed with a lot of salt (Újhelyi 1989, 431-433/324). These are the treatments indicated in the Book of Medical Prescriptions for Ana Bornemisza of István Ujhelyi from 1677, used at the court of the Transylvanian Princess. Becskereki prescription book indicated similar remedies. Poultice of radish, horseradish, walnuts, pine seeds, pepper, garlic were among the treatments (Becskereki 1989, 966/404).

The prescription books also describe the symptoms of the disease: shivers, sore throat, headaches, thirst, dry tongue, "outer cold and inside heat". Ujhelyi recommended people with these symptoms to visit the doctor at once (Újhelyi 1989, 426/324).

Such a general description of the symptoms contributed to hesitating and unsuccessful treatments. For example, in the case of a young men falling ill at the Jesuit College in Cluj there were misunderstandings between Massimo Milanesi, a nurse with great experience, and doctor Giorgio Blandrata, another doctor, on the one hand, and Géczy, the surgeon of the governor, regarding the illness: was it plague or lethargy. The first three considered that it was only lethargy, while Géczy thought it was plague. On Géczy's orders, the young men was sent to Aiud „where shortly after he died.” (Holban 1971, 139).

Death occurred 2-6 days after the first symptoms (Holban 1971, 134, 141). M. Milanesi described the case of Stanislav Javicki who:

“on Friday, 13th of June, started to be sick, suffering of great fever and headaches. In the morning I checked him, bound his head, preparing his bed, not thinking that he could have the plague and till noon when I prepared his medicine and was about to let blood, we discovered with the father that he was touched by the plague. He was then sent immediately to the garden in the hut and there he died after being delirious on Monday before noon.” (Holban 1971, 138-139).

In other cases, as G. Kraus wrote, “people died while walking or sitting. They had severe headaches and death stains...” (Kraus, 1965, 129). These situations cause fright and despair when people fell ill. The chancellor Mihály Teleki confessed in a letter of October 1678 from Chioar that he was anxious when he was not feeling well under the circumstances that the “plague began again.” (Gergely, 1926, no 268/293).

#### *People's beliefs and attitudes*

People kept asking whether the plague was contagious. It was admitted that the disease was contagious, which is reflected in the protective measures to limit the circulation of people. In the 18th century the mail was no longer brought from Wallachia in case of plague epidemic. (Armbruster, 1980, 398) However, that did not exclude the belief that disease was given by God to punish people for their sins. The conviction in the contagious nature of the disease was accompanied in some regions of Transylvania by the opinion that plague was not contagious. Doctor György Becskereki Váradi Szabo, whose prescription book circulated in the Szeckler area at the beginning of the 18th century, considered that plague was not contagious, but it is God's whip over the sinners. Moreover, in his opinion people were not supposed to flee from plague like Jonah (Becskereki 1989, 426, 532).

These pieces of advice led to a high mortality rate in the region, as people adopted the latter mentality. The Jesuit John Argento mentioned in the summer of 1603 that in a village in the Szeckler area:

“they stayed for several days where many people died of plague. But the inhabitants don’t flee the disease, but also consider that it’s a great crime to fear the plague and to protect from others who suffer from it. They say that plague is a punishment given by God and those who flee it, flee from God like Jonah from the Bible. That is why so many of our people died in Transylvania so that they would not give opportunity to grumbling people to blame them for deserting the flock in danger...” (Holban, 1972, 259).

Measures taken in other areas of Transylvania prove that this conception was an exception. On the other hand, clergy visited the parishioners “everywhere, respecting no isolation or security measures; some infected fathers visited our parishioners and others outside the parish, hearing confessions and offering holy communion, administering the eucharist and despite everything establishing rapport with others” – wrote Andreas Busau (Holban, 1971, 133). That was confirmed by other clergy. (Holban 1971, 147) G. Kraus remarked that some people who had the signs of the disease, sensing that the end was near “had a reconciliation with their fate, took farewell with their beloved and died...” (Kraus, 1965, 129). Such attitudes contributed to the spread of the disease.

Given that “after decimating the simple people [the plague] started to affect the rich” (Holban 1971, 138), while people of all social categories saw their loved ones die, doctors and clergy had no power to stop the tragedies, their loved became dominated by fear and suspicion. Merchants were among those considered guilty for bringing the disease in the community and their activity was limited, the roads were closed and good transport was forbidden (Luca, 2012, 28-39).

Under the pretext of the plague spread, extreme measures were taken in Bistrita in 1712. When the plague broke out in several Armenian homes, municipality expelled in 24 hours 73 Armenian families from the city. They were not welcome back after the cease of the epidemic that killed 120 people. (Ghița 1972, 123) In 1717, the activity of Armenian merchants was forbidden. (Szádeczky 1898, no. 1495/229) Thus, Transylvanian merchants removed an important competitor from the economic life, taking advantage of the plague.

Clergymen was another category regarded with fear. In 1596, Girolamo Fanfonio wrote that

“What grieves father Leleszi the most and all the others is that nobles from our area blame us for the plague in Alba Iulia even at the court of the Prince; this exasperates more the souls of those at the court and the barons against us.” (Holban, 1971, 131).

The situation was very grave, given that the accusations came on the background of confessional tensions within the principality.

The wanderers were also considered responsible for the plague, along with the soldiers, servants that came home from the cities (Cserei, 1983, 432).

In the most dreadful moments of the outbreak anyone could be blamed for provoking the disease in the community. The suspicion was especially directed toward persons who could have been considered witches. A document of 1729 showed that in the village Hereclean, Solnocul de Mijloc, in 1718, when several people started dying in the village, the noble Daniel Kis ordered that four men and women must search and examine everyone: „from the first to the last, if anyone is found guilty of witchcraft as the cause of the plague upon us...” All villagers were examined except for one young woman, but no suspect was found. The young woman, Szemedra, Gergely Mester’s wife, Lázár Pap’s daughter was sleeping profoundly and could not be awoken to be examined. Witnesses said that she was exhausted after working from morning till evening. In 1729, she was accused of witchcraft and under the suspicion that she brought the plague in the village in 1717. Her profound sleep was regarded as devil’s support not to be detected guilty (Kiss, 2002, no31/176-182).

Doctors’ inability, the rumors of disappeared settlements increased the uncertainty. The longer the epidemic, less hope people had. Such a state of mind was described by Cserei in Sighisoara of 1709. The plague had been in the city for two years, along with war and famine. Under these circumstances:

“the living eat, drink, get married and when the church bells ring, they say to the priest: Why should we go to church? We

prayed enough and cried enough in front of God and yet He did not show mercy on us. We'll die in two days as well, just like the others, so let us live as we please." (Cserei, 1983, 433).

The testaments illustrate the best the state of mind of those periods when the disease "seemed appeased, then started to haunt again", as Girolamo Fanfonio stated, another victim of the epidemic of 1586 (Holban, 1971, 114, 131).

György Petrichevich Horváth from Suplac was in the military camp at Sebeșul Săsesc in August 1634 when the plague haunted, writing his testament because he "could not know when the end of his life may happen." (Tüdös, 2008, no. 33/107). The nobleman György Mihálcz from Danic, Trei Scaune, wrote in November 1677: "seeing how the plague, Almighty God's harsh blow, rages over all the regions, over adults and children, I don't know how long God would keep me alive, as who is healthy today tomorrow can be lowered to the grave." (Tüdös, 2003, 97/266). On the 16th of November 1677, Kelemen Dimién from Cătălina, Trei Scaune, wrote his testament "out of fear that he would be called out from this world by the sad plague." (Tüdös, 2003, no. 98/269) The chancellor and the chronicler Farcas Bethlen felt the need in February 1678 to write his testament, as "the plague rules all around." (Tüdös, 2011, no. 23/108-112).

The case of the sick people was even more desperate. The wife of the noble János Donáth from Caratna, Alb de Sus county, sick of plague, wrote her testament on the 3rd of October 1677, "seeing death of many benevolent Christians and relatives and meditating on my uncertain fate..." (Tüdös, 2003, no. 96/265).

During a big epidemic of 1717-1720 the author of a testament written on the 5th of August 1719 justified his gesture saying that "in these times of sorrow, you don't know when your time comes." (Tüdös, 2011, no. 68/285). These documents were written under the pressure of the epidemic so that all affairs would be left in good order for the relatives. The writers carefully appointed tutors for their children in case they would remain orphan of both parents.

The fear of getting sick and dying of a terrible death pushed some people to suicide. After 1633-1634, when plague took numerous

lives, on 7 of January 1635, the wife of a royal judge of Sighisoara threw herself into a well. It was an extreme gesture in a society where the only explanation was that she was "possessed by the devil": "This event was a dreadful parable for such an esteemed person." (Kraus, 1965, 91)

Testaments show people's care, fear for their beloved. Parents tried to save their children taking them out of the cities, which were most affected by the plague. Cserei wrote that when he was ten years old, in 1677, "there was a huge plague in the entire country that lasted the next year as well. My father sent me and my younger sister to a village in the mountains, near the Făgăraș fortress, to his estate in Bucium and we spent the entire summer and autumn there. Thank God nothing touched us." (Cserei, 1983, 132).

After the outbreak of the plague in a settlement, people were preoccupied to find uncontaminated places to flee or to send their vulnerable relatives. It was a wide spread custom that both simple people and noblemen resorted to. M Milanesi described the turmoil of that period. For example, in the summer of 1586, clergymen and pupils of a school in Alba Iulia wanted to leave for the "Szecklar region, considered safe and healthy." (Holban, 1971, 140) There were cases when clergymen wanted to leave with their parishioners, but the speed of disease spread was higher than the news circulation. Milanesi mentioned that although initially clergy wanted to leave for Caransebeș, "upon finding out that plague touched the area, on 28 we left for Târgu Mureș where they said the city and the region were healthy, but we found them contaminated..." (Holban, 1971, 141).

During the war, when men were in the army, the task of taking care of the family belonged to mothers. Thus, F. Nagy Szabo wrote: "mother kept thinking where to go as soon as possible. We headed with our small wealth toward Brasov, with others on several carriages..." (Gáll-Mihăilescu, 1993, 110)

Another issue that concerned the inhabitants during the years with high mortality rate was obtaining the revision of the lists of fiscal duties (Monumenta, 1883, no 26, 52/416, 425, 512; Szádeczky, 1898, no 1438, 1518/146, 281).

During epidemics, people feared the goods and groceries. The goods brought from the Ottoman Empire were regarded with fear. In

1682, the Transylvanian envoy from the Ottoman Porte drew Princess' attention not to eat groceries from Constantinople, as it was touched by the plague. (Monumenta, 1894, no. 59/244) The fear persisted, and in July 1719 the plagued settlements were asked to pay their taxes in money (Szádeczky, 1898, 1511-c/267-268).

Although people were convinced of the contagious nature of the plague, that didn't stop them to break the rules concerning the isolation. In Șchei, in 1718, the plague proliferated after the family of a deceased bribed the barber to bury the deceased according to the Christian traditions. After the false statement of the barber more people were involved in the burial. Radu Tempea described the atmosphere of fear, hesitations and distrust:

“those who bathed the man found signs of the plague and sent for the barber to check, while the neighbours feared to come in; the barber might have taken money to declare that it was not plague. So, the neighbours came in and took care of the dead and buried him as it was accustomed with priests.” (Andron, 2004, 19).

People were also subjected to abuses on top of the famine, plague, war period and expensive prices. Authorities recognized in a document in 1720 that “robbery, fights, burglary, debauchery spread” (Szádeczky, 1898, no 1517/279) given that the law and order forces did not circulate and justice did not function properly. It was specific to previous epidemics as well, given that there were laws to punish burglars and thieves during the plague years of the 17th-18th centuries (Monumenta, 1884, no. 64/438).

People lived in fear of the cruel thieves, as their attacks were more frequent and violent during the food crisis. Although Sibiu seems to have been less affected by the plague in 1585-1586, it was harmed by the robbers. In Sibiu's register of income for 1587 different sums of money are mentioned for guarding their homes (six dinars - Pakucs-Willcocks, 2018, 79).

Another abuse may be seen in an order of the superior command in Bistrita on 10 of March 1720 that supposed that during the memorial service of the deceased the priests pretended the deceased's goods. The order

stated that the descendants and the priests must come to a monetary agreement (Szádeczky, 1898, 1518-a/ 281).

Mihály Cserei described the atrocities of the undertakers of Sighisoara during the epidemic of 1708-1709. He said that at least 80 people were killed under the pretext that they were infected with plague. These were rich people, killed so that their homes could be robbed. Cserei also told that a young man saved his sister who was closed alive in a coffin with her mouth covered (Cserei, 1983, 434).

In the 16th-18th centuries, the fear of the future was so profound that nearly all natural exceptional phenomena, all uncommon events were interpreted as signs foretelling disasters. It is true that most of the chronicles that contained such details were written after epidemics, wars, natural disasters. However, István Szamosközy commented on the flood events of 1598 that “elders conclude after the hardships of their long lives” that any change in nature foretells the evil to come (Szamosközy, 1977, 62). The quote is telling for the people's mentality of the 16th century.

#### *Restrictive measures*

The fears were amplified by the restrictive measures taken by the authorities after becoming aware of the contagious nature of the plague. There were concerns to stop the expansion of the plague since the beginning of the 16th century. During the epidemic of 1510 the doctor from Sibiu Johannes Salzmann proposed in a paper published in Vienna:

“The authorities must take care so that the streets, houses and rooms would be cleaned up of any dirt, stench or decay, the litter would be gathered and the swamps, puddles would be drained or covered in limestone, sand or clean earth [...] Also, people gatherings should be avoided, as it happens at fairs, weddings, small churches, boys' schools; small rooms with many people contribute to the spread of the disease [...]. City inhabitants that go to fairs or wander through the lands where the disease is spread or meet with people that bring the poisoned air must not be let back into the city, as they bring upon themselves more evil. Also, people should beware of clothes, food and everything brought from contaminated places.” (Offner, 2020).

These ideas would be the basis of the measures taken by the authorities in the next centuries during the plague epidemics.

Burial of the plagued people gave rise to all sorts of issues. Their relatives wanted a Christian burial and didn't hesitate to hide the cause of death. In other cases, as Radu Tempea noted, due to the restrictions imposed to those infected and their relatives, they, "driven by fear, buried their loved ones at night wherever they could" (Andron, 2004, 19). In some cities, the authorities accepted the creation of special cemeteries during the plague epidemics. This is how the Hajongard cemetery was established in 1586: "Firstly, seeing God's whip and the increase of death cases daily" (Kiss, 1994/a, 113). The nearby hospital hosted lepers when there was no plague (Gáál, 2020).

In Brasov in 1718:

"people craved to bury their loved ones at the church and they let them find a garden where to bury the plagued. Till 10 of November people buried their dead wherever they could. Then, after much bitterness and requests, it was accepted to bury them from Sloan toward Ciocrac, saying that it was not allowed to let them bury in their regular places and because if the Germans were digging up the graves three or five years later, people would be plagued even then." (Andron, 2004, 19).

In Sibiu, in the same year, according to the *Chronicle of Sibiu* by Emil Sigerus, at the initiative of the guilds, a special hospital for the plagued was built in front of the Gate Elisabeth, while the people could be buried nearby (Cheșcu, 2014).

During the epidemics, the roads were closed and circulation was limited and only those who had a special permit could travel from a region to another (Szádeczky, 1898, no. 1505/254). Fairs and reunions of all types were forbidden, as well as funerals, weddings and hiring workers outside the settlement.

After 1700, the Austrian authorities limited the circulation even more, forbidding the transport of goods from one region to another, a fact that emphasized the lack of cereals and salt in some regions (Szádeczky, 1898, no 1437, 1461/140, 181).

Mihály Cserei wrote that in 1709 the sick, be it the case of poor or rich people, were

taken outside the cities in some huts in the field where no one was allowed to go. The food was placed so that the sick could take it. If someone died, no one was allowed to take care of the body. The dead could not be mourned and the bells of the church didn't ring, no service was held; the deceased was buried in the field in a common grave. Two-three people were appointed in every city to bring and bury the dead with no ceremony. (Cserei, 1983, 433) In the parish register of the reformed church in Ozun it is mentioned that one inhabitant - György Kovács junior – had to pay a tax of 18 dinar on the 4th of January 1719 because he touched a deceased at a Romanian funeral (Szádeczky, 1898, no. 1510/265).

The circulation restrictions during the epidemic were extremely strict and any trespassing could be punished with death. In 1738, an anonymous traveller showed that in Țara Făgărașului "in the previous winter there was plague so that the neighbouring villages were isolated and going out of the castle to the city was forbidden" (Holban, 1997, 224).

Commissars were sent to verify the dispositions in many settlements, which supposed more obligations on behalf of the inhabitants drained by poverty, pain and fear. The commissars had the task to forbid the inhabitants to get out of the settlements and to keep track of the dead, burnt clothes and houses and sanitized houses. (Szádeczky, 1898, no 1513-2,3/269) Because of the fact that burning the infected houses could lead to bigger fire and because of the high number of the plagued, authorities gave up the decision to burn all the houses in June 1719. Other houses must be sanitized and smoked before being suitable to live in. (Szádeczky, 1898, no 1545/276) Based on Cserei's description, we may notice that in 1709 these rules were strictly followed and those who neglected them, risked the capital punishment (Cserei, 1983, 433; Andron, 2004, 26).

There were a series of complementary measures taken at the local level. For example, in 1738, the magistrates of Cluj decided the organization of a sanitary committee meant to supervise the evolution of the disease, to prevent its spread and to keep track of the contaminated houses by painting them in red.

Given that the authorities were always concerned with the limitation of the epidemic, the measures became more restrictive and their

implementation more strict during the 18th century. These aspects limited the effects of the plague in Transylvania (Nicoară, 2006, 97-105).

Most of the measures adopted were rational, but there were some contradictory dispositions. Thus, in *History of the Holy Churh of Șcheii Brașovului*, Radu Tempea (1691–1742) showed that in 1718, after the first cases of plague:

“the sick were closed not to get out and wherever they knew, they did the same till September 1. After advising and plotting, the sick got out from the fortress on September 27; the next day, on Sunday, the fortress was closed. It was opened on Monday, September 29 for several hours for people who wanted to leave.” (Andron, 2004, 18).

In Șcheii Brașovului the same policy was followed, people being allowed to leave on the 16th of September 1718 though there were cases of plague: „everyone was allowed to go wherever they could...” (Andron, 2004, 19).

Among the measures imposed by the central and local authorities, a day of repentance was set – 3rd of July 1661 (Kraus, 1965, 407) and some moments of collective prayer and fasting. Thus, from the 1st of August 1719 in all settlements every man “regardless of his religion and location” must say prayers and fast every Wednesday “because of the fast spread of the plague.” (Szádeczky, 1898, no 1511-b/267).

Because of the rise of burglaries and crimes in May 1719, the villages were guarded even at night (Szádeczky, 1898, no 1511/266). Some villages did not declare the infected cases in order to avoid the presence of the commissars and the implementation of the measures. In such cases, in 1720, the judges were punished (Szádeczky, 1898, no 1517/279).

Fear and helplessness favoured the superstitions and protective magical practices. The ritual of the “plague’s shirt” mentioned by Anton Maria del Chiaro for Wallachia was known in Transylvania, Maramures and Banat. There were regional variants, but everywhere a group of girls, under the coordination of a skilled woman, must make in one night a shirt meant to protect the community (Botiș, 2020).

People rarely expected happy events, but they tried to lead a normal life. Although many schools were closed during the plague periods (Holban 1971, 131, 139), the College of Alba Iulia, founded in 1622 continued its activity during the war and plague. When Alba Iulia was destroyed between 1658 and 1662 the College was moved to Cluj, then between 1704-1709, during Rákóczi's War of Independence and the plague, it functioned in Rimetea, Baia Mare and Satu Mare. During the plague epidemic of 1719-1720 the teachers and pupils, fearing contagion, took refuge to the woods of Aiudul de Sus. (Juhász, 1979, 15) The College was not closed due to the same reason the Jesuit College was open during the plague of 1585-1586: “father rector did not want to close the schools, waiting for a better situation.” (Holban, 1971, 133)

Francisc Nagy Szabo decribed the hardships of 1602-1603 – plague, expense, civil war – but that did not stop him to get married on the 21st of January 1604, when he was 23 years old. It seems that it was a modest wedding, though he was wellborn in Târgu Mureș: “the wedding took place in my cell, the former bakery of the monks”, but dishes spiced with pepper, ginger and saffron were not missing from the table. On the other hand, the writer mentioned that “those with means had no reason to fear not to find something they needed or wanted.” (Gáll-Mihăilescu, 1993, 133-134).

### Brief conclusion

Plague epidemics caused important human losses and changed people’s lives, bringing suffering, fear and suspicion. The overlap of the plague with famine and war favoured the rise of robber gangs and proved the incapacity of authorities to re-establish order and stop abuses, which contributed to a higher uncertainty for the citizens. Contradictory measures taken by the authorities and the low level of medical knowledge contributed the fast spread of the disease. Under these circumstances, people were helpless, disoriented and frightened near the bodies of their relatives. However, that could not stop their desire to come back to their homes, to normal life.



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## THE OTTOMAN LIEUTENANT BETWEEN “THE CUT” AND “THE PROMISE”

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**Abstract:** *The starting point of this study is the Armenian genocide and the international public opinion regarding this issue, alongside the Turks' involvement. Unrecognized by the successors of the Ottoman Empire, the genocide meant the annihilation of more than 1.500.000 Armenians and the attempt to erase their existence. That fate was prepared for any Christians within the empire. The film proved its capacity to impress a large number of people from its very beginning and it was used to support the Armenian cause starting with the year 1919. The silent film “Ravished Armenia/Auctions of Souls” was the first film made with this purpose. Feature films are analyzed according to their message, historical perspective or the approach of the topic.*

**Keywords:** Turkey, Armenian genocide, film, history, memory

**Rezumat:** *Prezentul studiu pornește de la genocidul armean și felul în care s-a raportat la el alături de Turcia, opinia publică internațională. Nerecunoscut de urmașii Imperiului otoman, genocidul nu a însemnat doar anihilarea a peste 1 500 000 de armeni, dar și încercarea de a șterge orice urmă a existenței lor, soartă pe care Junii Turci o pregăteau pentru toți “necredincioșii creștini”. Filmul și-a demonstrat de la început capacitatea de a impresiona un număr mare de oameni, astfel încât a fost folosit și în scopul susținerii cauzei armenilor începând din 1919 cu filmul mut Ravished Armenia/Auctions of Souls. Filmele artistice au fost analizate în funcție de mesajul pe care îl transmit. În cele în care aspectul istoric este cel care predomină sau memoria este modalitatea de abordare a subiectului.*

**Cuvinte cheie:** Turcia, genocidul armean, film, istorie, memorie

Considered the first genocide in human history, the Armenian genocide earned its place in the European conscience with difficulty, being considered an internal problem of the Ottoman Empire and then of modern Turkey built by the follower of the Young Turks, Mustafa Kemal.

The image of a weak Ottoman Empire became visible especially in the 19<sup>th</sup> century after the territorial losses when the Muslim population from the Balkans and Caucasus ran into the interior of the empire, causing thus a shock within the state (Howard, 2021, 333).

According to data of the Armenian Catholic census, there were four million Armenians who lived in Turkey, Persia and Tsarist Russia and an emigration before 1915 in European and American communities (Minassian, 2017, 21).

Yerkir is the Armenian country, the possessor of an impressive cultural and religious patrimony and impressive history from the first kingdom that recognized Christianity in 301. It lasted within the Ottoman Empire especially in six vilayets in

central and eastern Anatolia: Bitlis, Dياربکیر, Erzurum, Mamuret-ul-Aziz, Sivas, Van. Armenians were superior numerically in Van, Bitlis and Dياربکیر (Howard, 2021, 333).

Among those six Armenian vilayets, rural Armenian population and the Constantinople elite had no close ties. Armenians were not considered a threat and were praised for their loyalty supported through the Armenian Catholic Patriarchy. This is the reason the Turks' following actions were less cohesive and the political programs were less clear and easier to attack by the Turks as being of Russian inspiration.

In the European perspective, the Armenian question occurred after the Crimean war at San-Stefano and Berlin when the necessity to protect the Armenians against the Kurds was supported (Minassian, 2017, 39).

The most important Armenian political organizations – Armenakan/1885 and Federation of Armenian Revolutionaries/1890 – managed to get involved in 1908, alongside the Young Turks in the political reformation movement of the empire. Then, in 1909,

during the counterrevolution, the Armenian parties remained on the Young Turks side (Hesemann, 2016, 128-129).

For a part of European diplomats within the Ottoman Empire in the last decades of the 19th century and till the outburst of the First World War, Turks' violence over the Christians and especially over Armenians and Greeks surpassed the level of local conflicts. That was the case of remote provinces where the Ottoman administration was a mix of pretended modernism and atavistic behaviour of a medieval type.

Thus, the British consul from Erzurum referred in 1890 to an extermination process of the Christian population; the conflicts of 1894 and 1895 support his position.

The protest manifestation of Armenians in 1895 in Constantinople was repressed violently. The instigators were Islamic students, *softas*, followed by soldiers, armed bandits and the inhabitants, as well as common criminals released from prisons.

In Dyiarebekir, the French consul reported the massacre, initiated by the soldiers and gendarmes, which lasted three days and took the lives of 5.000 people. In the ancient cathedral of Urfa/ vilayet Alep, 3.000 Armenians were burned alive. The witness, an American missionary Corinna Shattuck, chose the biblical term *holokaustos* ("sacrifice by complete burning") from Greek to refer to that event. That was the first mentioning of the term that began its fateful existence in the human history. Another aspect is that the destroyed Armenian villages meant no trace of Armenian communities in the area (Hesemann, 2016, 90-92, 98, 114, 127).

The Armenian political leaders did not notice in their relations with the Young Turks that within the movement radical leaders gained more influence. Those radical leaders were obsessed with the idea of the former glory of the Ottoman Empire, while pan-Turkism replaced the pan-Ottomanism. Any references to the famous Constitution of Midhat Pasha were eliminated, as it mentioned the equal rights of all the inhabitants of the empire. We also notice the hypocrisy of the Turk officials and politicians when they condemned in 1908 the massacres of 1895.

Under these circumstances, in Smirna and Constantinople, there were popular gatherings when the Turks asked for forgiveness. Moreover, at Urfa, the place of the first

holocaust, after the commemoration service of the victims, a Turk officer promised that "from now on, no one is allowed to call the Christians *dogs*."

Although Armenians were elected alongside Greeks in the new parliament, the change did not last, as the counterrevolution came in 1909 that brought a new wave of violence against the Armenians (some of them risked a lot hiding the leaders of the Young Turks).

In 1909, the extreme violence in Cilicia/ vilayet Adana revealed the inability of the authorities to impose the law. Moreover, it became a rule to blame the Christians and especially Armenians for any weakness of the state. According to the facts revealed by the German consul, more than 20.000 Armenians were victims of the so-called Cilician Apocalypse after the urge of the moolah and imams (Howard, 2021, 354-355).

In order to prove the power of the state to the international public opinion, the Grand Vizier condemned 124 chiefs of gangs in 1910 for the first time in the history of the Ottoman Empire after the attack of the Christians. Moreover, he passed a law that forbade the political associations that included ethnicities in their title (Hesemann, 2016, 130-131).

Though they fought alongside the Turks in the Balkan wars, the members of the most popular Armenian party, Dashnak, considered Russia the greatest enemy. It is difficult to establish whether that was the official position or it was meant to protect the Armenian community. Hit again, the Ottoman Empire prepared to win the war against non-Muslims, by introducing the boycott of the Greek and Armenian merchants.

According to a secret order of 14th of May 1914 of Tallat Pasha, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Greeks were asked to emigrate in the first stage and to declare that they leave the homeland of their own desire. As a result, 160.000 Christians left the area of the Marmara Sea. Then the numerous and influential Greek community from Smirna/ Izmir city was targeted; 150.000 people emigrated and 50.000 were deported to Anatolia.

When Turkey entered the First World War near Germany, the triumvirate of the Young Turks chose the fateful policy "Turkey for the Turks!" Meanwhile the statement that Armenians are traitors justified merely

everything. The Party of the Young Turks organized the so-called Special Organization that was directly involved in the Armenian genocide (Hesemann, 2016, 139-141; Howard, 2021, 360, 362).

A preamble was given by the Armenian resistance in valyet Van, which triggered the governor Cevdet's anger, who being defeated by the Russians, destroyed the Armenian villages in the area under the pretended pretext of betrayal, revolt and hiding of the arms. There were people who tried to resist and to save their lives, but it is also true that there were Armenians who enrolled in the Tsarist Army (Howard, 2021, 362; Hesemann, 2016, 178).

The news of the Van resistance was yet another pretext for the Young Turk government to initiate a planned operation months before the 24th of April 1915. It was called the relocation of the Armenian inhabitants and started with 250 Armenian officials from Constantinople. One of them, Agnuni, was arrested on Tallat Pasha orders although he saved the latter's life in 1909 (Minassian, 2017, 333).

The deportations started in Cilicia in April and supposed the gathering of people in safe places, denying any means of escape. The direction was the superior course of the rivers Tigris and Euphrates, to Alep and then the Syrian desert. At Deir-ez-Zor, there were huge camps where robberies, forced conversions and mass executions took place. Thousands of victims died of hunger, exhaustion or were executed on the road. As a general rule, militaries that accompanied the convoys let the Kurds to attack mercilessly these convoys of death.

In the case of other deportations, such as Erzurum, those who attacked the Kemah gorge were gendarmes. They were used in many extermination actions, such as the one in Trabzon city, that was bombed by the Russian fleet in November 1914.

Sometimes the unbearable situation was sparked by the governors; that is the case of Mehmed Reshid, the new governor of Dyarbakir, forced to flee from the Caucasus occupied by the Russians. That is also the case of Baheddin Shakir, commander of the paramilitary organization of the Young Turks, Mahsusa. Meanwhile, all Ottoman civil servants that tried to interfere were

assassinated<sup>1</sup> (Howard, 2021, 362; Minassian, 2017, 331).

Between these two episodes, the topography of death, as it was named by Michael Hesseman took place in six Armenian vilayets, with few survivors. Those who survived were asked to give up their religion. Important information from every vilayet was recorded by diplomats, members of American, German missions, members of the clergy, such as the Lutheran pastor dr. Johannes Lepsius.

The American ambassador Henry Morgenthau was especially involved, as well as Angelo Dolci, apostolic delegate in Constantinople, the Austro-Hungarian ambassador von Pallavicini. On the contrary, the German ambassador, as well as the Kaiser who would have had a say in the matter declared their disinterest. However, the German consuls in Alep and Erzerum had a different position. In Vatican or in other diplomatic cabinets (including Berlin) thorough reports were recorded concerning the events of 1915 (Hesemann, 2016, 217-249).

Among the consequences of the Armenian genocide in Turkey we name the rich of 1916, those who got rich by taking over Armenian properties. Apart from several cities in the Levant, the entire Anatolia became Muslim and the Armenian names disappeared from the registers or were islamized. The failure of European diplomacy was yet again obvious.

After England's pressure, a trial of those guilty of crimes against humanity took place in 1919 in Turkey. Tallat Pasha, Enver Pasha, Cemal Pasha and their supporters were condemned to death, but they were helped by the Germans and reached Berlin. Thus, out of 17 condemned only 3 were executed. From 1920, Mustafa Kemal was Turkey's leader, an acolyte of the Young Turks, imposing ceasing of the trials and plenty of amnesties, while many documents disappeared. He was not a

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<sup>1</sup> In Dyarbakir, the Armenian convoys were transported on the rafts on the Tigris River, to Mosul, but then they were massacred by the Kurds and thrown into the river. Other thousands of Armenians were transported to work in the mines of Ergani and then thrown from the rocks in the Maden gorge. In the city of Trabzon all Armenians were attacked and robbed. Orphan children were given to Turk families, while sick and disabled Armenians were poisoned. Most Armenians were transported on barges and drowned in the Black Sea.

supporter of a multinational state and since that moment Turkey did not surpass that stage.

As a Turk historian, Taner Akcam, who was not involved in the state policy, noticed, the denial of the Armenian genocide has had several motivations: the modern Turk state is based on the personality of Mustafa Kemal and on the political party Unity and Progress (which included the organizers of the genocide). Therefore, it is difficult to recognize that one's homeland is the doing of some criminals. The compensations would be a proof that the foundation of the state is represented by the stolen properties from Armenians, which is a taboo topic.

The new Turk state was based on the absence of ethnic groups of Christian religion that had contributed for centuries at the development of the Ottoman Empire. Accepting the year 1915 equals the acceptance that Christians inhabited the Turk land, whilst Turkey's existence is based on the Christians absence (Marchand, Perrier, 2015, 14-15).

The doctrine of pan-Turkism, meaning a Turkish Empire that spreads from Asia to China, was illusive. Nevertheless, the relationship with the proto-Fascist pan-Turkism of that Turkish regime and Hitler's national-socialism was evident.

The number of people killed in the Armenian genocide could not be established precisely. At the 1919 trial in Constantinople, a death toll of 800.000 victims was mentioned, but contemporary historians reached the number of 1.500.000 people.

The first warning of a negative direction belonged to a French politician Jean Jaures. He stated in 1897, in a speech at the National Assembly in France, that humanity cannot live in its own dungeons with a corpse of an assassinated people. England elaborated *The Blue Book*, officially titled *The Treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire*. It was written by Viscount Bryce and Arnold J. Toynbee, published in 1916. It comprises a series of testimonies of those who survived the genocide and maps with data. (Marchand, Perrier, 2015, 23, *The Treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire*, 2021)

Numerous diplomatic memos sent to Constantinople to stop the massacres were answered by the Turks in the same way – Armenians are deported because of a coup against the state (which could not be proved) (Morganthau, 2000).

The genocide was known and documented from numerous sources: oral testimonies of witnesses, archives from Germany, Vatican, England, France, U.S.A., and photographs. Some books on the topic were forbidden by the state; the most famous case was of pastor Lepsius in Germany who, after failing to save the German mission in Urfa, wrote a booklet that was published in April 1916, showing that "the ancient people of Christianity is in danger to be exterminated." It was addressed to German officials, German Parliament and big newspapers, but in August 1916 it was forbidden. The author left for the Netherlands, then came back and published the book *Deutschland und Armenien* in 1919. The book publishes copies of documents from the German Ministry of Internal Affairs proving that Germany was not involved in the Armenian matter (Hesemann, 2016, 37, 213, 217).

The Armenian genocide was part of the greatest crime against humanity; it also involved the Greeks, Christians from Syria and other Christians. It was canonized only in 2015 by Karekin II Narcissian. That was the greatest number of canonized people from the beginning of Christianity (*Genocidul Armean*, 2021).

The law regarding the punishment of crimes against humanity was voted by the United Nations in 1948. (Hesemann, 2016, 273-306) Meanwhile, humanity overcame another world war and holocaust, while the link between Medz Yeghern and the holocaust was evident. The genocide was recognized by the Permanent Peoples' Tribunal in 1984, by the European Parliament in 1987, followed by over 20 European states and U.S.A. (Chaliand, 1985, 243).

### **Armenian Genocide in the Feature Film**

#### *Historical Events and Feature Films*

The topic was part of impressive feature films and documentaries, as well as debates and heated arguments based on feature film representations. It should be mentioned that political manipulations made their way to film representations so that the heroes' destiny played a greater role than the historical background.

Feature films are part of a large range of films: historical films, war films, psychological thrillers, westerns and eastern

films (from Soviet Armenia), experimental films and dramas.

Our starting point is Varujan Vosganian's reference that photography is the only remembrance of the Armenian genocide, representing the only replacement of the living and the premonition of death (Vosganian, 2008, 49,167).

The films are the modern way of remembering the lost homeland. The Armenian genocide is both history and memory, as the action takes place during the events and it is focused on the manner in which survivors and descendants remake the memory road in a symbolic way.

The films concerning the history of genocide are: *Ravished Armenia*/1919, *Assignment Berlin*/1982, *The 40 Days of Musa Dagh*/1975, *Sons of Sassoun*/1975, *The Lark Farm*/2007, *The Cut* /2014, *The Promise* /2016, *The Ottoman Lieutenant*/2017 and partially *America, America*/1963.

In the second category we chose: *Mayrig*/1991, 588, *Rue Paradis*/1992, *Komitas*/1988, *Uomini, anni, vita*/1990, *A Voyage to Armenia*/2006, *Ararat*/2012, *1915/2015*, *Armenia, my love*/2017, *Songs of Solomon*/2019, *Sunrise over Lake Van*/2011.

The first feature film dedicated to the Armenian genocide is *Ravished Armenia/Auctions of Souls*, (directed by Oscar Apfel, 1919), a silent film, based on the novel of a survivor, Aurora Mardighanian. It was filmed with the help of thousands of Armenian refugees from California. The film was known to Americans due to its suggestive poster – an Armenian young girl, trying to escape the Turkish sultan with a sword in his hand. Only 23 minutes are available out of the original 90 minutes, which is insufficient to fully understand the message of the survivor who played her own role.

The fact that Henry Morgenthau, the American ambassador in Istanbul, played his own role is proven by his involvement in the public awareness regarding the events in Turkey. Aurora Mardighanian was the witness of her family's liquidation in a village near the city Harput; she escaped pasha's harem and though she was tortured, she did not give up her Christian faith. Saved by the American mission, she reached the city Erzurum, under the Russian occupation. She was sent to U.S.A. to plead for the cause of a destroyed people, of a silent crime. The most tragic

sequence of the film is the crucifixion of 16 young girls from Malatia/ vilayet Mamuret-ul-Aziz (Hesemann, 2016, 217-249).

The film played an important role for various reasons. Although the American Senate gave up the political support for the Armenian cause, the film raised the public awareness and imposed the material support through the *American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief* (Laurence Baron, pdf, 291).

The films in the History category present the action before the genocide, describing a reasonable lifestyle and heroic images. That is the case of the movie *The Sons of Sassoun* (directed by Sarky Mouradian, 1975). The film was dedicated to the resistance movement of the Armenian outlaws from the area, which were trying to oppose the sultan's order to colonize the Caucasus mountains. Sassoun resonates in the Armenian conscience, as a well-known medieval poem dedicated to the heroes that led the medieval kingdom. However, the victories were local and the film ends with the epilogue of the last victory of Varuzh and his men against the Turks. It is a colorful film, with a great soundtrack. There is a series of characters that pertain to stereotypes: Ottoman officials who are brutal and corrupt, the precarious condition of women, threatened by arranged marriages, the status of Greek and Armenian peasants eager to gain their freedom and Varuzh with his men who opposed the repressive Ottoman policy.

The same director adapted for screen Franz Werfel's novel *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh*, dedicated to the Armenian resistance on the mountain in vilayet Alep/ province Hatay, Turkey. This is a successful resistance (Yicheng Zhang, 2020). The novel was published in Germany when Hitler was in power and it was a premonition for the holocaust of the Second World War. The topic became clear to the Jewish author after his journey in 1930 in Egypt, Palestine, Syria and Lebanon, after meeting Armenian orphans in Damascus working at the carpet factory. The novel was published in 1934 and was very successful, but it was forbidden in Germany after a Turkish signal, marking an old friendship between the two states. Moreover, the author was accused of inventing the massacres despite his thorough documentation. In Berlin and Istanbul, the Armenian and Jewish community had to burn publicly the novel. Another issue was the incomplete



translation of the novel in Great Britain and in the U.S.A. in 1934 so that many chapters concerning the Armenian civilization were eliminated, as well as the massacres and rapes in order not to harm the public's sensitivity. A complete translation was published only in 2012 after its translation in Turkish in 1997.

Franz Werfel expressed the fact that his novel was necessary for the Armenian people. Therefore, the Jewish author was considered a hero by the Armenians. The example of the resisting Armenians was followed by the Jews from the Warsaw ghetto. In Palestine, the first Jewish communities were thinking of organizing their Musa Dagħ on the Carmel Mountain in case they would be invaded by the Germans. Yair Auron's tragic conclusion regarding the book is that a reader would hardly believe that it was written before the Jewish holocaust.

Among the historical characters that are in the novel and in the movie there are the German pastor Johannes Lepsius, the American ambassador Henry Morgenthau and the sinister triumvirate: Tallat Pasha, Enver Pasha and Djemal Pasha. The fight for a successful film adaptation was stopped by the Turkish diplomacy. The discussions and debates of a successful novel on the Armenian genocide and an impactful film adaptation could harm severely Mustafa Kemal and his followers. MGM studios bought the adaptation rights in 1934 and organized the first shootings; the main hero was to be played by Clark Gable. The Turkish ambassador was not satisfied with either of the provided scripts and after repeated interventions and threats of boycotting the MGM films in Turkey, the studios gave up the project.

As a result, the film *The Forty Days of Musa Dagħ* (directed by Sarky Mouradian, 1982) was filmed by Armenians, with scarce funds and shootings done in Malibu, California and the hills of Los Angeles. The director organized the entire action around the main character, Moses Des Kaloustian, played by Gabriel Bagradian. He returns to his birthplace with his French wife and their son after the war and his flight to Paris. The most memorable scene is the discussion between pastor Johannes Lepsius and Djemal Pasha concerning the latter's attitude towards Armenians.

The main character considered himself a loyal citizen of the empire, fighting in the

Second Balkan War alongside the Young Turks. Although he could not believe the rumors that reached his village Joghonoluk/vilayet Alepo, he became the organizer of a resistance movement that was thought to be short-lived. Their salvation was possible due to the French war ships. Though the resistance lasted 53 days, the author chose to present the 40 days resistance due to its biblical reference (the flood and the Jewish wandering thought the desert). The main hero paid the ultimate price, losing his family – his son is killed by the Turks and his wife cannot resist the trauma. The main hero died in battle, while the person who inspired the novel survived till 1986.

The film was not appreciated by the critics. Eduard Minasian described it as a modest remembrance dedicated to the innocent victims of the lack of humanity. (Welky, 2006, 35-43) In a study dedicated to the relationship between the films and the Armenian community in the United States, Dikran Kouynjian stated that it was a lost chance to realize a great film when MGM gave up the project and the collaboration with the best American director of Armenian origin, Rouben Mamoulian. In others' opinions, it would be better for this novel to not be adapted to screen (Kouymian, 1994).

The film with most awards that refers to events of Ottoman Armenia was *America, America* (directed by Elia Kazan, 1963), based on the director's novel. Stavros' story, a poor Greek from a Cappadocia village, after witnessing the murder of Armenians had a single aim – to get on a ship in Constantinople and to flee to New York. The black and white film was awarded with Oscar, Golden Globe and the Golden Shell at San-Sebastian Film Festival.

Then, despite Turkey's threats the films that had the Armenian genocide in the background continued to be made. The following films were produced in 2007-2017: *La masseria delle alondole/The Lark Farm* (directed by Paolo and Antonio Taviani, 2007), *The Cut* (directed by Fatih Akin, 2014), *The Promise* (directed by Terry George, 2016) and *The Ottoman Lieutenant* (directed by Joseph Ruben, 2017).

Antonia Arslan's novel was the basis of the film adaptation *La masseria delle alondole/The Lark Farm*, launched at the International Film Festival in Berlin in 2007.

One of the directors declared at the Vatican radio that the reason they agreed to take on such a project was the terrifying fact that mankind could cause the greatest harm while hurting its neighbor.

The script of the film did not avoid the horrifying reality, as it was for the Avakian family, reunited after the death of their elder. The two elder brothers of the family – Aram, a wealthy land owner and Assadour, a renowned doctor in Venice – held a meeting to discuss the rumors regarding the Turks' behavior in the neighboring areas. They establish to retreat at a remote farm, but a regiment of the Turkish Army occupies the farm, kills the men and forces the women to march to Syria's deserts. One of the boys was dressed like a girl to spare his life. During the march the women witness atrocities, including a woman being forced to kill her newborn. The love story between Aram's elder daughter and an Ottoman lieutenant cannot have a chance.

The film *The Promise* is linked to *The Ottoman Lieutenant*, the latter was produced with Turkey's financial assistance. This is one of the strategies through which Turkey continues to deny its involvement in the Armenian genocide.

*The Promise* premiered at the International Film Festival in Toronto in 2016 and received mixed reviews, while being a box-office success. According to the director's statements, the film's main aim was for the "audience to learn from films rather from history textbooks."

The film starts with images from Siroun city where the relationship between the Turks and Armenians are about to end. The main hero of the film is a young pharmacist, Mikael Boghasian, who wants to become a doctor while not having the financial means. Instead, he receives the dowry of his future wife and accomplishes his dream. The life in Constantinople, where the Imperial College of Medicine is situated, introduces him in the life of a wealthy relative and of a cultured woman under the influence of an American journalist. A love triangle is formed between the three. Mikael tries to save his uncle after the outburst of the genocide, but ends up in a refugee camp. He tries to save his family through the American Mission and follows a resistance movement similar to the one from the Mount Musa Dag.

*The Ottoman Lieutenant* was filmed in the same period, but their message is different. *The Promise* was filmed by a director convinced by the authenticity of the Armenian genocide, while *The Ottoman Lieutenant* conveys a denying message. The film presents the love story between an idealist American young woman, a nurse who comes to Turkey to help a remote hospital and the guard assigned for her protection.

Some articles published in the U.S.A. included declarations of the crew that mentioned the change of lines and the message linked to the Armenian genocide according to the Turkish financing parties. *The Promise's* producers are firmly convinced that *The Ottoman Lieutenant* was shot in order to counter-balance their film and message. Though *The Ottoman Lieutenant's* film had no great impact, it was supported and promoted by the Turkish officials.

The film *The Cut* puts the blame for the Armenian genocide on political factors. There is another proof on how the common tragedy transforms the life of an individual, a blacksmith from Mardin, Nazareth Manougian. He lives a peaceful life with his wife, his two daughters and his relatives, but he is deported to the construction of railways in a remote area. While the time goes by, Nazareth witnesses atrocities – Armenian convoys led to death, attacked by the Kurds and violated. An officer comes to the camp asking them to convert, leaving the camp; the next day, common criminals come to execute the rest. As the criminal assigned to kill the main hero could not complete the execution, he has a neck wound that causes him to lose his voice. This wound is symbolical for the rupture with his family and the silence of the human society concerning the Armenian genocide.

While searching for his family, the main hero is helped by the Turks from the deserters' camp or by those from Alep as a ransom of guilt. His journey ends in a small town from the U.S.A. One of the surviving sisters lived to see their father. One of the last sequences shows the two going out of a cemetery toward a landscape that is strange to their native one, but peaceful.

Unlike other films, this is the only one that has several sequences about the stigma on the Turkish population and soldiers after the end of the war. The film was an international co-

production (Germany, France, Poland, Turkey and Canada) and it was chosen to compete at the International Film Festival in Venice, Golden Lion.

A common aspect of these films with an Italian film should be mentioned - *Il Giardino dei Finzi-Contini/The Gardens of the Finzi-Contini*, (directed by Vittorio de Sica, 1970), the film adaptation of Giorgio Bassani's story. The film presents the same illusion of a wealthy and refined family of Jews from Ferrara, hoping that they would be left alone in their small world. While the Armenian genocide was associated with a sad song, *Yaman*, in this film, the Jewish deportation is accompanied by the funerary song *El male rahamim*.

As an epilogue at the references to the history of the Armenian genocide, we may discuss about the film of the justice, *Assignment Berlin* (directed by Hrayr Toukhanian, 1982) that debated the issue of justice, moral aspects and the means of conducting justice. The main hero, Saghamon Tehlirian, assassinated the main initiator of the Armenian genocide, Tallat Pasha, in 1921, in Berlin. Tallat Pasha fled to Berlin after the fall of his regime and was convicted to death by a Constantinople Court of Justice. The author of the execution was part of the Nemesis Operation of punishing the organizers of the genocide. Tehlirian executed first the most efficient Armenian informer of the Turkish police in the capital, Harutian Mgrditchian, who helped in making the list of Armenian intellectuals deported on the 24<sup>th</sup> of April 1915. Tehlirian fought in the Russian Army as a volunteer in the Caucasus and he lost his family and nearly all his relatives during the genocide.

At the trial he was defended by dr. Theodor Niemayer, Professor of Law at the University of Kiel, while among the witnesses was pastor Johannes Lepsius, the German General Otto Liman von Sanders and survivors of the genocide. The public opinion was on Tehlirian's side, considering him innocent. The trial gave rise to many debates that searched to answer the question whether the extermination of a people that leads to assassination is an act of justice. The German journalist Emil Ludwig pleaded then for the Society of Nations to punish the guilty people, as no Turk Pasha has the right to send a people in the desert. Later, the Polish lawyer Raphael Lemkin asked the

elaboration of a law that would forbid the genocide based on a universal jurisdiction, while a state's sovereignty would not be an impediment to give the right to kill millions of innocent people.

After the Holocaust, Hannah Arendt compared Tehlirian in her book to Shalom Schwartzbord, who assassinated the Ukrainian politician Symon Petlyura in Paris, in 1925, considering him guilty of Jewish pogroms.

As the film treated a subject with a very important role for the Armenian community, it was considered a promise, as in the case of the film about the Mount Musa Dag. It was successful mainly due to the idea that justice was done – after the declaration of death penalty by a Turkish court, the punishment was carried out by a civilian. (Kouymian, pdf)

#### *Soviet Armenian Films*

A special category is represented by the Soviet Armenian films; most of the films have the same theme – the pain of losing everything: the family and the homeland. The filmography was influenced by the Soviet policy toward the ethnic problem and neighboring Turkey. After the Yerevan Memorial opening in 1965 important films were produced: *They Are to Live* (directed by Laert Vagharshyan, 1961), *Nahapet* (directed by Henric Malyan, 1977), *Yearning* (directed by Frunze Dovlatyan, 1990).

The first mentioned film presents the fate of two brothers affected by the genocide – the first one reached Soviet Armenia and died in the Second World War, while the other flees to the U.S.A. and comes back to search for his family. Lawrence Baron concluded that the Soviet films about the Armenian genocide, as the ones about the Holocaust, followed the same policy, the scenes of mass executions were allowed. The film *The Commissar* (directed by Alexander Askoldov, 1967) made possible a comparison between the evolutions of the two communities – the Armenians and the Jews.

Askoldov's film debates not only the close links between a woman commissar of the Red Army and a family of Jews that housed her, but also questions what would be the world's response to the death of the Jewish family? Would it be the same as in the case of the Armenian genocide? It is suggestive that the name of the Jew is Yefim Magazanik, an Armenian name. The film was censored and

was screened only in 1988 (Baron, pdf., 297-298).

In the film adaptation *Nahapet* of Hrachya Kochar's novel, the fable revolves around a genocide survivor who cannot get over the pain of losing his family. He was forced to assist at their death. Life offers a single solution to this poor Armenian peasant, destroyed by grief – to start a new family. What I found interesting about the film is that although there is a scene with the newly appointed Bolshevik Armenians at a party meeting, the new communist reality plays a mere background role.

The final scene offers a chance by representing the former victim beside his new family, preparing to plant a tree as the symbol of life every time a new baby was born in the village. The film was appreciated for the representation of the genocide. The film was screened at the Cannes Film Festival in 1978. The title of the film is symbolical, as the word means "patriarch."

For Aro, a humble Armenian peasant from Turkish Armenia, the main hero from the film adaptation *Yearning* (by the same writer), nothing could replace his family and homeland. After repeated dreams, he wants nothing else but to visit his native village and the tombs of his parents, to kiss the walls of the church in the village. While coming back from Turkey, Aro is caught by NKVD and considered a spy. He dies in the wagon that takes him to Siberia, his last exile. The similarity to Holocaust trains is evident.

### Films of Memory

The second category of films is represented by films where memory plays the most prominent role, alongside faith in the power of survival. The protected memories may direct the heroes toward healing. The heroes of these films are always between the past, present and future, following the footsteps of their ancestors.

For Armenians, the name of Komitas, his real name Saghamon Saghamonian was associated with the Armenian genocide. Two films refer to this hero - *Komitas* (directed by Dan Askarian, 1988) and *The Songs of Solomon* (directed by Arman Nshanian, 2019).

Komitas, an orphan from childhood, but with a beautiful voice, studied theology at Encimadzin, the most important Armenian religious center and then music at the

University Frederic Wilhelm in Berlin. After coming back to Constantinople, he was focused on the Armenian folklore, collecting over 3.000 popular songs, of which 1.200 have been conserved. He was the first to collect the first musical book of traditional Kurd songs. His concert life was over when the genocide started. He was arrested with other Armenian intellectuals and sent to a camp in April 1915. As a result of what he witnessed and suffered he had a nervous breakdown of which he never recovered. In 1919, he was in a military hospital in Turkey, while the years between 1923-1935 he spent in a psychiatric clinic in Paris.

In the film of 1988, the emphasis is laid on the first part of his life. However, in both films, the main hero is Komitas' music.

The second film represented Armenia at the 93<sup>rd</sup> edition of Oscar at the section of the best foreign film, but it was not nominated. The script was based on the writer Sylvia Kavourkjian's story about the way genocide affected her grandmother. Along with the story of a very gifted orphan, the writer described a special friendship between an Armenian and a Turkish girl. The destroyed innocence seems to be the aim of this represented friendship. During the rest of the film, the main hero is secluded from real life, while his music pleads his cause.

A French director of Armenian origin, Henri Verneuil, proved that a director may be popular by filming commercial and biographical films, as is the case of *Mayrig* (1991) and *588, Rue Paradis* (1992). The topic of the first movie is focused on the life struggle of a family of Armenian refugees, author's parents and aunts, who land in Marseille port, the place of the most important Armenian colony in France. The film starts with awaiting the verdict in the Berlin process of Saghomon Tehlirian. The film *Mayrig* is a reconstitution of Azad Zakarian's biography for twenty years. This is the story of Armenian refugees who could not forget the beauty of the places they left. A great Armenian song, *Yaman*, became popular after being the soundtrack of the film – a love story that ends tragically, just like the love story between the Armenian inhabitants and their land. The title of the film is symbolical, as *mayrig* means "mother." Azad's life story is interrupted by flashbacks from the Armenian genocide and

issues of social integration that proved difficult.

588, *Rue Paradis* is the sequel of *Mayrig* that was successful due to the story and great actors: Claudia Cardinale-mother, Araxi and Omar Sharif-father, Agop. Meanwhile, the main hero of the film became a famous playwright to stage a play of an autobiographical inspiration. The most impressive scene is when the street where they lived in Marseille became the place of a waltz for Zakar and his mother. The play is a way of remembering the life as an Armenian refugee and a French citizen. The history of the street is important to Azad and buying a house for his mother on the same street is significant, as it proves wealth. The rose garden of this house reminds of the lost paradise of the family in Ottoman Armenia. Thus, at the end of the film there is a symbolical image of the lost homeland and the image of *mayrig*, a still-frame of the only remembrance of Armenia.

A hero of the film *Sunrise over Lake Van* (directed by Artak Igityan, Vahan Stepanyan, 2011), Karapeth defines his sense of living by remembrance as duty. He built his life around the commemoration ceremony of his mother, survivor of the Armenian genocide in the hope to save his family from alienation and rupture. Every year, on the 24<sup>th</sup> of April, he considers his duty to burn the Turkish flag in front of the Turkey embassy. His son, Dikran, remembers this date because of the fact that he pays the fee for his father's act. Karapeth's grandson disapproves this act of remembrance, as he is involved in a love story with a Turkish student. His stubbornness is costly for the family, but he asks for the right to dream of the beauty of the Lake Van, the symbol of the lost paradise, living as a foreigner on the American land.

The film *Uomini, anni, vita* (directed by Yervant Gianikian and Angela Ricci Luchi, 1990) shares extraordinary images from archives of the First World War. The directors combine images from Caucasus in their experimental film. The odd starting image is of Russia as an angel asking submission to all peoples from Caucasus. The images of the first part of the film refer to the war and the apocalypse of the Armenian people, as it is described in the journal of a survivor of the horrors they lived through.

Unlike other films, there are no scenes to show the direct danger, but there is the certainty of a disaster by filming the empty

streets of the villages, where, at some point, a priest and some children are running scared. The directors chose *Stabat Mater* by Pergolesi as the soundtrack for its tragic tone. Some of the scenes were altered – the human figures are elongated to emphasize the pain and to impress the audience.

The psychological thriller *1915* (directed by Garin Hovannisian and Alec Mouhibian, 2015) stages a play after 100 years from the genocide of 1915. The place of the play – a theatre in Los Angeles – is considered haunted. It may be considered a hero of the film, as it has a great role in the city, Charlie Chaplin being one of the founders of the theatre. The play was chosen to serve an aim – the spectators should have a unique experience, reliving the history. The director of the play hopes to transmit the emotions to the spectators. The play is the commemoration of the Armenian genocide. The star of the play is director's wife, playing an Armenian woman whose decision will produce a change. The play is not a normal representation, as there is a protest in the street and a series of strange accidents that produce panic among the spectators. It seems that director's mission is much more dangerous and the ghosts of the past are everywhere. The film presents several themes – the fight between those who recognize or not the genocide, the way people relate to history and the way they understand it. The soundtrack of the film is signed by Sarj Taukin, the leader of the band *System of a Down*.

Missak Manoukian in the film *The Army of Crime* (directed by Robert Guedignian, 2009) is another victim affected by the consequences of the genocide. After losing his family during the genocide, he ends up in an orphanage in Lebanon, which was under the French mandate, and after 1925 he moves to France. Missak becomes known as a poet and leftist activist. The film was dedicated to numerous immigrants that fought in the French Resistance during the Second World War. The title of the film is the slogan from the posters of the Vichy regime who tried to present the sabotage actions of foreigners, especially Jews. Missak's group of 100 partisans organized in 1943 the most sabotages against the Germans, but could not escape the action of the French militia, paramilitary organization subordinated to the Vichy government.

Arrested in 1944, the partisans were judged and executed by the Germans.

An important theme of the film is the relationship between the state and the citizens and how it became toxic during the Vichy regime. Manouchian is presented like a hero in the film, being opposed to the Holocaust as a survivor of the Armenian genocide. Another theme of the film is the comparison between the Armenian genocide and the Holocaust.

The films *Armenia, My Love*/2016, *Ararat*/2002 and *Une Voyage en Armenie*/2006 were filmed by interposing the past and the present, while the heroes create a series of interdependencies that determines their life.

In *Armenia, My Love* (directed by Diana Angelson, 2016, an American of Romanian origins), the focus is on the drama of Orbelian family, betrayed by everyone. The head of the family was beheaded by the Young Turks after calling him to Istanbul as the leader of the local community. The family tried to escape, but they fell victim to Turkish soldiers. The only survivor was the son who reaches the American shore, becoming a renowned painter. In his dreams, he comes back to Armenia to bury his loved ones. He also dedicates them a significant painting. His son is the bearer of the family tradition, singing the same traditional song at Easter. His paintings present his mother often and the hero is involved in imaginary dialogues with her. His mother's last written letter urges him to go on without forgetting that there is "only one country, one love and one mother: Armenia." At the 2016 manifestation in Los Angeles he is one of the witnesses near a symbolical message: We are here!

The film *Ararat* (directed by Atom Egoyan, 2002), screened at the International Film Festival in Cannes, had two famous actors in its cast - Charles Aznavour and Christopher Plummer. The action of the film starts in Canada, where a family of Armenian origins is led by Ani, widow of an Armenian who tried to assassinate a Turk ambassador. Her step daughter is convinced that Ani pushed her father from a cliff, while the relationship between two step siblings complicate things even more. Ani is a specialist in art history and especially the work of an American painter of Armenian origins, Arshile Gorky.

An American film producer wants to shoot an episode about the Armenian resistance in

the city of Van and about the painter, hiring Ani as a historical consultant. Rafii, Ani's son is also involved in the documentation process and as a result of this interest, he travels to Turkey in the area of the city and lake Van to rediscover his roots. A custom official interrogates Rafii upon his return to Canada under suspicions of drug smuggling. The dialogue about the film determines the custom official to let Rafii go, discovering later drugs in the film reels.

The film promotes two symbols of the Armenian community after 1915. The first one is photography, as "before 1915 there were photographs with the entire family in the Armenian houses. There were itinerant photographers, and the rich people awaited them at home, while the others came to the square of the village or at the school. After a while, the photographer came back with the sepia pictures. In all Armenian houses there was a family picture, it was their way of staying together, feeling what was about to happen" (Vosganian, 2008, 49).

Another symbol of the Armenian genocide is the pomegranate. Edouard Saroyan invites the Turkish actor in his car and presents him what pomegranate meant for Armenians especially in the desert: "taking the pomegranates from hand to hand, keeping one kernel on the tongue to ensure coolness in the scorching heat of the deserts" (Vosganian, 2008, 174).

The action of the film takes place in three directions: the evolution of the family, Edouard's involvement in the film making and the drama of the painter Arshile Gorky. The most flashbacks are about the painter's journey in the desert who was a child back then. His mother's hands were particularly important in his paintings though he would repaint them thoroughly. The memory of his flight is painful to Arshile, as is the memory of his father's death.

Vostanik Manoug Adoian is the real name of the Armenian painter who ran away with his mother and three sisters in the area protected by the Russians, but his mother died in Yerevan in 1919 of hunger. When he came to the United States, he reinvented his name to sound Russian; he chose to commit suicide after becoming famous. Though the film had multiple ethical implications and received good reviews, it did not surpass the importance

of *Schindler's List* (directed by Steven Spielberg, 1994).

Seen as a film within a film, alternating the scenes of the present and the past, the film proves that the genocide cannot be reduced only to the events of 1915, given the dramatic consequences on the survivors. The producer Saroyan states the idea that "The biggest pain is to know that you are so hated. Who are those people that can hate us that much? How can they deny their hatred and continue to hate us so much?" The film develops the idea, according to E. Levinas regarding the ethical theory of the other – how dangerous the dehumanization of the other became (Freeze, 2008, 243, 256).

The film *Une Voyage en Armenie* (directed by Robert Guedignian, 2006) presents a French family whose Armenian origins were not that important. The main heroes, the father and the daughter, a renowned cardiologist, prefers to fly back to Soviet Armenia, which he left in the '50s, to operate his father. The daughter flies back after her father, searching for him and ending up searching for details about her family. The film presents bluntly the communist and post-communist Armenia along with the question: will Armenia keep her identity and history? An old Soviet helicopter transports the main hero to the Lake Van, where he meets with his daughter under a blossomed apricot, the symbol of Armenia.

### Brief Conclusion

The present study reiterates the long and painful journey of the Armenian genocide, taking into account the historical background and the feature films that approach the topic. The first part of the article is focused on the meaning of the genocide for the Armenian community before and after 1915, including the survivors, descendants and the international public opinion.

Turkey did not recognize the genocide to this day, triggering campaigns against the films that are not in line with their position, be it documentaries or feature films.

The study analyzes the message of the films concerned with the Armenian genocide. One category is focused on the individual drama of the survivors with no family, hope and homeland. The second category revolves around the descendants of the genocide and their relationship to memory and commemoration.

Although some films were realized from political standpoints, the tendency to establish a dialogue and a healing point is evident. That is a remembrance act for the victims of the Armenian genocide.

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**Fig. 2.** *The Promise/ Promisiunea* (directed by Terry George, 2016)

**Fig. 3.** *The Ottoman Lieutenant/ Locotenentul otoman* (directed by Joseph Ruben, 2017)

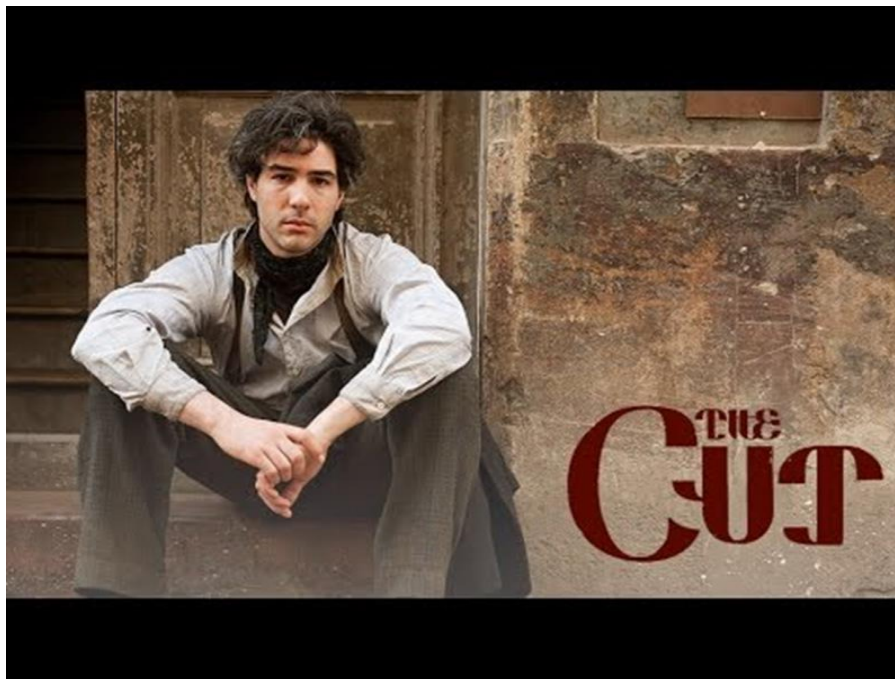


Fig. 1. *The Cut/ Tăietura* (directed by Fatih Akin, 2014)



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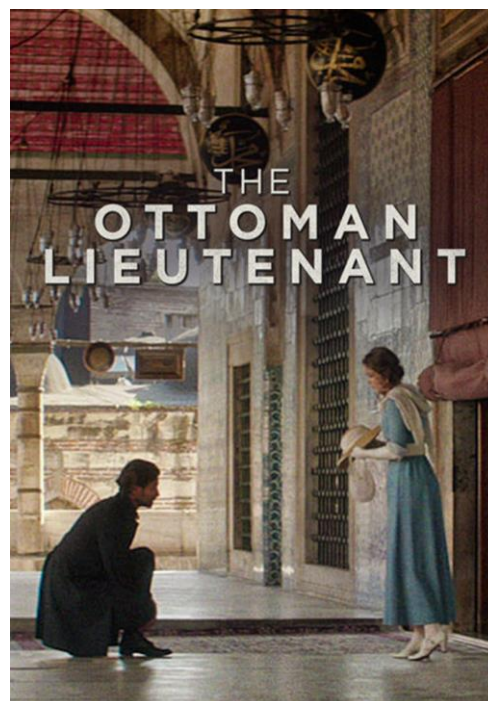


Fig. 3. *The Ottoman Lieutenant/ Locotenentul otoman*  
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# **“BIG BOYS DON’T CRY, OR DO THEY?”: ROMANIANS DURING THE FIRST WORLD WAR, BETWEEN MASCULINE STEREOTYPE AND THE REALITY OF WAR**

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**Abstract:** *The present paper proposes a different reading and analysis of the Great War, having as a methodological reference the gender perspective on wars. Our aim was to study and understand how the Great War’s atrocities and experience as a whole influenced men’s reaction to it. Considering the fact that they were exposed, since childhood, to a gendered education which included such features as honour, courage, heroism, power, and strength of character, all considered as typical masculine features, we tried to stress that, due to this gender stereotype, men had experienced an emotional roller-coaster during the war years in their effort to “act like men”, as the society – and during the war years, the official propaganda – expected them to as opposed to what they really felt and lived during the war years.*

**Keywords:** *men; masculinity; gender stereotypes; The First World War; imagined war; real war.*

**Rezumat:** *Prezentul studiu propune o explorare a Primului Război Mondial din perspectiva teoriei genurilor. Pornind de la premisa, asumată ca și referință metodologică de altfel pentru prezentul studiu, că identitatea de gen este un construct cultural ne-am propus să urmărim maniera în care bărbații au reacționat în timpul anilor de război în fața tuturor atrocităților pe care le-au avut de suportat sau la a căror martori au fost. Unul dintre rezultatele cercetării este acela că, într-adevăr, bărbații au trebuit să „negocieze” permanent între imaginea idealizată a masculinității cu care au pornit la război și sentimentele și reacțiile reale pe care le-au avut în acești ani.*

**Cuvinte cheie:** *bărbați; masculinitate; stereotipuri de gen; Primul Război Mondial; războiul imaginat; războiul real.*

This study explores the clash between the ideal features of masculinity, men were exposed to since their childhood, and the actual feelings and reactions of men confronted with the reality of war.

We explored for this purpose both the discourse and the propaganda that shaped the image of war as well as the evolution and the reactions of men since the beginning of the Great War towards the end of it. We also tried to verify the general assumption that all men involved in the war paid a great deal of attention, and were deeply influenced in their actions by their masculinity. In fact, officers and politicians alike paid close attention to their personal honour and prestige during the debates, and we might add, on the battlefields as well (Timm, Sandborn, 2016, 160). On the other hand, this gender perspective – focused on men and not women – brings into discussion also the manner of approaching historical narratives on war in the sense that,

and Svetlana Alexievich underlined this fact, there is a tendency for men to recall mostly one lot of people heroically killing other people and winning a victory, or losing, what kind of weapons they had, what the generals were like (Alexievich, 2019). However, we consider that men’s perspective is determined, unconsciously, by this gender stereotype perspective of what their roles were supposed to be in times of peace and war as well. Our study also revealed that even with all the attention paid to not losing “a man’s reputation”, men showed emotions, weakness, fear, voluntarily or forced by the context, so that eventually they were “no heroes just people” too (Alexievich, 2019).

Thus, we intended to show that the stereotyped image of masculinity, the so well-known “big boys don’t cry”, determined indeed a certain behaviour during the war years. However, the shellshock was so great that men who went to war with this idealised image of man, strong and absolutely brave,

had to accept that they were not so strong as they should or were expected to be.

Our approach also intended to point out how complex and mixed were the feelings of those who had to live this experience, of the Great War.

Our research involved consideration of a range of historical records as the perspective we tried to focus on is a very complex one. Thus, we used memoirs, war letters as well as journals and diaries. We have a large number of historical records as during the interwar period, in Romania, there was a real explosion of autobiographical writings, the majority including the period 1914-1918 (Bucur, 2019, 87). Each source offered a different narrative on how war was experienced and felt on the part of men who were supposed to “act like men” – according to the masculine stereotype that had emerged and strengthened over the past century.

In order to construct a comprehensive understanding of how men reacted during war years, as a consequence of this masculine stereotype, we compared the masculine “war-adapted” stereotype with the real experience, thoughts, reactions, feelings of men. Also, there were some instances that needed to be taken into consideration which we framed as research questions:

- Who were those speaking/writing? Who created the masculine war-adapted stereotype?
- By what means was this stereotype disseminated?
- Did men believe/were they responsive to this ideal?
- How did the war influence their self-image as man?
- Can we speak of/was there a crisis of consciousness determined perhaps by the fear that they could not meet/would fail to act according to the standards?
- Are their narratives accurate enough or rather subjective, in the sense that the authors avoided writing about their true feelings, reactions and thoughts under the pressure of being considered as “lesser men”/losing the image of a real man?
- When were these records written? Is there a different point of view/can we note a different narrative between

those writing during the war years and those who recorded their war experience after its end? And is this difference determined by the wish, deliberate or not, to retain their “manly reputation?”

As a consequence, we tried to compare the masculine stereotype, with the men’s real feelings and reactions, and see to what extent their self-representation as men matched their actual feelings and thoughts. For this purpose, we analysed several types of narratives belonging to men from different social backgrounds and with different roles in the military hierarchy. As well, we paid attention also to the opinions of men who were taken into captivity as prisoners of war and of the refugees. How did they react, think and feel while not being able to take part in the war and, at least in theory, do their duty so deeply rooted in the masculine code—at least for those from the upper social classes?

As Nira Yuval-Davis argued: “any contemplation of gender relations in the military, however, should not lose sight of the fact that it is never all men and all women in the society who fill particular roles within the military or outside it. Ethnic membership, class, age and ability play crucial roles in determining who is included and who is excluded from these roles” (Yuval-Davis, 1997, 132). For instance, social and intellectual backgrounds were very present in the Romanian discourse, according to the logic that all Romanians were brave: sacrifice, courage, loyalty and honour were common features from birth. However, each had to act in conformity with his place in the social hierarchy: “The scholar gives to the soldier the consciousness of the battle he is fighting for; it gives him clear ideals, a living fantasy, an expanded horizon, the choice of a better and efficient fighting technique. In war, physical resistance is a must, agility of movements, the knowledge of the paths, fields, valleys, the knowledge of scouting and the crossing of the natural obstacles, and here the peasant is handier, he feels more comfortable” (S.n, 1915, 23).

### **Big boys don’t cry: masculine stereotype – war-adapted**

This subject has already been addressed in our previous research; thus, we consider that we are now able to draw some strong

conclusions (Fodor, Tatar-Dan, 2018). However, there are aspects that still need to be focused on, that will be broached in what follows. Before approaching the Romanian case, some general remarks on gender stereotypes are necessary as well as a short historical account of its evolution.

By masculinity we understand “the way men assert what they believe to be their manhood” (Mosse, 1996, 3), the “ideal of man” encompassing the “manly virtues, such as will-power, honour and courage” (Mosse, 1996, 4). These features were the result of centuries of adaptation – as masculinity should be understood as a historical phenomenon, thus undergoing changes as required by the society – until they were stereotyped, becoming the norm (Mosse, 1996, 5).

In Europe, modern masculinity emerged somewhere around the second half of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century, and it changed little thereafter (Mosse, 1996, 4). Starting from the 19th century onwards, the war was considered a male, elevated aspiration, developing the nobility of the spirit, courage, the spirit of sacrifice, which could be the greatest purification of the races and nations (Chiper, 2012, 47). And for sure, the First World War – at the propaganda level – strengthened this stereotype.

War and gender need also some reference points in this context. Nowadays, and due to recent historical studies, war is no longer seen as being exclusively masculine (Yuval-Davis, 1997, 129). However, if we limit our research to the First World War, it was perceived as being such. As G. L. Mosse argued, the Great War was a masculine event which turned such features as bravery, courage, decisiveness, strength and toughness of will into compulsory ones (Mosse, 1996, 139). Men were constructed for war, is a representation which has a long history and it definitely became, during the Great War, part of men’s self-representation and, at this point in history, no social discriminations were made; every man was important and turned into a combatant either on the front or on the home front.

This historical evolution started with the French revolution, yet only with the First World War do we see this generalisation: “The coupling of citizenship rights with participation in the military has existed since the French revolution. However, before and

after the French Revolution, serving in the military has never been universal, even among the citizens of the state, who virtually never encompass the whole population living in the state’s territory” (Yuval-Davis, 1997, 133).

However, during the Great War, rightly or wrongly (probably rightly) propagandists and officers believed that the best way to motivate soldiers to risk death, to endure awful living conditions, and to do so for extended periods of time was to make soldiering identical to fulfilment of masculine duty (Timm, Sandborn, 2016, 165). About the experience of death in the context of war see the excellent study by Mihaela Grancea (Grancea, 2020, 360).

The Romanian case is a very challenging one from this point of view, as part of the Romanians lived in a multinational Empire as a second and discriminated community, constantly facing the potential threat of fighting against “their brothers” from the Romanian kingdom.

Referring to the masculine stereotype as constructed in this area, mostly by the Romanian intellectuals well aware of the political agenda and priorities, one can observe that the features are the same as in the rest of Europe. The ideal Romanian man encompasses the same so called “manly virtues” which included: honour, courage, sacrifice, endurance, religiosity. Honour was a key one, and all those writing their war experience pay attention to it: “The country’s men are called on the field of honour... the Romanian soldiers... will do their duty without a doubt...” (Mihail, 1914, 1). So, honour, courage, heroism, military virtues, fearlessness, all these features were presented by propaganda as being innate and not constructed features of a man’s character: “The Romanian soldier has no match in battle... disciplined, indefatigable and overpowering – hero cut out of heroes” (Sn, 1914, 1).

The Great War completed this list of a man’s attributes with one more: patriotism, but in connection to honour. Those who wrote pay also a great deal of attention, not only to their personal honour and prestige but also to the honour and prestige of their nations (Timm, Sandborn, 2016, 160).

These were the main features of the masculine stereotype to which the Romanians living in the Austro-Hungarian empire were

exposed. As already mentioned, they were not new features but forged now by the war until they become the norm.

Romanians living in the Romanian kingdom were exposed to a similar discourse. Take for instance, in a comparative manner, the appeals addressed to Romanians by the imperial authorities, on one hand, and the one made by the Romanian authorities of the kingdom, on the other, both published in the press. The best comparison is between the appeals of the two political leaders, Franz Jozsef and King Ferdinand of Romania, although at a two-year distance from one another. Both stress the masculine features mentioned above. The emperor's speech, "To my people" deals with honesty, trust, the sense of duty and honour: "referring to Serbia's endless provocations we must put an end to these if we wish to preserve...the authority and honour of my monarchy" (Franz Jozsef, 1914, 7). Besides, honour, loyalty is the other basic feature altogether with the sense of duty. Put it in another words: being and acting "like a man": "I have every confidence in my people, who...gathered around my throne and did not hesitate to make the ultimate sacrifice for their country's honour, glory and success" (Franz Jozsef, 1914, 7).

King's Ferdinand proclamation from 1916 uses the same "masculine terms". The dominant ones are: the sense of duty for the country and the nation and the moral obligation of continuing the ancestor's achievements, a context in which Mihai Viteazul's name is mentioned: "it is our duty to save our brothers from the foreign rulers...It is on us, on our virtues and bravery, the power of freeing them...Motivated by our sacred duty, determined to face, as men do, all the sacrifices imposed by the war" (Monitorul Oficial, 1916).

What is obvious in these appeals, is a key element for the present study as it reveals that what the leaders did was to equate the national duty, of territory, power or honour, with the masculine defence (Timm, Sandborn, 2016, 165). This association is even more clearly stated in the Romanian king's proclamation addressed to his soldiers, exclusively: "A fierce battle is ahead of us. With manhood should we face what lies ahead...and by the will of God, may the victory be on our side!" (Monitorul Oficial, 1916). The king's speech in which he uses twice the word "manhood",

represents an obvious statement that the war was perceived as a men's affair. Thus, for the king, as well as for all the other military and political leaders who had to convince the men to go to war, it was presented as a masculine duty they had to do for the nation's sake: "we are at war. From now on we have only one concern: to win at all costs, because to win is to fulfil our national ideal... From now on comes the beautiful age, the era of action in which Romanians will show us what they are able to do" (Mille, 1916, 1).

In the Romanian kingdom, as well as in Transylvania these features of masculinity were presented as being innate, as being part of the Romanians' genetic code. This explains also the historical references, leaders and propaganda, to medieval rulers – presented as being personification of Romanian masculinity. The heroes "cut out of heroes", as we previously mentioned, are the same: Mihai Viteazul and Ștefan cel Mare. We must also emphasise the same idea of equality and solidarity among men ("comrades" is a very frequent word in the war vocabulary) – male solidarity despite the social belonging:

"From now on, all the passions, the hate and the internal struggles ceased. We are now a single Romania which fights for becoming the Great Romania, individuality is replaced by the common effort of the fight, where the peasant and the townsman, where the worker and the intellectual fight shoulder to shoulder and risk their lives for the country" (King Ferdinand, 1916, 1).

In sum, according to the propaganda and official discourse, the Romanians, despite the leader and the country they had to fight for, had to prove their manly virtues on the battlefield as the war was a test of masculinity, where was no place for "womanly behaviour" (Adevărul, 1916).

### **Big Boys Do Cry!**

Due to propaganda, men had a self-representation dominated by this masculine stereotype: now they had the chance to prove they are real men. As well, this propaganda contributed to a misrepresentation of what war really was: they had created an imagined war, far from the reality. These two explain the great deal of enthusiasm, in all countries, and for sure this enthusiasm was also determined

by such appeals as that they were going to fight a just war – regardless of which side they were fighting for. Take such ideals and merge them with the stereotype of masculinity and you have the perfect recipe for going to war ready to face death. However, what lay beyond this façade? And when and in what circumstances did Romanian men let their guard down, acting “less manly”? Did they do this in front of their comrades, during or in between battles, or rather after the war ended – when they felt somehow safer to talk about real feelings and reactions they had while being on the front? – distanced from the events but having fulfilled “the duty”. These were some of the directions we tried to explore in this second part of the study.

For this purpose, we used mainly memoirs and war letters written by Romanians who fought either on the side of the Austro-Hungarian empire or the Romanian Kingdom, thus having a different perspective on how the war challenged their self/masculine representation. This deliberate choice of using historical records from both Transylvania and the Romanian kingdom is also justified by the purpose of demonstrating that despite the country they fought for, men and their masculinity were put to the same test. They wore different uniforms but felt the same. They had to handle the same confrontation between imagined and real war.

We limited our analysis to three types of narratives. Though they are not exhaustive, they provide enough for understanding the main reactions in face of war that challenged the masculine stereotype. Thus, we deal with the image of man – war-masculinity as seen through a soldier’s eyes. This of course is the first to be explored as masculinity at its peak is embodied by the soldier – the absolute depository of all man’s features and qualities. The second one is the perspective confronting the ideal with the real experience of the war prisoners as they were somehow forced to accept defeat, which according to the propaganda, was not compatible with a man’s character. All official material focused on winning, on victory and even when there were defeats, these were used as a lesson to be learned: “we have victories in the North. in the South we have had a defeat. one outweighs the other. It is better we have been unsuccessful because too many victories would have made us too confident and it is bad that a people is

fed only with victories. Failure is a school and we have learned our lesson” (Mille, 1916, 1). Moreover, losing is to be handled in as many a way as possible: “We must not be alarmed ... is a mere incident of war ... But for that we must not lose our mind, we must not start trembling worse than women” (Mille, 1916, 1).

The third perspective on war masculinity is that of the refugees: those men seeing the war “from behind”, and maybe confronting or living with the idea that, as men, they cannot do the duties all men had to do for the country.

These approaches will also allow us to have a different perspective on war in the sense that, and we took this as a research hypothesis as well, we are convinced that men went to war with a not very accurate image of it. For sure, their image included danger, risk, deprivation *etc.*: “The saddened face of the boys...in the freight wagon, does not betray the interior...they keep silent, but silence is pain...” (Nemoianu, 1933, 6). However, their records prove that their representation of war was far from reality: “from far away there was the booming of cannon, music we didn’t enjoy, but which we didn’t fear as well. First, because none of us had seen and suspected the actual effect of the gun, as they had never been directed against us. Secondly, because the Austrian instruction regulation did not initiate us in such secrets. Why put terror into the man before time and unnecessarily?” (Nemoianu, 1933, 11,12).

However, when they got to the front and faced the real war and the battle field they had to adjust their feelings, reactions and thoughts and accept that the “real” war was far beyond what they had imagined or what they had been told. Thus, their self-representation as men, with all the features resumed as the masculine stereotype, was put to an ultimate, extreme test.

### **Soldiers - cry!**

Moving beyond the “imagined war” Octavian C. Tăslăuanu spent three months on the front in the Austro-Hungarian army before he fled to Romania. He recorded his war experience in a very detailed manner and what makes his memoirs more representative is the fact that the author does not record only his reactions but also those of his “brothers in arms”; thus, some generalisation being possible. Moreover, his memoirs are



significant also for the fact that the author assumes he is giving readers an objective version of what happened. He assumes this in the introductory part of his *Trei luni pe câmpul de războiu* (Tăslăuanu, 1915, 4).

By objectivity he means that he did not focus only on “brave, “heroic centred” narratives but rather on “the real war”. Actually, from his records we can acknowledge that those who wrote their war experience realised that there were two wars, the imagined and the real one. O. C. Tăslăuanu also accepts that the war determined men to act/react as all “normal” human beings experiencing such feelings as fear, terror, weakness *etc.* However, there is a certain subjectivity which is determined by two elements. The first is nationalism – when it comes to motivation, meaning that he was a Romanian caught on the wrong side of the front. He does not let pass any occasion to point out that if he was to fight for Romania everything would be different. The second one, is the gender perspective he has on war in the sense that the masculine stereotype he was exposed to all his life determines the manner in which he analyses his conduct and feelings and that of his comrades as well.

Objectively or not, he sometimes judges facts according to the masculine stereotype. This is proven also by the fact that he also uses a “masculine” language. There is a certain masculine terminology that he used that puts in anthesis the manly features with the rest: “comrades in suffering”; “the honour battlefield”; “the dance of death”; “sense of duty”; “military duties” versus “crying like babies”; “I burst into tears”; “I cried like a baby” *etc.* But, even with these subjective elements, the author’s memoirs are a powerful testimony that “big boys do cry”, that in face of war men act like all human beings and cannot be so strong and untouched by war’s horrors as leaders and propaganda wished. Thanks to Tăslăuanu’s memoirs we could delimit also some of the key moments in the chronology of war that forced to the extremes the masculine features that had been stereotyped: honour, bravery, courage, self-restraint, calmness *etc.* Of course, we used other records too, as Tăslăuanu is not the only one to judge his and his comrades’ behaviour under the influence of the masculine stereotype.

### **First tears: leaving home and the loved ones**

War propaganda, as seen in the journals of the time for instance, described mainly the feasts and the celebration that marked the triumphal departure for the front. As P. Nemoianu said, in other words, it could not be otherwise as it was not good for the morale (Nemoianu, 1933, 11). But these moments were crucial for creating that image of men/soldiers going to war, to be brave, to show their best qualities. Enthusiasm was contagious: “In the few days I spent in Sibiu, I listened to the...patriotic songs from the coffee shops” (Tăslăuanu, 1915: p. 14), “I was looking forward to the arrival of the long-dreamt-of moment. My dreams were only dreamt about the army and war” (Ardelean, 1916/1917, 150).

The railway station is the place where all this enthusiasm is at its height: “the soldiers were very cheerful and they were walking down the street dancing and holding their weapons. At the train station we stayed for a few hours while they kept on dancing and cheering” (Ardelean, 2018, 154). However, this is also the moment when men felt their “weak side” and especially the moment when the train left the station. This was the first real test for the soldiers. The first one that made men cry, in public. Tăslăuanu witnessed and wrote about such dramatic moments, of the separation from the loved ones: “At the railway station, lots of people, screams, whining and crying. A peasant’s separation from his wife made me cry too. The young woman was crying her heart out...The strong man was looking at her and he, nervously, kept on stepping down the train, hugging her. They were both crying like children do...” (Tăslăuanu, 1915, 94).

The ultimate test then was arriving and facing and dealing with the reality of the battlefield: winning and losing, confronting the enemy as a real person, seeing the dead, the wounded, the maimed, tested their self-representation as man to the extremes: “The crippled walking...the sound of the battles...the news that we were losing the battle...the chaos of the retreat from Halici, the confusion and disorientation around us, demoralised us before facing the enemy...The efforts of the march and the demoralisation of the retreat made us into horrified soldiers.” (Tăslăuanu, 1915, 70, 72).

Hunger was perhaps the worst enemy that tested their virtues and limits: “The hunger determines a certain morale and laws. An empty stomach makes you steal and rob...hunger makes a soldier into a beast led only by his needs” (Tăslăuanu, 1915, 90). However, few were those that really showed what they felt. And for sure, they acted like this due to the fact that they were men and had to act accordingly; again, it is the gender stereotype that imposed their conduct: to prove that they are strong for the loved ones as well as for their comrades in arms. In the memoirs sometimes, the authors recognised that their feelings were totally different: “I tried not to show any sign of weakness, but my heart was crying...when we said good-bye, I could hardly hold myself not to burst into tears” (Ardelean, 2018, 152).

The other moment when their manhood was tested was the first contact with the front. As we already mentioned, soldiers went to war with the image of a brave hero but at the front, they had to handle the war as fragile human beings. And this was not an easy thing to accept as most of them grew up with this idealised image of masculinity which was taught from the cradle. O. C. Tăslăuanu, for instance, recalls his childhood and adolescence when he played and wished to become a soldier: “When I was 16 years old my dream was to wear a sword...and serve the emperor...even in my 20s...I wished to remain in the army” (Tăslăuanu, 1915, 55). In fact, all his war memories go in this direction: a permanent confrontation between how he should behave, “like men should do” and how he actually reacted and felt while at the front. So many mixed feelings!

War exposed men to an emotional roller-coaster dominated by the struggle of “acting like a man” and the real emotions and feelings: “Hundreds of thoughts crossing my mind, feelings were gone in the wind...My heart was only thoughts and feelings. I did not know what to do anymore. The sorrow for the Romanian soldiers tormented me, however, my Romanian pride made me fight until the end, whatever happened...” (Tăslăuanu, 1915, 212, 213). This ambivalence, the ideal and the real, explains why the authors, even when they recall moments of weakness, tend to compensate by stressing that it was rather an exception than the rule, that, they were brave and acted as expected: “gradually we got up

the courage and even the mood to fight” (Nemoianu, 1933, 21).

We also had to keep in mind that the pressure was even higher for the military leaders who were on the battlefield. Thus, some had to be “more men” than the others. Tăslăuanu underlines that officers could not reveal any sign of weakness as this was bad for the troops’ morale: “the poor soldiers were singing and crying...I was listening to them and crying as well without letting them see me” (Tăslăuanu, 1915, 139). Dimitrie Ardelean was of the same mind: “I was always brave in my heart to be able to keep soldiers safe and with the good morale” (Ardelean, 2018, 194).

We can also add another variable that influenced their conduct and determined them to show how brave, good, honourable they were. This is the pressure of honouring the nation they belonged to. We refer to this as “the concurrent heroism” determined by the sense of the national pride: to prove that you/your company/army is better than your enemies’, or as in the case of the Romanians fighting in the Austro-Hungarian army, better than your fellow Hungarian soldiers: “Just thinking that we might be forced to retreat, a sort of pride and ambition arose in me, that we were Romanians and that we will be considered cowards and villains. All the curses addressed to poor Romanian soldiers I was forced to hear made me feel as a real soldier who was fighting ...to prove to the strangers that our nation is better on the field as well...even in their war we wished to distinguish ourselves and prove to them that they were inferior to us” (Tăslăuanu, 1915, 188).

Considering these facts, we can draw a first conclusion: that in what the masculine stereotype embodied by the soldier is concerned there is a profound ambivalence – as seen in the war narratives – of conforming to this idealised model that men were exposed to since childhood, and the harsh reality of war. We might stress also the fact that some considered as well, and this is something specific to masculine stereotype discourse, that war made men into real men – by the saying that still is present today, that you are not a man if you did not serve in the army. Thus soldiers were the real men: “for those who suffer from hypochondria, I recommend a cure on the battlefield. I was completely cured.



Before August 1914 I imagined suffering all kinds of diseases” (Tăslăuanu, 1915, 341). “Those who were not on the battlefield cannot imagine how much suffering a human being can endure. The vital forces and the energies gained are an amazing wealth for the human body” (Tăslăuanu, 1915, 267).

### **The prisoners of war: a test for men’s strength...and pride**

The prisoners’ faith was a subject of historical study (Tudorancea, 2017). We are dealing here only with the discourse on the masculine stereotype and the extent to which it influenced prisoners’ acts and their writings afterwards.

The sense of duty that Tăslăuanu also talked about was conjoined of course with the pursuit of victory. *Mutatis mutandis*, being a prisoner could be seen as a confirmation of weakness which was, according to the stereotype, an unacceptable feature. Weakness and acceptance of the enemies’ superiority, thus an offence, was an attack on one’s honour, therefore unacceptable. So, we considered as being compulsory, for the present approach, to understand and analyse how the prisoners handled their captivity. Whether or not they confronted the same ambivalence of thought between how they were expected to react, as men, and the situation they got into, as prisoners of war.

Our objective was to see the extent to which, the prisoners understood captivity in terms of the masculinity discourse. To discuss the issue, we considered two profiles: of the Romanians who were soldiers in the Austro-Hungarian army and were made captives by the allies, and of those Romanians, in the army of the Kingdom, who were made prisoners by Austro-Hungarian, German or Bulgarian armies. It was a deliberate choice to focus on these two types as both could complete our study of the masculine stereotype tested by war.

The case of Petre Ugliș-Delapecica is iconic as he chose to surrender, alongside his entire company, the army, and was made prisoner by the Italians. His case brings in antithesis two features: that of the courage and that of cowardice. Delapecica’s decision was perceived as an act of bravery through the eyes of Italians and Romanians. However, for the Austro-Hungarians it was an act of cowardice. This reveals another important aspect of the

masculine stereotype, that of judging the values under the specific circumstances. By doing so, some facts were heroic or not depending on which side in the war one was. His narrative was published as an autobiography in 1975 and, most recently in 2018. Thus, it must be approached prudently as it is dominated by a national pride and bravery perspective, almost as a heroic saga in which the main character proved all the man’s best qualities in order to accomplish the national ideal. He was a volunteer and contributed to the organization of Romanian regiments from Italy. Petre Ugliș-Delapecica’s records reveal mostly the “brave side” of masculinity. However, moments of sensibility are present too: boys do cry, this time, they are tears of joy and happiness when victory was won.

A totally different experience of war captivity, thus put to a different test, was that of the Romanians who were imprisoned by the armies of the Central Powers. Emanoil Antonescu was one of those and his traumatic experience was published in 1920: *Povestiri din captivitate. Lagărele Lansdorf și Mannheim*. In addition to that, we can mention Petre C. Mihail, a doctor who spent fourteen months as a prisoner in Hungary; or Ion Oprișan who also was a prisoner of war. If we synthesise, their experiences in relation to the present paper’s research hypothesis, we can conclude that they were all, to different extents, unable to dissociate their experience and consciousness of the masculine stereotype. They must endure the faith as bravely and in as “manly” a way as they could: “we were not complaining too much of the lack of comfort, we were soldiers after all” (Antonescu, 1920, 6).

However, tears burst out in some extreme moments: first, it was the acceptance of defeat and of realising their new condition as prisoners. This moment, judged in masculine terms, meant humiliation considering that they associated captivity with slavery. As well, it meant, for some at least, frustration and remorse, as losing meant not to fulfil the main duty as a soldier: “but it is not the yoke of slavery that debases me in the hour when I recall the fatal day ... but the thousands of spears which are heading out of me in the very depth of my own soul. At the end of a single month of war, my flag was gone.” (Oprișan, 1920, 12). Some were led less by the sense of

national duty and talked about the confusion, despair, frustration and fear they experienced in this situation: “it was the ultimate moment of judgment. What are we doing? some soldiers were shouting! We die! others were screaming. A corporal knelt, his hands together in prayer, crying” (Oprișan, 1920, 1).

The other challenge was hunger, all the prisoners talked about how the lack of food, and of bread in the first place, made men turn into unrecognizable human beings sometimes bringing them to the limits. Such moments were the ones that made “the boy cry” as in the case of Emanoil Antonescu: “while we were waiting outside to be examined by the German doctor, as weakened and depressed as I was, I heard two of my comrades whispering: <he is dying, too>...I hid myself behind the barrack and, unseen by anyone, I cried for the second time since I had been prisoner” (Antonescu, 1920, 37).

The third one was generated by the longing for the loved ones, now they had more time to think about them and to worry that they might not see them again. In such circumstances, no one hid his emotions anymore: as much men as they were. However, some prisoners underlined that this was a sign of weakness, an unmanly reaction: “It was on the seashore that I indulged myself thinking...of my family, of their wellbeing and, concerned for their faith, I often found comfort in a silent... crying” (Caracas, 1920, 18).

Prisoners tried to act as strongly as they could, as they were taught to: to be men, act like soldiers as if physical suffering was something they could endure. But the mental suffering was much harder to endure, especially when they were thinking of the ones left at home. They rather stayed in solitude, hid from the rest, to release their emotions and tears: “each of us was feeling better alone, hidden from the rest as he could let himself be prey to his thoughts.” (Caracas, 1920, 19). To them, in the same way as to soldiers, the moments of feasts and celebration, such as Christmas, were more difficult than other times: “and that’s how the Christmas passed, in endless tears for the loved ones” (Caracas, 1920, 19). Likewise, the tendency was that all the moments of weakness to be afterwards equated with examples of bravery and courage or honour. It is definitely this masculine unwritten code that moves the authors of the

memoirs to recall the tragic hardships they had to endure while being prisoners. Here are some arguments: “it was only due to the strength of the Romanians that we were able to survive life in the prisoners’ camps” (Almășanu, 2018, 354); “we kept our dignity until the end.” (Almășanu, 2018, 354). On the other hand, we must stress also the fact that the same code of masculine honour was for sure the one that determined men to try to isolate themselves from the rest, not showing any signs of weakness to their peers, was another item in this code.

There is also to be noted, the same as happened in the case of the soldiers, that for the prisoners as well, the level of weakness they could show was directly related to the military ranks they had. Officers, military leaders of all ranks were expected to behave accordingly, the captivity did not annul their rank: “A bullet is a hope in a brave man’s eyes. And so is the appeal and the manly urge of an officer, who shares the burden of the situation with his comrades” (Oprișan, 1920, 16).

P.C. Mihail created a sort of war typology of man according to their behaviour: the heroes, were the soldiers; the prisoners and, at the opposite end, the cowards and the deserters, the most “unmanly” of all as they lacked the key feature of masculinity: honour. (Mihail, 1919). His list does not include the portraits of the refugees and of the men who did not go to war for several reasons. How did they feel and react during war time as they too were exposed to the same masculine discourse? This is another subject that deserves serious study.

For the time being we explore some of the thoughts and reactions of the refugees, of those men that for assorted reasons were not on the front: “priests with white beards, teachers...passionate writers.” (Mateiu, 1919, 25,26). In their case, the manly attitude is also in the foreground. They also try to prove themselves strong, capable, and not showing any sign of weakness. Their fight is for survival, so another war was also fought in as manly a way as possible: “the men strengthen their hearts. They put a shield on their souls.” (Cosmin, 1919, 5); “despite all the difficulties we faced, they could never put us down seeing that our army is growing stronger and is capable of taking us back to our beloved country” (Mateiu, 1919, 10).

Furthermore, their conduct and feelings were also heterogeneous. They also experienced an emotional roller-coaster in times of war. But all those writing about their experience, underline that they never lost faith in victory, which is also an inoculated masculine feature: not to let yourself be discouraged by the difficulties of the situation. Different roles in war time, all-men-together perspectives, common feelings and reactions can be captured in a pattern: that of the masculine stereotype. Despite the extreme situation they were in, sometimes on the edge, they recall the experience from a man's perspective. This is the result of the process of gender socialising. They were educated, and influenced by war propaganda as well, to prove they were men indeed. In fact, we consider that the war was a test for men and we can see, quite often in the memories or journals this idea that war in fact strengthens the character – there is not a single word about the shellshock or the post-traumatic stress. Yet, this is obvious in some literary records published in the interwar period (Bucur, 2019, 105). Tăslăuanu's memoirs, written in 1915, offers in this respect a very vivid description of man/soldier war typology which is useful for us to understand the type of discourse men were exposed to: "The man – soldier is a very interesting human being. He has also the survivor instinct as well as the sense of duty and sacrifice to die for doing his duty, accomplish an ideal. ..., the war is the most important school from which a man can graduate for moral character" (Tăslăuanu, 1920, 196).

However, as we have shown, while moving beyond the constructed image of war with which all men went to war, while facing the reality of the war front, prisoner-of-war camp, refugee camp, seeing death all around in so many ways, men discovered their "sensitive" weak side: big boys do cry! Even if they most often tried to hide any sign of weakness which was actually impossible: "cowardice was much more familiar to human character than courage." (Tăslăuanu, 1915, 197). Tăslăuanu might sound harsh, yet he just stresses that no one was prepared for what had come and that despite the propagandistic image, the imagined war, men were forced to accept that "crying was not for women only". The present paper also tried to draw attention to war narratives and their approach since we should pay more attention to the gender perspective of the story. As there is a tendency, though not necessarily a conscious one, to recall the war experience through one's gender stereotype, which is once again, if necessary, a plea for "reading" the war through these lenses.

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## HEROIC DEATH REFLECTED IN THE COMMEMORATIONS OF VETERANS OF WAR FROM OLTENIA

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**Abstract:** *In this article we propose to analyse the activity of the veteran associations of lower ranks in Oltenia, that fought in the Independence War, the Balcanic Wars and the First World War, reunited, in 1924, in a society of veterans with the name of United Society of Veterans “Smârdan” from [18]77-[18]78 and the Fighters from 1913-1916-1919 Inferior Ranks “General Al. Averescu”. For a relative long period of time (1908 – 1948), the „old” and the „young” veterans operate and, later on, coordinate their activities to honour and keep alive the memory of those fallen on the battle field of the country’s wars, continue to stay united through a solidarity and camaraderie born during the war, organize and participate in corpore at the commemorations dedicated to the heroic death and various commemorative manifestations in public space, and they build monuments. The constitutive elements of the ceremonies, the occasional speeches emphasize a lasting coagulation of this socio-cultural category, having as fundament the solidarity and sensibilities born on the battle field, but also a symbolism of heroic death, that allowed a compatibility of ordinary life with the heroism born during and after the war. Both the „fictive kinship group” and the “emotional communities”, the veterans become the creators of “places of memory” contributing to the formation of collective memory and the local and national community identity.*

**Keywords:** *heroic death, veterans, agents of commemoration, “fictive kinship group”, emotional communities.*

**Rezumat.** *În acest articol ne propunem să analizăm activitatea societăților de veterani de grade inferioare din Oltenia, care au luptat în Războiul de Independență, războaiele balcanice și Primul Război Mondial, reunite, în anul 1924, într-o societate a veteranilor cu denumirea de Societățile Unite “Smârdan” Veterani de la [18]77-[18]78 și Luptătorii de la 1913-1916-1919 Grade Inferioare “General Al. Averescu”. Pentru o perioadă relativ lungă de timp (1908 – 1948), „bătrânii” și „tinerii” veterani își desfășoară și, ulterior, își coordonează activitatea pentru a cinsti și păstra vie memoria celor căzuți pe câmpul de luptă în războaiele patriei, continuă să rămână uniți printr-o solidaritate și camaraderie născute în timpul războiului, organizează și participă în corpore la comemorări dedicate morții eroice și diverse manifestări comemorative desfășurate în spațiul public și construiesc monumente. Elementele constitutive ale ceremoniilor, discursurile ocazionale relevă o coagulare de durată a acestei categorii socio-culturale, având ca fundament solidaritatea și sensibilitățile născute pe câmpul de luptă, dar și o simbolică a morții eroice, care permitea compatibilizarea vieții obișnuite cu eroismul născut în timpul și în urma războiului. Deopotrivă „fictive kinship group” și „comunități emoționale”, veteranii devin creatori de „locuri ale memoriei”, contribuind la formarea memoriei colective și a identității comunității locale și naționale.*

**Cuvinte cheie:** *moartea eroică, veterani, agenți ai comemorării, “fictive kinship group”, comunități emoționale.*

In this article we propose to analyse the activity of the veteran associations of lower ranks in Oltenia, that fought in the Independence War, the Balcanic Wars and the First World War, reunited, in 1924, in a society of veterans with the name of United Society of Veterans “Smârdan” from [18]77-[18]78 and the Fighters from 1913-1916-1919 Inferior

Ranks “General Al. Averescu”. For a relatively long period of time (1908 – 1948), the old and the young veterans operate and, later on, coordinate their activities to honour and keep alive the memory of those fallen on the battle field of the country’s wars, continue to stay united thru a solidarity and camaraderie born during the war, organize and participate in

*corpore* at the commemorations dedicated to the heroic death and various commemorative manifestations in public space, they have the initiative to build some monuments etc., but also mutual material and financial support in various situations. The occasional speeches and their activity emphasize a lasting coagulation of this socio – cultural category, having as fundament the solidarity and sensibilities born on the battle field, but also a symbol of heroic death, that allowed the compatibility of ordinary life with the heroism born during and after the war. Alike the „fictive kinship group” and the “emotional communities”, the veterans become creators of “sites of remembrance”<sup>1</sup> (that can become in time “sites/places of memory” – “lieux de mémoire”<sup>2</sup>), contributing to the formation of collective memory and the identity of local and national community.

In our approach, we refer to “heroic death”, understood as a concept born after the wars of the end of the XIX<sup>th</sup> century but, mainly, after the First World War: generic term formulated around the military heroism and/or derived as a result of the participation in war<sup>3</sup>. The cult of heroes becomes part not only of the elite culture, but also part of the culture of the entire society:

“(…) the cult of the heroes impacted societies and their culture and helped spread a specific form of heroism, the military heroism, which put emphasis especially on the idea of self-sacrificing for the nation” (Hariton, 63).

The immense loss of human life and remaining on the battle fields and/or away from home of the dead bodies created sensitivities from which the “Unknown hero” – “Unknown soldier”, that served his country through his sacrifice, was born. The commemoration of his death symbolizes, in equal measure, the

celebration of heroic death and victory, but also the remembrance of its relatives’ suffering, of the comrades that survived after the war (See, Hentea, 2012, 363-364; Mihalache, 25, 253).

The important historic events (revolutions, wars etc.) leave deep marks at the level of the entire post war society under apparently different forms, but, essentially, common. In the case of armed conflicts, resulting in loss of human life, the death of the loved ones becomes a common binder of the desire to remember, commemorate, and create “places” or commemorative events to facilitate their remembrance:

“(…) is a fundamental link between a community’s identity and the historical events its members choose to remember. The identity of a community is usually build around such events therefore insights into the way the past is recalled are also insights into the way present identity is actively constructed. (...) the memory of these events is not only preserved, but also produced through sites of social memories (...)” (Cucu, Faje, 2009, 125).

In our case, amongst those that feel motivated, inspired by their own experiences and inner feelings to build in the community’s life, as part of the community identity, traces of these memorable events, are the veterans, a group of contemporary people with the events that were both traumatizing and heroic.

The veterans – the survivors of the war, those that returned home, are those who contribute to the creation and perpetuation of the memory of the fallen comrades on the fields of honour, out of necessities that shape two dimensions of their action. The first is born out of the need to be and/or maintain united by coagulated solidarity on the battle field and to have close the others to support and live in the reality of the peace in which they returned and to which they contributed with their fight and the sacrifice or their comrades. The second dimension of their association in peace time is born out of the need and desire to contribute to the remembrance of those that the “heroic death” slayed on the battlefields. They are the ones that through their commemorative activity/work create, at a small scale, “sites of remembrance” for themselves and also for the local and national community and, on long term, for the collective memory of the generations to follow.

<sup>1</sup> See Winter, 2006; Winter, Sivan, 1999.

<sup>2</sup> See, for concepts “lieux de mémoire” and “milieux de mémoire”, Pierre Nora, 1996.

<sup>3</sup> For the statement “derived from the participation in war” we consider the fact that, after the First World War, next to the soldiers dead on the battlefields, were integrated/assimilated in the category of heroes and those who became cripple, and also those who died from epidemic diseases, like cholera (1913) typhus fever (1916). To the concept of hero it was added, theoretically, also the connotation of victim (Mihalache, 2007, 253; National Archive Dolj, Rezidența Regală a Ținutului Olt fund, file No. 22/1939, f. 20).

The veterans, reunited in specific associations, can be seen as being what J. Winter comprised in the concept of “fictive kinship groups” and can be considered “key agents of *remembrance*”. He highlighted the fact that the main role in creating and keeping the collective memory came and will come, essentially, to the small groups of people united by connections based on experience that, through their activity (creation of associations, writing their memories, creation of movies, monuments etc.) keep and perpetuate the memory of an event or events that, in particular, marked their existence and, in general, marked the history of a state/nation:

“Memories are both personal and social, and sites of memory are created not just by nations but primarily by small groups of men and women who do the work of remembrance. They are ‘social agents’ of remembrance; without their work, collective memory would not exist”. These groups are “bonded not by blood ties but by experience. They share the imprint of history on their lives, and act as kin do in other contexts. They endure together, they support each other, they quarrel, and they act together. At times, their bonds are sufficiently strong to enable us to call them ‘fictive kin’. It is the trace of these groups we find in the work of remembrance, and in many war memorials themselves. ‘Fictive kinship groups’ are the key agents of remembrance” (Winter, 2006, 136).

Starting from the premise that tight connections derived from experiences and sensibilities born on the battle field are the base for the formation of the veteran associations, and also the fact that these connections are doubled, post war, by new sensibilities and emotions (sadness, joy, empathy, fear etc.) born within and during the activities grouped around “the work of remembrance”, we consider that these veterans associations can be appreciated as forming what Rosenwein called “emotional communities”:

“Groups in which people adhere to the same norms of emotional expression and value – or devalue – the same or related emotions” (Rosenwein, 2006, 2; Idem, 2010, *passim*).

In our opinion, the Society of Veterans “General Alexandru Averescu” (that later

became “Mareșal Al. Averescu”) from Craiova fits in this particular frame of analysis. In the following, we propose to highlight how the three generations of veterans from Oltenia dedicate a good part of their post war existence to keeping alive the memory of their comrades fallen on the battlefield, as a holy duty for the missing ones, but also as an example for the young generations. In this regard, the veterans have initiatives of building commemorative monuments, of composing songs (The veteran’s anthem), organizing or participating to the commemorative celebrations of heroes, declared officially and accepted at a national level. Their association in and/or for the commemorative and recall work of the comrades that died heroically on the front is doubled by the care they have for each other and for the day to day problems of life (disease, death, poverty etc.). All these aspects draw to the veteran’s group the fine lines of an “increased family”, that, united through experiences and sensitivities, common emotions, try to make compatible the life during war with the post war life. In other words, to find a balance between the life/experiences both heroic and traumatic during the war, with the life post war, during peace time, when remembering “the heroic time” intersects with the profane of daily life.

Starting from these approaches, our analysis focuses in a first part on the foundation and activity of the first veterans association from Oltenia, of those who participated in the Independence War from 1877-1878. In the second part, we will refer to the “Averescu” Society that will assimilated and integrated the first in a manner that transformed figuratively the Oltenian veterans in an “extended family” in the way of “fictive kinship group” and of “emotional community”. The veterans community, seen from these points of view, is employed in supporting the work of remembrance, memorial and honour those that died heroically on the front, creating and contributing to the formation of the short and long collective memory. This community was also engaged in mutual support of usual, outside the heroic area, various problems, that veterans faced in everyday life.

The Veterans Society Inferior Ranks from Oltenia „Smârdan” was constituted on May 11, 1908 (30 years after the Independence War of the Romanian state); had its headquarter in Craiova and was formed out of inferior ranks



that participated in the Independence War from 1877-1878. The honorary president was General Petre Giurtu; president, Grigorie Nemțzanu; vice-presidents: Dumitru Nedelcu and Ilie Opran<sup>4</sup>. When it started, it had 104 founding members (Archives Dolj, C. Puțoreanu fund, file No. 9, f. 131, 182-182v.; Dobrin, 2003, 93).

The patron of society was celebrated yearly on January 12. The veterans stated in art. 1 their desire that future generation will keep their memory alive:

“This flag with the History and the Golden Book and also the Veterans’ album, after the society will no longer exist, will be sent to the army arsenal to be kept in the hall of honour, *as a memory that we have existed* (our underline)” (Archives Dolj, C. Puțoreanu fund, file No. 9, f. 131).

The founding statute of the Society sits as testimony for the close ties between the members and the experiences they lived, created on the front. The desire to consolidate their connections, with the purpose of commemorating, gave birth to the idea of building a monument – as a place to honour and remember their comrades from Oltenia that died heroically on the front, individualizing the monument with “The Hero from Plevna”<sup>5</sup>. Moreover, the veterans wanted to be an active presence in local communities, at the commemorative events that would be organized out of their initiative or of the authorities:

“The purpose of the society is to *maintain camaraderie and brotherly connections like we were in the front of the enemy on the battle field* (our underline), without distinction of social class, to help each other by power, in need, to intervene

<sup>4</sup> Members of the administration committee were also: Constantin Gardo – secretary; Avram D. Semo – cashier; N. Ioachimescu, M. Chirescu, Al. Giulescu, N. Gelep, Al Rădulescu, Nae I. Nicolau, Gheorghe Basta – membrii; I. Urdăreanu, C. Buzgure, Măntulescu Dumitru – censors.

<sup>5</sup> Mihail (Michail) Christodol Cerchez (born in Bârlad, 1839 – deceased in Iași 1885), military, division commander. During the war from 1877–1878, was the commander of the Second Division, then of the First Division (See, Constantin Cerchez, *Eroul din familia mea*, in „România Eroică”, No. 1(46), New Series, 2013, p. 35-36; <https://www.eternitycemetry144.ro/cerchez-cristodulo-mihail/> – accessed on 2021, 30 May).

peacefully and in order to obtain and achieve the following:

a) To commemorate through a monument all the comrades that under the towering shadow of the flag and for the ‘Independence of the Country’ have given their lives on the plains of Bulgaria, and also our former division commander, General Mihail Cristodol [Cristodol] Cerchez, the Hero from Plevna, in the hands of who Osman Pașa surrendered his sword, capitulating.

(...) this monument. Glorifying and showing love and gratitude towards the comrades from whose blood and manhood the Crown of the Country was forged, [to be] towards eternal memory and example to young generation.

b) To be part *in corpore* and officially at all military solemnities given in the memory of the battles we won, and also any other solemnity when we will be invited” (Archives Dolj, C. Puțoreanu fund, file 9, f. 174-174v).

The foundation of the Society was done from the beginning with double purpose. If the first refers to the creation of what we call today war memorials, the second was targeting the mutual support and help towards the various problems of everyday life, the ordinary life, that followed its course outside the heroism and/or heroic death. Thereby, at the death of a veteran, after obtaining the legal authorisations, he had to be given the due honours: the veterans *in corpore*, carrying the symbols of the Society (the mourning flag, the uniform with medals etc.) had to accompany the funeral procession. Also, if needed, the veteran’s family had to be helped “towards giving him a funeral worthy of a soldier that fought for the independence of his country” (*Ibidem*, f. 175).

Besides the mutual support in case of illness, poverty (“disease and misery”) etc., some clear objectives were also established, with the purpose of common action to solve problems or gaining rights for the veterans or for the families of those that died for the country in the Independence War<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> Amongst those we mention: obtaining some rights for those veterans that were functionaries (stability in their jobs, consideration of the period spend in was as double time for retirement etc.); the same right as the children of the veterans of superior ranks for the children of the veterans of inferior ranks (exemption from school taxes; school books for those lacking the material means); reduction of some taxes; national reward similar to the one given to firemen for

From the foundation up until the merger with the young veterans (1924), that fought in the First World War, the veterans of Independence from the "Smârdan" Society had a sustained activity in the direction of creation the war memorials and delineation/formation of collective memory within the narrow frame of local communities and also within the extended one of Romanian society.

Between 1908 and 1916, on January 12, they celebrated the Society's Patron, but also the victory at Smârdan<sup>7</sup>:

"The Day of January 12, 1878, taking Smârdan, was the holiest day they care for and they celebrated it in all the years until the war of 1916 mentioning the comrades dead for the country" (*Ibidem*, f. 51v).

On August 30 (September 11, in new style), "they passionately celebrate the Taking of Grivița" (1877), conquering the stronghold opened the road to Plevna<sup>8</sup>, resorting "with ardour for the pomposity, to all the citizens":

"We the veteran core from Oltenia, (...), the old and forgotten brave of the time of glory, when we won with our blood the independence and the glory of this beloved country; we make a warm call to our many loved countrymen to join us towards the celebration, together with us, of this great day" (*Ibidem*).

The monument that the veterans of the Independence, reunited in the "Smârdan" Society, proposed to build, had, besides the perpetuation of the dead comrades, the purpose of reminding the veterans the experiences during the war, but also the moments of glory:

"(...) they wrote in their Regulations the obligation to perpetuate their comrades lost in the war, through a monument that, *in their entire lifetime, would remind them the sufferings of the war, and also the sublime*

1848; award, just like it was given to the NCOs that were reemployed, "even a small patch of land, this land long awaited and promised, that we fought for and with our blood we won it" etc. (Archives Dolj, C. Puțoreanu fund, file No. 9, f. 175-176v.)

<sup>7</sup> See, for the festivities from 1915, Dobrin, 2003, 93.

<sup>8</sup> In the festive calendar during Carol's reign (1866-1914), it was included, next to national holidays, and two historical commemorations: "The Taking of Grivița" (11<sup>th</sup> of September) and "The Taking of Plevna" (10<sup>th</sup> of December) – 1877 (Rusu, 2016, p. 135, 140).

*moments of victory, the moments of soul elevation and manhood. They wanted to see all the heroes of that holy war, through their former Division Comander General Mihail Cristudol Cerchez, the hero from Plevna – our underline (...)" (Ibidem, f. 51).*

From various reasons, independent from their plans and will, the veterans managed to fulfil this objective, written in the founding regulation of the society, but not under the form of a monument but of a bust in miniature of the hero from Plevna (layout), barely in 1916:

"Our beloved veterans did not achieved from various reasons of administrative order, of material order or even political order, in the same time and because of not granting the place (land) were the monument should have been erected; could not be built in 1912 as it was decided.

Still the idea was achieved, but in small style and not in Oltenia, but because of the 1916 War, the miniature monument of the brave commander Cerchez would find an honourable place in the orderly room of the Comander of the 21 Ilfov-Bucharest Regiment, regiment that in the Independence War was the 4<sup>th</sup> Line Regiment" (*Ibidem*, f. 51-51v).

### **Celebration of the Battle of Grivița (celebration of "The taking" of Grivița) – Consecration of the Flag of "Smârdan" Society: 1908**

Their first public manifestation took place on August 30, 1908, when, next to the Taking of Grivița, the Oltenian veterans also celebrated the consecration of the flag of the society. With this occasion, in Craiova, around 982 Oltenian veterans gathered. The event was organized in Craiova with great pomposity and solemnity, the veterans having next to them the representatives of military and civil authorities and those of cultural institutions and also a part of the local community. The commemorative ritual included the veterans' parade in the town centre, the requiem for the fallen heroes in the War of 1877-1878 in the "Madona Dudu" Cathedral, the ceremony of the consecration of the flag in the Cathedral's front yard with military music ("Veteran's Anthem") and occasional speeches. The day finished with a festive meal offered by the Craiova city hall and a parade with torches, "in the cheering of the entire town that gathered, watching them".

The event was recorded and practically immortalized in the pages of a local magazine<sup>9</sup> from 1908. Besides the main description of the commemorative ritual, the importance of the festive event was also highlighted for the local and national community, but also for the veterans themselves. On the other hand, some expressed the regret that the event was not better prepared<sup>10</sup> so that the impact will be greater within a wider social category; two such categories were mentioned. First, the school age youth, those who had to form “memories” to be able to honour and remember in the future those that died heroically in the Independence War. Secondly, a warmer and more pompous event was desired for the veterans that survived and who, being old (some of them), had less and less chances to participate at these type of manifestations, that would fulfil and bring them peace of mind, in remembering their heroically dead comrades on the battlefields:

“Fond and full of emotions was the Veterans’ celebration!!! But (...), it should have been made with more pomposity, so that on one side our beloved Veterans could have returned to their homes with greater and radiating heartfelt thanks, in which many of them, until an eventual celebration, fatally would have passed in the fellowship of the kind martyrs, with which, in the fellowship they tasted the bread, suffering and martyrdom on the field, were in [18]77-[18]78, and they seeded and wetted with their sweat and blood, the glory of the kind; and on the other hand, the citizens, especially our Craiovean [from Craiova city] youth, could have the happiness of tasting and raising their soul, reading in reality a page of high national feelings, is the one that even the voice of the best and most sentimental critic could not provide” (*Ibidem*, f. 212-212v.).

<sup>9</sup> It’s about “Revista Culturală”, Craiova, Year I, No. 22, October, 16-31, 1908, p. 495-496, in the pages of which the article is written “Serbarea Veteranilor Olteni la Craiova” [“Celebrations of Oltenian Veterans in Craiova”].

<sup>10</sup> Although a large public participated at the Veterans’ celebration, regrets were expressed regarding the fact that there were insufficient steps taken by local authorities and cultural institutions to make the event grander and neither towards the population of Craiova; the moment chosen for the manifestation, in the students’ summer vacation, was also considered inappropriate (*Ibidem*).

It can be detached pretty easily the fact that, at the level of how people thought back then, there was the conviction that such commemorative events had a more powerful impact over the population than a written paper. Such commemorations, in public space, were important because they were part of the community’s identity; these events represented a demonstration, a live lesson of history, which contributed to the formation of collective memory of many generations.

The veterans of the 1877-1878 War had a well individualized place within the community. They fought and contributed to winning a fundamental right for the Romanian state at that time, the country’s independence. They were the first soldiers that in 1902 officially received this title<sup>11</sup>. Their importance was highlighted in the magazines of the time<sup>12</sup>:

“For a long time the name *veteran* was almost unknown. Then 1877-[18]78 placed under martyrdom many men of our country. Many left their bodies on foreign soil, and with the raised soul, living in the world of eternal life; but many returned in their country (...)” (*Ibidem*, f. 195v.).

### **Celebration of the Victory at Grivița – The Monument of Independence from Craiova (layout): 1909**

In 1909, on August 30, the celebration dedicated to the conquering of the Grivița stronghold benefited of a better organisation in comparison to the previous year, 8.657 members participating, next to the town’s officials and a large public. The ceremony included a *tedeum* at Madona Dudu Cathedral, followed by the hero’s requiem, veterans’ parade, and produced deep emotions within the veterans and local community:

“The enthusiasm cannot be described. Tears were pouring down from Romanians’ eyes, at the passing of those in who’s chests beats a clean Romanian heart, where a brave soul was seen, proven by doings, shown by the signs of bravery. In their turn, an inexpressible joy and enthusiasm

<sup>11</sup> On April 29, 1902, King Carol I promulgated the decree that established for the first time the title of veteran of war, in the honour of the soldiers that survived the Independence War (1877-1978) (Drăgici, 2015, p. 7).

<sup>12</sup> „Revista Culturală”, Craiova, Year II, vol. II, No. 21-22, 1909, p. 558.

comprised them to the tears, looking at their beloved and venerable Honorary President. So much the looks of these veterans said when they met the shiny, gentle and flooded look of the General [Petre] Gigurtu!” (*Ibidem*, f. 196v.).

This quote catches the emotional load that bonded the participants into an emotional community, a community that felt the solemn moment with a raised intensity. The joy, the enthusiasm and the sadness were enhanced by the remembering of the moments of glory and the virtues that animated and motivated them to fight on the fields of honour to gain the country’s Independence.

In the afternoon, in the Minerva garden, the layout of the Independence Monument was exposed, which would be built in Craiova, having at its centre king Carol I:

“The veterans stayed for hours looking at the King and the persons so well known to them. If in miniature, looking at this monument one could not step away from it, something enduring fixing you on the spot, what will it be when we will see it in its greatness in the middle of Craiova? A lot was written about it in magazines and yet it cannot be characterized enough” (*Ibidem*, f. 197).

The intense emotion felt by the veterans as they were looking at the monument layout suggests on one hand the remembering and even reliving the experiences from the war, the joy of returning home, and on the other hand the sadness of losing their comrades. The monument in miniature, having symbolic connotations, as they were perceived or understood by those who lived the “independence time”, was destined to be “a place of memory”, dedicated to the memory, remembrance and commemoration of an important stage from the life of the Romanian people:

“It is not a monument dedicated to one person, or a statue; this *is a monument that symbolises a life of a people* (...). In this monument one will not see King Carol I, nor the others that operated on the front, but it will be looked upon with the eyes of the mind, *the Independence*, that Romania only met with periodically, when now – *we hope* – will be ensured forever, if we will know what to do. (...) It is not a small thing

what General Gigurtu and his pure-hearted veterans did” (*Ibidem*, f. 197-197v.).

On May 21, 1923, in Craiova, “The Revealing of the Monument of the War from 1877-1878” took place in a solemn and festive frame, with the participation of a large public, in the presence of Queen Elizabeta, Prince Ferdinand and his family and also some ministers. The preparation for the great event took two months, time in which Craiova was “dressed” for a great celebration. The highest secular, ecclesiastic and military officials participated, next to representatives of the Royal House, and amongst them even 500 veterans from Moldova (named “Nine with the sergeant ten”). The ceremony was similar with the one used for the great national holidays, including processions in the city centre and parades of the groups representing socio-professional categories: students, veterans, corporations of craftsmen, officers and troops. 1<sup>st</sup> Artillery Regiment, led by the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion, which fired the first cannon in Calafat on May 15, 1877. The parade was finished when they reached the place where the monument was built<sup>13</sup> – the entrance of Bibescu Park. The festive events were accompanied by the choir led by Grigore Gabrielescu and accompanied by military music (Royal Anthem) and ended with a retreat with torches. This monument “portrayed soldiers with the cannon directed towards the Danube” and Carol I, who with the cap in one hand salutes the bravery of his soldiers” (Dobrin, 2003, 93-94).

Relevant for the important place that Independence War veterans had within the local community is also the fact that, in 1916, the commander of the 5<sup>th</sup> *Vânători* Battalion ordered that the ritual of taking the oath towards the Country and Throne by those freed from service [those exempted from the army] and recruits, will take place “in front of the Flag of the Veterans Society that in 1877 revived the ancestors’ bravery” (Archives Dolj, C. Puțoreanu fund, file No. 9, f. 97).

<sup>13</sup> Unfortunately, we do not have in this moment enough documents that will reveal the emotional load that had to exist in the moment of the solemnities organized with the occasion of revealing the Independence monument in Craiova. The monument, made out of bronze, with a total height of 9.75 m, on a concrete foundation with a side of 8.6 m, was demolished and melted in 1948.

An anthem dedicated to Queen Elisabeta was created out of the Society's initiative: the "Veterans' Society Smârdan Anthem", as it was called and it was to be sung at all great events of the veterans (*Ibidem*, f. 99).

Besides the "Smârdan" Society, other veterans' societies were established. Such an organisation was the Society "Avântul țarei", formed out of the demobilized lower ranks of the 1<sup>st</sup> Army Core that participated in the 1913 campaign. Its headquarter was in Craiova and had as honorary president General Viișoreanu. On June 22, 1915 this society organised a celebration with the occasion of consecration of the flag (Dobrin, 2003, 93).

This "incursion" in the universe of remembrance of the first veterans is considered important because their activity represents a first stage of what we nowadays include in the "work of remembrance". Their active presence in the middle of the local community, by means of organizing of and participating in historical commemorations, of building of monuments etc., paved the way for future veterans, of "young veterans" (as they called themselves), of those who survived The first World War.

### **The Society "General Alexandru Averescu"**<sup>14</sup>

On September 23, 1928, in Craiova, the Society of Mutual Support "General Al. Averescu" was established. It consisted of ex-fighters of inferior ranks, that participated in the campaign of 1916-1918. The first Administration Council had lieutenant colonel Petre Popescu as honorary president, as active president Aristide Cantorichi and vice-president M. Rotaru<sup>15</sup>. The flag of the society was a military tricolour flag. The patron of the society was Saint Alexandru (August 30). The society had 65 founding members (Archives Dolj, C. Puțoreanu fund, file No. 9, f. 16-16v., 19-20).

The purpose of the society was to keep the camaraderie and brotherhood connection born on the battlefield, to encourage mutual help among the veterans and widows or children of their comrades. Amongst the objectives of the society were:

"To commemorate through a monument all our fallen comrades on the field of honour. To take part *in corpore* at all solemnities held in the memory of the battles" (*Ibidem*, f. 10v.).

On March 30, 1924, the two societies united under the name United Societies of Veterans "Smârdan" from [18]77-[18]78 and Fighters 1913-1916-1919 Inferior Ranks "General Al. Averescu"<sup>16</sup>, keeping the common purpose, and also a part of the objectives – building a monument to remember the fallen heroes on the battlefield and mandatory participation in *corpore* at the solemnities held in the memory of the battles. (*Ibidem*, f. 1-3v., 34-34v.). When they participated at the parades, the veterans had to wear the specific decorations. Some new objectives were established. We quote below a fragment from the statute of the united societies from 1924:

"The purpose of the society is: To maintain the camaraderie and brotherhood connections like they were on the battlefield; to respect the leaders and ourselves, to help each other in need. (...) To establish a reading house inside the headquarter of the society with educational, national and cultural purpose. To hold small monthly conferences where only patriotic and military subjects will be discussed. (...) The pilgrimage at the Hero's Graves will be done as it is possible every year" (*Ibidem*, f. 3-3v., 12).

It was also stated the participation at the parades, funerals of veterans in a disciplinary manner. The statute from 1924 had a series of details regarding this obligation, which highlights, practically, the founders' desire that the public presence of the veterans be exemplary, and that the image of the veteran core will embody discipline, respect and, why not, the virtues that characterised them for so long. The veteran column was formed out of 50 members, wearing the tricolour military flag. They had to behave, the following behaviours being forbidden:

<sup>14</sup> See also Păunoiu, Mitrică 2010, 130.

<sup>15</sup> The Administration Council was formed also from: Tănase St. Ion, N. Olaru, Petre C. Căpriță, Zină Vasiliu și Traian C. Petrescu (members); M. Mehedințeanu (secretary); Frantz P. Thesis (cashier); Const. Puțoreanu, S. Rosenstein și C. Dragomirescu (censors).

<sup>16</sup> The new Society of veterans from Oltenia was recognize as physical and juridical entity by Dolj Tribunal, Section I, in 1926, the sentence of Civilian Section, being published in "Official Monitor" on November 16, 1927. The Statute of the Society will be modified in 1937 and 1941, but the purpose and main objectives remain valid.

“On the entire time of the trip, it is forbidden for the members of the column to: smoke, use walking stick, salute by taking off the hat, [from the head], or being accompanied by children. It is also forbidden to leave the row or column completely” (*Ibidem*, f. 11v.).

The merger of the old and young veterans was done, firstly, out of an inner necessity, the veterans’ feelings that the tight and profound connections of “brotherhood” born during war had to be kept and consolidated after the war ended. In the same measure, these connections had to be exploited. In this way, they could establish common highlights and objectives of their existence, which would help them make ordinary life compatible with the heroism born on the battlefield. Their own perception regarding the merger of the two societies reflects, in fact, a (re)union with familial connotations, with symbolic references towards a (re)uniting of an extended family – the family of Oltenian veterans – committed to keeping the memory of the country’s heroes and forming the collective memory of the local community, in particular, and of the national community, in general. Also, they committed to care for each other in cases of ordinary needs, but also in the most difficult moments, like the funeral of a comrade or of a member of his family. Included in “the great family of veterans” there were the widows and the children of the comrades that died heroically on the field of honour of the country.

The veterans’ solidarity coagulated as a result of the shared experiences. The following explanation written in the society’s records could not be more relevant in this regard<sup>17</sup>:

“The first element of moral nature, was in the founders’ opinion to form the society; inspiration of the sentiment of solidarity that came from the love of keeping the camaraderie connections, that could be transformed into connections of ‘brotherhood’. Unanimity urges us to unification; fluid obtained in the valuable life on the battlefield, where all become as brothers.

<sup>17</sup> “Conference: The main elements of establishment of ‘Smârdan’ Society of veterans of the 1877-1878 War and ‘General Al. Averescu’ of fighters, campaign 1916-18, inferior ranks”, organized by the active president C. Puțoreanu, on December 31, 1941 (*Ibidem*, f. 94).

This term *brotherhood*, was not revealed only *ad hoc* nor was it written for the beauty of style (...), but it was also written in the law of the Society’s establishment, under Judicial authentication; becoming an absolute text, *just as a Contract and even more, as an oath* (our underline)” (*Ibidem*, f. 94-94v.).

The merger of the two societies was seen and understood by the veterans as a natural process, born partially out of sentiments, emotions and sensitivities similar to the ones felt by the members of a family united by blood ties. The convictions and beliefs that made them unite the societies in 1924 are remembered and restated over time, with various occasions that demanded the presence of veterans, young and old, in public space and also internally, in the society’s meetings. Some Society documents record such statements up until 1942 (in 1948 it was dissolved<sup>18</sup>), statements that strengthen the initial premise of our analysis according to which the societies of veterans can be considered both “fictive kinship groups” and “emotional community”.

An example in this way is the speech of the active president of “General Averescu” Society, with the occasion of the celebration, on July 23, 1933, of 25 years from the establishment of the “Smârdan” Society<sup>19</sup>:

“But because of all sorts of problems, in the administration of the Society and in the application of the statute and also as a natural consequence of ageing, the activity of the veterans has gradually reduced over time; but not too late and as a soul comfort of seeing their child has been born, as a consequence of the war of the country’s unification, meaning: The Society of the Demobilized 1916-1918, they attached themselves to this society with all the faith that they will be helped just like parents, that have the right to enjoy the support of their children.

We, the young, new veterans, greeted the old veterans with open arms, because we

<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem*, file No. 10, f. 17.

<sup>19</sup> The celebration of the independence veterans was done thru a jubilee celebration with a thanksgiving at the Church “Brândușa”, followed by an outdoor party in the garden “Ocolită” next to the park „Nicolae Romanescu” from Craiova and organisation of a raffle of witch income was destined to support the veterans and their families, in sufferance. (*Ibidem*, f. 49).

understood very well the latters need to be helped; because we understood our duty to help them and because we felt the honour we received by entrusting us with the Society's Flag, which symbolises: manhood, bravery and victory.

As a sign of gratitude towards the 1877-78 veterans, we wanted to celebrate them with the occasion of 25 years from the establishment of the Smârdan" Society. That we will hold within our Society as long as our powers will help us; and the few veterans that we still have with us, we will worship and hug as parents, enjoying until the last moment of the support and attention they deserve to have from us (our underline). For those missing we will keep a pious memory" (*Ibidem*, f. 51v.-52)

Another eloquent example for the above idea, but, also to show the fact that the transfer between generations implied also the fact that the young veterans took over the moral duty of the previous generation to continue the work of remembrance, is the conference held on July 20, 1941, expressed by the active president, Constantin Puțoreanu, in the general assembly of the "General Averescu" Society. The young veterans took over the moral duty and commitment to care for the memory and honour of those dead on the battlefields of the Independence War, of the Independence War veterans that died over time:

"Over 17 years have passed since we are united. In this interval we understood our duty, to support and embrace – the veterans – giving them all the attention with every opportunity. The same, the veterans have been next to us, impressing us with their old look and, that old age, did not stopped them from showing the same warmth of their heart from the past for patriotic acts and interest of Romanian kind also in the time when they were affiliated to us.

We consider, that regardless of how much the number of veterans will diminish – physically disappearing – "Smârdan" Society is alive in Oltenia (...) and then "Smârdan" Society will live through us, the rightful followers, as we are going to prove, reading an authentic text, through us the inheritance of Romanesque blood and the followers of Veterans' Association, as keepers of the goods of this Society; through us, which, as many as gathered around the valuable Flag – that we wear from April 1<sup>st</sup>, 1924 - we will keep as an

icon and we will always wear it with the appropriate pride, with every witty occasion for our kind and country, in this corner of Oltenia" (*Ibidem*, f. 100-101v.).

The Society "General Averescu", reuniting the veterans and the fighters/demobilized that participated at the three important wars of our country, had a rich activity. Next to their own commemorative activities of veterans, the Society was present in local and national community at all the events and solemnities dedicated to war heroes and also the ones organized with various occasions, of which we mention the following: a delegation carrying the flag of the Society participated at Mărășești with the occasion of commemorating the Heroes of our Kind; annually, next to authorities and other associations, they participated at pilgrimages organized at the graves of the heroes from those towns; they participated at national celebrations: The Day of Heroes, "The Taking of Grivița" etc. (*Ibidem*, f. 100-100v.).

They even put down efforts to be taken into consideration for participating at such festive events; to keep their presence within their communities. For example, in 1938, when it was mandatory that all public organisations must take an oath on the Constitution "King Carol II", they made all the necessary efforts next to the authorities to obtain the approval to organize this needed oath in the day of the celebration of their patron of the Society, that coincided with the national celebration of "The Taking of Grivița". Their request has been approved but, for the day of September 11, 1938<sup>20</sup>. In the occasional speech, the president of the society concluded over the event with an interesting expression and full of depth: "*I have accumulated today more soul (...)*" (Archives Dolj, Rezidența Regală a Ținutului Olt fund, file No. 25/1938, f. 16). The expression suggests how important it was for the veterans to be in the middle of festive events, organized in public spaces, which, by remembering the

<sup>20</sup> Idem, Rezidența Regală a Ținutului Olt fund, file No 25/1938, f. 20-22. Between 1938 and 1940, the veterans were included in the schedules prepared by the authorities with the occasion of the National Holiday and that of the Royal Family, having their own place within the parades. At historical commemorations, they could hold speeches of their representatives. (Archives Vâlcea, Garda Națională a F.R.N. Vâlcea County fund, file No. 4/1939-1940, f. 17; Vezi și Păunoiu 2013, *passim*).

glorious past got transformed into a source of stimulation, of raising their inner strength. These public participations practically kept the balance between the past and present, between the heroism and ordinary life, they represented a binder that gave them the power to live in time of peace.

### Day of Heroes

After the First World War, "The Day of Heroes" became one of the most important commemorative historical celebrations. The immense losses of human lives during the First World War and the general mourning imposed the sacralisation of death, of heroic death. In this matter, it was not by accident that the "Day of Heroes", celebrated for the first time on May 20, 1920, was instituted in the same day with the religious holiday of "The Lord's Ascension"<sup>21</sup>:

"(...) the immense human toll taken by the Great War facilitated a sacralisation of death. (...) This 'religious doubling' of a political commemoration with a religious holiday has to be read in lines with the Christian tradition of martyrdom as a promise of resurrection and ascension to the heavens of the souls of the soldiers who were the heroic martyrs of the nation" (Rusu, 2016, 147).

The participations of the veterans at the national celebration dedicated to the commemoration of national heroes had a raised importance for all, especially for the young veterans, which participated at the First World War and hence lived their own experiences and losses of comrades on the battlefields. The occasional speeches highlight the veterans' convictions that came from the Christian-Orthodox faith, that the heroic death of their comrades, their sacrifice, ensures them the resurrection in a superior form – the true "apostles of kind God". Moreover, in their speeches, the veterans emphasized the importance of the work of remembrance, materialized in the arts: paintings, monuments, poems, songs, books, festive commemorations etc.

In this way, we consider eloquent the following fragment from the speech<sup>22</sup> held on May 17, 1934, by the president of "General Averescu" Society in the "Sineasca" cemetery of heroes from Craiova, at the celebration of "The Day of the Heroes":

"Today, we also commemorate like in all the years since the War for the Unification of our Kind, the holy day, the day that binds our conscience and soul with that of those who sacrificed themselves for the national ideal; the day of dead heroes for the country.

(...) They reached our feelings, in such a way, that day by day we have them next to us and we consider them comrades with noble title, distinct title, that never dies, just like their quality as heroes of our kind cannot be changed.

They live in our mind through their heroic acts, which make us remember the courage, the manhood and the faith in the war they held (...).

They are seen by us as viable beings, because, through the meaning of the place they held in the history of the country, they pass in front of our eyes in every occasions. We see them in instructive paintings, in historical monuments, in pieces of lecture, in allegoric paintings, and also in the songs of poets, that they cannot disappear and no one can contest that they are not with us and even next to us, for the live example that needs to be known and learned by all young Romanian citizens.

(...) it is a custom that in this day of religious exaltation, of soul and moral exaltation, (...) we should feel relieved in fulfilling our duty towards our heroes, that are spiritually lifted to the grade of *Holy Apostles* of good God" (Archives Dolj, C. Puțoreanu fund, file No. 9, f. 62-64).

The veterans can be considered or appreciated as "key agents of remembrance" in the period right after the war. The impact of their activity was more accentuated, on one side because of the fact that the memory of the war and the loss of the loved ones was still "fresh", they themselves witness and participated at events lived during the war, and on the other hand because the "public", the local communities seen the message of the veterans with a certain intensity, born out of the

<sup>21</sup> See, Mihalache, 2007, 237, 245; Păunoiu, 2020, 1062-1063.

<sup>22</sup> The speech is published in „Curierul Olteniei”, Craiova, Year 43, No. 1769, Sunday, 1934, May, 20.



sensitivities formed as a result of the war experiences, of the fact that many families were in mourning by the loss of their loved ones. The intensity of emotions, the initial meanings of the commemorations, of war memorials gets reduced and changed with the passing of time and distancing away from the experiences of war and the disappearance of those that fought in the war. From this point of view, one can argue that these commemorations, especially on a long term, become impersonal and gain a somewhat abstract note.

The disappearance of those directly involved in the historic events and the occurrence of forgetting and diminishing of the emotional intensity of the participants become inevitable with the new generations that come. What is left, in physical form, written or as ritual of a ceremony, are traces they have left behind through their sustained activity to create these traces and leave as legacy to the future generations. The discovery of these traces gives us an occasion to meditate and analyse a fragment from the life of those that, in an historic moment, fought or sacrificed to fulfil a common ideal.

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# RACIST IDEOLOGIES IN THE 20TH CENTURY: ORIGINS, MOTIVATIONS AND CONTINUITY

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**Abstract:** *In a democracy, the power of decision belongs to governments, but also to the people who support them. Therefore, there is an extended responsibility. Statements such as "never, never" and "let's not forget the horrors of the past" can be fulfilled today only with our commitment to develop in each of us and in the civil community a daily virtue that has lost its impact in our societal projects: the altruism. The concentration camps of the 20th century had a lasting negative impact on humanity. However, there were also differences in the establishment of the camps, differences that determined the course of each of the ideologies in history: while communism aimed primarily at annihilating the opposition of any kind, Nazism was based on racial superiority, an idea that was perpetuated over time and persists today in various forms. The goal of Nazi ideology, which is considered by its followers the perfect form of exercising social power, is the common ground that led to the practices of mass physical extermination. Racist ideologies originating in Nazism, formed the basis of political regimes and practices such as apartheid in South Africa and the extermination of the Tutsi population in Rwanda. Racism is a social scourge even in advanced democracies, with Martin Luther King Jr.'s fight for the civil rights of black people in the United States being a clear evidence. This article explores the forms of manifestation of political ideas supporting racial superiority and aims to demonstrate that, despite the ubiquity of a concept such as human rights, access to public services and personal development continues to be blocked by unjustified belief in racial inequality.*

**Keywords:** racist ideologies, racial dissimilarity, genocide, social exclusion, democratic politics.

**Rezumat:** *În democrație, puterea decizională aparține guvernelor, dar și populației care susține respectivele guverne. Prin urmare, există o responsabilitate extinsă. Afirmații precum „niciodată, niciodată” și „să nu uităm de ororile din trecut”, pot fi aduse la îndeplinire numai datorită angajamentului nostru din prezent, de a dezvolta în fiecare dintre noi și în comunitatea civilă o virtute cotidiană care și-a pierdut suportul în proiectele sociale: altruismul. Lagărele de concentrare din secolul 20 au avut un impact negativ durabil, asupra umanității. Totuși, au existat și diferențe în ceea ce privește înființarea lagărelor, diferențe care au determinat cursul fiecărei ideologii în istorie: în timp ce comunismul a urmărit în principal anihilarea opoziției de orice fel, nazismul s-a întemeiat pe superioritatea de rasă, idee care s-a perpetuat de-a lungul timpului și persistă în ziua de astăzi sub diferite forme. Obiectivul ideologiei naziste, considerată de adepții săi ca forma perfectă de exercitare a puterii sociale, este fondul comun ce a condus la practici de exterminare fizică în masă. Ideologiile rasiste, având originea în nazism, au stat la baza unor regimuri și practici politice cum sunt apartheid-ul în Africa de Sud și exterminarea populației tutsi în Rwanda. Rasismul este o plagă socială chiar și în democrațiile avansate, lupta lui Martin Luther King Jr. pentru drepturile civile ale persoanelor de culoare din SUA fiind o dovadă certă. Acest articol explorează formele de manifestare a ideilor politice care susțin superioritatea rasială și demonstrează că, în ciuda omniprezenței unui concept precum drepturile omului, accesul la servicii publice și la dezvoltare personală continuă să fie blocat de credința nejustificată în inegalitatea rasială.*

**Cuvinte-cheie:** ideologii rasiste, inegalitate rasială, genocid, excluziune socială, politică democratică.

## Introduction

Within human societies there are different processes that determine those phenomena of identification, ethnogenesis and definition of subjectivisms that can generate racism. Talking about these processes and how they grow means focusing first on what we want to understand when we express the word 'identity' and then, in short, on the historical and artificial dimension of political identification processes. The notion of identity is essential to understanding that of discrimination. To be "identical with" implies to be 'different from.'

In this sense, the feeling of belonging that is synthesized as identity, regardless of which identity we are talking about, is determined based on the processes of mutual differentiation, or rather, in the recognition of the other as non-self; one can recognize an "I" by referring to "the other". The reference to the other, his rejection, is the condition of identity and, therefore, is what is not seen when we say 'identity' or, in other words, the relationship that establishes the self-awareness.

If the difference is presented as an acceptable limit, an unchangeable fact or a problem, the processes of discrimination and dehumanization take place under certain historical conditions. They make it possible to exercise violence against other people, who are denied the status of human person. To say "who we are" always means to say "who we are not", that is, the forms removed from us, which often involved the dehumanization of the other. Scientific production on this subject is now enormous (Todorov, 1982; Levi, 1986; Bensoussans, 2006): starting from the study of genocide, the invention of the "other" is an anticipation of violence, based on the idea that a group exists and identifies itself solidly, producing a form of hatred that is projected into a cohesion function on a victim group; In this sense, Jews, minorities, sexual deviations, but also women - a specific object of persecution throughout history - are different declinations of an identical matrix.

Summarizing a theme approached by Francesco Remotti and his school (Remotti, 1996), identity is a fiction, an artificial construct, it is not something substantial, it is a sense of belonging that has become reflective and socially constructed. In other words, it is a myth (Assmann, 1997). Therefore, identity

does not exist, it is not a concrete thing and, in any case, it cannot be considered unique or fixed, but it is the improper name historically attributed to an amalgam of feelings subject to historicity. It is a sense of belonging that is embodied in some practices and only an erroneous logical conception can be considered as a substance. This is the logical premise on which racism is based, i.e. any doctrine according to which individuals in a group are born bearers of a given culture and are subject to a given destiny, conceived as a standard set of biological, moral and cultural characteristics, ordered hierarchically (Jesi, 1979).

Once the existence of an identity is assumed, this dynamic network of reflexive relationships, extrapolated from the ideal-typical context and devoid of its mobile character, is reduced and simplified to be then consciously used as an exclusive and stigmatizing notion.

In the identification processes, the subjects themselves are active, their strong faith is able to guide their actions and decisions. Identities represent the creation of fictions, manipulable and exploitable in different contexts of their use, in which the political dimension is decisive: identities are above all political projects, prepared and strategically led by elites determined to achieve a result. These are historically based phenomena on the struggle for power between rival social, cultural and political groups (Aime, 2004). An identity is actually the result of a set of cultural elements that have entered the processes of socialization and that guide the beliefs of individuals who identify with them. As historiography teaches us, every process of state building does not coincide with that of nation building. The process of mass nationalization mentioned by Georg Mosse in 1975 describes those practices of socialization, acculturation, education through which, in the contemporary era, citizens were forced to submit to the rules and social frameworks of public cultural memory in which they find themselves, oriented in the sense of a cult of the nation and the homeland.

From a theoretical point of view, culture is not a rigid and defined supra-organic reality: on the contrary, it is dynamic, fluid, changeable in the continuous negotiation relations that different individuals possess at the same time in the cultural framework.

From a historical point of view, the individual is not overdetermined by culture,

and societies are never mono-cultural in any age, from ancient times. On the contrary, they were built by exchange, intersection and osmosis, both in cooperation and in conflict (Leghissa, Zoletto, 2002). Language, culture and identity have always been at the heart of real political projects and discursive strategies rooted in history: identities, national and regional, ethnic or religious affiliations are therefore problematic concepts that should be treated with great care, especially when history is taught or addressed in public and in political discourse.

There are, in fact, several forms of exclusion and discrimination in history, which are becoming forms of racism. Starting from the dynamics of xenophobia, known to the ancient world, we reach the conceptualizations of the modern era, when the categories of race, ethnicity and culture emerge. These are conceptual forms of life organization that have served to define and build relationships with other individuals and which, in particular, take on traits of separation, hatred and violence when addressing minorities and those considered inferior. Racism is not simply a prejudice or a negative feeling, but a form of knowledge that, at certain historical moments, is institutionalized as a form of legitimization of domination and fulfills a central mythical function for the stabilization of one or more powers of human groups.

Western European and American thought has organized and constructed relationships, mainly of domination, that intersect with the variable geometries of group classification and subclassification, or their hierarchical subordination in terms of access to resources and role within society (Aime, 2020). In a schematic way, it is possible to identify a tendency of cognitive origin to divide, classify and simplify the possible variables of existence, on which the organization of power and the logic of subordination are grafted, in which the imaginary of distinction legitimizes the forms of exercise of power and violence. From a didactic point of view, it is essential to focus on the history of racism, but also to order it along the time axis.

It is not possible, in this context, to make a complete cultural history of racism, but nevertheless there are several paradigmatic moments that can be highlighted in history for raising awareness about the issue of racist violence and genocide and which, from a

genetically perspective, they anticipate and prepare the subsequent logic of dehumanization.

If we focus on the contemporary history of the sense of territorial belonging and the "logic of blood" - descent, kinship, tradition - with related forms of xenophobia, they change over time, in relation to the birth and reinterpretation of nineteenth-century nationalisms. As Contini demonstrated in 1959, race is a term that, since the first attestations in the old Italian language, has spread to European languages and is a medieval transformation of the old French *haraz*, which indicates a herd of horses, or a herd of wolves: it has "a zoological, veterinary, equine birth" (Contini, 1959) and belongs to the semantic sphere of the animal kingdom.

Since the second half of the nineteenth century, European and American reflection on differentiation, a true "rasiology", is associated and grafted on nationalist discourse: based on blood and the national community, two key ideas. Since the 1970s, human zoos have been set up, linked to zoos and universal exhibitions, in which people from different parts of the world, especially the "wild", are animalized, kept in cages and in "naturalistic" scenarios reconstructed and inserted in an evolutionary narrative that inscribes them in the world of primitives.

Native Africans, Australians, for example, were taken as prehistoric remnants, true "living fossils" demoted to the edges of the globe, whose present would be the European past; the aversion, sometimes pathological, towards Africa or primitives is also linked to the rejection of evolutionism and the cultural trauma that Darwinism introduces into European and American culture and which will soon suffer a social interpretation, against the same intuitions and intentions of Darwin. These ideas then enjoyed formidable support in the 20th century and characterized many widespread anthropological ideas due to Eurocentric religiosity and Orientalist exoticism.

While anthropology, which was born positivist and colonial, was one of the first disciplines to thematize the problem of its origin, which historicized and deconstructed its own knowledge (King, 2020), many works of philosophy, literary criticism and the history of religions with a metaphysical label are problematic in the long run and by virtue of their tradition and teaching, as shown by the

recurring controversy about even important and respected intellectual figures (striking examples are Heidegger and Eliade), who in the first half of the twentieth century did not militate only in organizations of the extreme right or related to totalitarian regimes, but in their academic field and from a theoretical point of view they supported meta-historical, racist ideas and unsustainable prejudices.

The current globalization and the many conflicts of the present, in connection with the modern past, are additional elements that lead us to consider how racist and colonial violence are the carriers of mass political violence in the twentieth century. The colony is the incubation place for the internment of civilians and mass killings that will culminate in Nazi concentration camps and the extermination system even during the Second World War (Vercelli, 2015). In schematic terms, it is a question of looking at the long nineteenth century to identify in colonialism the background of a violence that, in other contexts, then detonates in Europe and USA, since the beginning of the Great War. The practices of brutal and industrial violence in the Holocaust, with their unprecedented feature, are the extreme consequences of the synthesis of social Darwinism, reactionary ideologies and aggressive imperialism that the Third Reich and its allies managed to achieve in modern Europe (Soverina, 2010). It is a product of modernity (Bauman, 1999).

Looking at the present in terms of historical sociology, one can highlight a conceptual model for which every cultural, economic or systemic crisis involves a closure of majority social groups in an identity and homogenizing sense and determines the activation of exclusionary practices on discriminated minority groups of which there is a repertoire of negative stereotypes.

Even in democratic societies, an alleged privilege and supposed responsibility in a time of crisis of the individual defined and experienced as different, become the subject of projective and victimizing fantasies of segments of the population who see a worsening of their condition and seek security and political references that ensure them peace of mind and are able to promise a return to the order of stability of previous periods.

Against the background of an increasingly complex globalization, the widespread beliefs generated by the fear of "the other" are

operational myths that fuel social and economic tensions and frustrations. Systematic demonization of the "different" / "diverse" primarily legitimizes exclusion. The definition of the "closed" image of the other is functional for determining the identity of the national / ethnic community and can trigger reactive phenomena of subsequent exclusion.

The issues of discrimination and dehumanization are of great importance for the education of citizens - now formalized as Civic Education - and are all more important as these practices are explicitly and dramatically present in today's authoritarian-populist and post-fascist cultures, in a time when human rights violations coexist with democracies and fall below the threshold of public opinion or are even consciously accepted. Nationalist, anti-Semitic, xenophobic stereotypes, the demonizing and criminalizing imaginary of migrants are today in Europe, USA and beyond, simplified images of reality, identity myths that offer easy answers to crises of dramatic intensity and complexity. The new faces of racism are by no means new, as they reconnect with established political precedents and traditions considered (even symbolic) references, embodied in long-lasting clichés and images, rooted and widespread in national cultures, especially of countries that have experienced dictatorial regimes.

In contexts of democracy in crisis, such as Italy or USA, it is possible to witness a proliferation of right-wing cultures, inseparable from the populist and sovereignist renaissance of references or allusions to the authoritarian practices of fascism (if not Nazism). These are cultures that are reborn in the media sphere and in widely disseminated contents, which propose an updating of the relations and political practices that aim at the future, on scenarios that until recently would have been called dystopian (Vercelli, 2021). The novelty therefore consists in a conscious exploitation of identity themes by institutional politics in the democratic arena and a wider involvement of the production of "bottom" ideas with significant conceptual and social changes: identitarisms are sophisticated forms of cultural differentiation, they are at the base of the theories and ideologies of the new radical right and have reached presentability and visibility through strategies for conquering cultural hegemony, often together with university

publications that are welcome in neoliberal circles and in more moderate public opinion.

Social and political thinkers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century has enshrined democracy as the most suitable political regime to fulfill the ideals and aspirations of humanity, both individually and collectively (Johnson, 1988). Although some authors (Hermet, 1989; Rosanvallon, 2008; Chomsky, 2016) have highlighted undesirable aspects of democracy, it still remains the most preferred government form because it provides the most appropriate context for establishing a balance between elites and the masses, but especially between the different ethnic and racial groups and subgroups. In this sense, concepts such as human rights, emancipation, inclusive democracy and the rule of law have become real turning points in perfecting democratic regimes in many states of the world, whether associated with center-left or center-right ideologies, conservative, neoconservative or progressive.

The relationship between democracy and human rights is frequently raised today, in scientific circles, in non-governmental organizations, in interest and pressure groups, but also within political institutions. This research aims to bring forward the less commented dimensions of this interdependence, taking into consideration the American case of ethnic and racial tensions which are recurrent in the political history of the United States. American society and politics are characterized by the failure of democracy to create a compromise on the representation of the civil rights, interests and liberties of various communities, be it White, African Americans or Latin. Deeply-rooted prejudices, together with the strengthening of a segregated value system and the lack of an effective federal legislative system, have generated a deficit of the American democracy that is a fertile case study for making recommendations.

North American democracy is a criterion for how all those ideas and values affirmed in the texts of classical, Enlightenment philosophy can be put into practice. Many of the European ideals of governance have paradoxically found their place in the political system of the United States of America, even though the French Revolution of 1789 brought the well-known values of freedom, equality and fraternity. The 'founding fathers' of the United States considered the interpretations and solutions

offered by Montesquieu, John Locke, or Jean-Jacques Rousseau and reformulated the ways in which political power was exerted, putting first the representative character of the republic without tyrants (Przeworski, 2006, 14), as well as a series of individual rights and liberties that European absolutist monarchs did not offer at that time. But a subject that has not been discussed too much - and which will accompany the evolution of American democracy - is that of equality of rights within a very heterogeneous community from the ethnic and racial point of view, as would be the case of the United States.

In the process of establishing the American nation and the federal state, over the 19th century, of course, a question has arisen: Who benefits from the set of political rights and liberties? Since the colonists first assumed the status of American citizens, they had the privilege of assigning these political and legal benefits, building a system of laws that did not lack segregation and discrimination of certain social categories (Dahl, 1957). The abolition of slavery of blacks in 1865 did not solve the problem of social equality definitively, as collective thinking and mentality were already settled around the idea that only white colonists must have rights and liberties, that they are superior to the other groups, and consequently inequalities were something natural. The white superiority complex in relation to the African Americans, then to the Latin American population is still present, to a significant extent, among the society in the United States, putting the democratic model of this country in a negative position.

The numerous local incidents between authorities and individuals belonging to the African-American or Latino community, discriminatory application of laws, racial prejudices are part of the picture of the current American political regime. In this respect, we are referring to the hypothesis that democracy cannot be limited only to formal electoral procedures (according to Joseph Schumpeter's theory (Schumpeter, 2003)), to the existence of several power centers (according to Robert Dahl's theory) or to its operation without depending exclusively by an ideology (as claimed by Giovanni Sartori). Current democracy, in the conditions of globalization and the mix of populations of different origins, must be based on the concept of human rights, which can ensure a fair representation of the



interests of each social group, and the case of the United States of America is particularly eloquent.

This research consists of two parts. In the first section we exposed the theoretical foundations and presented a series of features of American democracy, referring to the concepts under discussion, namely fundamental human rights and discrimination. We have invoked the theories and considerations of some American authors focusing on the study of the political regime in this country, with the intention of creating an objective, multidimensional perspective on the debated phenomena. Thus, we have taken into account the view of American national democracy, the paradigm of cultural democracy, the institutional and legal approach, the center of the latter being the principle of civil rights and liberties. We have noticed that there is no unique way to interpret American democracy. The case we are exposed to is a particular one because the United States does not have an ethnic nation but a colonized one. Consequently, the perspective of democracy in this country is different compared to that of European countries such as France, Great Britain or Germany, which are today considered standards of the power of the people. As one can easily see, there is no single democratic paradigm. The political tradition of each state has had a decisive influence on the configuration of democracy.

The second section includes an empirical approach to American democracy, referring to case studies on racial discrimination and segregation. The concrete situations, the inconsistency between the democratic principles and values contained in the American legislative system (in its letter and spirit) and the way in which the public authorities (federal and local) act, support the arguments in the article.

In the absence of legal constraints associated with applied social and political ethics, democracy cannot work for all citizens, regardless of their biological origin. The democratic paradigm, as demonstrated by the case study on the United States of America, can only become functional when the elites and the masses also lead a struggle to eliminate barriers between classes, races, and ethnicities.

### **The American Democracy. Concept and Contradictions**

By comparison with the European democracy, The American democratic paradigm associated with a success story in common knowledge is marked by contradictions and multiple interpretations in the academic literature. In the period between the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when the United States was on an upward trend unprecedented in history, the progressive trend was represented by many authors who analyzed the pluses and minuses of the democratic regime of that era. After the Second World War, when the United States was in the winners' side and had the opportunity to impose global democracy as a political regime opposed to the communist regime, another generation of researchers brought to a critical analysis the evolutionary trends in the US internal politics. Those writings were somewhat influenced by the context of the Cold War and the rivalry of the left-wing regimes (Dudziak, 2000; Abramson, Clagget, 1984, 719-38; Bobo, Franklin, 1990, 377-93).

The assessments and assertions prevailing in the contemporary American scientific space highlight the construction of democracy through the continuous improvement of the institutional system, but also by rethinking the patterns of relations between the different communities, taking into account that the United States is an exponent of cosmopolitanism and diversity but simultaneously of disputes and conflicts. Consequently, the American democratic regime appears today as a sum of political principles and theories, whose main actors are the elites, the masses, the parties, the civil society and the constitutional system. The focus is on the role of law in regulating inter-institutional relations, relations between citizens and the federal state, and finally the specificity of social interactions (Brown, 2005).

The American democracy is the result of a long process of reflection and political action, whose significant moments have been noted and analyzed by authors from several perspectives. Of course, the form of government, the relations between the elites and the masses, the degree and type of participation of society in public decisions, the ways of political organization of different social classes, together with civil rights and

liberties have always been at the forefront of the academic preoccupations. The United States has since embarked on a heterogeneous social environment where civil liberties and citizens' rights constituted, in the first stage of democracy, a privilege for certain classes (Aarim-Heriot, 2003; Blum, 2005).

Opinions on the emergence of democracy differ from an author to another but we can also identify common points. Among these, the assertion that the quality of democracy depends on inter-racial or interethnic tolerance is common (Frymer, 1999). Democratic regimes have often been conceived as a guarantor of communion between individuals belonging to different races or ethnicities, and to different cultures. What these societies should unite is the political culture (Gamble, 1997, 245-269), predominantly democratic.

A first perspective developed in the intellectual environment across the ocean is that of democratic construction within the 'American Exceptionalism', which stipulates the principle that there is a certain typology of US citizens who can enjoy the privileges of democracy, civil rights and liberties and participation in the adoption decisions concerning the public sphere. Herbert Croly, for example, advances the idea that the American democratic model is in accordance with the nation's cultural specificity, with the traditional line that grants rights and liberties only on the white colonists of European origin, excluding African-Americans, South Americans, and Asians (Croly, 2006, 19). From its point of view, the national interest dictates the configuration of democracy, and this interest is focused, among other things, on exclusive nationalism (Croly, 2006, 19):

"The American democracy can trust its interest to the national interest, because American national cohesion is dependent, not only upon certain forms of historical association, but upon fidelity to a democratic principle. A nation is a very complex political, social, and economic product—so complex that political thinkers in emphasizing one aspect of it are apt to forget other and equally essential aspects" (Croly, 2006, 19).

So, according to Herbert Croly, the United States would be superior to its neighbors both politically by practicing the advanced rules and

customs at the advanced and also at the cultural level through the supremacy of the white race, whose traditions and customs are supposed to define the ethnological history of this country.

Croly insists on the importance of political centralization in ensuring social order as an attribute of democracy (Croly, 2006, 20), arguing that the American democratic regime is grafted on national traditions and the nation-state (Croly, 2006, 124). The American case is, however, different from the 19th-century European nation states: while the European continent has the ethnic nations as a specific feature, the United States is not the subject of this characteristic. While Europe is dominated by conflicts between nations, inter- and intra-state, the American society is divided by racial discrimination and conflicts.

Croly also states that the success of North American democracy depends on cohesion around an ideal concretized through economic development and the elimination of differences between elites and the masses, but also within society (Croly, 2006, 124). He gives the example of the Civil War for the Abolition of Black Slavery, which, in his opinion, resulted in a compromise only for maintaining a relative social and political stability (Croly, 2006, 20-21). Herbert Croly focuses on the thesis that the democratic compromise should be used not only to sacrifice economic development in favor of the balance between racial or ethnic communities (Croly, 2006, 22). In his view, democracy is the guarantor of the Americans' self-identity and national stability (Croly, 2006, 23). Finally, as the history of the 20<sup>th</sup> century has shown, Americans will make democracy more than that: they will transform it into a "democracy of expansion", and this practice could be explained using the statement of Guy Hermet that: "Western European societies and North America will provide the primary and compulsory roadmap, because it is also the one of democracy" (Hermet, 1989, 19).

The ethical perspective on democracy offers numerous keys of interpretation. One of these concerns the right of the 'people' to take part in the process of decision-making of the public agenda. John Dewey, in *Democracy and Ethics*, explains the usefulness of the democratic regime in countries with many racial and ethnic communities, such as the United States:

"What gives the democracy more than other forms of government the appearance of being a mere rule of a mass or multitude is, without doubt, the use which it makes of individual suffrage on the one hand and majority rule on the other" (Dewey, 2006, 72).

It follows that, irrespective of the nature of each racial group, the majority rule enshrines the right of election winners to govern but considering the views of the minority. Democratic vote is also the expression of the individual will, the aspirations and personal goals of every citizen participating in the public life. It is equally true that the sum of individual wills represents a collective will. The Cold War period transformed American democracy into a 'weapon' of political confrontation.

Ideological rivalry with communism gave democracy an expansionist dimension, neglecting the issue of human rights on the internal plan. In spite of the signing of the 1975 Helsinki Agreements (Final Act), which included, inter alia, respect for human rights, racial discrimination and the limitation of certain liberties for those considered 'marginalized' in society remained recurrent in the United States. In that context, Mary L. Dudziak notices that:

"During the Cold War, when international perceptions of American democracy were designed to influence the nation's ability to maintain its leadership position, and in particular to ensure that democracy appealed to the new independent states of Asia and Africa, the diplomatic impact of the issue racial in America was very strong. The fundamental question of whether the nation had reached its own ideals had been raised beforehand, and activists of previous years were looking abroad for a favorable audience for their criticism of American racism" (Dudziak, 2000, 6).

Along with the historical analysis of the contribution of the black population to social and democratic progress, the description of American political culture once again highlights the negative aspects of the integration of black communities. Critical thinking plays a special role in the fact that certain contemporary authors issue hypotheses that contradict the nineteenth-century ideological prowess, during which the emerging American nation needed ways of

legitimation in relation to other populations and to the absolutist regimes of Europe.

Carl Boggs is an example of this approach, casting doubt on thinking systems such as that of Herbert Croly, cited above. Boggs analyzes the American political culture from a critical angle by combating nationalist excesses and the theories of the supremacy of certain nations and races:

"American political culture has been marked by a long history of national exceptionalism, originated in the proclamation of a unique democratic policy, the Messianic patriotism, and the special normative law underlying the United States' involvement in world politics" (Boggs, 2011, 26).

Reflecting on the political thought of American colonists, Carl Boggs highlights their intention to establish a formal rather than substantial democracy (Boggs, 2011, 26), thus explaining the origins of racial segregation, and of imposing privileges on certain social categories instead of universal rights. Moving into the contemporary world, it brings to the fore the rise of corporatism as a potential adversary of democracy (Boggs, 2011, 88), arguing that corporations, through their power and influence over the federal government, can impose certain undemocratic principles and values (Boggs, 2011, 89). Boggs compares the classical governmental theories (which predicted the shift of emphasis on state bureaucracy and the search for profit through corporate control by corporations) and contemporary political practices, concluding that no one took into account the domination of elites in a so profound degree (Boggs, 2011, 90). Political staff, through their decision-making power, can favor democracy or, on the contrary, can limit it. Carl Boggs believes that political action in favor of corporatism has the effect of reducing the impact of the masses' pressure on the public agenda (Boggs, 2011, 92).

Recently, simultaneously with the expansion of researches on the concept of good governance, there have been developed assertions about the importance of an economically homogeneous society, access to education, respect for fundamental rights and liberties, and the progress of democracy. The United States is no exception, and the

relationship between elites and masses is used to demonstrate that public policies adopted at federal and local level influence social development and, implicitly, the quality of democracy. In the sense of the above statement, Theda Skocpol and Lawrence R. Jacobs find the American democracy is far from being perfect, but it has the advantage of its construction which was permanently oriented to a set of ideals and values (Skocpol, Jacobs, 2005, 1): freedom, equality of access to public services and goods, equality in the expression of political opinions and vote, tolerance between ethnic communities and different races, respect for and application of human rights as provided for in the Universal Declaration adopted by the United Nations in 1948 and in the American law.

It remains to be seen, however, how the problems mentioned at the social level will be solved, because if they persist, there is a risk of a new radicalisms that could threat the democratic stability. For Skocpol and Jacobs, American democracy is by no means perfect, it is - on the contrary - marked by many negative points that detract its prestige already acquired at the international level, but there are also many efforts to correct the shortcomings (Skocpol, Jacobs, 2005, 5). Concretely, the United States has a history of democracy coupled with the stigma of discrimination of some outside communities, and here we refer to African-Americans (originally slaves to native farmers), Latin populations (especially South America), Chinese and Japanese (in the inter-war period) (Skocpol, Jacobs, 2005, 9).

What has not been successful so far in the North American democracy, is the creation of a multi-ethnic and multi-racial community based on the principles of mutual acceptance and the equality of rights and liberties (Skocpol, Jacobs, 2005, 10). Moreover, the public sphere abounds in speeches on freedom, but a conceptualization and an adequate understanding of this one can be offered from a philosophical perspective.

Friedrich Hayek, a fervent supporter of liberal democracy, offers a complex and multidimensional perspective on freedom. It fits into the core areas of social life: social security, monetary system, taxation and redistribution, urban civilization, agriculture and natural resources, education and research. From Hayek's point of view, freedom cannot be appreciated at its real value, except in

opposition to coercion and servitude. In this sense,

"Recognition of private or perennial property is such an existential condition for preventing coercion, though in no case alone. (...) Recognition of property is obviously the first step in delimiting the private sphere that protects us from coercion" (Hayek, 1978, 160).

The modern and contemporary age has in any case brought a clarification of the conditions of individual freedom, and Hayek admits that:

"However, the essential condition for protecting the individual from coercion is not the possession of property, but that the material means which allow him to pursue an action plan are not all, under the sole control of another agent. One of the achievements of modern society is that freedom can also be enjoyed by a person who practically does not possess anything and that we can in large part leave others the care of property that satisfies our needs. It is important that the property is sufficiently dispersed so that the individual does not depend on certain people, the only ones who can offer them what they want or can hire" (Hayek, 1978, 160).

In other words, the centralization of property is practically synonymous with coercion, which the socialist and communist states have practiced as a foundation of their totalitarian ideology. Friedrich Hayek sets out more definitions of freedom, be it individual or collective. It distinguishes between political freedom, inner freedom, and freedom as a power to act in accordance with one's own desires. Of all these, political freedom is the one that concerns our research, which Hayek insists on, categorizing it as "people's participation in the election of the governors, the legislative process and the control over the administration" (Hayek, 1978, 37). He draws attention, however, that this kind of freedom can have paradoxical consequences if it is not accompanied by the ideal of a democratic society by "the fact that a person can vote or sign a contract by which to become a slave, thus consenting to renounce freedom, in its original sense" (Hayek, 1978, 38).

Legal power has on many occasions reconsidered equality in civil rights and

liberties for all American citizens, irrespective of race, gender or ethnicity, although sometimes political interference has created controversies. Although the ideals of American democracy are clearly and explicitly formulated in the founding documents, the legal framework for the application of principles and values being thus created from the outset, in practice the differences and contradictions are visible. The aspirations for freedom and equality among all citizens, civil rights and non-discriminatory access to public goods and services are some targets that are not yet fully achieved.

Friedrich Hayek believes that, in relation to the definition and application of freedom in a social and political context, the most important American contribution is the constitutionalism. The limitation of the arbitrary use of power and the granting of civil rights and liberties are two of the purposes of the American fundamental law (Hayek, 1978, 197). The Constitution of the United States of America (Kemp, 2010, 84) occupies a central place in the implementation of the rule of law and the American political system, because it reaffirms the rights and liberties proclaimed by the Declaration of Independence (Kemp, 2010, 55). At the same time, the Constitution mentions the relationship between the three powers, the principle of checks and balances being the basis for their functioning.

The tightening of civil rights and liberties, and ensuring their exercise by all citizens without imposing limits on a social class, come along with the document of *Bill of Rights* of 1791 (Kemp, 2010, 28). It has constituted a response to the criticisms of the Constitution's contestants, among which some of the Founding Fathers argued that fundamental law should not have been ratified because it failed to guarantee all the principles of human freedom (Wanning, 2012, 31). Beyond the fact that it is a legal certification of some political rights, this act remains a symbol of the nation and of the American exceptionalism.

The 1968 Civil Rights Act is essential to transpose the democratic values into the American law, in the context of an increasingly diverse racial and ethnic society (Wright, 2006, 11). In the 1960s, Americans who knew only the potential of equality of legislative protection, expected the President, the Congress and the Courts of Justice to meet the promise of the 14th Amendment. In response,

all three branches of the federal power, together with the general public, debated a fundamental constitutional dilemma: the prohibition by the Constitution of the limitation of equality of social protection must exclude racial and ethnic criteria in any attempt to create social justice and social benefits? The Civil Rights Act introduces the concept of 'affirmative action' referring to compulsory and voluntary programs intended to affirm the civil rights of the concerned social categories through positive actions to protect against discrimination (Wolcott, 2012, 191).

But public debates created a controversy for many Americans: by guaranteeing rights to a particular social class, did the government guarantee that it would not restrict the liberties of other classes? Many felt that the equality of civil rights and liberties between whites and the black population actually favored the latter. Finally, the amendment has established that recruitment, testing, hiring and dismissal of workers will be done without regard to race, sex or ethnicity. The legislative amendment improved the social situation of the African-Americans, represented at the time by Martin Luther King Jr. (Wolcott, 2012, 194).

An obsessive observer of the American society of his time, also a visionary researcher, Allan Bloom believes that racial and ethnic segregation is a structural feature of American democracy and greatly limits his quality standards. The volume *The crisis of the American spirit* brings the hypothesis that the university environment is one of the important sources of discrimination, because it is standardized and devoid of values and principles:

"The automatic character of current student comradeship is missing; and real intimate attachments that do not know barriers stop there. The programmatic brotherhood of the 1960s did not culminate in integration, but turned to the segregation of blacks. White students feel uncomfortable about this subject and prefer not to talk about it. Things should not be that way. They do not fit with their dominant vision that human beings are pretty much the same, and that friendship is another aspect of equal opportunity" (Bloom, 1987, 103).

Bloom demonstrates in the above quote how American universities, even when Martin Luther King Jr. was conducting public

campaigns to combat segregation, acted - tacitly - in a reverse manner. He criticizes that liberty and human dignity, in the liberal sense of terms, are undermined by the institutions that should cultivate them to the highest degree. The case of universities is suggestive because they are one of the mechanisms of social control, constantly shaping attitudes and behaviors.

Also, when examines racial and ethnic issues, Allan Bloom associates these with intercultural differences. Consequently, democracies are not the proponents of intolerance, but only the framework of its manifestation:

"Liberal democracies are not waging war with one another because they see the same human nature and the same rights as apply to everyone and everywhere. Cultures bear wars with each other. They have to do this because values can only be affirmed or sustained by overcoming others, not by arguing with them. Cultures have different perceptions that determine what the world is like. They cannot reach a compromise. There is no communication about the most valuable things" (Bloom, 1987, 241).

The arguments put forward confirm that American democracy has moved from the founding on ideals expressed in classical philosophy by Rousseau and Locke, but also in contemporary philosophy by Friedrich Hayek, to the founding on myths and symbols. The current context confirms the impact of political symbolism on the values and principles of democracy. Given that people believe in persons rather than institutions and are manipulated or misinformed, it is hard to believe that the issues discussed here will be solved - racial non-discrimination, social privileges granted to certain groups, the promotion of myths and typologies of the `ideal American` which excludes non-white populations.

The temptation of populism is another threat to democracy, because many leaders of this type consider that the `people` exalted by them mean only the white population. Racial messianism (Woodson, 2006, 184-2011) and the undermining of the social and political realities are still an issue on the public agenda of US federal institutions, requiring a punctual approach and solutions as efficiently as possible so that there should not be more

winners and losers when we talk about fundamental rights and liberties.

### **Conceptual network: racial discrimination-residential segregation-democracy without democrats**

"The concept of an enemy that man himself establishes semantically by the term `inhuman` is a blind formula, within which each can define the Other to legitimize himself as man, which leads only to the functional understanding of the enemy for their own purposes or for their own interests. The `sub-human` is the perfect victim of the arbitrariness of those who, per negationem, establish themselves as super-humans. It is, therefore, a formula empty of content and ideologically applicable in various situations, the definition within itself abducting the Other the last chance to remain just an enemy. It is reduced by circumventing the human attributes, literally dehumanized, to potentially non-existent, considered unworthy to live and thus exterminated" (Koselleck, 2006, 237).

Taking as a benchmark the dimension of discrimination, it is relevant that, from the etymological point of view (the verb *discrimino*, latin), the meaning of the concept captures the existence of an inequality through which a distinction is made, a separation. In this sense, the phrase used by Seneca, *discrimino inter*, is similar to the fact that discrimination implies to distinguish between similar things. At the same time, while *discriminatio* means "separation", the meaning of the noun *discrimen* means "space separating", "interval", "difference" (Pavel, 2012, 11-23).

Instead, the term *emancipation* derives from the expression *e manu capere*, used to describe that legal act by means of which, in the Roman Republic, a *pater familias* repudiated his son. As a result, the son finally breaks his family, becoming legally without tutor (*sui iuris*). The emancipated son, even if he had civil and commercial rights, and the right to marry, was deprived of the right to inherit (Koselleck, 2006, 163-164). For Montaigne, unlike the animal, `man is emancipated from the impact of the laws of nature in order to follow his own fantasy` (Koselleck, 2006, 165). Without losing legal implications, emancipation has become, at the

same time, a concept used to designate a historical movement as well as aspirations to remove legal, social, political and economic inequalities. That is why Scheidler called emancipation "the most important concept", despite the fact that he lost, as Koselleck observed, "the referential stringency, becoming polysemantic" (Koselleck, 2006, 167-168).

With regard to the American space, to delimit the conceptual framework necessary for reflection on the issue of political and civil rights, the following observation is necessary: racial discrimination is not an American invention, but rather an extension / redefinition of slavery. An eloquent example of this is that in 1787, despite the fact that the abolition of slavery was not stipulated in the US Constitution, "the votes of three-fifths of slaves had the same weight as their owner's vote" (Koselleck, 2006, 161).

Also, for Douglas S. Massey and Nancy A. Denton, in *American Apartheid*, residential segregation is not a neutral fact; on the contrary, it "systematically undermines the social and economic welfare of blacks in the United States (Massey, Denton, 2001, 2). Thus, racial segregation has condemned a significant proportion of African Americans "experiencing a social environment in which poverty and poor pay jobs are the rule in which a majority of children are born out of wedlock," a space "in which failure school prevails and where social and physical deterioration abounds" (Massey, Denton, 2001, 2). For this reason, it is important to underline that the effect of racial segregation is structural, not individual (Massey, Denton, 2001, 2). At the same time, Massey and Denton adds, a feature of segregation is that it has created "a raging environment totally unknown to most white Americans in the racist ghetto. What the white Americans did not understand, but what black cannot forget is that white society is deeply involved in the ghetto. The white institutions have created it, they support it, and the white society overlooks it" (Massey, Denton, 2001, 4).

"The term <<ghetto>> means different things for different people. For some observers, simply, it means a residential area of the black, for others it signifies an area that is not only of the black (...). A ghetto is a set of neighborhoods that are inhabited exclusively by members of a

group in which virtually all members of that group live. For urban blacks, the ghetto was the residential configuration for at least 80 years" (Massey, Denton, 2001, 18-19).

Generally, the net effect of racial segregation is to expose whites and blacks to very different environments in terms of socio-economic characteristics (Massey, Denton, 2001, 128). Consequently, a high degree of residential segregation imposes African-Americans on their social and economic isolation from the rest of American society (Massey, Denton, 2001, 167). At the same time, it should not be neglected that the definition of "black race" is based on a social and conventional concept that does not take into account biological factors (Myrdal et al, 1944, 113). In fact, the very concept of race is a cultural and ideological construct (Ghebre, 2007, 120-124). Thus, social discrimination is defined on the assumption that a part of the population does not benefit from the opportunities that the other party has. As a result of the social stratification resulting from race inequality, within social structures, between groups and individuals, we notice the emergence of social exclusion, defined as "difficulty in accessing some fundamental institutions" (Ghebre, 2007, 120-124).

Segregation perpetuates poverty as a result of the close link between social and spatial mobility (Massey, Denton, 2001, 14). Thus, even if there are differences over apartheid in South Africa, according to Massey and Denton, by perpetuating race-based inequality as well as by the socio-economic deprivation it generates, US segregation in the US. was a solid basis for the emergence of a system of racial injustice, also encountered in South Africa. For these reasons, Massey and Denton believe that racial residential segregation in the US through the ghetto has led to the establishment of American Apartheid (Massey, Denton, 2001, 15).

To analyze the dimension of American apartheid, Massey and Denton define segregation as a tendency to geographically separate blacks from whites so that in some areas the former are over-represented, and in other areas either poorly represented (Massey, Denton, 2001, 74). To observe the presence of bumps, the two authors define segregation according to the following five dimensions: non-uniformity, isolation, grouping, centralization, concentration (Massey, Denton,

2001, 76). It is relevant that through these indicators the psychological defense mechanism of the excluded is explained, through which the ghetto inhabitants adopted a cultural identity that was defined in opposition to the ideals of the white inhabitants. Thus, segregation has favored the emergence of drug use and the violation of women, the treatment of women as a sexual object (Massey, Denton, 2001, 167. For these reasons, the effects of racial segregation cannot be ignored. In that regard, W.E.B's remark is irrelevant. Du Bois in 1906, according to which "the issue of the 20th century will be the racial issue" (Luther King Jr., 2010, 183).

To fundamentally distinguish itself from the political regime promoted by the Soviet Union, from the second half of the 20th century, the debate on racial discrimination reappeared in the United States public space. Since the Soviet ideology was based on the principle of discrimination and the division of society into classes, the policy of the West was based on the values of democracy and equality of persons before the law. An eloquent example by *The Final Act of August 1, 1975 of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe*, drafted in Helsinki on August 1, 1975, the US foreign policy succeeds in imposing the principle of human rights and liberties: "VII. Respect for human rights and fundamental liberties, including freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief: Participating States shall respect human rights and fundamental liberties, including freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion. They will promote and encourage the effective exercise of civil, political, economic, social, cultural, and other rights and liberties, all of which derive from the inherent dignity of the human person and are essential to its free and full development".

The evolution of how to report on the acceptance or abolition of racial discrimination and how to interpret constitutional amendments were influenced by the dynamics of international events, the way in which other actors perceived and recognized the image of the United States. In this regard, Speech by President Lyndon B. Johnson, in a special message addressed to Congress - *The American Promise* on March 15, 1965, highlights the issues that racial discrimination has produced over the US image on the international plan:

"We rarely faced a challenge that would call into question not progress or abundance, not our welfare or security, but the values, goals and meaning of our beloved nation. (...) The issue of equal rights for black Americans is precisely such a problem. And even if we were to defeat all our enemies, even if we doubled our wealth and conquered the states and if we still could not be at the height of solving this problem, it would mean that we would fail both as people and as a nation. (...) Our nation is the first in the history of the world that has been founded with a conscious purpose: <<All men are created equal >>, <<give me liberty or give me death>>. (...) Apply any other criterion - to deny a man hope for the color of his skin or race, his religion, or the place where he was born - is not only committing an injustice, it is denying America and dishonoring those who gave their lives for America's freedom" (Johnson, 1965, 247).

The persistence of racial discrimination, ghetto and residential segregation highlighted the fact that democracy and respect for the individual did not manifest themselves a priori, with major discrepancies in their interpretation and application in American space. A major role was constituted by the context in which the relationship between the free and the freed ones manifested itself, as well as the paradigm shift that the representatives of the servicemen spread through the appeal to the sacrosanct values guaranteed by the United States Constitution. In addition, the abolition of racial discrimination (and slavery) would not have been achieved at that time in the absence of US State brand awareness and consensus. of universal value, offering them, as the State, as the main landmark.

The African-American rights activist Martin Luther King Jr. (Dudziak, 2000, 249) was murdered at the age of 39 in Memphis, Tennessee on April 4, 1968. On the evening before the assassination, ML King Jr. made the final speech - *I've Been to the Mountaintop* - where he spoke about the promised realm of African Americans by US institutions. In this speech, King stressed that racial discrimination was not completely abolished, despite the fact that through the Civil Rights and Voting Rights Act, residential segregation rates in southern federal states recorded significant decreases (Dyson, 2008, 31-53). In this speech, King



highlights two important aspects that reflect how the issue of racial discrimination has been reported (Luther King Jr., 1968).

First, the desire to be free ("we want to be free") and to have access to 'promised land' leads them to claim their social, economic, civil and political rights, using nonviolence and constitutional norms to enjoy the same rights and obligations as American citizens ("nonviolence or nonexistence") (Luther King Jr., 1968). Thus, in this context, the concept of freedom is defined in opposition to that of racial discrimination: the American / African American citizen who is not restricted to access to social, economic, civil and political rights is free, not only at the declarative level or legislative and judicial documents, as well as relations with American citizens, both in the North and in the South (Luther King Jr., 1968).

Secondly, Martin Luther King Jr. affirms that "the promised realm" of African Americans by US founders is only feasible in a democratic regime. In addition, accepting discrimination / segregation affects the very functioning of democracy, rather, it is specific to totalitarian regimes (Luther King Jr., 1968).

This issue is resumed the following day by Robert F. Kennedy in his speech in which he announced the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr:

"I have bad news for you, for all of our fellow citizens, and people who love peace all over the world, and that is that Martin Luther King was shot and killed tonight. (...) In this difficult day, in this difficult time for the United States, it is perhaps well to ask what kind of a nation we are and what direction we want to move in. For those of you who are black - considering the evidence there evidently is that there were white people who were responsible - you can be filled with bitterness, with hatred, and a desire for revenge. We can move in that direction as a country, in great polarization - black people amongst black, white people amongst white, filled with hatred toward one another" (Kennedy, 1968).

Considered in the context of the Cold War, recognizing through these speeches that American democracy is incompatible with residential segregation, ghetto and racial discrimination, it also highlights the impact of the US image on the external (but mainly)

when the 'American Dream' was associated with freedom of expression, equality before the law and access to a high standard of living for all American citizens, excluding a part of the population from these rights due to the skin / color of the skin is a contradiction with the image that the US had promoted externally, as it contradicted the very ideals that stood behind it.

Last but not least, it is important to perceive, both by its own citizens and by the respective state, and by the other actors with whom they interact, in terms of the country image, the landmarks and the values promoted. At the image level, U.S.A. had promoted since 1900 the image of an actor who supports freedom and democracy. At the same time, after the Second World War, the US became an actor that destroyed monarchic empires and set up the creation of national states. Thus, if it did not solve the problem of racial discrimination, there would have been a contradiction between the message sent inside the US over foreign policy. In addition, by solving the internal problem, starting with Helsinki 1975, it has succeeded in imposing international human rights guarantees, thus exporting its own image model, transforming it into a world-class image.

An eloquent example of this is the experiment conducted in the spring of 1937 by Harper magazine, which organized a \$ 1,000 award-winning essay competition on the American Way, as this phrase does not exist in the American political vocabulary, but it had become popular since the mid-1930s (Wall, 2008, 15). The aim of the magazine's editorial was to identify how citizens perceive the image of the United States. in relation to an undefined concept in political language, but used in excess in common language. Of the 1570 essays received, the editors of the magazine were disappointed that most essays were made with arguments from the ideas of communism or aristocratic ideas (Wall, 2008, 16). Hence, even if historian James Truslow Adams used the expression 'American dream' in his 1931 volume, *The Epic of America*, from a semantic point of view, the concept remained indefinite. Most American citizens used this concept without understanding its meaning without being able to define it. Thus, the image of the American Dream was a confused one (Wall, 2008, 17).

The conclusion of the Harper magazine experiment raised the interest of American citizens in responding to the question 'What is the American Dream?' An important role was played by artistic cultural personalities who exploited this concept from an artistic perspective. Thus, in 1939, the American Way melodrama appeared, the actors of the play suggesting that the American way is the way immigrants followed for freedom and to live together respecting each other (Wall, 2008, 64). Lawrence Reddick also published in the same year an article titled *The Greatest Gift of the Negro to America*, published in the *American Common's Negro Week*. For L. Reddick, "The American dream is the dream of the black. The dream of the black is the dream that America guarantees, through Douglas's words, 'all rights for all'" (Wall, 2008, 76).

At the same time, after all efforts after the Second World War, there is still a need to promote a common vision of the American Way. Therefore, between September 1947 and January 1949, a locomotive (Wall, 2008, 202, 2019) painted in the red, white and blue colors was used to remind the "Spirit of 1776", depositing documents of American history so that it could be seen by the citizens of the 48 states of the federation. Among these documents were the draft of the Declaration of Independence by Thomas Jefferson, a copy of George Washington's Constitution, as well as the Declaration of Rights, namely the Proclamation of Emancipation (Wall, 2008, 201).

Even if it had the slogan "Freedom Is Everybody's Job" (Wall, 2008, 240), the problem of racial segregation contravened the values the American Heritage Foundation promotes through the locomotive. However, after two weeks of negotiations with the authorities in Memphis, on November 18, 1947, the Foundation's representatives announced that the locomotive would arrive in Memphis on January 7, 1948, being open to whites and blacks for 6 hours and 30 minutes for each (Wall, 2008, 233). Since this announcement, there have been numerous criticisms of the foundation's initiative. The southern states where racial discrimination is being practiced have tried to prevent the locomotive from stopping in their cities to prevent blacks from accessing the documents it exposed (Wall, 2008, 235-236). In addition, on stopping the locomotive in San Bernardino,

California on March 4, 1948, it was fire, but without damaging the documents (Wall, 2008, 239). All these examples underline the need to redefine racial discrimination, namely residential segregation.

In respect to the US external image, it was built through foreign policy and the media. Thus, American foreign policy has focused on promoting democracy and restraining communism, but this policy contrasts with internal practice, especially addressing racial discrimination, especially in external relations with Asian, African, and Latin American countries (Dudziak, 2000, 12).

In this sense, Jimmy Wilson's execution in Alabama for stealing two dollars is the most eloquent example of the impact of racial discrimination in America during the Cold War: petitions and protest letters were sent to the US authorities in Norway, Israel, Ghana, and Jamaica, respectively. Also, the Communist newspaper in Rome titles on the front page titled 'This is America,' referring to Jimmy Wilson's death, 'a new crime of American segregationists' (Dudziak, 2000, 3-6).

Soviet propaganda (Dudziak, 2000, 93) has exploited the problem of racial discrimination in the United States to highlight its contradiction with the principles and values assumed by US foreign policy (Dudziak, 2000, 37). Against this background of propaganda in President Truman's mandate in 1947, the Report of the Presidential Commission on Civil Rights - 'Protecting these Rights,' underlined that violation of Civil Rights would harm the US from a moral, economic, but also from an economic point of view of US foreign relations (Dudziak, 2000, 79-80).

In addition, the practice of racial discrimination is an argument used to combat American democracy. Thus, for Jean Grugel, it is necessary to use an extended definition, 'in which democratization represents the introduction and extension of citizens' rights plus the creation of a democratic state', in contrast to the 'substantive' rights-based democratization with the 'formal' democratization. As a result, Jean Grugel points out: "The turnesol test of democracy does not refer to the existence of paper rights, but rather to their real significance for the population" (Grugel, 2002, 19), democratization is dependent on the way (Kaldor, Vejvoda, 2002, 19). Analyzing the consolidation process of democracy, Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan

observe the existence of behavioral, attitudinal and constitutional dimensions, through which: "Democracy gets routine and deeply internalizes in social, institutional and even psychological life, as well as political calculations achieve success" (Diamond et al., 2004, 20).

Generally, the abolition of racial discrimination requires the internalization of the sentiment of the likeness, identified by Alexis de Tocqueville in 1840 in the book *About Democracy in America*, through which an anthropological revolution occurs: The American new man understands himself looks at others from the point of view of equality (Manent, 2013, 130).

To understand the effects of racial discrimination on American society, both domestically and externally, it is necessary to define the macro image of a country. According to Martin and Eroglu, the macro image of a country is "the sum of all descriptive, inferential and informational beliefs that one has about a particular country" (Pappu et al., 2007, 727). In addition, the macro image of a country is defined as opposed to the consumer's attitude towards a country's products. Martin and Eroglu have thus proposed three dimensions for defining the image of a country, namely: the economic, political and technological dimensions (Pappu et al., 2007, 727).

Therefore, the image of the United States is represented by the economic, political and technological dimension. In the context of the Cold War, the economic and technological dimension was high: as Europe was devastated by the Second World War and faced one of the worst winters in history on June 5, 1947 at Harvard University, State Secretary George C. Marshall presented the Marshall Plan. Since then, the United States has provided economic aid worth up to 20 million dollars to the countries of Europe that have accepted the condition of uniting on "building a rational plan for how to use this aid" (Urofsky, 1995, 346). At the same time, it has to be stressed that the US economy has benefited from the Marshall Plan, as "money was used to buy goods from the United States and they were shipped across the Atlantic to American commercial vessels" (Urofsky, 1995, 346). Consequently, from the point of view of the economic dimension, both internally and externally, the image of the United States benefit from positive recognition.

At the level of political leaders' speeches, foreign policy was defined not "against a country or doctrine, but against hunger, poverty, despair, and chaos" (Urofsky, 1995, 347-348).

As far as the technological dimension is concerned, it is relevant that America industrialized itself at a rapid pace at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century. "America, which was primarily a rural country, was urbanizing at a rapid pace, and the force that propelled this transformation was the industrialization of the economy. In those three decades when the number of inhabitants has doubled, manufactures and factories have increased production four times" (Urofsky, 1995, 177).

Despite the political leaders' attempt to build the US image as a defender and guarantor of human rights and liberties, emphasizing the values and principles stated in the Declaration of Independence of July 4, 1776, according to which "all men are born equal", and "are endowed by the Creator with certain inalienable rights, counts life, freedom and the pursuit of happiness" (Duculescu et al., 2002, 183), their discourse was in contradiction with the way Blacks were treated in the South.

## Conclusions

Throughout this article, we have analyzed the American democracy in its social and political dimension, more specifically from the point of view of discrimination and racial segregation. The two relatively similar concepts are in antinomy with the notion of emancipation. Both discrimination and segregation, on the one hand, and emancipation, on the other hand, are not only part of the theoretical area; they are current and widespread actions and practices in the United States, and there are frequent debates and confrontations around them. However, if the first two are negative behaviors, easily outlined by almost anyone, emancipation is, by contrast, a political ideal difficult to achieve in spite of favorable factors such as non-governmental organizations, fundamental rights legislation, media campaigns.

The first observation is that in American democracy there are discordances between the letter of the law and the collective mentalities. From the outset, the American political regime was founded on values and principles in which the limitation of political power on a legal

basis, the representative and delegational character of democracy, along with the assertion of the primacy of freedom and equality among citizens were the leading positions. American democracy was, however, vitiated by the difficulty and hesitation in the universality of granting citizenship, along with the erroneous conceptions and prejudices of white colonists about other cultures. The myth of white race superiority, the granting of American citizenship in the first instance to European colonists only, the use of African-Americans exclusively as a labor force and the deprivation of their rights have impenetrable from the beginning on the quality of American democracy.

Later in the 20th century, especially in the context of the Cold War - when the export of democracy had become one of the main 'weapons' in the face of communism, the negative aspects from the domestic level were somewhat minimized. The statement leads us to the second finding of our research, namely that we are dealing with a bias between the democratic model offered to the "free world" as an alternative to the "socialist camp" and practices in American politics and society, where racial tensions were the rule and not the exception. As we have seen, the excess of zeal on the part of the authorities as well as the simple citizens in exalting US superiority and law enforcement often had the collateral effect of segregating and discriminating African Americans and Latin populations.

The following finding refers to the relative passivity of political elites on this subject, many preferring a reserved attitude to the detriment of civic involvement. At present, ethnic and racial tensions and disasters in American society continue to manifest itself. Thus, Barack Obama's election as the first black president in US history. has not resulted in a lasting improvement in the situation of African Americans. The distance between the federal and the regional levels is paradoxically considered, freedom of action and state autonomy, contributing to the maintenance of discriminatory attitude. I have not seen a strong current opinion at federal level about the removal of racial tensions. There is not yet a consensus within the US political elites, and there is probably not going to be too soon.

The heterogeneity and fragmentation of American society are both an advantage and a disadvantage in creating a high-quality

democracy. The advantage is that the development options are much more, and the workforce is varied and well-prepared. The disadvantage lies in the fact that, in the presence of negative patterns of collective thinking - the superiority of whites, the limitation of the granting of American citizenship, the constant obstacles to the integration of racial minorities (which are already prevalent in many localities), political representation on the basis of proportionality is a stalemate difficult to overcome. Consensualism is certainly preferable to the majority model.

Democracy is an ideal for any contemporary country, and its attainment depends on political will and legal efficiency. Last but not least, we are reminded that the masses cannot be attributed the responsibility to create systems of values and principles, this debt to the elites. In this approach, the legal constraint expressed through constitutionalism plays a fundamental role, eliminating the arbitrariness of the public decision-making process. Along with the legal, the political ethics developed around the ideas of equality, freedom and non-discrimination contribute to the elimination of prejudices within the groups and help to develop the social dialogue.

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## DEPORTATION OF ROMA PEOPLE TO TRANSNISTRIA DURING WORLD WAR II: THE ISSUE OF A POSSIBLE GENOCIDE

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**Abstract:** *As a result of the deportation of about 25,000 Roma to Transnistria – an Ukrainian territory occupied and administered by Romania during World War II – 11,000 people died in less than two years, because of the cold, disease and starvation. Half of them were children. The deportation of Roma to Transnistria from 1942-1944 is recognized as a part of Romanian Holocaust. The present analysis takes into consideration 2 subgroups of Romani people who were targeted for deportation – the nomadic Roma, respectively, among the stable ones, those who were considered at that time to be a danger to public safety – to respond to some sensitive issues. First: If we can speak of genocide in this case, considering the perspective of an intentional action, intended to destroy an ethnic group? Second: The problem of a systematic plan implemented by the authorities.*

**Keywords:** *World War II, Roma deportation, Transnistria, death, genocide*

**Rezumat:** *Ca rezultat al deportării a circa 25.000 de romi în Transnistria – un teritoriu ucrainean ocupat și administrat de România în timpul celui de Al Doilea Război Mondial – 11.000 de oameni au murit în mai puțin de 2 ani, din cauza frigului, bolilor și înfometării. Jumătate dintre aceștia au fost copii. Deportarea romilor în Transnistria, în perioada 1944-1944, este recunoscută ca parte a Holocaustului românesc. Analiza de față ia în considerare 2 subgrupuri ale romilor care au fost vizate de deportare – cei nomazi, respectiv, dintre cei stabili, cei considerați în acea perioadă un pericol pentru siguranța publică – pentru a răspunde la niște probleme sensibile. Prima: Dacă putem vorbi în acest caz de genocid, luând în considerare perspectiva unei acțiuni intenționate, destinate să distrugă un grup etnic? A doua: Problema unui plan sistematic implementat de autorități.*

**Cuvinte cheie:** *Al Doilea Război Mondial, deportarea romilor, Transnistria, moarte, genocid*

### Introduction

In the Nazi ideology, Roma (Gypsies) were seen as racially inferior and socially unfit. Their so-called “asociality” was the main reason of the measures taken against them in Nazi Germany and later in some other countries occupied by Germany or under Nazi influence, like Romania. The eugenic theorists claimed that the Roma, in spite of their Aryan origin (as a part of Indo-european populations) degenerated by mixing with non-Aryans and became “asocial”, with a predisposition to commit crimes, thefts and so on. The criminality became, in this theory, a characteristic of the Roma race, and so this population was targeted for destruction.

The alleged “asociality” of Roma was invoked as basis for the measures taken against them even before the Nazis’ rise to power and it was accentuated during Nazi period. Moreover, it was a strong reason for denying their recognition as victims of the

Holocaust (and related compensations) after the war.

About 25,000 Romanian Roma were deported in the occupied territory of Transnistria in May 1942 (nomadic ones) and September 1942 (from settled ones, those who had criminal record or no means for daily living, alleged to be unlawful). Small groups of these two categories of Roma were deported or re-deported (those who managed to escape, but were caught) even after the adjournment of the measure, announced in October, 1942. 11,000 people – half of them children - died there, in less than 2 years, because of the cold, hunger, and contagious diseases, like typhus. The Romanian authorities denied any eugenic motivation in this measure, the former leader, Ion Antonescu, claiming that it was simply taken for reasons of public safety.

Genocide is supposed to have some specific elements, in which the *intention* of



extermination of total annihilation of a group or a significant part of the group (in this case an ethnic one) so it cannot exist anymore, and a *systematic plan for killing* are of utmost importance<sup>1</sup>.

We intend to analyze in the following if these two elements are to be found in the testimonies given by the survivors of Roma deportation in two films, realized by two sociologists - "Hidden Sorrows. The Persecution of Romanian Gypsies during WWII"<sup>2</sup>, by Michelle Kelso (2005), and respectively "O Samudaripen andar I Romania. Roma Holocaust of Romania"<sup>3</sup>, by Romane Rodimata (Nicolae-Adrian Furtună, 2018). The collection of interviews of the Roma deported to Transnistria during World War II and Romani music regarding the event are used in this film for a sociological perspective, meaning recollection of a traumatic experience. But there are in the same time very good pieces of oral history, which allowed us to analyze the deportation of Roma to Transnistria from the perspective of a possible genocide<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> The UN Genocide Convention (1948) defines it as "acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in a part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group".

<sup>2</sup> Available at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qQNhSQemCzo>. Accessed on 13<sup>th</sup> of March 2021.

<sup>3</sup> Available at

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7\\_o4-luJRRI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7_o4-luJRRI). Accessed on 13<sup>th</sup> of March 2021.

<sup>4</sup> See more in Donald Kenrick, Grattan Puxon, *The Destiny of Europe's Gypsies*, Basic Books, Inc. Publishers, New York, 1972. This book was a milestone in the recognition of the genocide of the Gypsies under the Third Reich regime, but also in Western and Eastern Europe, and convinced Germany and other countries to give compensations for victims of Roma origin, as they gave before to Jewish victims of the Holocaust. The chapter "Nazi Period 1933-1945" of the book deals with the subjects of "The non-Aryan Aryans", "The Road of Genocide", "Western Europe under the Nazis", "Eastern Europe under the Nazis" and "Concentration Camps and Medical Experiments". The authors stated that "to make Germany free of Gypsies followed logically from the policy applied to Jews" (p. 76) and provided numerous examples of the policies taken against the Roma in Germany (regulation regarding "pure Gypsies" and "Mischlinge", meaning "Fremdrasse", Himmler's decrees against "Gypsy scourge" and "Roma plague" from 1938 and 1942,

### **Hidden Sorrows. The Persecution of Romanian Gypsies during WWII, by Michelle Kelso (2005)**

This documentary was the first film realized on the topic of Roma deportation from Romania to Transnistria, and is the result of American sociologist Michelle Kelso's research in the work field for about 10 years. The people's name didn't appear in the film, so we noted the persons Survivor1, Survivor 2 and so on, in order of appearances.

The testimonies reveal, more than 60 years after the traumatic experience of deportation, that some people who were deported are still frightened. The documentary opens with the testimony of an old man who was scared of being deported again. Survivor1 thinks initially that doing the interview means going back in Transnistria, because Roma were subject of a census before the actual deportation from 1942. He described the harsh conditions that the Roma found in Transnistria and said that he is afraid of being sent there again:

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deportations, extermination in labor camps, experiments on Roma children, especially twins, in concentration camps like Auschwitz-Birkenau), but also in Holland, Luxembourg, Belgium, France, Italy, former Yugoslavia, Hungary, Romania, Poland, Ukraine, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia and White Russia. Recognition of the Roma as victims of the Holocaust was an issue after the World War II. Germany passed a law in 1953 to compensate the Nazi victims, who had been persecuted for political, racial, or religious reason. Roma victims were initially excluded from these compensations, the Ministry of Interior from Würtemberg even declared, in response of the Roma claims, that their persecution during the Nazi period was motivated not by race, but by their "asociality" and criminal records. Only in the '80s, after many interventions by Roma activists and the International Romani Union, the popularization of the term and theme of "forgotten Holocaust" of the Roma, by Christian Bernadac, and the publication of the above-mentioned book of Kenrick and Puxon, Germany finally recognized the persecution of the Roma as racially motivated. Since then, several states, including Romania, have compensated Roma victims, but it is still disputed – at the academic and also political level - whether or not the persecution of Roma is part of the Holocaust and whether or not it was genocide, as intentional and systematic state action, to exterminate the Roma. See also David Crowe, John Kolsti (ed), *The Gypsies of Eastern Europe*, M. E. Sharpe Inc, New York, 1991.

“They woke us up and dragged us through the snow. Life was bitter. Lice bit us all over while we slept. Life was bitter for us. I’d better not talk if it means going back there. I’m afraid to go back. Please, miss, I want to stay here in Romania”.

Another man, Survivor2, spoke about the census and the fact that Roma were fooled with the promise of allotment in Transnistria:

“We were called to city hall for a census. They told us we were being sent to Transnistria to get rich. Yeah right! They transferred us from village to village until the border”.

Survivor 3, a woman, said that Roma were taken by force and beaten, in order to be sent in Transnistria:

“They took us by force, throwing us in with the others. And they beat us”.

Another woman, Survivor 4, also recollected in tears that Roma were deported by force, with little means for living. The cries and death are the main images accompanying the measure:

“Our tents were left behind with all that we owned. We left with the clothes on our backs. We looked back and cried, ‘Oh, God, how can we leave all this?’ Imagine someone forcing you out of your home. We were punished to death. I could just cry!”

Survivor 5 is the first one who talked in his testimony about the authorities’ intention to exterminate the Roma. He said that at the border between Romania and Transnistria, when the train with settled Roma stopped and they were allowed - although escorted - to buy food from the market, they were warned by some Romanians regarding the fate that awaited them in Transnistria:

“People bought food for their families. Some Romanians there told us, ‘Brothers, you’re going to be exterminated’”.

According to documents cited by Kelso, once Roma arrived in the camps of Transnistria, they were used by Romanian and German armies as slave labor for the war

effort. Deportees received no food for weeks. In happier cases, Roma who dug trenches and built roads received a few slices of bread for the day.

Survivor 6, a woman, declared that Roma were forced to work, threatened with guns, shot and beaten if they refused:

“They forced us to work in the snow and cold and in storms. They forced us with guns. They’d beat us to keep digging - the young and old alike. Once they took us out and my father was ill and couldn’t go. He said he couldn’t work and they simply shot him in the leg. It was in the fall and he didn’t heal until the spring. There weren’t any hospitals, doctors, anything”.

Another woman, Survivor 7, said that Roma were even whipped if they refused to work and they received little food in exchange for their work. Hunger was the main motivation for thefts, she said, an aspect confirmed by a document presented in the film<sup>5</sup>, in which an official said that “even the honest Roma” were forced to steal, in order to get some food:

“We lived badly. They didn’t give us food. Just some corn meal to make porridge. They whipped us. Any good clothes we had were stolen to trade them for food”.

Some Roma developed some strategies to cope with their bad faith and provide for their families. In order to get food they sold their clothes (as Survivor 8, a woman, said) or improvised, as fortune teller to the “Russians” – meaning Ukrainian women, as Survivor 9 (also a woman) told Kelso – she learned a foreign language in order to be able to do that:

“There was nothing to eat. I told fortunes to Russian women. I learned Russian. For telling fortunes I got milk, cheese, cornmeal, bread. I survived with my cards”.

Other survivors were not so lucky. Survivor 10, a woman, contemplated the

<sup>5</sup> In an official report, from May 1943, the Gendarme’s Legion from Berezovca described the situation of the Roma from this county as “terrible”, saying that they are in a situation in which is expected to die from hunger.

possibility of her son dying because she was not able to carry and feed him. Survivor 11 said that Roma: “ate grass and roots, and after vomited and cried for an hour”. Survivor 12 recollects that: “by morning, hunger had killed 7 or 8 people”, who were buried in mass graves. Survivor 13 talked about episodes in which the guards shot Roma who were caught stealing corn or vegetables, because they weren’t allowed to move around. Survivor 14 recalled an episode in which their loved father died, shot by guards, after he was caught stealing tiny potatoes. Man said that at the moment he wanted to die too:

“He found some small ones, like nuts. He died with them in his hand. A guard shot him. When I saw him fall, and then dragged into a pit, I prayed for a bomb or a bullet to kill me, too”.

Survivor 15, a woman, made a list of what the Roma were forced to eat in order to survive, saying that she was always searching for food – dead dogs, corn kernels recovered from cow dung. Survivor 16, also a woman, reported cases of cannibalism:

“The dead were heard and we sat there. My father cut a piece of a dead Gypsy’s backside without us seeing. We had nothing left to eat. He put the meat on the fire and fed us”.

Survivor 17, a woman, said that harsh living conditions – many families in one room, which was filthy and without water – caused a typhus outbreak, and so many people died. Roma lacked any funeral ceremonies, so she compared their deaths with the deaths of the dogs:

“There were no cemetery, no priest, no candle. Nothing. We died like dogs there. Killed by hunger and typhus. Naked and miserable. Praise the Lord! I don’t know how he saved me”.

Survivor 18 said that dead Roma were thrown “like garbage”, in a hole topped with dirt, without any respect for them:

“I saw hundreds of dead people. None had coffins. A hole was dug in the ground and filled with straw. They dragged people by the feet, pushing them in. A little dirt was thrown on top. Like garbage”.

Survivor 19 also reported that some Roma were eaten by dogs, even his mother, who died in a barn where they sheltered from the snow:

“We were exhausted and had to leave her there. A dog ate her. So many were eaten by the dogs”.

Survivor 20, a woman, recollect how every morning a guard asked if they have any dead, and they usually said no. But one day her father said “Yes” and so she found out that her mother passed away. The way in which dead Roma were taken to a mass grave shows no respect for human dignity:

“Two nights I slept next to her, I thought that she was asleep. (...) They took her, two by the hands, two by the legs, and they threw her into a mass grave”.

Other survivors spoke about the rapes which occurred in the camps of the Roma. Survivor 21, a woman, said that German soldiers attempted to rape her and her beautiful niece. Her brother, who tried to protect them, was shot:

“They hit us continually. My brother tried to protect me. They killed him. They shot him twice for trying to save me. Bang! He fell down. My heart broke seeing my brother shot by the Germans. They also killed my father. They had their way with us”.

Survivor 22, a woman, said that her mother and the other women hid their faces, rubbed soot on their faces to look old and ugly, to avoid being raped. She recollected an episode in which one Roma woman resisted and she was killed by a German soldier, in front of her husband. The German soldier cut her chest with a sword and she died instantly, she said. Survivor 23, a woman, said that she and her sister were beaten in the camp, and her sister died some days after a guard took them by the hair and knocked their heads together.

Survivor 24 remembered that Roma and Jews were in two camps, and they could see each other dying. The image of the shootings is horrifying:

“Gypsies were on one side and Jews on the other. We watched them die. They

watched us die. So many were shot. When they saw a Jew – Bang! Shot. When they saw a Gypsy – Bang! Shot. They made us, Gypsies, dig trenches for the Jews. Every 7 or 8 meters, guards made holes in the wall. They put machine guns through these holes. Jews were lined up and fell in the trenches as they were shot”.

Survivor 25, a woman, said that the Jews from the camps were also naked, and that a “Russian” took their golden teeth. Survivor 26 remembered how 2,000 Jews were arrested and were all shot:

“A young Jewish girl was in line to be shot. An officer took her aside and he told her: ‘I’ll marry you and you won’t be shot’. She refused. ‘You shoot my family, you shoot me’. So they shot her”.

In 1944, the retreat/ evacuation of the Romanian Army allowed the Roma to leave. They returned home by foot, without shoes or clothes, during the bombing on the front. Some died of exhaustion and cold on their way back home, but also shot by the Germans and Russians. In some cases, bridges and trains were bombed, hundreds of Roma being killed.

Survivor 27, a woman, said that some children were abandoned on the side of the road with little food, because their exhausted parents could no longer carry them. The same happened with some old people: “They died where they were left. The old and young alike”.

Survivor 28, a woman, said that her own father didn’t make it:

“I found my father dead in the snow. His mouth was full of snow. I fainted when I saw him. We walked hundreds of miles. If your child died, you didn’t even look. You had to go on”.

It took months until the Roma were able to return to Romania. In the end of the documentary, when the subject of compensations is reached, the idea of intention to exterminate the Roma came again. Survivor 30 said bluntly that: “They deported us to Russia to kill us”.

*Hidden Sorrows* contains even a Roma song of the suffering and deportation, *Cimitir Romano*, sung by a survivor, in which the memory of trauma is also present, with

references to slave labor, the large number of the deported who died there and the senseless deaths of (young) Roma, “at the Bug”:

“In Transnistria, they took us to slave labor / Hear the wind blowing for the dead Roma / God All Mighty, what a shame for young men to die this way / On the banks of the river Bug, grows a Roma cemetery”.

After the song the man added: “We cried there. That was a Gypsy song of sorrow”.

### **“O Samudaripen andar I Romania. Holocaustul romilor din România” – Romane Rodimata (2018)**

The interviews, realized in Romani language and Romanian with Roma survivors, question the motivation of deportation and the possible idea of genocide. Survivors are presented by name, and questioned about the activity they had in interwar period and the motivation of deportation. The interviews are more structured, and show the lives of Roma before the deportation to Transnistria, during and after this event.

Nicolae Clopotar, 85 years old, from Merghindeal, Sibiu county, a nomadic Roma in interwar period, described how authorities raised all (nomadic) Roma from the Sibiu county, 200 people, in convoys of caravans, with 4 guards (gendarms): one in the front, one in the back, and 2 in the middle. He said that “at the Bug” their horses and caravans were taken from them by “Russians”, a situation in which Roma were not able to provide for their families. Many died of cold, in the forest, while the others – like him - lived for one and a half year in some pits, dug by them and in which they put soil between two pair of woods. After that they were sent in a place surrounded by electric wires, forced to work in “colhoz” and “collective”, beaten if they refused, and forced to sell their clothes, in order to have something to eat. Only 50 Roma lived.

“My father and my uncle died there, in ‘Russia’. We – my mother and 3 children – came back. We suffered enough! Romanians didn’t suffer like us never. I was 8 years old when I was deported. I remember all. I can show you, in ‘Russia’, the places where they buried the dead Roma. We were at Romanovca Balta.



Because they split us. They didn't let us bury the dead in Russian's cemetery, only near it, there was a place with weeds, willow... they put Roma there, in a pit, all of them. (...) They dug a great pit. My grandfather and an aunt tied their legs and pulled them to the pit. No one wanted to do this job, only my grandfather and this aunt. We stayed at Romanovca Balta, others were at Caterinca, others at Crinca, and so on".

Clopotar said that the Roma from the camp received little food - peas, pumpkins, cabbage, put in a boiler of 200-300 kilos, and polenta - and no payment for their work. At their way back to Romania, they went: "ahead of the front, until they reached Dniester", many of them by foot. Those who "had luck" returned to their homes only when Easter was celebrated. He confirmed the intention to kill all Roma from Romania and the Nazi (Aryan) plan:

"Reporter: Why did they want to deport the Roma in Russia / Transnistria?

Clopotar: To kill them. To be killed by the Germans, so no one will remain in the country. Only Saxons (from German origin) and Romanians.

Reporter: But what did the Roma do? Were they bad?

Clopotar: They weren't bad! They wanted this nation to no longer exist, you know? Named Gypsy".

Maria Căldărar, 87 years old, from Sâmbăta de Jos, Braşov county, confirmed that hypothesis, saying that some Romanian were well aware of the plan of exterminating Roma:

"One guard said to my father: 'Niculae, come back, because they take you there to die of hunger'. My father refused: 'I have 5 daughters. I don't have any perspective to marry them here, if all Roma are sent there'. I swear he said that".

Căldărar said that the Roma people were in large number when they arrived "at the Bug", reporting that the conditions were really bad - they had nothing, not even drinkable water. She repeated that the intention was to kill all Roma who worked in inhuman conditions. They received little or no food and many died of starvation, cold and typhus:

"The Roma were infected by lice, they didn't have clothes, they didn't have food, they died like a sick chicken. And they threw them there, where they were. It was really bad. Because, if it was okay, we'll never come back. God forbid! They died 200 each day, and they threw them in a lake. I tremble even now when I remember. And, when they wanted to kill us, they put us in 'colectiv', to work, all the Roma. I was at Golta, at Vradiovka. We were deported there for 2 years. There were unfortunate times, I feel like crying even now, when I remember. There were no food, no clothes, we walked naked, starved and thirsty. The Russians sold us pumpkins and potatoes. Pumpkins for pigs. And my father and my mother bought them. They came home, boiled them and finally we ate them. We lived in Vradiovka, in stables. There were many, 3-4 families each. We did all the work, but we starved until they gave us food, which was some mixture, similar with pig's food. Small portion".

According to her testimony, starving Roma had to work, because otherwise they didn't receive any food at all and were beaten. Many of them died, covered in a blanket and threw into a lake nearby, an image which seems to have the force to get her on the verge of madness even after decades:

"When Roma died, it was not 1 or 2, were 20-30 persons in the same time. I'm going crazy when I remember".

Elisabeta Clopotar, 85 years old, from Bârghiş, Sibiu county, opined that Antonescu took thousands of Roma to "Bug" in order to kill them, and the gendarms had their part in this, because they fooled them by promising to receive houses:

"That was the order! Antonescu took us and put us in 'colhoz' there. I don't know why. For their madness, I think. That was the order! He gave the order! To kill us. To kill Roma".

Tudora Strugaru, 86 years old, from Chiselet, Călăraşi county, talked about orders received by the chief of police, to deport both Jews and Roma in Russia. She said that he promised them "tractors, cars, that we will be rich", and the Roma believed him and even sold their bulls, in order to make money to buy

food. The Roma were all targeted all for deportation, as “thieves”, she said:

“The police chief of the locality said: ‘Embark yourself. Because the thieves always – if you have 10 thieves in the village, they corrupt all the people’. Us, Rudars (a subgroup of Roma), we have 3-4 thieves among us. But the gardens were destroyed by the Serbs”.

They went by foot. She remembered that Romanian soldiers confiscated all their belongings, except for the salt, when they crossed the river Prut and when they arrived in the “Valley of sights” (Transnistria), they cried:

“And when we arrived, we all cried, our children cried for hunger! We were in a state to eat grass. We live in Diminoika, Vasiloka and Lixandroka village, in stables. No stoves. We had to stay there, we have no choice. The orders were to give us 200 grams of corn each. It was a mother with 2 children, it was in January, and she made fire, in order to de-froze them. We went on roads with fear that Germans will shoot us. And at that time, a convoy of German cars appeared. She ran away from her children, poor soul. The last car stopped, a German looked at the girl, and did nothing; and after that, he looked at the boy, and hit him with a pistol in the head. Boy’s brains came out of his nose, and he writhed. We all saw, from the weeds in which we were hidden. The German left him writhed, and took the girl with him. You can imagine how it was for the mother”.

Elisabeta Danciu, 85 years old, from Porumbacu de Jos, Sibiu county, complained that Roma were beaten, in order to force them to work (in agriculture), “with whips, sticks, until we fell” and all gold coins, silver glass, rows of silver coins (she explained that, when a Roma woman married, silver coins were putted on bride’s neck), and even their clothes:

“They took it from us, and gold, and glasses... all. We return with nothing. The few who have returned! Because many died there, of typhus. They put us in ‘colhoz’, in stoves. And they died, many of them died, there, in stoves. And they put them all in a great pit”.

She gave a dramatic image of the return, in which her brother, who didn’t have enough strength and couldn’t walk, from hunger and tiredness, was left there “not dead, not alive”, in great pain. The same situation happened with her grandmother, who “remained somewhere, and she was alive”. In the same time, another grandmother died, in the same way as her brother: “They remained there... not even buried, on the road... they were eaten by the crows”.

When the Roma returned to their villages, Romanians gave them food and clothes, hot water for washing themselves. All deportees had lice, she said.

Constantin Brăilă, 85 years old, from Bucharest, related, along with another man, also deported, that all Roma were put to work, even small children of 4-5 years old – which is odd, because the archive documents authorities referred to children of minimum 12 years old. All of them were guarded and forced to work, threatened with guns:

“The soldiers came, one of them with a rifle, and the rest – so-called brigadier – guarded us. From morning – they took us from stables, only the oldest and the sick ones remain; yes, stables, there were no houses, only stables, without doors, with straw on the floor. I stayed at Renova from April till September, and we did all kinds of work”.

He also made a connection between the Jews – who were deported first – and Roma, who were deported a year later.

A final interview was made with two Roma women who were deported in Transnistria and who nowadays live together in Pietriș, Iași county: Vleninaree Stratan, 86 years old, and Lențica Dura, same age. The two women said that many Roma died in that winter, and were “*carried as corn bags, at stove*” and finally put in a pile, because no cemetery was there. They invoked God as witness of the horror:

“They made a great pit and threw the dead there, with forks, as we do with sheaves of wheat. That was all. God saw what they did!”.

They said that many children were there, who walked barefoot and naked, in the winter. The Roma weren’t allowed to beg or to search

in the garbage for food; if they were caught doing so, the Germans would beat them with their belts. The two women said that they have “days to live”, even if there were “bitter days”. Lențița even recognized that she survived because her family had “possibilities”. Both have the same perspective:

“The wealthy ones lived, came back to Romania. But those without money, clothes or food, died near a fence”.

They said that, when they returned, they didn’t find nothing left beside the house – “no cattle, nothing”, and they were forced to start from scratch. Young Roma are not interested of their story, and the compensations or pensions came too late – if ever came, said Vleninaree:

“Reporter: Do you receive pensions?  
Vleninaree: Yes, some of us. But I was already old. Is a small amount, they said that will give us a difference, they didn’t give nothing.  
Reporter: You have to present documents.  
Vleninaree: From now on, death certificate. A journalist from America came 2 years ago, and cried when we told our stories”.

### The question of genocide

In the *Final report of the International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania* it is stated that “in the specific case of Romania, another additional population (besides the Jews, n.n.) was targeted or destined for genocide - the Roma minority”<sup>6</sup>.

The Romanian legislation has evolved in the past years from a certain restraint to the open declaration of genocide. On the ground of *Resolution of the European Parliament on Anti-Gypsism in Europe and EU Recognition of the memorial day of the Roma genocide during the World War II* from 2015<sup>7</sup>, the Romanian law regarding the application of GEO 31/2002 was supplemented by Law 217/2015, which includes amending the title of

the Ordinance. Thus, in its new version the term genocide appears no less than 9 times<sup>8</sup>.

Both the official discourses and the academic approaches to this topic swing between describing the deportation of Roma in Transnistria as a policy of ethnic purification, confined to the Holocaust, and genocide.

Historians like Viorel Achim (1998), Lucian Nastasă-Kovacs and Andrea Varga (2002) are cautious in describing the deportation of Roma in Transnistria as genocide.

Achim admitted that the Roma deportation was a part of the Romanian Holocaust – recognized by law – but he argued that in this case we cannot speak about genocide, because only 12% of Romanian Roma were deported.

In the book of edited documents, Lucian Nastasă-Kovacs claimed that the death of 11,000 people was a consequence of bad organization, in spite of the fact that some officials talked in documents about many weeks in which deported Roma did not receive any food.

On the other hand, Radu Ioanid (Ioanid, 2000), in the *Holocaust in Romania. The destruction of the Jews and the Roma under the Antonescu regime* suggests the idea of genocide by title<sup>9</sup>, and Jean Ancel speaks in *Transnistria* (Ancel, 1998) about the conditions in which Roma were deported as methods of extermination<sup>10</sup>.

Moldavian historian Vladimir Solonari (Solonari, 2015) sees the deportation of the Roma within the “ethnic cleansing policies” of the regime, according to the vision of Marshal Antonescu, of creating an ethnically “pure” Romania, which involved not only the deportation of the Roma and the Jews from Bessarabia and Bukovina in Transnistria, but

<sup>6</sup> Tuvia Friling, Radu Ioanid, Mihail E. Ionescu (editors), *Final Report of the International Commission for the Study of Holocaust in Romania*, p. 333.

<sup>7</sup>

[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/T-A-8-2015-0095\\_EN.html](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/T-A-8-2015-0095_EN.html).

<sup>8</sup> See more at

<https://lege5.ro/Gratuit/g4ztnjxga/legea-nr-217-2015-pentru-modificarea-si-completarea-ordonantei-de-urgenta-a-guvernului-nr-31-2002-privind-interzicerea-organizatiilor-si-simbolurilor-cu-caracter-fascist-rasist-sau-xenofob-si-a-promov>.

<sup>9</sup> Ioanid, Radu, *Holocaust in Romania. The destruction of the Jews and the Roma under the Antonescu regime*, Chicago, Ivan R. Dee Publishers, 2000.

<sup>10</sup> Jean Ancel, *Transnistria*, vol. I, București, Editura Atlas, 1998.

also population exchanges, such as the one with Bulgaria<sup>11</sup>.

The official speeches on this subject also experienced an interesting evolution. Over time, there were several episodes of minimization of the Holocaust, starting with the former President Ion Iliescu - followed by the establishment of the International Commission for its study.

The discourses swing between depiction as ethnic purification, confined to the Holocaust, and genocide. In October 2007, in the speech given by the ex-president of Romania, Traian Basescu, at the "ceremony for the decoration of the ethnic Roma survivors of the Holocaust", he spoke about honoring, by the Romanian state, the memory of thousands of Roma "people like us, deported in 1942-1943 to Transnistria", in terms of "ethnic purification"<sup>12</sup>. On August 2, 2019, President Klaus Iohannis, "on the occasion of the International Day for the commemoration of the genocide of the Roma"<sup>13</sup>, also spoke of "the genocide committed by the Nazi regime on humanity, including Roma citizens":

"Although less discussed and documented, the genocide of the Roma is undoubtedly an episode of disturbing tragism, not only in the history of this community, but also in national history"<sup>14</sup>.

We have seen, in the above, some testimonies in which survivors talked about the intention of extermination of Roma. In the particular case of Romanian Roma deportation in Transnistria, we can talk about intention to destroy the nomadic ones, since all of them - including the military who fought at that time

for Romania - were sent to Transnistria, where the exterminatory conditions were well known by everyone.

All nomadic Roma from Romania were targeted by Ion Antonescu's regime in the first phase and have been deported in May 1942, even those who were on the front at the time, fighting for Romania. In this regard, we can appreciate that nomadic Roma were subject of genocide. Some months later, in September, were deported, from settled ones, those allegedly criminal – and we have seen that in Nazi theory criminality became a characteristic of "race". In spite of the large scale of abusive deportation (Roma who haven't criminal records, Roma who were working, and even some other ethnics - Romanians and Turks), the idea of a systematic plan for killing can be also retained, testimonies of Roma showing that the measures taken against them were all the same and similar with the measures taken against Roma in Nazi Germany and some other countries under this influence.

<sup>11</sup> *Purificarea națiunii. Dislocări forțate de populație și epurări etnice în România lui Ion Antonescu, 1940-1944 / Purification of the nation. Forced population dislocations and ethnic cleansing in Romania during Ion Antonescu regime*, Iași, Polirom Publishing House, 2015.

<sup>12</sup> See the entire speech in Radu Ioanid, Michelle Kelso, Luminița Cioabă, *Tragedia romilor deportați în Transnistria: 1942-1945: mărturii și documente*, Iași, Editura Polirom, 2009, pp. 9-10.

<sup>13</sup>

<https://www.presidency.ro/ro/media/mesaje/mesajul-presedintelui-romaniei-domnul-klaus-iohannis-transmis-cu-prilejul-zilei-internationale-de-comemorare-a-genocidului-romilor>.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*.



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# THE DIARY AS SURVIVAL. DEHUMANIZATION, DEATH AND SUFFERING IN THE HOLOCAUST DIARIES OF CHILDREN AND TEENAGERS

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**Abstract:** *The historical uniqueness of the Holocaust not only lies in the number of victims it produced and the intensity of individual and collective suffering, but also in the vast quantity of accounts retold by the survivors of this tragedy. In the years following the Second World War, these narratives re-enacted the historical trauma of the Holocaust, and they thus integrated this violent part of recent history into the Western cultural memory. Their presence in the public discourse also managed to raise a series of questions that have led to a much-needed anti-totalitarian consciousness. These accounts are both testimonials of the horror experienced and occasions to remember the life and suffering of those left behind. But beyond their cultural significance, these are in effect stories of survival, typically regarded as emblematic episodes of life's triumph over the horrors of the concentrationary universe. However, a less studied phenomenon is that of the Holocaust diaries, despite the popularity of a few texts, like Anne Frank's Diary. Unlike Holocaust memoirs, which are authentic but still post-factum accounts, shaped by the memorialist's narrative reordering and influenced by their present perspective over the past, the diary is a document that manages to transcribe accurately the directness of the experience of horror and suffering. Moreover, such an authentic experience is especially visible in the diaries of those who failed to survive the Holocaust, of those who perished in ghettos, in concentration camps, or in mass shootings. In this last case, the diary read by future generations represents the survival itself. In this article, this last view underlies my analysis of the phenomenon of the Holocaust diaries kept by four female adolescents who did not survive the Holocaust tragedy (Anne Frank, Eva Heyman, Rywka Lipsyc, Renia Spiegel).*

**Key words:** Holocaust literature, witness literature, diaries, trauma.

**Rezumat:** *Unicitatea istorică a tragediei Holocaustului constă nu numai în numărul de victime și intensitatea suferinței individuale și colective, ci și în cantitatea imensă de relatări ale supraviețuitorilor. Acestea au format în anii care au urmat celui de-Al Doilea Război Mondial memoria vie a traumei istorice a Holocaustului, făcând posibilă integrarea acestei părți traumatice în memoria culturală a spațiului occidental și acceptarea unor teme de meditație ce au condus la o atât de necesară conștiință antitotalitară. Aceste relatări sunt atât mărturii ale ororii trăite, cât și prilej de rememorare a existenței și suferinței celor rămași în urmă. Dar dincolo de semnificațiile lor culturale, acestea sunt mai ales povești ale supraviețuirii, citite de obicei ca episoade emblematică ale triumfului vieții asupra ororii universului concentraționar. Un fenomen mai puțin studiat este însă acela al jurnalelor Holocaustului, în ciuda celebrității unor astfel de texte, ca de exemplu Jurnalul Annei Frank. Dacă memorialistica de Holocaust, oricât de autentică ar fi aceasta, este o relatare post-factum, tributară reordonării narative și influențată de perspectiva prezentului asupra trecutului, jurnalul este un document care reușește să transcrie în manieră autentică experiența directă a ororii. Cu atât mai mult, o astfel de experiență autentică e vizibilă mai ales în jurnalele celor care n-au reușit să supraviețuiască Holocaustului. În acest caz jurnalul lăsat posterității reprezintă supraviețuirea însăși. În cele ce urmează voi analiza din această perspectivă fenomenul jurnalelor de Holocaust ale patru adolescente care n-au supraviețuit (Anne Frank, Eva Heyman, Rywka Lipsyc, Renia Spiegel).*

**Cuvinte cheie:** Literatură Holocaustului, literatură testimonială, jurnal, traumă.

## Diaries and the traumatic experience

According to the estimations given by many historians, over 6 million Jews were

killed in the Holocaust. More than one million of these victims were children (Stargardt, 2006, 9). In fact, if one analyses the

destruction mechanisms of the Nazi “final solution”, including extermination camps, forced labour camps, starvation in ghettos made into antechambers to gas chambers and mass shooting, it is only evident that the survival chances of Jewish children and teenagers were extremely slim (Heberer, 2011, XXV). In this racial war waged by the Nazi ideology, youngsters were the targeted victims for the “final solution”. For instance, an estimated 231,640 children were deported only to the Auschwitz concentration camp. Most of them were killed upon arrival in the concentration camp, while only a few of them, almost at the age of adolescence, were kept alive to be used as labour force, but eventually they were all doomed to extermination. The fact is that when the Auschwitz death camp was liberated by the Soviet troops on January 27, 1945, only 650 inmates under the age of 17 were found to be alive (Heberer, 2011, 169). Fewer others survived during the forced evacuation marches towards the German interior and in the new concentration camps where they were relocated. Roughly 210,000 Jews from the town of Łódź and from the surrounding areas were imprisoned in the Łódź ghetto, the longest of the Nazi ghettos, established in April 1940. It was liquidated in August 1944. At the end of the war, an estimated 1,246 children managed to survive the brutal carnage through daunting challenges. Sixty-one young residents remained hidden in the ghetto (Heberer, 2011, XXVI). The two examples given above suffice to illustrate the suffering inflicted upon the Jewish youngsters who perished tragically in the Holocaust.

Starting with the end of World War II, the Holocaust began to be studied in detail. Since then, historians have reconstructed this atrocious tragedy of the twentieth century with accurate details, facts, analytical evaluations, and historical causations. However, the most intimate parts of this tragedy are only now surfacing in the survivors’ personal accounts that chronicle the sheer size of this utterly inconceivable human disaster. It is true that the tragedy of a population doomed to extermination by a criminal ideology can be reflected in the numbers shown by archives, in the administrative documents recording the destruction mechanisms of a totalitarian regime, in the judicial details of the trials conducted immediately after the war, etc. But,

at the same time, this collective tragedy is the sum total of the millions of individuals who experienced utter horror, extreme violence and persecution and were still able to articulate their pain in memoirs and diaries. In addition to their historical value, these intensely “personal” accounts preserve much of the authenticity of the lived experience, which contributes to a more accurate representation of the Holocaust in history.

Among these personal documents, the diaries of the Holocaust are a special category in that they are able to preserve the open and highly processual nature of the traumatic experience. This is due to the fact that they were in direct contact with the actual moment of suffering and are unmediated by the memory changes that can appear when the subject recollects the events. First and foremost, the diary is the generator of factual authenticity because it is written in the vicinity of the lived moment and is closely related to the actual event generating the writing. In addition, it lacks the totalizing perspective that is characteristic of memoir writing, which mainly focuses on recollected past events. Unlike the memorialist, the diarist chronicles the lived experiences by conveying unadorned information, in a brief and concise manner. The events discussed in a diary are only partially incorporated in the diarist’s life experience because they are only relevant for the present moment of writing. Only later do they actually prove to be entirely relevant or not, depending on the other events that are to be chronicled. However paradoxical it may seem, the diary can also generate a lot of emotional authenticity. Since diaries are primarily kept to provide a space in which individuals can open up to their self, Holocaust diaries are believed to explore this individual voice, which becomes louder, given the extreme experiences the subject includes in the diary. Diaries can also preserve something from the original tension of the historical moment, exactly as it was processed by the diarist. In conclusion, the diary combines the raw representation of a traumatic event with the diarist’s personal reflection on the lived experience and with the diarist’s exploration of their private self. From this perspective, the diary is a document whose authenticity resides in the individual’s capacity of recording the traumatic experience at this three-dimensional level.

These intrinsic features of diary writing sit at the core of the diaries kept by the Jewish children and teenagers who did not survive the Holocaust. In what follows, some of these writings will be fully described. This particular topic has been chosen for the following reason: the innocent diarists who were in the process of accumulating life experiences recorded in a direct and unmediated manner the events they lived and the traumatic tension accompanying these experiences, i.e. in a manner not distorted by any value judgements that typically occur in the writing of adult diarists. Moreover, the premature death of these young diarists makes their writing, which was not proofread or prepared for publication, stand out as an authentic account documenting the diarist's tragic fate. In fact, the diary seems to be the reminder of a life cut short by unparalleled human suffering inflicted by one of the most horrific tragedies of humankind.

### **Holocaust diaries kept by children and teenagers – a potential corpus**

The corpus of diaries kept by Jewish youngsters seems to be too vast and difficult to systematize, even though some of the most important accounts were published immediately after World War II or just before the end of the war. For instance, Mary Berg (Miriam Wattenberg), who was imprisoned together with her family in the Warsaw ghetto in October 1940 (she was 16 years old then), escaped extermination due to her mother's American nationality and finally arrived in the United States in 1944. During her atrocious experience in the ghetto, she kept a diary which was published in February 1945. The diary of Anne Frank, which her father recovered when he returned from the concentration camp, was published in 1947 and soon became one of the most significant documents of Holocaust literature. However, such vast material is difficult to systematize not because there are too many Holocaust accounts but because it is difficult to access them. Many of them look like fragmented passages, barely comprehensible without a detailed exploration of the historical background in which they were written. It is evident then that the publication process is very slow. Many of them are scattered in archives and in memorial centers, and so finding and collecting them requires

concentrated efforts. On top of all this, another difficulty is the language access. The fact is that the diaries were written in a Babylon-like diversity of European languages (admittedly, most of them were written in Yiddish and Polish, but many others are in Russian, Romanian, Hungarian, etc.), further indicates the vast geographical size of the Nazi terror inflicted upon Europe.

There are two instruments to gauge the real size and impact of the diaries kept by Jewish youngsters in the Holocaust. The first one can be found in Laurel Holliday's anthology, *Children in the Holocaust and World War II. Their Secret Diaries* (1995), which compiles pages from the diaries kept by 22 children and youngsters, aged between 11 and 18 years old; 7 are Jews and 5 are non-Jews<sup>1</sup>. The second one is Alexandra Zapruder's anthology, *Salvaged Pages: Young Writers' Diaries of the Holocaust* (2002), which compiles large fragments from the diaries kept by 15 Jewish children and young people. Even though some of these diaries are already published, either entirely or in fragments, most of the diarists are still unknown. A close study of these undiscovered names would be extremely useful to capture authentic snippets of the daily life in the ghetto and of the suffering inflicted by the Holocaust. It should be noted that only 4 anthologized names appear in both collections<sup>2</sup>.

In principle, the 28 diaries mentioned above can be categorized as follows: seven diaries are from concentration camps, almost all of them (6) from the concentration camp of Terezín (Theresienstadt), which was a transit camp on the way toward the extermination camps in Poland and was also used by the Nazi propaganda to show a more "humane" image of the death camps to the international public. Among the three names anthologized

<sup>1</sup> Laurel Holliday includes the five non-Jewish diaries in her anthology because she aims at a broader topic, i.e. the overall suffering in World War II.

<sup>2</sup> Alongside these two volumes, Alexandra Garbarini published another book, *Numbered Days. Diaries and the Holocaust* (2006), in which she analyses roughly 100 unpublished diaries, most of them written in Polish, others, in French and German. The numerous Polish diaries show that the Polish Jews had to suffer most. The second place is held by diaries in Yiddish, but Garbarini was unable to access them linguistically.

by A. Zapruder, only Eva Ginzová and Alice Ehrmann survived the Holocaust, whereas Petr Ginz, Eva's brother, perished in the gas chambers at Auschwitz. He was only 16 years old. Among the diaries anthologized by Holliday, three of them come from Terezín (Helga Weisssova-Hošková<sup>3</sup> – 12 years old, Helga Kinsky-Pollack – 13 years old, and Charlotte Veresova – 14 years old), while Janina Heshele (Altman), the fourth one, is from Janowska, near Lwów (Lviv), the town she managed to flee and then went into hiding in Krakow. I was able to identify some other published diaries belonging to the above-mentioned category: the diary of Eva Mándlová (Roubíčková, 1998), also deported to Terezín, the diary of Leon Weliczker (taken to the concentration camp in Janowska<sup>4</sup>), and the diary of 14-year-old Ana Novac (Zimra Harsanyi), a Jew from the town of Dej in Transylvania, deported to Auschwitz in 1944 and then to Płaszów (Novac, 2004).

Zapruder anthologized the diaries of three refugees who fled from the Nazi invasion in Austria and Germany and afterwards from the countries that were soon to be occupied by the Nazi army. Both Peter Feigel and Elisabeth Kaufmann fled to France, and Klaus Langer sought refuge in Germany and then in Denmark. This category of diaries written by refugees seems to be broader, since many Jewish Germans had fled the country during the Nazi accession to power and were thus able to save their diaries and later managed to publish them.

This last category comprises a collection of diaries kept by those who lived in hiding in the Nazi-occupied Europe, but who were nevertheless captured in the end. Similar to Anna Frank's diary, they are chronicles of the hope to survive. Alexandra Zapruder compiles two other similar diaries: the diary of Moshe Flinker<sup>5</sup> (Brussels) and the diary of Otto Wolf<sup>6</sup>

(Olomouc). The recently discovered diary of Renia Spiegel (Przemyśl) and of Hélène Berr (France) belong to this last category.

However, the most harrowing stories of the Holocaust can be found in a collection of eleven diaries kept by Jewish youngsters during their imprisonment in the ghettos in Eastern and Central Europe: Miriam Korber (Transnistria, Djurin), Eva Heyman (Oradea), Dawid Rubinowicz (Kielce), Ilya Gerber (Kovno/Kaunas), two anonymous diarists (a boy and a girl) who kept a diary in the ghetto of Łódź, Yitkhok Rudashevsky (Vilna/Vilnius), Elsa Binder (Stanisławów), Werner Galnik (Riga), Tamara Lazerson (Kovno/Kaunas), Macha Rolnikas (Vilna/Vilnius), Mary Berg (Miriam Wattenberg - Warsaw).

In addition to the titles anthologized in the volumes mentioned above, there are other invaluable contributions to Holocaust literature: Dawid Sierakowiak's diary (1996), an extremely dense account of his four-year imprisonment in the ghetto (between August 1939 and April 15, 1943), mostly written in the ghetto of Łódź, Jerzy Feliks Urman's diary (11 years old, he was imprisoned in the ghetto of Stanisławów and then lived clandestinely in hiding, protected by several Polish families), Miriam Chaszczecki's diary (the ghetto of Radomsko<sup>7</sup>), the diary of Ruthka Lieblach<sup>8</sup>

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voice, fully assuming his Jewish identity. The book stops abruptly in September 1943 when he was arrested and deported to Auschwitz, where he perished in the gas chambers.

<sup>6</sup> Otto Wolf, born in 1927, hid together with his family in the forest near Olomouc and Tršice. He kept a diary between June 1942 and April 1945 when he was shot by the Vlasovists, one of the German auxiliary forces. His parents and his sister survived.

<sup>7</sup> Miriam Chaszczecki was born in 1924. She began to keep a diary in the summer of 1939. While the first part of her account documents the occupation of Radomsko by the German army, the second part consists of her notes made between 21 April and 7 October 1942. When the ghetto was destroyed, Miriam and her mother hid in a laundry house for a week, but as they were famished, they surrendered to the police and were taken to the ghetto of Częstochowa and then, most probably, to Treblinka. Her diary, which was kept by one of the police officers to whom they had surrendered, would come in possession of Miriam's former teacher, Stefania Heilbrunn, who published it later in the book entitled *Children of Dust and Heaven*:

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<sup>3</sup> The diary was published in English in 2013: *Helga's Diary: A Young Girl's Account Life in a Concentration Camp*

<sup>4</sup> Later, the writer develops his diary into a book entitled *The Janowska Road* (Wells, 2014). Leon Weliczker, who was born in a village near Lwów, in 1925, was the only survivor of an extended family of 76 members.

<sup>5</sup> Moshe Flinker, who was born in The Hague in 1926, sought refuge together with his family in Brussels in 1942. In the diary, he transcribes the experience of a clandestine life in a sorrowful

(13 years old, the ghetto of Andrychów), the diary of Halina Nelken<sup>9</sup> (16 years old, the ghetto of Krakow) and the one of Rywka Lipszyc (12 years old, the ghetto of Łódź). It is important to note that, out of these 18 diarists, only six survived the Holocaust, while the other 12 perished in ghettos or were executed in mass shootings or gassed at Auschwitz, Belzec and Treblinka. Many others died from extreme physical exhaustion upon their release<sup>10</sup>.

I claim that these diaries are the most harrowing Holocaust accounts due to their extremely detailed exploration of the ghetto experience, something that is hardly comprehensible for our general human capacity of processing pain. Moreover, these writings seem to be prompted by contrasting emotions: very often the recording of daily sufferings was changed by the whims of prison guards or by the despair engulfing the diarists in fear of deportation, execution and the death of close family members. In other cases, however, their accounts were fuelled by the illusionary hope of liberation. The ghetto diarists recorded the stages of human degradation rapidly unfolding in the concentrationary universe. Among the causes of this degradation are starvation, forced labour, senseless violence, mass shootings, denied access to information from outside the ghetto, disease, death and the deportation of family members. These horrifying elements occur recurrently in almost every account of the Holocaust, portraying a human tragedy of an unprecedented scale that murdered millions of innocent individuals.

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*A Diary from Nazi Occupation through the Holocaust*, along other painful accounts of the atrocious Holocaust.

<sup>8</sup> Lieblich 1993: *Ruthka: A Diary of War*.

<sup>9</sup> Halina Nelken, *And Yed I Am Here!* 1999. Halina survived the concentration camps of Auschwitz, Plaszow and Ravensbrück. When the war ended, she became an art historian.

<sup>10</sup> Jerzy Feliks Urman is the only one who committed suicide by swallowing cyanide when the house which was their hiding place was searched by the Nazi soldiers. He was only 11 and a half years old. His very short diary was kept by his surviving parents who had it published in English with the title: *I'm not even a grown-up: the diary of Jerzy Feliks Urman* (Urman, 1991).

## Stories of suffering and death

*Anne Frank*

Anne Frank's story is the quintessential example of a Holocaust diary. Her diary entries, adding up to roughly 250 pages in the fully edited version, cover two years, between 12 June 1942 and 1 August 1944. Broadly speaking, the diary chronicles the time when Anne together with her family (her father, Otto, her mother, Edith, and her older sister, Margot) went into hiding in a secret annex that had been built behind the business premises where her father used to work as a business associate. The Frank family continued to live in hiding as more and more Jews from Holland<sup>11</sup> were being deported to the concentration camps in Poland. They lived there with four other people: the Van Pels family (mother, father and their son), whose names were changed to the pseudonym of Van Daan, and Fritz Pfeffer, who appears in the diary with the pseudonym of Albert Dussel. Anne began writing her diary on June 12, 1942, the day when she turned 13 years old. Prior to her being forced into living in the secret annex, at 263 Prinsengracht Street, Anne's diary was meant to be a self-reflection exercise (Frank, 2012, 12).<sup>12</sup> It was on July 6, 1942, that her diary became an account of a life spent in hiding as her family were struggling to escape deportation. From that moment on, her diary developed the chronicle of a life in hiding, which was lived under permanent death threats.

When Anne talked about the emotional instability associated with the onset of her puberty, she explored the most private part of her undiscovered self. To her intensely intimate recollections, she later added the frustrations prompted by their forced existence in the secret annex, the intense loneliness resulted from the lack of human interaction with the other residents in this small place, especially with her mother, which led to frequent arguments among them. Anne's conflictual emotions provoked by puberty, the

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<sup>11</sup> The Frank family, originally from Frankfurt, had to seek refuge in Amsterdam in 1933 when the Nazi dictatorship began.

<sup>12</sup> "I hope I will be able to confide everything to you, as I have never been able to confide in anyone, and I hope you will be a great source of comfort and support." (Frank, 2011, 12)

boredom endured in the secret annex and the lack of interaction were all amplified by their physical isolation, but particularly by the fear of being discovered, arrested and then deported. It is this fear that grounds Anne's diary in a realm beyond adolescent fragility and that makes her writing stand as a vivid record of the troubled history unfolding outside the secret annex. It can be noted, therefore, that the diary also chronicles the horrifying realities taking place outside the annex. The most horrific news for the Frank family was when one of their acquaintances was arrested or when they heard about the atrocities committed by the Gestapo police (Frank, 2011, 70-71). They had also difficulty in processing the burden of guilt that other Jews were subjected to so much suffering.

The second half of Anne's diary is dominated by the feverish excitement they were all living when they heard the news about the latest progress of the war and about the military success on the Allies side. As they were receiving such promising news about the history unfolding "outside", Anne changed her diary into an account awaiting liberation. Unfortunately, the liberation never happened. On August 4th, 1944, the "clandestine" residents were denounced to the German occupiers most probably by someone working for the company that owned the secret annex. They were immediately arrested and, after a brief imprisonment in Westerbork, the transit camp established for the Jews from the Netherlands, they were sent to Auschwitz. As the Soviets approached Auschwitz, Anne and her sister were relocated to the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp, where the Frank sisters died of starvation and disease, most likely in late February or in early March in 1945, just one month before the concentration camp was freed by the British liberators. In the end, out of the eight clandestine residents housed in the secret annex, only Otto Frank, Anne's father, survived the horrors of Auschwitz and, upon his return to Amsterdam, in July 1945, was given his daughter's diary by Miep Gies, one of their protectors while they were in hiding, who preserved Anne's diary after her arrest. Anne's father decided to publish the diary. The first edition came out in its original Dutch (*Het Achterhuis*) in 1947. In 1950, it was translated into English and French and published in the USA and the Great Britain, becoming a best seller. The diary has since

been translated into more than 70 languages, including complete critical editions.

The diary's surge in popularity is largely due to a number of interesting features that characterize it as an authentic and disturbing Holocaust account. One of its most significant features allows us to hear the diarist's innocent voice that handles authentic, simple but intense emotions, experienced as Anne struggled to survive in a world engulfed in evil. Historians have validated the diary's historical authenticity, even though it was contested by many while others questioned how the document has been edited. However, the diarist's emotional authenticity cannot be contested since it appears to emerge right from the very force of her voice and from her capacity of mastering and ordering in writing her distinct life experiences focused on her struggles to survive. The diary has therefore a testimonial value as it bridges the gap between individual suffering and the collective tragedy produced by the historical rupture that has become symbolic of the disaster of the Holocaust. Finally, the reason why Anne Frank's diary has survived to this day while her life was cut short by anti-Semitic persecution is largely due to its testimonial nature. Anne's innocent voice accompanies her writing as she documents her daily life in a plain and unaffected manner, despite the tense historical times she was living.

Ever since the 1950s, Anne Frank's diary has become more and more famous, which is mostly due to the quality of its writing but, at the same time, it has to do with the public's interest in reading a fully articulated story documenting a historic atrocity that had never been witnessed before. At the end of World War II, the westerners began to experience conflicting emotions generated, on the one hand, by the joy of liberation from the dire warfare and from long years of dictatorship and, on the other hand, by the worries about the future of Europe that was then in ruins, inhabited by the ghostly figures of the concentration camps survivors, haunted by the memories of the dear ones who had been lost in the war or in deportations. The joy of liberation was also darkened by the living in human misery, starvation, and very often by the desire for revenge sought by those who had suffered<sup>13</sup>. Initially, Anne Frank's diary

<sup>13</sup> For a detailed image of Europe in the aftermath

became extremely popular in the USA because it managed to convey accurately, through direct and unfiltered references to the individual who experienced the Holocaust at first hand, the grotesque images showing the dead bodies of the inmates piled up at concentration camps awaiting burial in mass graves. Anne's body was left behind in such a horrific place. In conclusion, the diary brutally confirmed what Americans had previously learnt from the unofficial accounts coming from the Old Continent. It is true that Europeans became more receptive to the Holocaust memories especially in the 1960s, but even prior to this date, they had known Anne Frank's diary. It was regarded as a document of human suffering, born in the midst of an evil and terror-stricken world.

#### *Eva Heyman*

A detailed account of the Jewish persecution in today's Romanian territory is the one written by Eva Heyman, a Jewish girl from Oradea (Nagyvárad). Her diary written in Hungarian is accessible to readers due to the efforts of Eva's mother, Ágnes Zsolt. On Eva's thirteenth birthday, February 13, 1944, she began keeping a diary in Hungarian and she ended it on 30 May 1944, shortly before her deportation by train (possible on 3 June) to the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp. She discusses in detail the extreme deterioration of the Jewish community from the city of Oradea in the spring of 1944, the deportations to the ghettos, and the terror they all experienced daily at the thought of the dreadful fate awaiting them at the hands of their cold-blooded oppressors. In fact, other later memoirs (Lustig, 1991, 32-33) talk about Eva's tragic death in the gas chambers at Auschwitz, in the mid-October (October 17) of the same year. Given this brief introduction to Eva's diary, it becomes apparent that her writing is reminiscent of Anne Frank's personal account, not only because the girls were almost the same age and shared the tragic story of the Holocaust, but they were both killed in the Holocaust. As a matter of fact, critics have already explored the similarities between the two diaries and nicknamed Eva "Northern Transylvania's Anne Frank" (Lustig, 1991, 7). Upon Eva's deportation to Auschwitz, she entrusted her diary to the

family maid, Szabó Mariska. After the war, the maid passed the diary to Eva's mother who planned to publish it. The 1947 Hungarian edition was published under the title of *Évalányom* (*My daughter Éva*). It was the 1964 Hebrew translation that made the text popular, but the diary became a real best-seller with the 1974 English edition, based on the Hebrew version.

However, there is some question about the authenticity of the diary (Zapruder, 2002, 445-446, Kunt, 2016) that is substantiated on the fact that Eva's mother did not keep the original manuscript after the first edition of the diary was published. Her health failing in the traumatic aftermath of the Holocaust years, she was admitted to a sanatorium in Budapest where she edited the manuscript (Zsolt, 2017). Ágnes Zsolt and her husband, Béla Zsolt, a well-known publicist and socialist politician, eventually managed to escape the ghetto of Oradea, but left Eva there, who then died tragically, as mentioned above. Because of this, Ágnes was plagued with guilt for Eva's death. According to Alexandra Zapruder (2002, 445), it seems likely that the diary is authentic but Eva Heyman's mother strengthened what might have been a less unified text so as to prepare it for publication. Another argument supporting the authenticity of Eva's writing is the fact that the events she discusses in her diary about the Jewish persecution in Oradea also resurface in other memoirs (see, for instance, Mozes, 2005, Tsur, 2005). Moreover, the diarist always addresses the events in her diary with the warmth and affection that characterize a 13-year old child. Eva's innocent voice lends her writing a kind of unaffected naïveté, even when she talks about very serious events. In a similar vein, Sue Vice (2004, 126) argues that a sort of "ironic ignorance" generally characterizes children's (including Eva's) Holocaust writings. However, I would add that the "ignorance" discussed by Vice produces a somewhat ironic effect, which, despite being involuntary, is another clear sign of authenticity. In the end, even if we accept the possibility that Eva's mother edited the manuscript "heavily", as Alexandra Zapruder claims (2002, 445), or "lightly" (Reuven, Tsur,<sup>14</sup> 2005, 91), the tragic experience having

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of the war, see Buruma, 2013, Judt, 2005.

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<sup>14</sup> Reuven Tsur (Róbert Steiner), a reputed cognitive poetician, born in Oradea, was one year



Eva Heyman as its reluctant protagonist remains thoroughly authentic and her diary stands out as one of the most intense and emotional accounts of the Holocaust.

Eva's diary begins with an entry on her thirteenth birthday, February 13, 1944. The entries in the first part of her writing are longer and exclusively focused on the past. It is very likely that Eva's mother edited this part by adding some information which she must have recovered from other diary entries prior to the date of February 13. Nevertheless, except this accidental intrusion, Eva's voice remains unchanged. But her story gains momentum when it becomes apparent that she approaches a tragic end in the midst of a violent history. Like in the case of other Holocaust diaries of children and teenagers, in Eva's diary two narrative layers intersect. The diarist's intimate story is set in the background of her writing. It is the story of a little girl sharing with her readers the story of her undiscovered self and of her family. It is the story of a little girl who lives in Oradea together with her grandparents and who talks about her insecurities and the emotional pangs of the separation from Ági, her absent mother. It is the story of a little girl who celebrates her birthday with her girlfriends and who feels confused and excited as she feels the first butterflies in her stomach. However, her diary will be gradually suffused with the threats posed by the absurd world outside. So, the second layer becomes apparent when the evil in the society begins invading Eva's and her family's peaceful life and the harmonious existence of the community in which she lives. The story is now of a little girl who suddenly discovers that she is different from others, not as an individual, but as a member of a category that defines Eva in racial terms. Eva's story takes place in a historical age that was radically alien to otherness, but especially with respect to the otherness of Jewish identity, which also defines Eva's life. She chronicles with deep concern the unremitting persecutions her grandfather was submitted to, especially when the Nazis seized the pharmacy

he had owned, the deportation of Béla Zsolt, a well-known Hungarian writer and her mother's second husband, whom she desperately tried to save, the forced discharge of their Austrian governess, Juszti, due to the law that forbade gentiles to serve Jewish families, etc. But it is the memory of Eva's dearest friend, Marta Munczer, that permeates much of her writing. Marta was also deported with her family to Kamenetz-Podolsk in 1941 where she was murdered<sup>15</sup>. At first, Eva is unaware of her friend's tragedy but, as her writing progresses, she becomes painfully aware of the loss, a dreadful anticipation of her own fate that will soon be cut short (March 26, *ibid.*, 91).

The very private and intensely descriptive entries she wrote up to mid-March 1944 reflect the signs of the violent history unfolding all around and the tension of a brief silence before the storm. As the situation worsened, Eva's diary entries became shorter and more focused on current events. On March 19, following the German occupation of Hungary with the help of a government that cooperated with the Germans, the adults around Eva became extremely worried as the disaster was now inevitable. Eva sensed those changes and recorded them in her diary accurately. If at first she filtered the events through her innocent eyes, later her writing became guided by fear. It was the fear she saw in her stepfather's eyes, who had already experienced deportation to forced labour detachments (56). It was the fear she saw in

<sup>15</sup> In 1941, Marta and her family were deported to Kamenetz-Podolsk after the Hungarian citizenship law was changed. Marta's father lost his Hungarian citizenship. He was deported to Ukraine but his wife and his daughter decided to join him. In her diary, Eva says her friend had been deported to "Poland", when, in fact, the Kamenetz-Podolsk region was in Soviet Ukraine. But during the Holocaust, "Poland" was synonymous with "deportation", "concentration camps", "mass shootings", in short, with "annihilation". At the onset of the war, the eastern front was a theatre of conflict between the Soviets and the Nazis and a place of massacres. Between August 26 and 27, 1941, approximately 26,300 deported Jews were massacred in the area of Kamenetz-Podolsk. 16,000 were Jews of Hungarian nationality that were arrested by the Hungarian police forces and expelled from the Hungarian territory (Snyder, 2018, 194-195). Most likely Marta and her family were among the victims.

Eva's junior. Their families were on good terms, and so were Róbert and Eva. The Steiners survived due to the fact that they managed to cross the border in Romania shortly before the deportation. Tsur published a memoir about the Holocaust (Tsur, 2005). See also Kunt (2016).

her grandmother's nervous breakdowns (83). It was the fear she sensed as she heard warrior marches on the radio (83). It was the fear she sensed as the adults began seeking refuge and safe places for hiding (87). It was particularly the fear and burden of being a Jew, the fear of having to face an absurd situation and imminent persecutions, the fear and burden of losing close family friends and friends, the fear of intense suffering. It is, in short, the fear of death. From now on, Eva's diary followed what must be a pattern of collective persecution, which can be found in hundreds of other Holocaust accounts: preparations for the deportation to the ghetto (Zsolt, 2017, 100 – 30 March), the compulsory wearing of a Jewish badge (March 31, p. 103), the seizure of Jewish property (April 7, p. 111-113), the arrest of family members (April 9, p. 115), etc.

On May 5th, Eva's family were deported to the Nagyvárad (Oradea) ghetto, a transit area before their final deportation to Auschwitz. With great pain and anguish, her story captures the horror of the relocation, as Eva experienced it personally. Her perspective seems to be similar to the one seen in a nightmare which is replayed in slow motion. Everyone became distressingly disturbed at the realization that the whole humanity had been lost to the ravages of hatred, plaguing also children's lives. Upon their arrival in the "shelter" of the ghetto, Eva saw her grandfather cry for the first time (138). He must have known instantly that their lives were irrevocably changed.

Once members of the prosperous Jewish community in Oradea, the deportees were divided into separate groups and then imprisoned in squalid, sub-human conditions. They knew that a worse fate lay in store, leading to starvation, torture<sup>16</sup>, misery, and death. As she was looking through the ghetto's high fence, Eva vividly expressed her anguish and horror when she thought she heard from "beyond" the sound of the ringing bell of the ice-cream vendor she knew in Oradea. What was considered by the perpetrators to be

deviant behaviour in the inmates was punished by death sentences, cynically announced in public notices signed by the Hungarian police commander in charge of the ghetto, Lieutenant Colonel Jenő Péterffy (Zsolt, 2017, 145-147).

Eva's fears intensified as she remembered her friend Marta and the sense of death's inevitability became painfully clear. As she saw the waves of mass deportation happening daily, she barely managed to pass the diary to Mariska, their former family maid who provided them with food and gave them news from outside the ghetto. Indeed, in early June, Eva was put into a cattle train which took her to Auschwitz. She managed to survive only until the second half of October when, because of her failing health, was murdered in the gas chamber. She perished tragically but her diary lived on to tell the traumatic story of a child who fought to stay alive but lived so little.

#### *Rywka Lipszyc*

Rywka Lipszyc is the author of a diary about her experiences in the Łódź ghetto. The diary was written in Polish and covered the time period between October 3, 1943 and April 12, 1944. Rywka was born on September 15, 1929 and was the eldest of the four children in a religious Jewish family (the names of her siblings are Abram, Cypora, and Estera). Throughout the diary, she reveals the religious side of her character. By the time she began her diary, Rywka had already been in the Łódź ghetto for almost three years. Similar to a large colony of slaves who were forced to work for the benefit of the German war effort, the Łódź ghetto was the second largest of the Nazi ghettos, after the one in Warsaw, and the most isolated from the "Arian side" of all the ghettos in the Nazi occupied Poland. Rywka's father, brutally beaten by the Nazis, had died in the summer of 1941. Her mother had also died of exhaustion and malnutrition one year after (July 8, 1942).

Being the eldest of the four children (she was thirteen years old), Rywka assumed the role of a mother and a protector for her younger siblings. But tragedy soon struck them. Concentrating only on the "productivity" of the slave population, the Germans constantly "cleaned" the ghetto of "unfit work elements" (i.e. the elderly over 65 and children under 10). One of these operations was the infamous action remembered as *szpera* ("curfew"), from

<sup>16</sup> In her diary, Eva talks about how the Hungarian guardians ill-treated and tortured the wealthiest Jews interned in the evacuated warehouse of the Dreher beer factory to force them to say where they had hidden their valuable property (Zsolt, 2017, 159). Other accounts (for instance, Mozes, 2007) discuss similar cases.

September 1942, which led to the deportation to the gas chambers of 15,000 children and old people. Rywka and Cypora survived, but her 10 years old brother Abram and 5 years old sister Estera (nicknamed Abramek and Tamarcia) were deported to Auschwitz and probably immediately put to death. Throughout the diary, which began a year after these events, Rywka wrote lines full of pain and remorse about the loss of her siblings. Even if the significant part of the text has a pronounced intimate dimension, the diary is also an instrument that helps her objectify the inner tensions caused by the suffering in the ghetto. Rywka seems to write in the diary especially to shape her own identity in this violent and absurd world that was surrounding her. This explains her insistence on her school projects, on her need for role models, on her friendships, or on her participation in the religious and cultural assemblies of the youth organizations in the ghetto. The loss of her parents, the responsibilities she must assume to rescue her younger sister, who miraculously escaped deportation, gave her an apparent strength, but the tension caused by her struggle to accomplish all this can be seen in many entries of her diary. It can be seen in the abrupt transitions from feelings of hope and joy to states of intense despair.

She also felt an intense need for human warmth, which explains the almost “erotic” admiration for “Surcia”<sup>17</sup>, her mentor and one of the few bright figures in Rywka’s life. In this respect, like many other similar writings, Rywka’s diary is emblematic for understanding what it meant to be a growing child in a context of suffering and death that threatened everyone at all times. The diary’s emphasis on her inner life was unable to stop the invasion of the evil from the surrounding world into her existence. Dehumanization, suffering, and death are everywhere. Life in the ghetto meant working until inmates were exhausted. It meant feeling the fear of becoming the victim of arbitrary violence. It meant suffering an excruciating hunger and finally being killed by starvation. All of these

are recorded accurately in Rywka’s diary as signs of the ubiquitous evil in her world.

In the end, she had no chance against the Nazi infernal machinery of extermination. Deported to Auschwitz in August 1944, during the final liquidation of the ghetto, Rywka survived her first contact with the concentration camp. She also survived the relocation to Bergen-Belsen at the end of 1944 but died of illness and exhaustion immediately after her release from that camp. Found in the ruins of the Auschwitz crematorium by a Soviet army doctor (Zinaida Berezovskaya), the diary was brought to the U.S. during the 1990s by her granddaughter. After a systematic study on its authenticity and historical value made by preeminent Holocaust researchers, the diary was published in English in 2014: *Rywka’s Diary: The Writings of a Jewish Girl from the Lodz Ghetto*.

#### *Renia Spiegel*

Renia Spiegel was a Polish Jewish diarist, born on June 18, 1924, in the village of Uhryńkowce on the Dniester River, near the border between Poland and Romania<sup>18</sup>. Her long and dense diary written in Polish is only indirectly touched by the Holocaust persecutions. What she actually focuses on is her ordinary life of a sensitive and ambitious teenager who explores in depth her innermost self through her intimate writing. In fact, when she began keeping a diary on January 31, 1939 (she had just turned 14 years old), it was before the outbreak of the WWII and the increasing anti-Semitic persecutions. Planning her writing very carefully, Renia first introduces her ethnic identity and then largely discusses her family, her everyday school activities and friends, but she mostly focuses on her powerful and conflicting emotions that describe her as a lively teenager looking forward to the future. She was then living with her grandparents in Przemyśl, a town divided by the river San. Renia’s father, Bernard, was very busy with the family estate and was subsequently absent from his daughter’s life. Sadly, she would soon perish in the Holocaust concentration camps. Her mother moved to Warsaw to promote her younger daughter’s acting career, Ariana Spiegel<sup>19</sup>, the new “Polish Shirley Temple”. Only Spiegel’s

<sup>17</sup> Sara Selver-Urbach, who survived the liquidation of the ghetto and Auschwitz. She is the author of a memoir – *Through the Window of My Home: Memories from the Ghetto Lodz* (1972) – that confirms some details in Rywka’s diary.

<sup>18</sup> The village is in today’s Ukraine (Uhrynkiwtsi).

<sup>19</sup> Known later as Elisabeth Leszczyńska Bellak.

mother and sister survived the war by means of concealing their Jewish identity. I mentioned above that Renia touches only lightly upon the horrors of the Holocaust, which I believe shows her amazing capacity for dissimulation and repression of painful thoughts and memories as she lived and wrote in horrific times. Indeed, she struggled to focus on her life exclusively and only write about her most intense emotional experiences, but the brutal history did not spare the diarist. The diary entries up until the outbreak of World War II only briefly discuss the worsening of the political climate, but what follows after September 1<sup>st</sup>, 1939, proves that Renia's tragic life was to be controlled by the whims of a cruel fate: the refuge to Lwów at the beginning of the war (September 18, 1939), the Soviet occupation and their return to Przemyśl (October 27, 1939), her "new" life in Poland, now part of the USSR, whose "comradeship" ideology Renia treats with irony in short lyrical passages<sup>20</sup>.

She also talks about the worrying changes in the behaviour of the Soviet authorities who decided to deport several categories of people, between April and July 1940. However, Renia's entries during this time reflect her first feelings of infatuation, the arguments with her very strict grandmother, her friendships, and her days at school. Renia's writing becomes particularly more intense as she touches on her distress at being separated from her mother, whom she calls affectionately Buluś. Her mother was living in the Nazi occupied Poland, but Renia regarded her as a metaphysical figure guiding her writing and very often invoked in such incantatory phrases as: "Help me, God, and you, Buluś...". Another godly figure soon appeared in her life. On September 21, 1940, she met Zygmunt Schwarzer who became her lover, trusted confidant and her only joy for the short time left to live. From this moment on, her diary is largely dedicated to her love for Zygmunt. In the entry of June 20, 1941, she talks about their first kiss and in the entry of June 20, 1941, she plans to go to a party together with Zygmunt. These are natural gestures in a

normal world that was about to end. Let us not forget that the war began on the eastern front on the night of June 21 when the fate of the Jews living on those territories was forever sealed.

Following this historical moment, Reina's descriptions are largely focused on a world endowed with a heightened sense of absurdity. She began to experience directly fear, apprehension for the fate of the close ones, wartime shortages, persecution, and brutal violence. The consequences of these abrupt changes are increasingly more visible in her writing<sup>21</sup>, even though the diarist struggled to conceal such horrific scenes by switching focus to her ordinary teenage activities. Reina, in her diary entry of April 10, 1942, became aware of the mechanism that helps her repress the trauma: "It's true that I run away from this world [...] This is the escape from the oppressive life, which I don't know how to enjoy, which I don't love." (Spiegel, 2019). The brutal relocation to the ghetto on July 15, 1942, came as a shock to Renia: "Remember this day; remember it well. You will tell generations to come. Since 8 o'clock today we have been shut away in the ghetto. I live here now" (Spiegel, 2019). She barely finds the words to articulate the shock. The rest of her diary is thenceforth full of grief-stricken lamentations questioning her chances to survive. As a matter of fact, Renia perished soon. Her diary ends abruptly on July 25, 1942. Zygmunt took possession of the diary and kept it safe. He managed to add seven brief entries about Renia's tragic fate: together with Zygmunt's parents, she had sought refuge in an attic to escape deportation to the extermination camp. Sadly, they were found by the Gestapo and shot on July 30, 1942, at 10.30 am. After surviving the concentration camp, Zygmunt brought the diary to the USA where he emigrated and gave it to Reina's mother, who had also emigrated there with her younger daughter. The diary was first published in English in 2019 (Spiegel, 2019).

<sup>20</sup>Renia's ironic poems about the Communist ideology show her understanding of the paradoxical situation in which Polish and Jews found themselves during World War II, caught between two criminal ideologies.

<sup>21</sup> "Wherever I look, there is bloodshed. Such terrible pogroms. There is killing, murdering. God Almighty, for the umpteenth time I humble myself in front of You, help us, save us! Lord God, let us live, I beg You, I want to live! I've experienced so little of life, nothing. I don't want to die. I'm scared of death." (Spiegel, 2019).

### Diary as survival

As shown in the texts analyzed above, there is a significant number of diaries kept by Jewish children and teenagers who lived the horrors of the Holocaust. The reasons for their interest in this genre are complex and may be seen as complementary. The first reason is rooted in the historical and cultural background of the first half of the twentieth century when the tradition of diary writing, previously developed throughout the nineteenth century, continued to be kept alive, in addition to other literary genres that explored the self's subjectivity (confession and autobiography). Diary writing was considered to be able to convey one's self's authenticity and its fluid experiences meant to help individuals fully develop their selves (Carter, 1997; Buckley, 1994). On the eve of World War II, these genres had a significant cultural and educational impact on the life of Jewish young people who largely belonged to urban communities that were highly literate. It is not accidental, therefore, that many young diarists began to explore consciously the genre of diary writing, perhaps even as a continuation of their school projects once their access to education had been drastically limited or even banned.

Most of the diaries analyzed in this article can be also regarded as a living proof of the diarists' interest to continue their "school" activities. They made extensive notes about their school projects and the progress they made with their work, which shows their intellectual potential and, more particularly, their hope for a bright future. Another reason for the popularity of diary writing among Jewish youngsters is exactly their young age. The diary allowed them to explore at length their restless selves. In the very first diary entry of June 12, 1942, Anne Frank wrote: "I hope I will be able to confide everything to you, as I have never been able to confide in anyone, and I hope you will be a great source of comfort and support". This is an illustration of how the diary becomes the diarist's conversational self. In the same confessional tone, Renia Spiegel began her diary on January 31, 1939: "Today, my dear Diary, is the beginning of our deep friendship". It is true that not all young diarists had such a strong connection with their diaries, but despite this, within the multitude of highly personal details they gave, there always emerges the desire to

begin a dialogue with the self and the need to transcribe the sheer vitality of the young subject.

However, the most important reason for keeping a diary was the diarists' deepest need to chronicle the horror of the Holocaust, which was supported by their intellectual mobility and reinforced by the need to explore their innermost thoughts and concerns. These young diarists observed closely the increasing persecutions, the arbitrary violence and the unreasonable deaths. Such elements occur more frequently in the diaries begun shortly before the war and prior to the intensifications of the persecutions. For instance, Renia Spiegel, who started her diary on January 31, 1939, pushed in the background of her story the horrors that were steadily growing around her, but, nevertheless, one can note the tension provoked by the all-encompassing evil, emerging from the anguish with which she discussed the current events that could no longer be ignored.

Since the anti-Semitic persecutions were not new in Europe, the interest in diary writing can be seen as the continuation of a particular tradition, i.e. the Jewish tradition of preserving the memory of hard times. This type of diary is not only a form of resilience in the face of horror or, as formulated by Alexandra Garbarini, "a form of individual and collective resistance" (Garbarini, 2006, 8; see also Szeintuch, 1986, 188, Kassow, 1996), but also a form of testifying the tragedy of the Holocaust that was engulfing the Jewish population. It is the articulation of fury and despair and the chronicle of lost families and lost communities. It is the need to order incomprehensible experiences in an attempt to make them comprehensible and ready to be delivered, like a cry, to future generations. These young diarists experienced shock and astonishment more intensely as they were overwhelmed by an avalanche of extreme experiences that tore their innocence apart: the confiscation of property, the deportations to the ghettos, extreme starvation, fear, the loss of family members, and especially the imminent death threat. Death is a daily reality: death as an arbitrary action at the hands of the Nazis, death at the whims of some neighbour who instantly turned into a perpetrator, death caused by disease, inhumane living conditions, and malnutrition. Death is at the core of a universe from which there is no escape.

Through its close connection with the present of the lived experience, the diary is an accurate reflection of the despair felt when facing an imminent death threat.

The authenticity and the special nature of the Holocaust diary can be better grasped through the comparison with the Holocaust memoir. While it shares the testimonial nature of the diary (Tucan, 2018), the memoir reorders the narrative from a post-factual perspective. When the memorialist begins remembering, they are heavily influenced by the recollected suffering, and this further contributes to the selection of the events they choose to narrate. They thus order the recollected events in the fluid interplay between traumatic memories (*ibid.*, 286 and the following ones). The memorialist chronicles their experiences with a view to showing their contemporaries the traumatic traces of the past. However, the memorialist is part and parcel of a suffering community as they have all been persecuted on grounds of ethnic identity, and not as individuals. They share the traumatic experience of the past with the ones that were persecuted next to them, but sadly many of them did not survive. The memorialist's story is therefore a testimonial made on behalf of those left behind. It is precisely the self-awareness of the survivor and their need to confess that make the transcription of the memories follow a final and generic aim, which typically is the one of defeating the concentrationary inferno, despite its diabolic nature. In fact, this is the major characteristic of the memoir: to tell a story of survival.

Unlike the memorialist, the diarist writes about recent events. The story of the diary is therefore fragmented into smaller narratives of the present moment. Typically, this is the moment of fracture in the Holocaust diaries. The diarist mostly focuses on how the regime of horror is steadily installed, inflicting suffering upon the individual and the collectivity. This fact intensifies the diarist's emotional response to the present moment and requires them to filter the traumatic experience step by step. This is why the diarist's attitude fluctuates and alternates between despair and hope. Diary writing involves careful observation, confession, fury, lamentation, despair, and more often than not, resignation. In sum, the diary is a form of ordering horror instantly, since the diarist does not have the privilege of knowing how the story will end. This becomes especially relevant for those who did not survive the Holocaust. Traces of the lives they led in the Holocaust inferno will appear as marks on the pages of the diary, susceptible to degradation and likely to be lost or destroyed. The diarists will survive in the cultural memory of those tragic times only if their accounts are preserved. To all of them, the diary is the survival itself.

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## THE DIARY OF ANNE FRANK – A DOCUMENTARY AND CINEMATOGRAPHIC COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

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**Abstract:** *The historiography of the Holocaust has relied over the years, from the post-war period to the present day, on a large number of testimonies and written resources on this phenomenon. These important memoir resources are, first and foremost, first-hand sources, intended to help the historian, the researcher or the simple reader who peruses them with valuable and usable information. Of these, perhaps the best-known and most widely publicized resource of its kind is The Diary of Anne Frank, which has received and continues to receive additions and film adaptations to this day. Combining various qualities, Anne Frank's diary stands as not only a historical document recording a phenomenon, but also an experiment in itself through self-imposed captivity against the background of the anti-Semitism that was proliferated and promoted during World War II. All of these unique particularities, but also the multiple angles from which the Diary can be viewed, have led to a series of film adaptations that have carried forward, sometimes faithfully, sometimes slightly distorted, the message of Anne Frank. It is known that any artistic intervention in order to adapt a life story involves some contribution and/or slight distortion of the model to be adapted, just as any measurement process influences the measurement result. The way in which these adaptations portray historical reality is largely determined by the director. In our century, these film and documentary adaptations of various historiographical sources on the Holocaust are much easier to reach, especially among young audiences. This gives him the opportunity to witness first-hand testimony to the phenomenon that conceptualized the term "genocide". All this against the backdrop of the rise of extremist and neo-Nazi events and formations in various parts of Europe, especially in the areas where the worst genocidal atrocities were committed.*

**Keywords:** Holocaust, memoirs, diary, Anne Frank, Holocaust cinematography.

**Rezumat:** *Istoriografia privind Holocaustul a contat, de-a lungul timpului, încă din perioada postbelică și până astăzi, în contemporaneitate, pe o serie numeroasă de mărturii și resurse scrise cu privire la acest fenomen. Aceste importante resurse de memorialistică sunt, în primul rând, izvoare de primă mână, având menirea de a ajuta istoricul, cercetătorul sau simplul cititor care le parcurge cu informații valoroase și valorificabile. Dintre acestea, poate că cea mai cunoscută și mediatizată resursă de acest fel este „Jurnalul Annei Frank”, care a primit și primește adăugiri și adaptări cinematografice până în prezent. Întrunind diverse calități, jurnalul Annei Frank stă mărturie ca fiind nu doar un document istoric ce înregistrează un fenomen, ci și un experiment în sine prin intermediul unei captivități auto-impuse pe fondul antisemitismului proliferat și promovat în perioada celui de-Al Doilea Război Mondial. Toate aceste particularități unice, dar și multiplele unghiuri din care poate fi văzut Jurnalul, au dus la o serie de adaptări cinematografice care au transmis mai departe, uneori fidel, alteori ușor distorsionat, mesajul Annei Frank. Se știe că orice intervenție artistică în vederea adaptării unei povești de viață implică o anumită contribuție și/sau o ușoară distorsionare a modelului de adaptat, așa cum și orice proces de măsurare influențează rezultatul măsurătorii. Felul în care aceste adaptări redau realitatea istorică rămâne îndeosebi la latitudinea regizorului. În secolul nostru, aceste adaptări cinematografice și documentare din diferite surse istoriografice privind Holocaustul ajung mult mai lesne la public, mai cu seamă la publicul tânăr. Acesta are astfel oportunitatea unor mărturii vii cu privire la acest fenomen care a conceptualizat termenul de „genocid”. Toate acestea pe fondul creșterii evenimentelor și formațiunilor extremiste și neonaziste în diferite locuri din Europa, cu precădere în zonele unde au fost comise cele mai mari atrocități genocidare.*

**Cuvinte-cheie:** Holocaust, memorialistică, jurnal, Anne Frank, cinematografia Holocaustului.

The Memoirs on the Second World War recorded numerous volumes and testimonies on the events of the perception of them and the war conditions. Of these, "The Diary of Anne Frank" is perhaps the most illustrative example of a book that also meets a number of qualities. It is a historical document, a detailed analysis of a real anthropological experiment, a socio-historical radiography and a war diary with literary tinges.

Well-known over the decades since its first appearance, in 1947, "The Diary of Anne Frank", in the original *Het Achterhuis* ("The Secret Annex") brings together the multiple testimonies of a young teenage girl of Jewish origin regarding the period of clandestinity lived by her and the members of two Jewish families in the annex to the Opekta spice and pectin factory in Amsterdam, for a two-years period, 1942 to 1944. What stands out from Anne Frank's diary isn't necessarily the scenography behind this family tragedy or her contribution to the Shoah, but the whole suite of elements that make this volume of memoirs a real fresco of its era starting, as it couldn't be more natural, from a personal microhistory.

According to the publishing house that published the full Romanian version of the journal, consulted for this analysis<sup>1</sup>, the first translation into Romanian of this work took place in 1959. Since then, the journal has been republished, revised and added in 2011, 2016 and 2021, due to the appearance of five unknown tabs compared to the original version, from the late 90s. Beyond these film adaptations, the journal has had a number of other film adaptations, also theatrical, musical, comics and animated movies.

The volume itself, seen at the historiographical level, renders and confirms certain historical facts of the period under consideration (Mussolini's surrender, Operation Overlord etc.), against the backdrop of Holland's wartime journey as a country under Nazi occupation. As well as simply recounting or remembering them, the diary also shows how the residents of the Annex related to them or what their views were on the Second World War. As an event autopsy,

Anne Frank's diary transgresses from the simple notes of a young woman jotting down the chronology of her war days, going beyond the format of a simple historical diary and printing in its pages sequences and personal touches, sometimes even philosophical ideas. A number of such diaries were printed in the post-war period, as young people and children in particular are known to be the most honest observers of the world around them. What makes this particular diary such a resounding success is most likely not so much the socio-historical context, but the manner in which it has been rendered, through self-imposed captivity as a model of adaptation for survival. Anne Frank's notes begin shortly before her move to the Annex, shortly after her thirteenth birthday on 12 June 1942, when she receives the diary as a birthday gift from her parents. Anne had known about this gift before her anniversary, as herself declares in her diary, but she chooses to recall and recount, as a starting point in her writing, the moment when she sees the diary on the table intended for her presents, so when it becomes a certainty that this beautiful gift will become her real and intimate companion. So the notation begins at the Frank family home in Merwedeplein and continues for almost a month, until 9 July 1942, when Anne and her family move to Opekta's Secret Annex, alarmed by a recruitment order in the name of Anne's older sister Margot. This month-long period of "normality" depicts aspects of the life of an outgoing, talkative, extrovert young woman, a spirit with a critical capacity that shows real qualities of a good writer. But Anne Frank discovers only later that she is meant to be a writer, but before this revelation, like most teenagers of her age, Anne dreams of becoming an artist. Her temperament helps her in this respect.

After all, the main part of the book and the part that is interesting from a documentary point of view is the one about co-living in the Annex. It is well known that living together is quite a challenging experience even when people around us are people we know or even family members, especially when this happens in the presence of strangers. Above all, living conditions, by themselves, with their absolutely necessary restrictive value, are an act of stoicism. The difficulty of achieving privacy, on all its scales, from basic needs, maintaining hygiene, to the simple and healthy

<sup>1</sup> Anne Frank, *Jurnalul Annei Frank: 12 iunie 1942 – 1 august 1944*; definitive version, ed. by Mirjam Pressler, Humanitas, Bucharest, third edition, 2021, translated from Dutch and notes by Gheorghe Nicolaescu.

need to be alone, takes on a whole new meaning for each of the Annex's co-tenants. Nevertheless, and despite the obstacles, Anne manages to keep an intimate diary in which she does not shy away from writing with naturalness and verve, about every more or less spicy event in her living space. The formidable quarrels of the van Pels family (whom Anne calls van Daan, in her writings) are yet another example of a situation in which intimacy of the four walls lose its value totally. Even so, going back to the value of intimacy and the manner in which Anne manages to keep her diary only for her own eyes, we find here a true tacit understanding of the members of the Annex, by which none of them touches the notebook of the teenager, knowing that, at social convention level, there is a kind of sacred intimacy of an individual, like a taboo intimacy, which those around never touch. Another absolutely remarkable fact about Anne's diary is the manner in which others, constrained by the environment, change or refine their behavioural traits. The fine analysis of the Other. When a number of individuals are brought together out of a common interest, so that a certain amount of unpredictability is eliminated there is an opportunity to reveal the character of the Other, as naturally as possible, and even more so through the contribution of the Other. It creates a kind of behavioral melange that is as interesting as possible. On the one hand, the individual behaves as naturally as possible under the given conditions, for his own psychological comfort, on the other hand it is not possible to completely eliminate a certain dose of otherness imposed by the presence of the Other, and so the individual is forced to play a certain role, to pose. Not Anne. Based on her own self-characterizations, but also on the indirect characterizations that involuntarily result from describing certain episodes in the house, Anne Frank maintained her authentic spirit for the most part. Not only that, relying on her psychological analysis skills, she becomes a fine observer of the Other, more so than anyone in the Secret Annex. Without these qualities, the adaptations and stagings of the diary would have faced various script and directorial difficulties. In my personal analysis of the multiple screenings of *The Diary of Anne Frank*, I considered three productions of different origins:

- „*The diary of Anne Frank*” (1959, USA, directed by George Stevens);
- miniseriea BBC „*The diary of Anne Frank*” (2009, UK, directed by Jon Jones);
- the german feature film „*Das Tagebuch der Anne Frank*” (2016, Germany, directed by Hans Steinbichler).

Beginning with the classic screen version of *The Diary of Anne Frank*, and perhaps the one most familiar to the public, the 1959 American version of *The Diary* is a Hollywood production par excellence. I would note here, from the very beginning, that the film was adapted most likely to the rigors of the Hollywood studios, so it suffered some discordance with the original volume. It is well known that both then and now, American production studios are the real decision makers when it comes to making a film. However, this could explain certain screenwriting or casting choices. First of all, in "The diary of Anne Frank" (1959) we find a particularly beautiful Anne Frank (see Fig.1), recalling Vivien Leigh in the role that made her famous. According to certain information from various sources, it seems that Millie Perkins was strictly the director's choice, who saw her photo and tried to convince Perkins to play the role of Anne Frank. Millie Perkins had not previously studied acting, nor did she particularly want to be an actress, she had modelled until her first role.

The mere choice of a model in the role of Anne Frank, who did not consider herself to be a girl with certain remarkable physical qualities, as her photographs reveal, but a normal girl, already takes away quite a lot from the authenticity of the film in relation to the book<sup>2</sup>. Going over this aspect, the fifties production reveals a more childish Anne than the diary describes, the scenes with Peter van Daan even suffer from a certain dose of ridiculousness which brings us back to the American sitcom genre, scenes meant to portray the incongruity and disparity between the two characters, barely touched upon in the original diary. The Anne from *The Diary* does not dwell on these aspects, because, as

<sup>2</sup> But perhaps this choice followed the wishes of the real Anne Frank's father, who would have wanted Audrey Hepburn in the role of his daughter, inviting her into the project himself as <https://people.com/movies/why-audrey-hepburn-refused-play-anne-frank/> accessed 12 July 2021.

expected, the weight of the surrounding novelties overwhelms her. The suffocating longing for her cat, Moortje, the incomprehensible feeling of statelessness imposed by the Nazis on the Jews (the Frank family were at the origin a family of ethnic German Jews), the staggering of food portions or the way others perceive her, not just members of the van Daan family, but also her mother, who admonishes her most of the time for her outbursts incongruous with the social norm, are the real issues that have been bothering Diary Anne since her first months in the Annex. „I want to explode with rage, but I can't show it, I want to stamp my feet, scream, give my mother a good shake, cry and so much more, because of the mean words, the mocking glances, the blames that pierce me every day again and again, like arrows drawn from a tightly strung bow that are hard to get out of my body. I'd like to shout to my mother, Margot, van Daan, Dussel, and dad: *Leave me alone, let me finally sleep one night without my pillow getting full of tears, without feeling my eyes burning and my head pounding with pain. Let me go, leave everything behind, get out of the world!*”(p.100). All these states, all this inner tumult of Anne' were extremely poorly exploited, both in the American production and in the other two, who presents us with a strong, stoic Anne with very few outflows of weakness. It should also be noted that the narrative discourse of the real Anne is far superior and much more mature than that in the American production.

Perhaps the most bombastic screenplay of The Diary, the 1959 Hollywood film focuses heavily on the love story between a pubescent Anne and Peter, son of the Van Daan family. The event itself allows for an absolutely promising cinematic speculation, but in order to respect the historical truth, Anne did not give it as much importance as the writers of the film in question did. The scenes reach a degree of boudoir romance, going so far as to invent certain encounters or insert them in the context of bombings, always frightening for those in the house, as *contre emploi*. From the absolutely clumsy encounters at the beginning of the film, we somehow come to an unreal degree of affinity between the two. The same idea is followed in the case of the portrayal of Anna's feminism, all against the setting of a galloping narrative action, somehow meant to tick off as many aspects as possible from the

book to the film, an amalgamation that leads to an above-average length of three hours film.

In the depiction of the film under analysis, we find an almost tamed Mrs Van Daan, even with a friendly air, in contrast to her husband and in total discordance with the reality of the Diary. Shelley Winters, who plays Petronella Van Daan<sup>3</sup> and who wins an Oscar with this role, gives his character a dose of humanism hard to find in his jovial, trivial and materialistic Diary version. Even the contradictory discussions are imprinted with the benevolence of the films of the 1950s. On the other hand, remaining in the area of the portrayal of the Van Daan family, the obstinacy with which the viewer is forced to follow an episode that is given an exaggerated importance appears here at the end of the film – the moment of Mr Van Daan's capture while stealing food from the Frank family's ration, shown to the point of paroxysm in the film, when everyone is aware of Dr Dussel's similar practice of dosing food in the drawer under his bed, yet everyone shares the food with him on his birthday, an episode Anne recounts in the Diary.

Next let's take a look at the 2016 German feature *Das Tagebuch der Anne Frank*, which takes the adaptation of The Diary of Anne Frank even further. It is worth mentioning here one of the scenes at the beginning of the film, when Anne and some of her friends go out to the beach and then go into the water, in a radiant violation of one of the anti-Jewish laws, enforced since 1940, who claimed that Jews were not allowed to go to the swimming pool, even though the choice of exteriors for the stage in fact clearly indicated one of the beaches around Amsterdam. Beyond this non-existent scenario in the Diary, there is also an unfortunate encounter between the girls and some members of the Hitler Youth (*Hitlerjugend*), who urge the girls to get out of the water. A number of anti-Semitic invectives of these young boys want to expose, if necessary, the tense atmosphere between the two sides. Interesting how the director, Hans Steinbichler, chose to invent this scene at the cost of other, more interesting scenes presented by Anne Frank in the Diary, namely her meetings with Hello Silberg, the cousin of one of Anne's friends.

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<sup>3</sup> in the "Diary of Anne Frank", she appears as Auguste van Daan

But in "Das Tagebuch der Anne Frank" another assumption is put forward and, at the same time, aspects of an episodic character are invented - the philonazi and anti-Semitic magazinist from Opekta, who reveals these beliefs from the very first scenes of the film, in a short speech before entering the shift. Later, it only appears again in one key moment, the one in which Anne allegedly falls off the ladder while fetching a portion of potatoes from the attic. The storekeeper hears the sound of Anna's fall and even though the finality of this observation is not explicitly stated, on the assumption of betrayal, we are given to understand that he has alerted the Gestapo about the clandestine residence of those in the Annex, a fact not proven. Another curious choice of the director, to say the least, is the illustration of the Frank family leaving for the hideout in Opekta, carrying suitcases, a blatant fact that is clearly contradicted by Anna's lines, "Thursday, July 9, 1942. *Dear Kitty*, and so we walked through the heavy rain Dad, Mother and I, each with a backpack and a market bag filled with various things (...) for months we had carried out of the house furniture and clothes as much as we could" (p.35).

Following on from the film's exotic choices, it would be useful to mention the burlesque touch with which Petronella Van Daan's character is infused. Her portrayal becomes almost caricatured, as does the casting choice for the character of Margot Frank, whose beauty is often mentioned in the diary entries and here pales in comparison to Anna's, whom the director feels compelled to beautify more than is appropriate given that she occupies the lead role in the story. At the same time, Anne of the German film is not just a pretty face (see Fig.2), but comes across as a vain young girl, even naughty in her more than ironic lines.

I will conclude my review of the peculiar features of this film with another scene imagined by the screenwriter (Fred Breinersdorfer), which takes place outside the Diary, namely the arrival of the ladies and gentlemen from the Annex at Auschwitz-Birkenau after the evacuation. Another historical untruth, knowing that only Edith Frank, Auguste van Pels (van Daan), Otto Frank (the only survivor), Peter and Hermann van Pels (van Daan) and Fritz Pfeffer (Albert Dussel) ended up there in the first instance. In

fact, after the evacuation, Anne and Margot arrive at Bergen-Belsen, where they die of typhus. The director's vision also renders the humiliating but ritualistic moment of women's hair-cutting at Auschwitz-Birkenau, the last scene lingering on Anna's naked gaze.

In sharp contrast to the above films is the 2009 British miniseries "The diary of Anne Frank", divided into five thirty-minute episodes, totalling a full-length film of two and a half hours. Directed by Jon Jones, the BBC miniseries is a production that stays true to The Diary of Anne Frank.

The film opens with Anne receiving her famous diary on her birthday<sup>4</sup>. From the physical portrait, we find an Anne more faithful to the one in the diary and the existing photographs, with a hidden, almost modelled beauty in the performance of Ellie Kendrick (see Fig.3), in her first leading role. A well-rounded portrayal, as well as Anne's relationships with other Annex members, important to the character. Worth mentioning here is the well-tempered bond between her and Peter, but also the obvious lack of sympathy between Anne and Dr. Dussel, another well-represented character, the complete opposite of the one in the Hollywood film, where Dussel contained a strong dose of unintentional humor due to his laughable appearance.

A few amendments need to be mentioned for this production as well. First, the appearance of the library masking the entrance to the annex, which occurs after the tenants have moved there, in the televised version. Then there is the almost catatonic state in which Anna's mother finds herself in most scenes, inexplicable as long as we follow the descriptions in the Diary, "she eats in good health, speaks with vivacity" (p.149) and in the incongruity of some hysterical outbursts in certain situations of the miniseries. At the opposite pole is Mrs. Van Daan, in her most digestible version, even comical at times, who steals all the scenes in which she appears with Anna's mother, faithful to Anna's descriptions. – "If I knew how to draw her, I'd love to have captured her with exactly that attitude, so comical was that silly, crazy tramp!" (p.62).

<sup>4</sup> Unlike the 1959 feature film, in which Anne accidentally found the diary on arrival at the Annex.

All in all, modest in approach and aesthetic, the British miniseries is perhaps the most humanistic portrayal of the members of the Opekta Annex. There are also beautiful, necessary episodes, taken from Anna's diary, such as that of the countless crates of strawberries, brought by Herr Kugler, or that of bathing and finding the right bathing place for each of the housemates, together with the taking of certain quotes from the diary word for word. All of which gives a touch of respect to the work that is the basis of this screening and can only please every reader of *The Diary of Anne Frank*.

At the end of this analysis I will open a false parenthesis, referring to a different kind of production, a documentary. Produced in 2019, "*#AnneFrank: Parallel Stories*" carries forward Anne's message from her diary. The production, directed by Sabina Fedeli and Anna Migotto, takes "*The Diary of Anne Frank*" as its starting point, but it is not limited to simply narrating from it and recalling the story of the young symbol of the Shoah, but goes hand in hand with other stories of several Holocaust survivors who, at the time, were close to Anne Frank's age. The Italian documentary in question is as well anchored as possible in our times, which is proven by the way the producers (Didi Gnocchi, Franco di Saro, Veronica Bottanelli) have chosen to rework its title, framing Anne Frank's name in a hashtag, thus re-symbolising it and adapting it to a contemporary language that tends to become increasingly graphic.

The true stories of Anne Frank and the five Holocaust survivors (Arianna Szörenyi, Sarah Lichtsztejn-Montard, Helga Weiss, Andra and Tatiana Bucci) are followed and seen through the eyes of a young teenager, a personification of the younger generation. She embarks on an investigative journey to find out what the Holocaust meant and how it was perceived by young men and women of her age in those years. Katarina Kat, as the producers have chosen to call the young teenager, travels across Europe, stopping in the places of origin of the five survivors, but also in the camps where they lived for several years (Bergen-Belsen, Westerbork, Drancy, Terezín). After each stop, through her iPhone, Katarina posts on her Instagram account short queries, more or less philosophical, always ending with a hashtag that somehow agglutinates certain essential ideas (e.g.

#annihilation, #persecution, #resistance). This choice to merge survivor stories and inserts from Anne Frank's diary, recited by actress Hellen Mirren, is not exactly a fortunate one, as the character of Katarina Kat, in conjunction with the banality imprinted by the idea of the hashtag, sometimes seems false and this fact shines through several times beyond the screen. The colourful, high-definition shots, where we watch a Katarina visiting the remains of the camps or certain museums and the Anne Frank memorial house and asking herself questions which she then posts on social media, the hashtag framing, unable to clearly convey the overwhelming, hard to put into words, feelings at the sight of those places, all give the production a dose of superficiality.

Despite this small deficiency, "*#AnneFrank: Parallel Stories*" has a great merit, that of bringing to the attention of today's audience, on one of the largest streaming platforms in the world, Netflix, the memory of the victims of one of the most terrible genocides in human history. Not only that, the Italian documentary, using contemporary means, discusses with the descendants of the last Holocaust survivors how they understand and relate to their family history and heritage. Some of them translate this heritage through art, others choose to communicate it in a detached way or wear it on as a tattoo, like Lorenzo Giovanella, Arianna Szörenyi's grandson, who survived four concentration camps.

The documentary also features the less publicised story of the artist Helga Weiss (Helga Hošková-Weissová, her real name). Helga, an Anne Frank of the Czech Republic, has documented her stay in Terezín (the fortress town, or "city given to children" as it was portrayed by Nazi propaganda) in a diary. Born in the same year that Anne Frank was, Helga Weiss, inspired by everyday life in the camp where she spent three years of her adolescence, and by the notes she made in her own diary, has drawn a number of events in Terezín, as advised by her father. All these drawings and Helga's memoirs have been collected in a volume called *Helga's Diary: A Young Girl's Account of Life in a Concentration Camp*. The volume was recently published by an American publisher in 2013. Helga Weiss (see Fig.4) is still alive and lives in Prague.

The way today's young people are discovering the realities and history of the Holocaust, in an age when anti-Semitism tends to rise to alarming levels, in areas of Europe where extremist groups are gaining increasing popular sympathy, in an obsessive persistence of Holocaust denial and in the face of the undeniable presence of neo-Nazism in its various forms, are all strong enough reasons to look back to the historical past. At the same time, this is the strength of the existence and message of the documentary "#AnneFrank:Parallel Stories".

Whether we are talking about equal or unequal aspects, consistent or not with the volume that laid the foundation for each of the screenings mentioned in this work, these three versions, together with the other versions and adaptations of the reference volume, somehow enrich this eclectic, courageous, original and edifying writing. As for any adaptation or staging, there is a greater or lesser degree of directorial and scriptwriting vision, without which one cannot contribute to one's own interpretation of the work. In the case of a document with historical value, this contribution is like a double-edged sword. On the one hand we have the new or particular vision of the adaptor, on the other hand, as a point of reference, there is the historical truth, which prevails or should prevail in a work of this nature.

"The diary of Anne Frank" was and remains a landmark confession among Holocaust memoirs. The message of this diary transcends time and is the only one that cannot and will not be changed by anyone. As Anne wrote, in an almost premonitory moment: "It is absolutely impossible for me to build everything on death, misery and confusion. I see how the world is slowly turning more and more into a desert, I hear stronger and stronger the thunder that is coming and will kill us too, I feel the suffering of millions of people, and yet, if I look at the sky, I think that all this will turn out well again, that even this cruelty will end, that peace and tranquillity will return to the world order. Meanwhile, I have to keep my concepts at shelter, who knows, maybe they will still find some use in the times to come! Yours, Anne M. Frank" (p.377).



## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS/ LISTA ILUSTRĂȚIILOR

**Fig. 1.** Millie Perkins (Anne Frank) and Joseph Schildkraut (Otto Frank) on the set of "The diary of Anne Frank" (1959);

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Diary\\_of\\_Anne\\_Frank\\_\(1959\\_film\)#/media/File:Millie\\_Perkins\\_and\\_Joseph\\_Schildkraut\\_in\\_The\\_Diary\\_of\\_Anne\\_Frank\\_\(1959\).jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Diary_of_Anne_Frank_(1959_film)#/media/File:Millie_Perkins_and_Joseph_Schildkraut_in_The_Diary_of_Anne_Frank_(1959).jpg)

**Fig. 2.** Actress Lea van Acken, who played Anne Frank in the German film "Das Tagebuch der Anne Frank" on a filming day in Amsterdam;

[https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Das\\_Tagebuch\\_der\\_Anne\\_Frank#/media/Bestand:Lea\\_van\\_Acken\\_as\\_Anne\\_Frank\\_at\\_Merweideplein.jpg](https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Das_Tagebuch_der_Anne_Frank#/media/Bestand:Lea_van_Acken_as_Anne_Frank_at_Merweideplein.jpg)

**Fig. 3.** Ellie Kendrick, who portrayed Anne Frank in the BBC miniseries "The diary of Anne Frank" (2009);

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Diary\\_of\\_Anne\\_Frank\\_\(2009\\_TV\\_series\)#/media/File:Ellie\\_Kendrick.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Diary_of_Anne_Frank_(2009_TV_series)#/media/File:Ellie_Kendrick.jpg)

**Fig. 4.** Helga Weiss, in a 2015 photo, standing in the Volary Jewish Cemetery at the grave of former Holocaust survivor Judyta Hochberger.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Helga\\_Ho%C5%A1kov%C3%A1-Weissova#/media/File:Helga\\_Ho%C5%A1kov%C3%A1-Weissova\\_\(2015\).jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Helga_Ho%C5%A1kov%C3%A1-Weissova#/media/File:Helga_Ho%C5%A1kov%C3%A1-Weissova_(2015).jpg)



Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig. 4

## INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE TRAGEDY IN PHILIP ROTH'S *NEMESIS*

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**Abstract:** *"Philip Nemesis" (2010) is Philip Roth's last novel, fictionalizing a community crisis caused by poliomyelitis in Newark, Roth's predilect literary space. Written as the imaginary history of an epidemic as reflected in the particular destinies of a city, a vulnerable group and its hero, the novel revisits themes and strategies that make up the core of Roth's entire oeuvre - Jewishness, ethnic assimilation, illness and death, tragic love affairs, nostalgia, childhood and adolescence.. Roth assumes the role of a classical writer in superimposing a collective drama and an individual one – the story of a polio outbreak in Weequahic, Roth's Jewish neighborhood growing up, intertwines with the efforts of Bucky Cantor, a Phys-ed teacher, to control the epidemic and save the children under his care from the terrible threat. Faced with a hopeless scenario, Bucky becomes of Roth's iconic tragic heroes. This paper closely investigates Bucky Cantor's becoming and his unexpectedly contemporaneous role as leader in a gravely stricken community. The context of the 2020-2021 ongoing Covid, the global health disaster it triggered and the multi-layered short and long-term effects of this collective crisis favor a rereading of Nemesis that highlights resilience and belief in the greater good against the backdrop of an ultimately hopeless situation.*

**Keywords:** *Illness, epidemic, poliomyelitis, Jewishness, collective death.*

**Rezumat:** Ultimul roman al lui Philip Roth, *Nemesis* (2010) este o relatare ficțională despre epidemia de poliomielită afectând orașul Newark în 1944. Un exemplu viu de ucronie, romanul recalibrează câteva dintre cele mai frecvente teme și concepte din opera scriitorului: boala, evreitatea, moartea (individuală și colectivă), relațiile, memoria și tinerețea, proiectându-le pe fundalul unei crize severe de sănătate publică. Roth esențializează furia și disperarea unui cartier evreiesc lovit de epidemie și le integrează în drama individuală a protagonistului său, Bucky Cantor, transformându-l pe acesta într-un veritabil erou tragic. Lucrarea de față urmărește articularea acestui destin tragic în proximitatea epidemiei și a victimelor sale, copiii ce frecventau terenul de joacă aflat în grija lui Cantor, tânărul profesor de educație fizică.

**Cuvinte-cheie:** boală, epidemie, poliomielită, evreitate, moarte colectivă.

*Nemesis* (2010) is Roth's final novel, his "exit" (to paraphrase *Exit Ghost*) from the literary scene. An unusual end to a stellar literary career, the novel is, in many ways, a lesser accomplishment, if major writings, such as *American Pastoral*, *The Plot Against America* or *The Human Stain* were invoked. Once again, Roth mythologizes his native city of Newark, New Jersey, as he had done in many of his books. *Nemesis* (2010) is Philip Roth's final novel, marking a rather unusual departure from the individual focus of his later novels.

*Nemesis* remixes some of Roth's major themes - Jewishness, illness, death – in the high tonality of classical tragedy, by placing face to face, in a paradigmatic tension, a community in crisis and its potential savior.

However, Roth's vision of tragedy is a revised, modern version of the Greek archetype: when the children he was supposed to protect fall ill with polio, he cannot shield them from danger or even avoid becoming the spreading agent himself.

By mirroring an individual destiny and a collective one, Roth provides his protagonist with a singular character, one that distinguishes him from his peers, making him stand out, faced with a dire perspective – that of facing his fate as the agent of contagion and death among those he was trying to protect. *Nemesis* is not one of Roth's stylistic masterpieces, nor is it a character-driven narrative in the sense other novels – such as *Exit Ghost* or *The Humbling* – were. The novel gravitates around a crisis, rather than its

protagonist. In more ways than one, it could be argued that the central character of *Nemesis* is not Bucky Cantor, but polio itself. This final work marks a symbolic return of one of Roth's major themes, present throughout his later work – disease as a powerful, active force dismantling an otherwise compact entity – an individual life, or, as it is the case now, a tightly knit community trying to survive disaster. The narrative tackles an existential dimension as well, questioning the role of Divinity in the dynamics of collective illness and death. Since polio mainly affected children and teenagers, the perceived effect of the epidemic was that of inescapable doom – disease struck randomly and anyone could be affected. Victoria Aarons argued in a study on the self in Roth's novel that the writer involved in the narrative fabric of his novel a sense of “mythic time and place as well, out of real time” (Aarons, 2013, 55), at the same time opting to create what Inbar Kaminsky named “a hybrid of realism” (Kaminsky, 2014, 113). Bucky Cantor is memorable as a tragic hero particularly because the enemy he stands against is irrational and cruel. I intend to explore the articulation of this character as a modern variant of a classical archetype – that of the hero faced with an inescapable fate that he cannot accept, despite his apparent resignation. The confrontation between man and disease is part of the classical tragic conflict – Oedipus' Thebes was ravaged by the plague and infertility at the time the king decided to investigate their causes, therefore it is important to note that Roth's choice to involve polio, and not the generic plague as the element that erodes the community from within suggests that the writer intended to anchor his novel in a specific historical time, bearing a personal dimension – the 1940s recur frequently as an age of crisis and change in his oeuvre – at the same time placing it into a universal framework – Western civilization was massively impacted by the successive waves of highly fatal epidemics, from cholera and the plague to polio and tuberculosis. *Nemesis* reaches far beyond the message and allegories of an epidemic novel, bearing ethnic, religious and moral issues that are amplified and questioned more acutely, as is normally happens under extreme circumstances. The epidemic provides the context and plays a determining role in downfall of Bucky Cantor and his becoming as

tragic hero. Not only does he impersonate individual tragedy, as he turns out to be contaminated and sick with polio, but he may have also contributed to the aggravation of the epidemic.

It is important to note that the nature and spreading patterns of poliomyelitis is utterly relevant for Roth's novel, as this is an insidious disease, quietly infiltrating human communities and regularly attacking their most vulnerable members – children and teenagers.

Poliomyelitis was part of human life long before any written medical record could have kept track of its presence. It is the subject of many non-scientific medical “biographies”, as it elicited as much interest as any disaster that had left its mark on Western culture in recent times. Daniel J. Wilson's book on polio is particularly relevant for this discussion as it stemmed from a personal experience with an epidemic that swept the North American continent in multiple waves. The pathology and transmission of the polio virus are complex processes that became a public health issue once the pathogen reached modern settlements with a high density population. Although it is largely considered a childhood disease, polio can also be contracted by adolescents and adults as well – President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, is perhaps one of the most famous cases, as he was 39 when he became sick. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when clinicians and scientists began to keep written records of the disease and its effects, polio was initially called “infantile paralysis”, and the name was in use until later in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Given that the poliovirus attacks the gray marrow of the spinal cord, the new name, poliomyelitis, emerged in scientific descriptions, signifying an inflammation of the myelin. Once it penetrates the spine and its nerve structures, the virus targets the anterior horn cells, mediating the exchange of neural signals between muscles and the brain. The pathogenic mechanism that enables the virus to reach the spinal cord has not been completely understood, but clinical practice allowed specialists to observe a crucial detail – the degree of damage to these cells is a direct measure of the severity of illness. In cases of extensive damage to the anterior horn cells in bone marrow the patient was completely paralyzed. If nerve cells were irreversibly damaged, as they do not regenerate, the

affected muscle could no longer function, leaving the patient disabled. In many cases, the muscle was involved in a vital function - breathing, for example - in which case the patient died unless a special device was used - the iron lung.

The virus proliferated through a simple mechanism, via the fecal-oral route, and its rapid rate of infection was facilitated by poor hygiene conditions in cities and frequent contamination of water. The urban environment, although cleaner and apparently safer than the rural one, played an important role in diminishing immunity to the disease, as children came into contact with the virus later, when their immune systems had to fight it without the help of maternal antibodies from breastmilk. In fact, specialists theorized that a cleaner environment was detrimental to the effects of polio, as cases became more severe and herd immunity was impossible to achieve. The polio virus, once ingested with contaminated water or food, normally remained in the small intestine of the host, causing a milder form of infection, an intestinal flu, accompanied by fever and pains. It is estimated that 90% of infected patients who drink contaminated water or come into contact with elements derived from contaminated soil develop this form of the disease, with these less severe symptoms. Medical professionals call this "inapparent polio" (Wilson, 2009, 2), since the virus does not leave the digestive tract and never reaches the central nervous system. To this day, there is a small number of people that still live inside an iron lung. They had no choice but to spend their entire lives inside a device that saved many children from certain death. The mechanical respirator works by creating negative pressure inside the tank, therefore moving the thorax of the patient in a similar manner to normal breathing.

Statistics show that the majority of cases with an active infection are asymptomatic, with numbers as high as 90%. Far less patients, a total of 4-8% cases suffer from a mild form of disease, popularly known as "summer flu" (Wilson, 2009, 2). Although asymptomatic or mild, the disease prompts the immune system to create antibodies and that protect the patient from another infection with that viral strain. In less than 5% of cases, the virus enters the nervous system via the spinal cord and inflicts serious damage to motor

cells, causing various degrees of disability. If the anterior horn cells are damaged, but not completely destroyed, paralysis may be reversible, and the patient could regain motor skills with therapy. However, complete destruction of these cells results in irreversible paralysis, endangering the patient's life.

In premodern times, infants and small children were exposed to the polio virus very early in life, when their immunity was supported by maternal antibodies. As a result, they gained protection against further infection with the same strain of virus, and spreading was halted. Due to increasing hygiene measures in urban dwelling, starting around the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, humans became infected later in life, when they were older children, adolescents or even adults. Since they had no immunity to the poliovirus, the disease could manifest itself as paralytic poliomyelitis. Increased mobility and easier access to public transport greatly contributed to the aggravation of the epidemic.

Historically, poliomyelitis was constantly present in human settlements in various parts of the world, but it normally manifested as an endemic disease - meaning that it erupted and remained confined within a well-delimited region. Once contagion reached greater proportion, with the virus spreading rapidly beyond the limits of a community, the phenomenon changed its name and nature, becoming an epidemic. For the first six decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, polio was a constant threat for American children and young adults. Ambulances could be seen taking patient to the hospital when their condition already was severe - often doctors made house call just to confirm paralysis, as parents were dumbfounded by the sudden onset of permanent disability. American public health was periodically challenged by polio epidemics that swept across various states, leaving many scarred for life. Images of children encased in iron lungs became the norm in newspapers and magazines, as the machine was practically the only hope patients had to help them to breathe. Official scientific accounts reveal that tens of thousands of children were left permanently disabled by polio just as many died. In 1953 a glimmer of hope appeared as the first polio vaccine was discovered by American virologist Jonas Salk. Although he publicly inoculated himself and his family (including three young sons) with

his experimental vaccine, the large-scale immunization of American children was not spared from incidents. In 1954, the clinical trial in the U.S. using Salk's vaccine included 1.3 million schoolchildren and in April 1955 it was declared efficient and safe. An unfortunate incident put a halt to the general enthusiasm. Due to a defect in the production of the vaccine by the Cutter Laboratories in Berkeley, California, 200,000 people received doses that were not produced according to Salk's instructions. The same year, after 11 people died and hundreds were left paralyzed following vaccination, the program was suspended for safety reasons. It was later concluded that the disaster (leading to a sudden drop in the general public's trust in the vaccine) was caused by the manufacturer's failure to completely inactivate the Type 1 poliovirus in the vaccine. In 1960, Albert Sabin created the attenuated live oral vaccine, which showed better results than Salk's – it was easier to administer and immunity lasted for longer. In 1963, a vaccine that offered protection against all three poliovirus types became widely available.

Roth's *Nemesis* is imagined as a tale in a time of despair, though. There was no prospect of a vaccine during the dark years of WWII, and resources were directed towards the war, rather than research and public health. Official recommendations targeted prevention and hygiene, asking people to act responsibly and protect their own health and that of their family.

Public places were disinfected often and DDT was used to sanitize private homes. Doctors and governmental authorities encouraged citizens to wash vigorously and maintain the body and the living environment clean and as safe from contamination as possible.

In his book, projected as “the American story” of polio, David M. Oshinsky follows the dramatic history of the U.S. polio epidemic in the 1940s and 1950s. His observations are relevant in this context as they hint at a mentality and attitude toward crisis and disaster that shaped the character of Bucky Cantor, Roth's protagonist: “Already fearful of a disease whose victims ranged from anonymous children to President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Americans were primed to see polio as an indigenous plague with an indigenous solution—a problem to be solved,

like so many others, through a combination of ingenuity, voluntarism, determination, and money. One of the most common mantras of the post-World War II era, repeated by fund raisers, politicians, advertisers, and journalists, was the bold (and ultimately) truthful, promise, ‘we will conquer polio’” (Oshinsky, 2005, 4).

The Newark polio epidemic of 1944 that Roth based his novel upon is not historically accurate, but it isn't entirely fictional either. The city was affected by an epidemic in 1916 and 1952, and infections occurred in many other warm seasons. Roth intentionally superimposes the time of the ‘plague’ and that of the Second World War in order to achieve an absolute time of crisis and despair, powerfully and compellingly mirroring the powerlessness induced by the epidemic against the fear and uncertainty of war. Therefore, Newark - the year 1944 is a carefully chosen chronotope that ties both time and space to the fundamental notions that define America at one of its most dramatic moments in modern history: solidarity, leadership, courage, awareness, and, no less important, a type of heroism that can only be defined as tragic. The young lives lost on the European front and those lost or permanently affected by illness are invisibly bound by a tragic plot that bears the mark of inescapable doom. Indeed, war can be imagined as a global epidemic, an illness of the spirit and the mind, while major epidemics have been fought against with war-like strategies. The war on illness and the illness of war become Roth's central implicit metaphors in *Nemesis*. They are also connected to the writer's own biography, as many of his other novels are. This choice adds weight to the significance of subjectivity in the narrative, as the story is told from the perspective of Arnold Mesnikoff, who witnessed the events of that distant summer and had a deep connection with Cantor. Back then, the young man was a physical education teacher, director of a playground where children used to play, train and enjoy collectivity. Eugene “Bucky” Cantor was rejected for military service, as he was deemed unfit due to his poor eyesight. Instead, he compensated for this failure by actively participating in the life of the Weequahic community, as a protector of children and authority figure in the fight against polio. His relationship with Marcia, the daughter of a

doctor and a fellow teacher and, was headed towards marriage. He was loved by the young woman, children sought his company and their parents valued his opinion and advice. Roth articulates an emblematic human ideal, one that resurfaces in other tragedy-oriented novels, such as *American Pastoral*. "The powerful, the gorgeous, the lonely Swede, whom life had never made shrewd" (Roth 1998:79) is reshaped as someone else's elegiac memory, not Nathan Zuckerman's, as it had been in *American Pastoral*. Roth's archetype of the decent, kind, altruistic man torn apart by his tragic fate is a fitting choice as the swan song of the writer's career. Bucky is the epitome of decency, kindness and discretion, a teacher with a strong sense of justice becoming a leading figure embarked on a sacred mission – to protect the children under his care against the scourge of polio. His belief is simple and ridden with silent despair – the epidemic, like a mythological monster bound to destroy blooming life, seeks to kill the children of his city and neighborhood: "They're all kids, and polio is going after kids, and it will sweep through this place and destroy them all ... — in the end it's going to get every last child. The neighborhood is doomed. Not a one of the children will survive intact, if they survive at all" (Roth, 2010, 114-15).

Roth orchestrated complex strategies that make Bucky's downfall emblematically tragic, in a reversal reminding of the many twists and turns of classical tragedy. Cantor, the savior hero who fled his doomed land in order to be with his beloved Marcia, in the serene, apparently safe haven of the mountains, has the devastating revelation that he had brought the virus in that safe place, turning the holiday camp into a polio hotbed. In a tragic reversal, he became the danger he was trying to protect the children from. Subsequently, Cantor's life crumbles under the massive burden of shame and guilt, the fundamental pillars of the tragic plot. He feels crushed and defeated by a paralyzing sense of helplessness, unable to process the absurdity of the situation. Once confirmed ill, Bucky feels trapped and immobilized in the midst of incomprehensible events: children become sick and die, and all signs indicate a single possible scenario: unknowingly infected with the virus, Cantor had brought it into the camp, where he unwillingly infected others. Devious and cruel,

the epidemic won what had been a losing battle for Cantor, despite his refusal to accept this fact. Like a dark, blind force of nature, the epidemic reveals itself as the excessive, amplified form in which the virus attacks humans, trying to pursue its one essential purpose: to spread and multiply, using its hosts as weapons. Cantor loses everything, some of it by his own volition – refusing to become her burden, Bucky annuls his engagement to Marcia, despite her protestations and heartbreak. He chooses to isolate himself from all those who could remind him of his predicament, angry and alone, raising his fist at an indifferent God. His solitude is both physical and mental – his disabled body is the real, palpable metaphor of his abrupt distancing from community and otherness. Confined within his disabled self, Bucky becomes defined by his doom, inconsolable at the thought that he had brought illness and death upon those he was trying to protect and save. The former javelin thrower, who overcame his physical challenges with determination and resilience, was defeated with annihilating force by a primitive, natural element that closely resembles the irrationality of fate. Self-marginalization is the punishment Bucky inflicts upon himself for having contributed to the epidemic disaster.

An essential dimension in Roth's tragic plot is the focus on the collective effects of the epidemic – the "blaming the others" as a manner of diverting responsibility towards an antagonist group, usually foreigners or non-natives. In *Nemesis*, it is Italians and Jews. The first are blamed for spreading the virus when they descend at Bucky's playground and defyingly spit on the pavement. The former are gradually isolated by the majority as the scapegoat of the epidemic – due to the high number of polio cases in the Weequahic neighborhood. Classical literature and modern imagination have standardized the political metaphors of disease and epidemics. The pathogen spreading uncontrollably across communities, cities or even countries is often the figurative expression of a dangerous ideology, of a dialect of oppression, a form of excess and irrational action. The meaning of an epidemic often transcends the mundane and gains a metaphysical significance, related to the human condition and its spiritual correlatives. In a well-known and often cited approach to Roth's novel, the writer J.M.



Coetzee wrote that the American author “place[s] himself in a line of writers who have used the plague condition ... [as] simply a heightened state of the condition of being mortal” (Coetzee, 2010, 12). Coetzee’s tragic Greek reading of Roth revisits the classical symbolism of the novel, remarking that “the title *Nemesis* frames the interrogation of cosmic justice in Greek terms; and the plot pivots on the same dramatic irony as in Sophocles’ *Oedipus Rex*: a leader in the fight against the plague is unbeknown to himself a bringer of the plague” (*ibid.*). Greek mythology and American mythology become connected by their common understanding of heroic action: “everyman” characters like Bucky Cantor, marginalized in the grand narrative of history (as he was deemed unfit for service) become heroes engaged in a domestic war, and they end up just as disabled, lonely and isolated as if they had fought on the front. Roth’s understanding of tragedy is inextricably connected to the common and the domestic, and this vision is fully displayed in *American Pastoral*, where it generates the overwhelming tension that sets the novel’s tone.

Indeed, “Roth fantasizes a polio epidemic to coincide with World War II” (Budick, 2014, 2) in order to validate the catastrophic force of the polio epidemic at home. The symbolic meaning of the war becomes clearer once Cantor’s defeat is evident: his war with the epidemic and with the divinity that allowed its destructive force to manifest rages on, secluded in his mind, unseen and unheard by anyone else but himself. Decades after the epidemic had been overcome with the help of vaccines, Bucky is still trapped into his inner tragic conflict. His anti-theology is unsophisticated and personal, bordering the infantile – an evil and vengeful God allowed the epidemic to claim the lives and physical integrity of children, proving his cruel indifference to the young and innocent. This belief is no accident, nor the result of an entirely altruistic perspective: Bucky was an orphan whose mother had died in childbirth, a child who was abandoned by an unavailable father who deserted him in infancy. Bucky’s calling to save children from the threat of polio is a rather transparent effort to save himself. Arnold Mesnikoff, the narrative consciousness revealed towards the end of the novel, telling the tale in retrospect, praised

him in similar terms to those used by Nathan Zuckerman describing the Swede in *American Pastoral*: “he was, to all of us boys, the most exemplary and revered authority we knew, a young man of convictions, easygoing, kind, fair-minded, thoughtful, stable, gentle, vigorous, muscular – a comrade and leader both” (Roth, 2010, 444). The athletic hero is Roth’s embodiment of the American hero *par excellence*, a man shaping collective consciousness in terms of his own stellar qualities.

Culpability and guilt also play a significant role in the imagination of collective disaster and death. Roth connects it to Jewishness in the sense that his emblematic neighborhood of Weequahic becomes the defining scene of a ceaseless struggle for integration and assimilation. Marginals marginalize in their turn, though – the Jewish community seeks to blame Italians as spreaders of disease, well aware of the manner in which scapegoating is performed. Italians spit on the pavement to infect Jewish children, and Horace, the neighborhood vagabond madman is also blamed by another boy, Kenny, who knows that poor hygiene fuels the epidemic, facilitating the spreading of the virus while also providing it a favorable environment to flourish. . The allusion to the name of Horace, the classical writer is intentional and well placed. Here, much like in classical tragedy, the madman, the outsider, the paria is a disguised bearer of truth. Bucky defends Horace against the boy’s anger outburst, as he and the madman are “both ultimately aligned through unluck and bodily affliction” (Newton, 2016, 134). The kind, considerate and well-educated Kenny loses control and accuses the mentally retarded, dirty Horace of all the ills in their community: “He’s got shit all over his underwear! He’s got shit all over his hands! He doesn’t wash and he isn’t clean, and then he wants us to take his hand, and shake his hand, and that’s how he’s spreading polio” (Roth, 2010, 199). The fecal route of contamination is well-documented in epidemiological research concerning poliomyelitis, and Roth’s handling of his information is particularly relevant for the development of the plot: the scene where Bucky shakes Horace’s hand in a consoling gesture meant to counterbalance his public shaming could be the moment he contracted the virus. It is Bucky’s symbolic farewell to

the Weequahic community, as shortly after that, he is convinced by Marcia to leave Newark for Camp Indian Hill, a children's camp in the Pocono Mountains. The idyllic setting and Marcia's loving presence are meant to heal Bucky's guilt at the realization that he had abandoned the playground children and their families, despite their trust in him, left them defenseless in the face of disease and potentially death. It is a short interval that does not pass without a revealing lovers' fight on issues concerning God's indifference to human suffering. Immediately after, Donald Kaplow, another young instructor from the camp, and a close contact who had spent time with Bucky a few nights before, suddenly and unexpectedly fell ill. Shortly after, he is confirmed with polio, becoming the first symptomatic patient in a group where the disease started to spread uncontrollably, with many camp children displaying polio symptoms losing motor skills and becoming paralyzed, as families and doctors witnessed their degradation with increasing despair. Bucky was, at first sight, an infected, asymptomatic carrier who initially contributed to the rapid spread of the virus inside the camp, and then started to exhibit symptoms as well. He is overwhelmed with guilt and, in a desperate gesture of self-harm, refuses to marry Marcia, as if to punish himself and seek redemption. Far from ideal, in fact riddled with racism and antisemitism, Bucky's community is no stranger to the rise of fascism and Nazism in Europe, where death camps carried out the terrible murderous plan of the Holocaust. Bucky's supervisor has an overtly racist attitude, calling Bucky, the Jewish son of Jewish parents "Cancer" instead of "Cantor": "You Jewish boys got all the answers. No, you're not stupid—but neither is O'Gara, Cancer" (Roth, 2010, 138-139). As Inbar Kaminsky argued in her study on "Epidemic Judaism" in *Nemesis* (and in Ben Marcus' *The Flame Alphabet*), "the plague of anti-Semitism" (Kaminsky, 2014, 110) parallels the plague of poliomyelitis, both reflecting a massive social crisis affecting the foundation of the community. At the beginning of the novel, Italians were to blame for the epidemic: "Since so far their neighborhood had reported the most cases of polio in the city and ours had reported none, it was believed that, true to their word, the Italians had driven across town that afternoon intending to infect the Jews with polio and that

they had succeeded" (Roth, 2010, 18-19). Later, when the epidemic devastated the city while Bucky was at Camp Hill, his grandmother told him over the phone that the effects of the epidemic reignited antisemitic hate in the neighborhood: "The anti-Semites are saying that it's because they're Jews that polio spreads there. Because of all the Jews—that's why Weequahic is the center of the paralysis and why the Jews should be isolated. Some of them sound as if they think the best way to get rid of the polio epidemic would be to burn down Weequahic with all the Jews in it (Roth, 2010, 193).

In his commentary on *Nemesis*, J. M. Coetzee invokes two other cardinal writings on the issue of "plagues" – Albert Camus' *The Plague* and Daniel Defoe's *Journal of the Plague Year*. The latter was written as a meditation on the effects of epidemics upon society, critiquing Defoe, Coetzee analyzes them briefly in connection to Roth: "superstitious attention to signs and symptoms; vulnerability to rumor; the stigmatization and isolation (quarantining) of suspect families and groups; the scapegoating of the poor and the homeless; the extermination of whole classes of suddenly abhorred animals (dogs, cats, pigs); the fragmenting of the city into healthy and sick zones, with aggressive policing of boundaries; flight from the diseased center, never mind that contagion might thereby be spread far and wide; and rampant mistrust of all by all, amounting to a general collapse of social bonds" (Coetzee, 2010, 12). Roth does not refrain from involving these factors in his narrative, too and suggests that the ills of the small community in his native Newark can be connected to greater tragedies. Unnamed, the Holocaust, immediately comes to mind.

Bucky's tragedy does not steer away from the classical – by trying to avoid his fate, the tragic hero gradually fulfills it, one wrong step at a time. Bucky Cantor must accept his double failure: he was unable to protect the children under his care, and he was unable to protect himself. His tragedy runs even deeper, as he is denied to tell his own truth, his story, on his terms, remaining voiceless, as his story is told by Arnold. Besides denied speech, Cantor suffers from poor eyesight, which, in the classical code of tragedy, means that the hero cannot see his merciless fate, the *Nemesis* that punishes hubris and human excess. He



tries to encourage bereaved parents, carefully watches the latest developments of the epidemic, participates in funeral services and is ever present beside those who need his reassuring presence and advice. Despite his warm and trustworthy public persona, Bucky is all asperities and unsolved conflicts with divinity and his past. As an orphan, he cannot let go of the painful narrative that he has an almost sacred duty to protect those in need. This uncompromising ethos shapes his destiny as tragic hero, determining his excessive refusal to compromise and come to terms with difference and adversity. His handshake with the fecals – infested Horace and his evening with Donald become the turning points of his destiny, that would haunt Bucky for life. Like a counter-consciousness, Arnold's narrative of the past is founded on a divergent note, one bearing cynical undertones: "Sometimes you're lucky and sometimes you're not. Any biography is chance, and, beginning at conception, chance—the tyranny of contingency—is everything. Chance is what I believed Mr. Cantor meant when he was decrying what he called God" (Roth, 2010, 242-243). Bucky Cantor's ethics defines tragedy as an extension of his unbearable sense of guilt: "That the polio epidemic among the children of the Weequahic section and the children of Camp Indian Hill was a tragedy, he could not accept. He has to convert tragedy into guilt. He has to find a necessity for what happens. There is an epidemic and he needs a reason for it. He has to ask why. Why? Why? That it is pointless, contingent, preposterous, and tragic will not satisfy him. That it is a proliferating virus will not satisfy him. Instead he looks desperately for a deeper cause, this martyr, this maniac of the why, and the why is either in God or in himself or, mystically, mysteriously, in their dreadful joining together as the sole destroyer. I have to say that however much I might sympathize with the amassing of woes that had blighted his life, this is nothing more than stupid hubris, not the hubris of will or desire but the hubris of fantastical, childish religious interpretation." (Roth, 2010, 265)

It is deeply significant that, in his last novel, Roth returns to one of his most poignant tragic issues, that terrible things happen, without reason or meaning, to essentially good people: This interrogation is fundamental in *American Pastoral*, as the protagonist,

Seymour Levov, a baseball legend and an archetypal *Everyman* whose existential ideal was a simple, normal life, tried to face with dignity and ultimately survive the incomprehensible terrorist acts of a daughter he had raised with nothing but love and acceptance.

Starting with the spring of 2020, as the coronavirus pandemic spread throughout Western Europe and the United States, *The New Yorker* and *The Washington Post* published two articles that proposed a parallel reading of current events and Roth's *Nemesis*. Two remarkably difficult moments occurring eighty decades apart offer readers the chance to interpret the present through the instrument of a fictionalized past. The polio epidemic and the Covid-19 pandemic mirror each other, revealing the same fears, uncertainties and interrogations. The authors of the essays – Richard Brody, for *The New Yorker*, and Samuel G. Freedman, for *The Washington Post*, highlight the fact that a major epidemic affecting social life at all levels, reinforces distrust in administrative and political authority, elicits collective grief and questions the core values of the social structure it affects. The universal belief in the cohesive role of kindness and altruism, the need for empathy and protection, the moral necessity to offer support to the young, the weak and the elderly, all must be brought forth as public discourse dominants.

*Nemesis* is a valuable reading at the moment, as humanity is challenged by one of its most dramatic health crises in recent history. The COVID19 pandemic has become a worldwide cause of death, disability and disruption of life as we knew it and literature can prove useful in providing us with the mental and intellectual tools to face and ultimately overcome its often unbearable crisis. A classical lesson in the tragedy of one man confronting the gods of fortune and universal balance, *Nemesis* is also Roth's effort to understand and accept a past that defines and becomes imprinted on all those who try to escape or ignore it. It is a testament to the uncertain equilibrium connecting the individual and the collective under the sign of vulnerability and impermanence.

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## THE HOLOCAUST IN THE MOST REPRESENTATIVE EUROPEAN ART DOCUMENTARIES

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**Abstract:** *The present article aims at analyzing several art documentaries that we considered representative for the Holocaust topic. The criteria taken into consideration included the type of narration (linear or non-linear), the image expressivity and the capacity to evoke tragic collective and individual experiences, as well as the strong pedagogical finality. All the documentaries contribute, along with other cultural products, at the European, and Romanian, reconstruction and culture of memory.*

**Keywords:** *art documentaries, Holocaust, photography, memory.*

**Rezumat:** *În studiul de față am încercat să analizăm câteva documentare artistice pe care le-am considerat reprezentative pentru maniera în care acestea - prin narațiunea liniară sau non-liniară, prin expresivitatea imaginii, precum și prin capacitatea de a evoca experiențele tragice colective și individuale ale Holocaustului - au o puternică finalitate pedagogică și coparticipă alături de alte arte și produse culturale la reconstrucția europeană, implicit românească, a culturii memoriei.*

**Cuvinte cheie:** *documentare artistice, Holocaust, fotografia, memoria.*

### Historical background

In history, meeting the Other may be experimented as a terrifying abyss or as a “diagonal distance” that motivates the desire to know the Other in the same way one knows himself/herself. Such an approach generates a positive mutation (Zali Gurevitch, 2000) in most cases, in the history of humanity. The exploration of Difference as exploration of the human nature is permanently stimulated by multishaped interests and methodical doubts. The dialogue supposes a “familiar” interaction with Otherness (the concept of “familiar world” covers comfortable familiarity of daily life, “supreme reality of daily life” that governs the interhuman relations). Understanding the Other and authentic communication imply not only the exploration of reality, but also an emphatic engagement that compels the recognition of originating natures that bring us to identification and sometimes to confusion. Empathy imposes a certain exercise of imagination through which theoretically one is situated in the context of the Other, inside the Other’s variant of expressing the human nature. It is clear that this model of preparing for the contact with the world of the Other is part of a more complex

system involved by the need of perceiving the global existence. Within this system, the Other is co-participant at the existence of a world of order and sense.

But there is a flip side. Even if one knows the Other’s world, a universe perceived as a parallel dimension or as a negative reference system, hostility is present and oscillates from segregation to the desire to annihilate the Other, especially when it comes to the “Stranger in the City”/ “Stranger in the blood” (see the status of the Jew in Nazi ideology and in nationalist ideologies in Ukraine, Poland, Romania, Hungary). Only the “blood” is the one that certifies the belonging to an identity considered a danger for the “Arian race” or, the “Romanian race.” Thus, peoples under the domination of extreme right had come to even deny their own cultural values, given that Jews had essentially contributed to the affirmation of the German, Hungarian and Romanian cultures.

Therefore, the Other’s glance as ex-centric element in relation to the world opens “Pandora’s box” of xenophobia and racism. Probably one of the most powerful human paradoxes is the one between the curiosity from our complex nature and the undeniable

power of resentments, the vitality of the need to hate the Other perceived as the Difference that affects the narcissist mirror of the Self. It seems that the paranoid contagion that determines us to reinvent the Other in the hypostasis of the source of uncertainty and, ultimately, Evil, is responsible for the functionality of the paradox.

The Jew had been the generic enemy, the manifestation of Evil for centuries in Western Europe. European images of the Jew are reduced to several clichés and stereotypes: decide, practitioner of ritual murder, merchant, intermediary between the lethal disease (plague) and the “man of goodwill” (Christian), usurer, traitor and conspiracy maker. Such an imagery in the context of ultranationalist ideologies affirmation is reconfigured in Fascist ideologies of the 20th century (Oişteanu, 2001). Nazism considered that the Jews conspired in history, especially during the First World War, against Germany and spread the “Judeo-Marxism” as a poison. Thus, the Jews were considered, according to this reasoning, responsible for the geo-political misfortunes of humanity. While in anti-Judaism the Jew was the enemy of Christendom, with the increase of the process of social and political emancipation of the Jews and their integration in socio-political European structures, since the second half of the 19th century, the Jews become a deadly danger for the German identity. The Jew is guilty of cultural, political and genetic Judaization. In Interwar Romania, the social and economic competition (along with the rural Jews especially in Bessarabia that seemed an insult toward the image of the peasant as the basis of the Romanian country) contributed to the anti-Semitic culture and fueled it. That is why marshal Antonescu’s final solution was “territorial cleansing” of Romania.

Anti-Semitic ideologies constituted the legitimating weapons of the extermination process of the Jews in Austria and Germany, in the territories under the Nazi occupation and in Antonescu’s Romania. The Holocaust supposed the death of six million Jews, more than a half of the mass crime victims fallen in pogroms, massacres of communities, ethnic cleansing, ghettos, repressive systems.

### **The first art European documentaries on the Holocaust**

From the first years after the Second World War the documentary became an open and dynamic cultural genre of metamorphoses. A decade after the Second World War, after introducing some creative cinematographic elements, the creative documentary exceeded the canons and imposed an art transitional genre known as docudrama. The present study is an analysis of the art reference documentary. On other occasions, I am about to approach the montage documentary and the docudrama from a different perspective. The reason for my interest in docudrama resides in the fact that it is the most popular TV product that surpasses the boundaries between non-fiction and historical reconstruction through the fictionalization of elements without affecting the factual truth. The most recent docudramas become films for cultural consumption in cinema<sup>1</sup>.

The art documentary usually represents the TV format. The nature and technique of using the image and its expressivity, the narrative vision, the length of the film contribute to its usage in the cinema. The art documentary takes over the experience of the montage film, as well as the expressiveness of the art film (Buhantsov, 2013, 101-106). It has a unique artistic structure (see also the original compositional procedures of the script, the quality of director’s solutions). The audio-visual language is more efficient in the art documentary, as it supposes the revival of the available visual resources (photographs of the era, sequences from the news and propaganda films, animation of the photographs and interactive graphics) in the montage documentary. This language impresses and it is more efficient as historical pedagogy by involving the new media techniques.

The first art documentary of reference regarding collective death is the essay-documentary *Nuit et brouillard* (script: Jean Cayrol; director: Alain Resnais; composer: Hanss Eisler; 1955). It is a masterpiece of the genre and the most famous documentary about the Holocaust, a film that presents the

<sup>1</sup> See *No place on Earth* about the Jews that were hiding in the Ukrainian caves fearing the Germans and ultranationalist Ukrainians (Janet Tobias, 2012) or *Die Unsichtbaren – Wir Wollen Leben /The Invisibles* (Claus Räfle, 2017).

abominable character of the Nazi project of the Jews' extermination employing a reflexive and synthetic discourse. The film is built on the essentialised historical chronology that starts with images of the German propaganda and war machine, the enthusiasm manifested by the German population on the occasion of celebrating the political and military success of the first years of government. Some sequences from *Triumph des Willens* (Leni Riefenstahl, 1934) are used in the documentary. Moreover, the French director benefited aplenty from the German propaganda material, photographs and short films. The Nazi were always interested to register and conserve their military success, the Final Solution and other aspects by photographing and filming.

The title of Resnais' film refers to Hitler's plan *Nacht und Nebel*, a project from December 7, 1941, that decided the annihilation of political prisoners, activists of the French, Belgian, Dutch and Norwegian resistance in the concentration camp Natzweiler-Struthof. The technique of juxtaposition of the archive film (images of black and white from the concentration camps, terrifying images of the murdered victims and the survivors that seem like alive ghosts) with the film in color of the places of death after decades from the end of the war is linked to the need of conserving the memory of the Holocaust, given its denial. There is a functional symmetry between the landscape of the abandoned camp and the archive images and films. The opposition between the recently opened gates of the concentration camps and the serenity or neutrality of nature after ten years is telling. The archive images are only from France, Belgium, and Poland<sup>2</sup>. The French director did not use images of the destroyed Germany, such as those used in the documentaries of the 1945 (Germans crawling in the ruins and eating the American bread, Germans rebuilding cities and mourning after seeing the horrors of the concentration camps), because he considered them accomplices of the extermination plan of the Jews though they were not part of the Nazi Germany system. This subliminal message is transmitted by the images of the towns not that far away from the places of atrocities, German communities that used occasionally the labor

of the camp prisoners.

Ten years after the liberation of Auschwitz survivors by the Soviet Army there are only the guard posts, the perfectly aligned fences, the barracks, administration buildings, a so-called hospital that was the terminal station for the sick and the victims of the scientific experiments coordinated by J. Mengele at Auschwitz-Birkenau. The camera enters the infernal space and follows the route of the railway road where the grass started to grow. The horizon is clouded, as if awaiting during the war the victims descending from the train. The manner in which the director obtains impressionist effects by articulating the photographs of the bodies on the beds of the hospital is remarkable. The entrance to Auschwitz-Birkenau, the place of collective death, is a huge supra-realist vent that swallows all the captives.

The documentary presents the daily life in the camp, the diuretic soup, the constant famine, death as a daily phenomenon. The archive images show the Nazi as pagan entities of the war. Those from Waffen-SS are cynical, cruel, narcissist and confident. The details unveil the dimensions of the tragedy. For example, the submissive entrance of the Jews in the trains to the "death factories." Footage of the period show an old and crippled woman carried on the platform, with a small suitcase. She is placed on the train, near the rest. Not even the dying were allowed to die peacefully, in their homes. They were tortured for the guilt of the "microbe in their blood." According to the Nazi, no Jew was to remain in Europe. Another unforgettable image, taken over from the documentaries of 1945, is the image of the marks on the ceilings of the so-called baths, marks left by the people who were gassed and were dying slowly. The terror was that great that some of the strongest victims climbed on the bodies trying desperately to escape that lethal chamber.

The film becomes terrifying when some sequences filmed in 1945 by the British and Soviet cameramen are included. We are troubled by the sinister "landscapes of death", bodies left chaotically all over the place within the camps, cadavers that seem broken dolls, decomposed corpses and bulldozers pushing them to the common graves, bodies with eyes wide open, with the death rictus on their faces. The smell of death seems to pervade the images. Among the bodies, around one

<sup>2</sup> The French director, then the filmmakers of docudrama took over images of these montage documentaries.

hundred survivors witness the ongoing works. In the liberated camps of Majdanek on July 24, 1944, Auschwitz on January 27, 1945, the Soviets filmed the crematoria, corpses insufficiently burnt or forgotten in the crematorium furnaces. These were signs of the fact that the Germans left in a hurry, not being able to destroy all the evidence of their atrocities. Above all, there is the image of the half cremated body, an extremely expressive image<sup>3</sup>.

The finality of this documentary with exceptional aesthetic qualities resides in both the construction of the Holocaust memory and the presentation of the German harmful exoneration. Resnais presents the reactions of some Nazi guards in the extermination camps, SS members who denied their participation in the Final Solution. In this context of individual exoneration, the director supports the necessity of assuming the collective guilt<sup>4</sup>.

The same objective is imposed later by other exceptional documentaries. Some of them are hybrid and elude the strict classification, but they demystify and disturb the self-sufficiency of those who avoid talking about the Holocaust. Marcel Ophüls' documentary *Le chagrin et la pitié / The Sorrow and the Pity* (1969) is an iconoclast film. It is thought provoking, showing the truth about the French war memory and Nazi occupation, Vichy regime, French resistance and zealous collaborationism concerning the

application of the Final Solution. The film is ingeniously built; it has two parts and it revolves around the questions and answers of the interviewed people, French informants (term used by the methodology of oral history) from all social strata and several Germans who lived in the Parisian area. The interviews are fragmented by images of the period. See also the sequences with propaganda diaries from the era, fragments of the official discourses, images of the anti-Semitic ideology (see the shameful anti-Semitic propaganda film *Le Juiff Suzz*, 1940). At the same time, the interviews of oral history are fragmented based on the topic. The gross plan is used so that details could be seen easily, uncovering the psychological state of the interviewed (see the body language). One might easily observe a French amnesia based on the conducted interviews. While the director is talking about the zeal of the Vichy regime to apply the anti-Semitic legislation by deporting the Jews to the extermination camps, some French interviewed, former employees of the collaborationist regime presented false statistics regarding the number of deported and killed Jews. They stated that only 5% of the French Jews were killed after being "denaturalized." In fact, only 5% of the "denaturalized" Jews that fled to Central Europe survived the Holocaust. The regime, French police conducted the arrests, tortured cruelly the Jews and then transferred them to SS. One interviewed Jew, former prisoner of Dachau stated that many Jews ended up in extermination camps after being denounced by their fellow colleagues (competition in the pharmacy or medicine area). That was possible due to the existing so-called traditional anti-Semitism.

The most atrocious case is the arrest and extermination of 4.500 Jewish children. President Laval had no use of them so he sent them to gassing (Cole, 1963, 210-211; Lévy, 1992). The first place of camping for the Jews was the winter track cycling in Paris. Single people or those with no children were sent directly to Drancy. After five days of staying at the winter track cycling, the adults were sent to the camps within France, which had a transitional role. Then, at the end of July and beginning of August 1942, the adults were separated from the children and were deported to Auschwitz. The film states that 4.500 children were separated from their parents and

<sup>3</sup> The first montage documentaries filmed at the end of the Second World War were made by the teams of cameramen from the front: *Nuremberg: It's Lesson for Today* (Stuart and Budd Schulberg, the summer of 1945, public viewing of the restored footage took place in Berlin in 2010); *German Concentration Camps Factual Survey* (Sidney Bernstein, 1945). Images-document were not broadcast because of political reasons; the reels of the film were stored in the Imperial Museum of War in London; *Sud narodov/ Judgment of the Peoples* (Roman Karmen, 1946).

<sup>4</sup> Such an approach is present in a unique film, which is difficult to categorize in a certain cinematographic genre. I consider it compatible with docudrama genre. This is the case of the film *Auschwitz* (Uwe Boll, 2011) but also the documentary *The Accountant of Auschwitz* (script and producer: Ricki Gurwitz, director: Matthew Shoychet, 2018). The latter is a film about recognition and lack of assumption, the labyrinth of justice and the importance of precedence, principles and historical justice.

sent at the end of August to Auschwitz<sup>5</sup>. By the end of September 1942 38.000 Jews were deported to Auschwitz only from Paris. Seven hundred and eighty of them survived by the end of the war. Vichy regime, the French police under the German occupation acted criminally, co-participating at the Jews' murder in France (Friedländer, 2007, 413 sq.) Anti-Semitism of the French elite was a tradition. In the film, one interviewed supports the idea that for some French aristocrats the Nazi propaganda film *Triumph des Willens* (Leni Riefenstahl, 1935) was like a religious service. One conclusion of the film is that one's situation on the collaborationist or resistance side was not a matter of political and/or moral convictions, but personal problems, biographic elements, the obsession of survival at any cost.

*Shoah* (director: Claude Lanzmann, consultant: Raul Hilberg, 1985, 556 minutes) is an epic documentary due to its dimensions. It proposes a new and challenging manner of approaching the filmic narration, as well as original footage, becoming a reference point, an example of post-traumatic cinema (Hirsch, 2002, 9sq.). Lanzmann is the first documentary director who gave up the archival images and documents. This new approach to reconstitute the traumatic experience supposes courage and marks the rupture from the documentary tradition. It is thought-provoking, original, creative and resorts to the memory of the Holocaust survivors, witnesses and torturers. After years of footage the director stated that he wanted to create a film about death and moral limits of humanity (Lanzmann, 2013). The film is based on the testimonies of extermination camp survivors, witnesses among the nearby population and those who were involved in the system of death processing.

The testimonies of the survivors are overwhelming. The most impressive scene is the testimony of the Jewish barber filmed in his hair salon in Israel. He is confronted with his memories regarding the haircut process of

women in the camps. The barber burst into tears, while the director apologized for this hurtful remembrance process. On the other hand, former Nazi officers who were interviewed with the hidden camera were oscillating between remorse, indifference and cynicism. The interviews of oral history took place in the United States, Israel, Switzerland, Poland and Germany where the former victims lived. Such a geopolitical area, along with the filming in the extermination camps contributed to eleven years of work. The Polish witnesses recognize their former perception toward the Jews and their presence in the ghettos and extermination camps. Some of them were witnesses forced to become accomplices of the system of death.

An exceptional documentary, Lanzmann's film offers a mental reconstruction of the Jewish genocide. That is why the director focuses on the present in his attempt to make the viewer imagine the sufferings and fears of the ghettos and extermination camps. Lanzmann used different manners of filming in the case of survivors and torturers. The French director uses the full frame for the survivors for transmitting their posttraumatic feelings. The executioners are filmed with the hidden camera, the image being with interferences. Only a single former torturer was filmed directly while he displayed his remorse and accepted to be filmed during the interview.

The Jew was condemned to death by applying the Final Solution, which applied consistently, would have contributed in the long run to the prosperity of the "Aryan race". The concentration camps processed everything that could be harnessed out of the sub-human Jews or the "enemy within the city/ blood." In the same category were the war prisoners, political prisoners, gypsies, sexual and religious minorities. The rhetoric of the Final Solution considered that the living (through their forced labor) and dead Jews (through their goods and organs) contributed to the economy of the German Empire.

The former torturers who escaped justice are the cynics or negationists of the recent history crimes justified by some of the interviewed Nazi. The so-called discussion with the SS Officer Franz Suchomel is revealing, as he was still the supporter of the anti-Semitic culture as a historical product, a legacy from Martin Luther. The director took a

<sup>5</sup> The recent feature film *La Rafle* (Rose Bosch, 2010) presents the episode of 13.000 Jews (adults and children) imprisoned on the winter track cycling in Paris, in humiliating conditions. The main hero is Joseph of 11 years old. The film is a radiography of the utter cruelty of the Nazi, their institutions and their collaborators.



risk while filming with the hidden camera, as the accidental uncover of the camera cost the director several days of hospitalization.

The construction of the empathic discourse of the documentary is done with the help of the montage aesthetics. When an interview reminds of the concentration camp life, the camera surveys the camp as the “place of memory”. Thus, the images serve as ethical evaluation of the memories offered by the interviewed. The images of the green paradise that grew on the place of the former places of death and around them represent the background for the interviews of the survivors. The general plan covers the woods, the rivers and the ruins of the concentration camps. Although the stories of the survivors are terrifying, the nature is neutral and fascinatingly beautiful. The vegetation that spread through the former places of death must have grown on the bodies and ashes of the prisoners (see especially the footage from Chelmo, Sobibor, Treblinka, Auschwitz-Birkenau).

The most impressive interviews of oral history are those with survivors and witnesses, such as Richard Glazer (prisoner) Abraham Bomba (barber), Filip Muller (Sonderkommandor at Auschwitz), Jan Karski (Christian Jew, member of the police of the ghetto in Warsaw), Simon Srebnik (forced by the Germans to sing Nazi songs that was not able to forget even after 40 years), Henryk Gawkowski (train conductor of the trains with the victims, always driving drunk). The survivors are burdened by the shadow of the Evil. They confess in their native tongues (Yiddish, Hebrew, Polish, French, Greek, German) the memory of the Evil. The interviews reveal the same scenario of Apocalypse: coming to the camp after the terror and death inferno in the wagons, terrified by the perspective of death through gassing. Filming the entrance in the camp and the railway is taken over from the classic and stereotypical films about the Holocaust. Only this time the black train is filmed and introduced in the narration so that it gets closer to the viewer as an evil entity (see also a reference to Lumière Brothers' *L'Arrivée d'un Train en Gare de La Ciotat*, 1895).

*Shoah* is more than any other previous film a memorial that is part of the category of cultural products that built the culture of memory. Therefore, this film may be

considered a database with interviews of oral history, useful source of investigation concerning the history of the genocide, violence and atrocities.

### **Romanian documentaries on the Holocaust**

Recent Romanian documentaries are valuable contributions to the international filmography on the Holocaust, given the focus on the local pogroms, deportations and individual histories. These innovative contributions, witness reports (Taylor, 2021) are built on photographs and relevant fragments from diaries of the period.

The Romanian docudrama *Struma* (script: Stelian Tănase, director: Radu Gabrea, produced by Antena 1 and Intact Advertising, 2001) is a well-done film<sup>6</sup>. The documents of the era contribute to the historical character of the film, whose narration presents a tragedy in several acts. The first episode is prefaced by the poems of Paul Celan in *Fuga Morții* and tells the story of the Jews who are eager to get to their ancient country in the period dominated by the German Final Solution (see the Final Solution as a project of extermination of European Jews at the conference in Wannsee on the 20th of January 1942) and the Romanian context of applying the ethnic cleansing from 1941. The film is a micro-history supported by official documents, letters, photographs, interviews of oral history. Several images that attempt to reconstruct the atmosphere of the era are flashes, insertions of “docudrama” in the classic documentary.

Prologue. Immediately after Romania entering the anti-Soviet war (June 22, 1941), the liquidation of Jews starts in Moldova, Bessarabia, Bukovina (see the pogrom of Iasi, mass executions in other provinces, Transnistria camps). The Jews from Central Europe managed to escape in 1934-1940 through Romanian ports but after the adoption and application of the anti-Semitic policy imposed by the Goga-Cuza government (1938) and then by Antonescu's government, the Jews from Romania fled to Palestine. See the racial laws of the Antonescu, according to which Jews were deprived of citizenship and goods, socially excluded and their properties given away. Under those circumstances, on the 8th of December 1941, 769 Jews arrive in Constanta

<sup>6</sup> See details about the film in Grancea, Fulger, 2020, 33-35.

port. The train arrived from Bucharest and stationed for several days on a dead line. After such an inexplicable interruption of the journey, the Jews are robbed by the Romanian customs officers given their illegal immigrant status and embarked on Struma ship, a floating wreck that was used for transporting cattle. Several changes and touches were done to transport the Jews who were even singing the Romanian anthem, relieved to sail toward freedom. During the same days, the United States and the United Kingdom declared war to Japan and to the Axis powers. This aspect determines the fate of the refugees.

Most of the refugees were from the middle class, several were wealthy, while the rest were students or of liberal professions. There were also elders, children and newborns. Unfortunately, the improvised engine of the boat broke in the middle of the sea, leaving the passengers at the mercy of the waves. However, they anchored near Bosphorus; it seemed that god protected them. Nevertheless, another tragic event, the prolonged quarantine, brings them to despair. Nine weeks between hope and despair was the second act of the tragedy. Despite being a neutral country, Turkey did not favor the Jews. Though the refugees were helped by the Jewish federations from the United States and the Romanian Jews from Palestine, the negotiations for visas with the United Kingdom and Sweden failed. The refugees were denied access to the ship that could have transported them to Palestine, territory under the British mandate from 1922. The official reason was that the refugees were citizens of an adverse country and thus enemies of the United Kingdom. In fact, the British feared another Arab revolt. The refugees waited for a favorable outcome for two months and a week while the Turkish authorities command the refugees to return to the sea. With a compromised engine and cut anchor by the Turk soldiers, in the evening of the 23rd of February, the ship is towed into the open sea where several hours ago a Turkish ship was destroyed by a Soviet submarine.

The finale takes place on the 24th of February, in the morning, when *Struma* must have been destroyed by a Soviet submarine. Archaeological traces and a logbook from a Russian submarine wreck certify the hypothesis. There was only one survivor, David Stoliar, a young man of 18 years old who swam toward the coast and was saved by

the sailors from a Turkish lighthouse. Though he was traumatized by the events, he was detained and interrogated by the authorities. Two weeks later he was allowed to leave for Palestine. His testimony in Radu Gabrea's film is fundamental for understanding the tragedy.

Epilogue. Stoliar, a prosperous businessman, wonders why he was saved by a miracle among all those people. He told about the *Struma* tragedy later in life. Probably he was the appropriate man to testify referring to the Jewish tragedy that ended in February 1942. David's question "Why me? Why I was the one to be saved?" ends the film.

The Romanian production *Țara moartă/ The Dead Nation* (script and director: Radu Jude, 2017) is an original documentary and unique in this genre. It is the work of a cinematographic essayist revolving around several hundred photographs done on plate glass, from the fabulous collection of Costică Acsinte, a reporter on the Great War front. The reporter was the owner of a photographic studio in Ialomița region, Slobozia city in the '30s and '40s. The soundtrack of the film comprises fragments from the diary of the Jewish doctor and writer Emil Dorian. The photographs and the soundtrack complete each other, as the diary offers details on the anti-Semitic legislation and its spread in the social structures, the outbreak of the war and Holocaust in Romania.<sup>7</sup>

Several photographs taken in the studio and outside present the nationalist greeting performed by children and adults dressed in the uniforms of the National Rebirth, as well as some photographs of the German soldiers and the obedient attitude of Romanians toward the state authority. Fragments from speeches performed by Ion Antonescu and Horia Sima, old patriotic songs and legionary songs are used throughout the documentary, introducing the viewer into the atmosphere of the dictatorial period. The subliminal ironic message is transmitted by the relative chronological order of the photographs

<sup>7</sup> Some fragments from political and propaganda diaries were also used in order to present the extreme official discourse. See "Jurnal/ Diary 12/1937", ONC, 1937; *Marșul biruinței/ March of Victory*, 1940, ONC 1940; *Discourse Horia Sima - Ion Antonescu*, ONC, 1940; "Jurnal/ Diary 83/1941", ONC 1941 etc. and historical records from the audio archive of Radio Romania.

concerning the forms of vegetal existence of the common man in Romania.

Radu Jude shows the parallel universe of conformist or indifferent people toward the socio-political events. See the pictures of peasants at pork cutting or showing off their animals, as well as their weak children, dressed in traditional costumes or school uniforms performing the Romanian greeting during the dictatorship. There are also pictures of men at the pub or at a rural feast, as well as couples who pose, according to a standard in the period, holding white pigeons in their arms. There are also photographs with women posing for the camera, specific to the pre-war period as well, some workers in a tailor shop, singers, burials and parties indoors or outdoors, smiling German soldiers on their motorcycles. This is a world that seem indifferent toward the Other's fate and in complicity with the totalitarian state.

The diary of the Jewish doctor and writer reveals the anxiety and despair of the period, the hostility of his Christian neighbors, the absurdity of Nicolae Iorga's anti-Semitism, Emil Cioran's opportunism, data on the pogroms and the application of the "territory cleansing" in the North of Bukovina and Bessarabia, terrifying rumors about the deportation and death in Transnistria, arrogant attitude of the soldiers returned from Odessa bragging about the number of Jews killed. The text and the images offer a photogram of the Romanian society from the democracy crisis and introduction of racial laws by the Goga-Cuza government (1938) and the genocidal anti-Semitic actions from the first months of the war against the Soviet Union (June 1941-March 1942). The relationship between the image and the audio text explains the perceptions of the Romanian society, a dead world from the emotional perspective.

The film starts with the background images and Antonescu's hypocrite message, on a grey landscape (an interesting effect, considering that the documentary is a succession of black and white photographs). The neutral voice of the narrator who reads from the diary of the Jewish doctor emphasizes the writer's emotional pain and terror thinking of the deported Jews to Transnistria and the Odessa massacre. These intense feelings brought him close to suicide. There are no notes for days in the diary, a sign of despair and terror.

How should one name a population indifferent to the tragedy of Jews in Romania stripped of their rights, social decency, intimacy and belongings while applying racial laws? Is it only a selfish population or a hostile one? There is one explicit reference in the diary concerning the anti-Semitic attitude of the common man. Three patients suffering from tuberculosis wake the administration of the sanatorium to move the Jew from their ward to a different one (as if the "Jewish tuberculosis" was lethal). Another detail highlights the banality of crime, referring to the Romanian officer coming back from Transnistria and going to a Jewish barber to boast about killing around fifty Jews. In our opinion, Jude chose the most expressive fragments and the most impressionist photographs to contribute to the achievement of a new culture of memory in recent Romania.

*Ieșirea trenurilor din gară/ The Exit of the Trains* (Radu Jude and Adrian Cioflâncă, 2020), paraphrase the Lumière Brothers' *Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat* (1895), the film that opened the era of a new rapport to the human reality. This is a case of a tragic and troubling collective exit. This is a film-document, a "memorial", given the manner in which the filmmakers articulated the photographs of some of the victims of the Iasi pogrom with texts of the surviving relatives and witnesses that assisted to the crimes. The film is a virtual "hall of numbers."<sup>8</sup> The images from the second part of the film offer images with arrested, robbed, mistreated and murdered Jews on the street, no soundtrack provided.

The above-mentioned film is an excellent narration about what happened in Iasi on 27-30 of June 1941. A few days after the anti-Soviet war declaration (June 22, 1941), after Iasi was bombed twice by the Soviet planes, marshal Antonescu applied the Romanian plan of ethnic cleansing in Iasi where the Jews represented 30% of the population. They were accused of complicity with the enemy and communist actions of sabotage. All the accusations were part of the stereotypical scape goat, a mere pretext to liquidate as many Jews as possible. Men were arrested and brought to the court of Police Headquarters

<sup>8</sup> See the memorial "Hall of Numbers" in the Museum Yad Vashem in Jerusalem.

where machine guns killed so many that the bodies were stacked along the walls. The pogrom lasted several hours. People were killed in the courts of their homes or on the street. Their neighbors offered clues and details to the policemen, public guards or gendarmes where the Jews could hide out of fear not to be bombed again. The last bomb alarm was a false one to lure the Jews out of their hidings and easy to gather from the bomb shelters. The survivors of the massacre were boarded on two wagons for cattle<sup>9</sup>. On their way to the railway station the Jews were attacked, robbed, then stacked in wagons, around 120-150 people per wagon while the capacity was of 35. Some witnesses mention even 158 to 200 people in a wagon with the destination Călărași, forced labor camp. There was no water and in many cases the trains were on dead lines or moved back and forth for no particular reason. Due to the heat, many prisoners lost their minds, committed suicide or tramped each other to get some air through a small window of the wagon, drank their urine, undressed. Most of them died suffocated. Some bodies were thrown away, others buried in common graves at Târgu Frumos, Podu Iloaiei, Roman and Călărași. The average rate of survival was terrible – only 5 in 150 people. One testimony states that only 8 “travellers” survived out of 158 by the end of the “journey.” Survivors were forced to remove the corpses from the wagons and to wait in a mud puddle. Many corpses decomposed because of the heat. Another episode that exemplifies the anti-Semitic culture of the Romanians of that period is about a Jew buying a bottle of water from a Romanian soldier, paying a lot of money. After drinking, the Jew realized that the liquid burnt his stomach, as it was oil. When those dying in the wagons asked for water, the soldiers yelled at them: “Poison!”.

The first ones to die were the old people, then children, pre-teenagers and teenagers, women. They were not part of the initial plan of the local authorities, but were gathered overzealously. Another similar event was the murder of a 11 year-old boy who tried to jump out of the wagon, was shot in the leg and then

drowned in the Bahlui river by a warrant officer, as the boy was constantly asking for water.

These tragic events are reported by the surviving relatives of the victims, the testimonies of the soundtrack of the film. The depositions are mostly the civilians’ testimonies that are part of an investigation of 1945 and the pogrom trial that took place in June 1948.

The section *Images* of the film presents photographs with the arrested and robbed people who were abandoned on the street half naked. The civilians seem from another world, men and women passing by indifferently, as if there were no dead people on the streets. A testimony of a Romanian points out a terrible fact – the joy of most of the citizen after the massacre and deportation of Jews! The historian Adrian Cioflâncă provided details of his research at the common graves at Stâncă, Popricani, Iași, Târgu Frumos, Podu Iloaiei, Roman and Călărași – the staggering number of 14.850 dead<sup>10</sup>.

The documentary is a place of memory, given its topic. We refer especially to those documentaries that catch historical events and episodes, becoming a source of information. While expository documentaries had undisputed didactic qualities, the non-fictional films with aesthetic values, as the aforementioned ones, appeal to the emotional intelligence and influence the collective memory. The last two-essay films are memorials<sup>11</sup>, circulating archival images, photographs from the inter-war period and during the Second World War, mediating the viewer’s entrance into the “lived history.”

Jude’s obsession for the culture of memory and lack of critical perspective regarding one’s own past is present in the fiction film *Îmi este indiferent dacă în istorie vom intra ca barbari/ I Don’t Care if We Enter History as*

<sup>10</sup> See *Comisia Internațională pentru studierea Holocaustului în România. Raport Final/ The International Committee for the Study of Holocaust in Romania. Final Report*, preș. Elie Wiesel, eds. Tuvia Friling, Radu Ioanid, Mihail E. Ionescu, Polirom, București-Iași, 2004, p. 124; <https://www.pogromuldelaiasi.ro/ce-s-a-intamplat-in-iunie-1941/>, accesat în 31 ianuarie 2021)

<sup>11</sup> See the issue of critical reconstruction of collective memory, the first scientific Romanian demarche, a challenge of the volume edited by Cioflâncă 2003.

<sup>9</sup> See Ancel, 2006, Ioanid, 2014, Ioanid, 2015. In my opinion, the most relevant study about Antonescu’s extermination process belongs to Deletant 2006 (or the Romanian translation 2008).

*Barbarians* (script and director: Radu Jude, 2018) and the re-enactment, entitled ironically *Nașterea unei națiuni/ The Birth of a Nation* as a pretext to launch a film-debate, a narration with historical didactic value. The discourse of the film is ethical and resembles an overlap of archaeological sites. The beginning of the film insists on the prop in order to be closer to authenticity. The discourse about the history and extent of the Odessa massacre (October 23-24, 1941) is for everyone around the director of the film, as it is a history lesson.

The erudite director defends the project with historical, philosophical and reasonable in a meeting with the censor. She supports the usage of elements specific to historical re-enactments in a public show that should confront Romanians with their history and past atrocities. When one identifies with a collective identity, it means taking over its crimes not only the European values. When these aspects are thorny, one must approach them critically. The director mentions the collective symbolic responsibility with regard to Antonescu's "ethnic cleansing" and killing through deportation and massacre of 380.000 Jews. The Romanian Army killed in multiple ways – shooting, hanging, torching – 19.000 Jewish civilians. Most Jews found refuge in Bessarabia, fleeing the Romanian and German Armies.

Another topic discussed by the director and the censor is the definition of the massacre. The censor inclines toward the relative character of the truth, while the director supports the authentic truth. For the censor, the public education is only a comical illusion, asking the director: "Is it helping someone what happened in the past?" This argument is frequent in the popular and agnostic discourse and the recent African massacres represent the proof that the genocide is a reality of the human history. The director states that the critical reflection is fundamental while discussing the mass crimes. In the Romanian case, it would be much needed, as it would get the Romanians out of their self-sufficient state. Director's arguments are taken from bibliography of the critical assertions concerning domination in history and the socio-historical nature of the Evil.

In my opinion, the originality of documentary films produced by Radu Jude resides firstly in the involvement of photography expressivity. It was stated that

"usually the images about the past legitimate the present social order. Participants to any social order share a common social memory" (Connerton, 1989, 3). Regarding the photographs with historical value, they have the inherent traditional functionality and the role to make history visible and tangible, reproducing it subjectively and fragmentary.

The image is easier than the word embedded in the individual memory and has the chance to keep not only the information, but also the affective processing of the image. Therefore, the reproduced photographs in documentary films must be emblematic.

Photographs capture histories and reproduce in sequential manner events, which by photographing are recoded in scenes. (Flusser) At the same time, by archaic dialectic between image and text, the images become more and more historical, while the texts more imaginative. There is, on the other hand, a magic of the text, but a history of images. Photographs became a popular artistic genre from the second part of the 19th century and channeled the collective conscience toward a different perception of the historical time. These are testimonies that stand for the existence of individual history or of crucial moments of collective history.

Qualities of photographs to re-create suggestively and visibly an essential fragment of a historical event or a segment of daily and private life determined the political instrumentalization, intense usage (along with poster and documentary films) in war propaganda and totalitarian politics as protean image of potency. They were used as direct transmission of complex messages that claimed the legitimacy of political and military acts. At the same time, the artisans of image and its circulation introduced subliminal messages that supported the official discourse that became more efficient in manipulating/ mobilizing the masses. It is the irony of fate that those images destined to manipulation may be approached as case studies that prove the hypocrisy of the system. Thus, photographs of Nazi triumphant propaganda, partly from the albums of the Nazi elite, found near the family or group photographs, can prove the genocide. They become an important source in historiographical investigation, especially under the circumstances in which the Nazi system had destroyed much of the documentary material about mass crimes.

Even so, the photographs that survived await for a synthetic analysis.

### **Preliminary Conclusion**

Although the feature film has a bigger audience than the documentary, the latter retains undeniable pedagogical and didactic aspects due to its authenticity. And that is especially true in the case of the documentary film regarding the Holocaust. The direct and shocking images are historical proof that present the savagery of the Nazi and Antonescu regimes that cannot be contested.

Concerning the quasi-general desire to prevent the repetition of the past atrocities, there is a gnoseological stereotype. It is stated that we must know and remember the historical past in order not to repeat it and affect the evolution of humanity. And yet, the existence of such atrocities in the 20th century may generate a strong distrust in the moral progress of humanity.

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# PREDICTIONS IN COMIC BOOKS ABOUT DISASTROUS EVENTS THAT ACTUALLY HAPPENED

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**Abstract:** *The article is scanning for curious events that got published in comic books before they actually happened. The article is written after going through the original comic book source material for each case study. Imagination sometimes finds a way into reality and eventually happens, just like Jules Verne's inventions did or Star Trek or most of sci-fi literature, radio or films made their way to the future. Therefore, this article does not suggest there is an element of paranormal in thinking about the future and trying to predict it, but more like there is a special relationship between the apparent randomness of stories and the way they function, from time to time, as prophecies. 14 examples, with images included, that talk about events such as: atom bombs and bombing, the fall of the World Trade Center, coronavirus, Cold War paranoia, an earthquake, a city blackout, Princess Diana's death, and a drone attack. There are a few other articles online on the subject, but some contain unverified or inaccurate information or photos.*

**Key words:** *predictions, comic books, politics, sci-fi, war, virus.*

**Rezumat:** *Acest articol caută evenimente curioase care au fost publicate în benzi desenate înainte de a se întâmpla în realitate. Articolul pe care îl citiți chiar acum este scris după ce a fost parcurs materialul-sursă de benzi desenate pentru fiecare studiu de caz. Imaginația găsește uneori o cale de a pătrunde în realitate și devine aievea în cele din urmă, cum au făcut-o invențiile lui Jules Verne sau Star Trek sau cum majoritatea literaturii și emisiunilor de radio sau filmelor SF și-au făcut drum spre viitor. Prin urmare, acest articol nu sugerează că există un element paranormal în a ne gândi la viitor și a încerca să-l prezicem, ci mai degrabă că există o relație specială între hazardul aparent al poveștilor și modul în care acestea funcționează, din când în când, ca niște profeții. 14 exemple, cu imagini incluse, care vorbesc despre evenimente precum: bombe atomice și bombardamente, prăbușirea World Trade Center, coronavirus, paranoia legată de Războiul Rece, un cutremur, o pană de curent în mediul urban, moartea prințesei Diana, atacul cu drone. Există alte câteva articole online pe acest subiect, dar unele conțin informații sau fotografii neconfirmate sau inexacte.*

**Cuvinte cheie:** *previziuni, benzi desenate, politică, SF, război, virus.*

Comic book history contains a lot of narrative elements in its over 80 year-old existence. Usually, tragic or sad events function as a tool to test the characters or emphasize moral values. This article will discuss about superhero comics, which are, at their core, a form of sci-fi.

As told in an editorial from *The Flash Annual #2* from 1988, one of the major differences between the comic book universe and reality is context: a superhero knows the whys and can differentiate valuable info from random info in seconds. Reality is much grayer and a real-life superhero would sometimes need a special radar to have the exact context. This article, though, contains no gray line: some historical events did happen, in

the comic book universe and in real life.

One thing must be stated: comic books have two launch dates: *in store date* – the official date it is available in stores and *cover date* – the official launch date. *The cover date* is usually 2-3 months later than the *in store date*. This solves the problem of having a comic book on a shelf for a longer time. Also: the stories covered here are not necessarily the only stories contained in the mentioned comic book issue, because the older comic book format, for instance, contained various stories with famous and obscure characters alike.

The text may sometimes contain spoilers, but only to explain why these certain stories have a prophetic side to them.

### **The Atom Bomb before August 1945**

Wartime meant an official censorship of some aspects by the state. Some may argue that free speech should remain free in any context, but the state, USA to be exact, considered it in the interest of the national security not to release some publications until wartime ended.

#### *Superman #38 – The Battle of the Atoms*

(In store date: October 31<sup>st</sup> 1945,

Cover date: January 1946, Fig. 1)

The controversy of the story may be considered minimal to a contemporary reader, because the atom bomb reference is close to one word (Fig. 2), but wartime meant being very strict with every word and not implying anything that may help the potential enemy in any way. In this case, it is implying that USA might use the atom bomb, therefore giving the enemy potential classified info (even if it was in the form of a comic book).

#### *Action Comics #101 – Crime Paradise*

(In store date: August 15<sup>th</sup>, 1946,

Cover date: October 31<sup>st</sup> 1945, Fig. 3)

A similar case of atom bomb related content can be found in this story. This one involves atom bomb testing and a very unusual twist: Superman is made insane by a man-made chemical and starts making mischief and only gets cured by having contact with the atom bomb explosion (Fig. 4). The idea that an atom bomb can cure may be a random solution, but may also work as a reference to the idea that bombing Japan and executing over 200,000 people might have spared a lot more because it made the war end earlier. The Superman story is original, to say the least: after being cured, Superman films the explosion, helping a film crew that could not get too close to it.

Some have also seen this story as a pre-Cold War paranoia story, because the idea that nuclear and atom threats would become a casual matter was just about to start.

### **Bombings and war**

To imagine certain unfolding of intuitive events is most of the time an easy exercise and involves saying what the collective mind is already thinking. But things get a little odd when such things actually occur and they imply casualties.

#### *Captain America Comics #1*

(In store date: December 20<sup>th</sup>, 1940,

Cover date: March, 1941, Fig. 5)

USA joined World War 2 on December 7<sup>th</sup> 1941, therefore Captain America had no official reason to punch Hitler in the face at the time the magazine came out. Nonetheless, Nazis were regarded as bad guys in the USA, even before USA officially joined the Allies. Searching thoroughly, we actually cannot find a story in which Captain America battles Hitler in this issue. The cover is, in fact, misleading. We can see it as a symbol of Captain America battling Nazis as a concept, though, because we get him punch a lot of other Nazis in this issue.

#### *National Comics #18 – Uncle Sam*

(Cover date: December, 1941, Fig. 6)

Pearl Harbor, being a fleet base of the USA, would sound as an appropriate decor when talking about war stories in general. Because tensions were already growing, it is not impossible to see a scene in which Pearl Harbor would be attacked. As so, in November 1941, this issue came out and saw USA attacked by the Axis, but the prophecy was a bit inaccurate: the assailants were not the Japanese, but the Germans (Fig. 7 and 8). The fight went on, as Uncle Sam and his teen sidekick managed to defeat a whole squadron using only 2 planes and some wires between them.

#### *Green Lama #4 – The Green Lama bombs Tokyo*

(Cover date: April, 1945, Fig. 9)

Another pre-August involvement example talks about a Buddhist superhero on the American side that fights against the Japanese because they are using Hitler's robot bombs on the Pacific troops. Therefore in this story we get to see the USA bombing Japan, in 1945, using Japanese bombs designed by Hitler. However, it is not Hiroshima and Nagasaki, it is Tokyo (Fig. 10).

#### *OMAC #1 – Build-a-Friend*

(Cover date: October, 1974, Fig. 11)

A super soldier is given the task to destroy a corrupt company by a saucer-like eye ship on Earth's orbit. It may seem like a usual sci-fi action story, but it actually involves a proto-idea of smart war drones (Fig. 12), one of the most ruthless ways of modern warfare. The

issue's editorial also contains thoughts on the destructive nature of humans and their lust for war tech.

### **World Trade Center disaster**

A crisis that involves huge office buildings is probably a simple image to put together. Things get weird when the details imagined prove to be incredibly real.

#### *Adventures of Superman #596 – Shipbuilding*

(In store date: September 12<sup>th</sup>, 2001,

Cover date: November, 2001, Fig. 13)

Probably the most bizarre coincidence made this issue of Superman get launched exactly one day after 9/11. There was no time to remove it off the shelves, therefore no such official action was made. In time, the perception about it most probably changed. It tells the story of the falling twin towers of Metropolis (Fig. 14), and of a depressed Superman that refuses to help reconstruct the nation...

#### *The Uncanny X-Men #189 – Two Girls Out to Have Fun*

(Cover date: January, 1985, Fig. 15)

Even though it is just one panel, it is a very frightening and incredibly accurate one (Fig. 16). A girl that lived in the future meets up with a girl that lived in the past in the present of 1985. That future is really unsettling and functions as a kind of “what doesn't kill you makes you stronger” element on her. The rest of the story remains in 1985 and everyone escapes danger in the end, but that certain panel may become haunting for someone who lived the actual tragedy...

#### *X-Force #4 – Sabotage: Part 2*

(Cover date: November, 1991, Fig. 17)

A lighter way of referencing the WTC event: only one tower was blown up (this time by some Marvel villains that became terrorists) and there is no further reference or explanation outside the classic fight of good vs. evil (Fig. 18).

### **Corona virus**

As said before, the threat or scenario alone (in this case a biological threat) is not necessarily impressive, but the details make us wonder.

#### *The Spectacular Spider-Man #176*

(Cover date: May, 1991, Fig. 19) and  
*The Spectacular Spider-Man #177*

(Cover date: June, 1991, Fig. 20)

A new Marvel villain entering the scene by the name of Corona is sure to sound odd for someone in 2020. It sounds even weirder when we find out her origin story: her superpowers come from being exposed to some chemicals that give other people influenza symptoms, because they get Soho fever (the name of the disease - Fig. 21). A cure is mandatory, because the disease spreads and even Spider-Man gets infected: the chemicals went into the water supply of the city.

#### *Astérix #37 -- Astérix et la Transitalique*

(Cover date: October, 2017, Fig. 22)

This story is just about a chariot race, it cannot involve an actual disaster, can it? Oh, well, somehow a disaster reference made its way into this Asterix story: the name of the Roman competitor is no other than Coronavirus and his sidekick's name is Bacilus (Fig. 23). The story evolves like a normal race story, but somehow we can't help but raise an eyebrow while reading it.

#### *Judge Dredd: Day of Chaos*

(Compilation of 48 issues from 2011-2012; launch date of TPB: 2014, Fig. 24)

This time it's not about one story from one issue, but a whole graphic novel. This story arc follows the complex dynamic of the chaos virus (curiously described as resembling a cold - Fig. 25) in a futuristic city of 400 million people (Mega-City One). The outcome is devastating, in a world already filled with violence and conflict everywhere. As most of Judge Dredd stories, the main players are the judges, authorities that strive to enforce the law.

### **Princess Diana tragedy**

*Wonder Woman #126 – Where Have All the Heroes Gone?*

(In store date: October, 1997,

Cover date: August, 1997, Fig. 26)

In a weird symmetry, this issue shows princess Diana of Themiscyra on a bed, in a coma (Fig. 27), short before the newspapers announced the death of Princess Diana of Wales. The rest of the story shows little of Wonder Woman, but instead talks about a conflict in Olympus and contains an eerie episode in which Wonder Woman's mother is

hallucinating about being guilty of abandoning her.

### Space Shuttle Challenger disaster

*The Man of Steel #2 – The Story of the Century*  
(In store date: July, 1986,  
Cover date: October, 1986, Fig. 28)

In a behind-the-scene story, John Byrne tells the story of how he was drawing the story of Superman saving a space shuttle, when they announced in the real news that the Challenger disaster just occurred. Because the date was January 1986, he had time to redraw the story and so it was not about saving a shuttle anymore, but about foiling an armed robbery (Fig. 29).

John Byrne is not new to predictions that actually happened, because he was also involved in the Wonder Woman issue that, but also in drawing a New York blackout that happened in the same week the issue was launched (Fig. 30) and earthquakes in Japan in 1978-79 (Fig. 31).

### Conclusions

The world of comic books has a way of dreaming about the future that sometimes involves something bigger than just narrative or esthetic value. Sometimes the seeds of reality are contained within a comic book's story, editorial, or (as I previously mentioned) just a single word. It is worth looking closely into this realm, especially when times get tough and solutions seem few.

Prophecies have a single and undeniable quality: they come true. I did not try to imply here we can actually find prophecies in comic books, but rather admire the power of some coincidences that showed some catastrophic events before they happened, in hope that a synchronicity that also can be beneficial for us exists.

Now let's discuss a few things about connection between past and future events in *SYNCHRONICITY. An Acausal Connecting Principle* by Carl Gustav Jung (Jung, 1973). The idea that causality links past and future events implies the time factor and also implies the observant linking the events in a rational way. In other words, the events themselves do not link unless a rational observer links them, otherwise they exist separate to each other. Jung picks the term "synchronicity" to define a hypothetical factor equal in rank to causality, having the function of explanation. He also

quotes some experiments done by Rhine that led to the conclusion that space and time are defined by the human mind, and are therefore elastic and not static things. The concept of measurement and the wide spread use of it made humans really think about the relevance of trying to time and space being objective notions measured by objective devices. Even if it might sound odd for the times we are living in and a bit hard to wrap our minds around it, time is a man-created concept that we take as an axiom and we choose to think of it as a fixed concept, when in fact it is just a way to describe the behavior of bodies in motion and the succession of day and night and so on and so forth.

Getting back to synchronicity: the events in the past and those in the future are not synchronous in nature, but are synchronistic, because the mind experiences them in the present.

Jung talks about seeing this type of occurrence as acausal, meaning it is beyond actual causality. In other words, usual demonstrations function on quantifiable concepts, but concepts relating to the mind are in themselves not quantifiable, therefore usual causality cannot be demonstrated, the alternative being, of course, that is just chance.

Experiments concerning time and space (with cards, with dice, with trying to guess certain information etc.) show almost as a fact that the emotional state of the observer is crucial to the experiment. Therefore, a skeptic or someone who does not believe in guessing or winning will tend to guess less or have less luck in such experiments. Moving on to less scientific texts, Jung quotes Albertus Magnus as saying:

"Everyone can influence everything magically if he falls into a great excess... and he must do it at that hour when the excess befalls him, and operate with the things which the soul prescribes. For the soul is then so desirous of the matter she would accomplish that of her own accord she seizes on the more significant and better astrological hour which also rules over the things suited to that matter... Thus it is the soul who desires a thing more intensely, who makes things more effective and more like what comes forth. ...Such is the manner of production with everything the soul intensely desires. Everything she does with that aim in view

possesses motive power and efficacy for what the soul desires” (Quentell, 1485).

He again states that emotional state is important to magic occurrences, even though Jung does not regard them as magic but as the same nature of synchronicity we are talking about.

Furthermore, it is not only complicated to define events as these and quantify them, but it is also complicated to find empirical evidence on them. Because they solely relate to the mind, only concepts as intuition or irrational functions of the consciousness can be applied to them.

An interesting conclusion of Jung’s thesis is that, just like the concept of time, the concept of synchronicity applied to past and future events does not mean anything in itself, it is just a mere postulating of the fact that even though meaningful coincidences are a product of chance, the fact that they are so improbable in nature is fair to assume they are based on a principle or a property that is also fair to assume belongs to the empirical world.

Unfortunate and fortunate prophecies can both be regarded as meaningful coincidences, and the only major thing that probably separates them is the intention itself, whether it is someone who just tells a fictional story that comes true afterward or someone who intentionally tells something that comes true afterwards. The examples from comic books given here fall in the first category, of course, but are quantifiable examples of such coincidences.

The world of ideas functions beyond scientific methods because it involves the mind, which by definition has an unconscious side that works on different principles than the rational ones. One fair assumption would be that time is not necessarily linear, but has its theoretical “worm-holes” (passageways between different moments that elude the normal way distance between moments) and this article itself can be somehow linked to such an occurrence, because prior to writing it I researched for a screenplay documented cases of extraordinary luck, therefore coming in contact with meaningful coincidences before writing an article about things that came true. Was it just a coincidence? Was it a natural way of thoughts evolving? We cannot know, but we can know that the said research happened and that you are reading this article

right now.

In closing, to talk about the second category I just mentioned (the one concerning intentional events) I would like to reference the “23 enigma”, which is postulated to have originated from William S. Burroughs (Robert Anton Wilson - *The 23 Phenomenon*, in *Fortean Times*, 2007). It is the belief that the number 23 is very significant to humans, but it is also linked by some to obsessive-compulsive disorder. The idea functions as a simple principle: we observe details and get focused on them until we see them everywhere, and if we get too serious about it, it gives us an easy feeling and makes our mind react negatively to it. The weird thing is that it is usually true (if no mental disorder is actually involved) and we can actually link things and make them become meaningful coincidences just based on random concepts we apply to them. What does that really say about us? It says something profound, I would say: it says that our personal passion and context actually build up towards seeing reality a certain way and on the long run actually create reality in a way of speaking. It is somehow the power of self-suggestion, but combined with the power in thinking that there is a link between us and the universe (which is no longer mysterious to us, because we chose to see it, even if, in fact we actually created it with our minds).

Comic books and also comic book movies are and will always be linked to the moment they were created in terms of politics, fashion, technology and other ways of mimicking reality, but they will also contain a dual aspect that refers to hope and disaster. It is almost unavoidable to create a comic book story that will contain prophetic aspects to it, as long as the reader is well informed and pays attention to what is happening in the world. As you are reading this, probably someone is in the process of creating a story that will eventually have an interesting choice of details and will sound prophetic to someone.

We cannot ask ourselves: why are we attracted to such occurrences? What makes them special? I would say in Jungian terms: it is a very mysterious way that cannot really be put into words, to feel that there is a uniting principle that exits and links all these improbable events and we are directly experiencing it. It is a form of divination, but also a feeling that cannot be explained fully or cannot be recreated and thus it is a form (for

some) of Divine intervention or Fate or just the universe giving us a sign. To put it in a very pragmatic way: it makes us feel less lonely in this sometimes gray world and it is a way of experiencing what some call magic (not the scientists, of course), because it is very important for humans to experience meaningful truth. And coincidences are very personal ways of experiencing a greater truth that is beyond him and his existence (it works both ways: it can be a miracle or a disaster, it still applies).

When comic books will become archeological content (which will take a while), they will also become naïve or wise aspects of a past that talked about sci-fi, but also about who men is or should be in this world and what is their role and the struggle that comes with each aspect, but also how men admired nature and experienced mystery in their long way towards the future and what had really happened.

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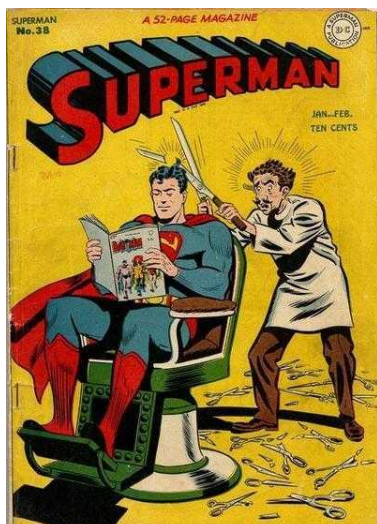


Fig. 1.



Fig. 2.



Fig. 3.



Fig. 4



Fig. 5.

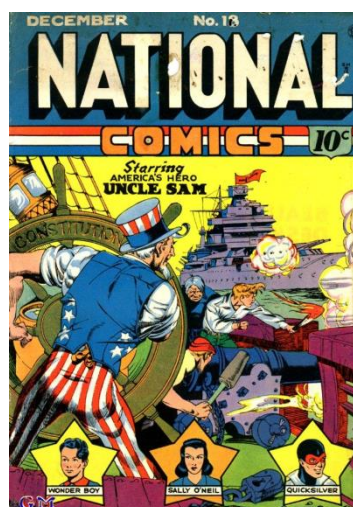


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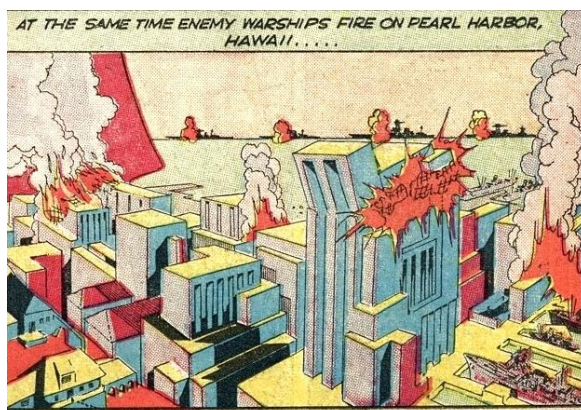


Fig. 7.



Fig. 8.



Fig. 9.

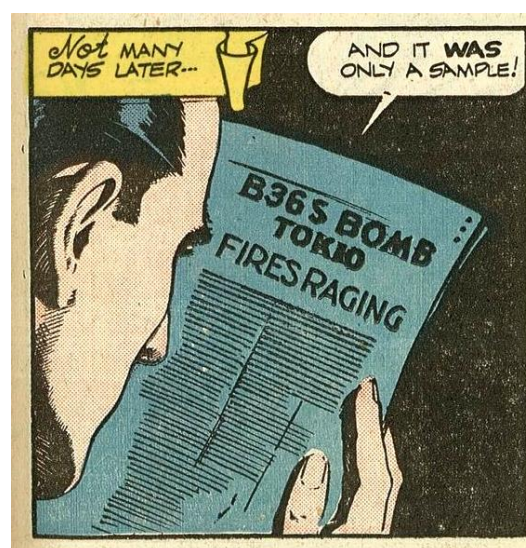


Fig. 10.



Fig. 11.



Fig. 12.



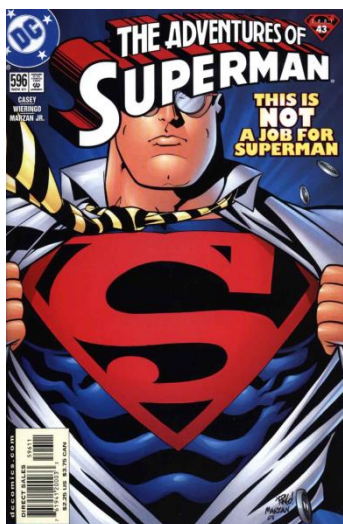


Fig. 13.



Fig. 14.



Fig. 15.



Fig. 16.



Fig. 17.



Fig. 18.



Fig. 19.



Fig. 20.



## THE NOT-SO-JOYFUL APOCALYPSE. MARGARET ATWOOD'S *USTOPIA* IN THE *MADDADDAM* TRILOGY

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**Abstract:** Referring to the dawn of the Industrial Revolution, Jean Baptiste Fressoz dubs this immense technological risk that humanity has taken, starting from the eighteenth century a “joyful apocalypse”. Among contemporary writers who favour the post-apocalyptic speculative genre, Canadian writer Margaret Atwood stands apart not only because of the large number of novels putting forth a gloomy vision about the future of Earth, but also due to the complex, multi-layered ecofeminist critical discourse she employs. The paper will discuss Atwood's *MaddAddam* Trilogy (*Oryx and Crake*, 2003, *The Year of the Flood*, 2009, *MaddAddam*, 2013), a series about an alarmingly near future in which a worldwide contagion caused by a laboratory virus has gradually led to the replacement of humanity by a genetically-engineered race. While this post-industrial apocalypse is anything but joyful, I argue that the author's message is not dystopian, but, in her own words, “ustopian”, i.e. about an ambivalent world, in which perfection and disaster coexist as two sides of the same coin. Atwood's novels about how the technological man has condemned himself to extinction contain a warning about the fragility of our condition, but are also a guide about how to slow down, in our precipitation into the future, by carrying a closer, more objective examination of the present.

**Keywords:** ecofeminism, joyful apocalypse, post-apocalyptic fiction, ustopia, worldwide contagion.

**Rezumat:** Referindu-se la zorii Revoluției industriale, Jean Baptiste Fressoz numește acest risc tehnologic imens al umanității, care a început în secolul al XVIII-lea, “apocalipsa veselă”. Printre autorii contemporani care se apleacă asupra genului speculativ postapocaliptic se numără și scriitoarea canadiană Margaret Atwood, care ocupă un loc aparte nu doar datorită numărului mare de romane despre un viitor întunecat al Pământului, ci și grație discursului ecofeminist complex și nuanțat pe care îl propune. Articolul analizează Trilogia *MaddAddam* (*Oryx și Crake*, 2003, *Anul potopului*, 2009, *MaddAddam*, 2013), o serie plasată într-un viitor alarmant de apropiat în care o pandemie globală provocată de un virus de laborator a dus la înlocuirea rasei umane cu o rasă modificată genetic. Deși această apocalipsă post-industrială nu este deloc una veselă, argumentul studiului este acela că mesajul autoarei nu este distopic ci, așa cum spune chiar ea, „ustopic”, adică trimițând la o lume ambivalentă, în care perfecțiunea și dezastrul coexistă, precum cele două fețe ale unei medalii. Romanele lui Atwood despre felul în care omul tehnologic s-a autocondamnat la pieire conțin un avertisment despre fragilitatea condiției umane, dar mai sunt și un ghid despre cum să încetinim ritmul precipitării noastre spre viitor, făcând o examinare mai atentă și mai obiectivă a prezentului.

**Cuvinte cheie:** apocalipsa veselă, ecofeminism, ficțiune postapocaliptică, pandemie globală, ustopie.

### Introduction. When works of civilization go wrong

Since World War II, the disenchanted view of the world and the gloomy, skeptical perception about humanity's chance of improvement have dominated the literary discourse, resulting in the successful proliferation of the dystopian genres. That a literary or philosophical utopia, more often

than not, turned into its opposite after implementation in real life became apparent in the rise and fall of global-scale extremist political movements or in smaller-scale economic projects. An example of the latter category, which also serves the purpose of the present paper, was Fordlandia, Henry Ford's idea to build an ideal community of industrial workers in the middle of the Amazon jungle.



As Greg Grandin points out in a book devoted to this ambitious and long-forgotten experiment, while El Dorado had been considered for centuries a real, yet undiscovered, place, Fordlandia was a settlement which marked the transition, in the twentieth century, from the “age of adventure” to the “age of commerce” (2010, 9), which illustrated, quite literally, “a new and titanic fight between nature and modern man” (2010, 4), a fight which, at that moment, seemed to place man at a glorious advantage. But what started as a promised land soon degenerated in waste and chaos: Fordlandia turned out to be dysfunctional as a community, inefficient economically, disastrous ecologically, in short, rather than “a Midwestern city of virtue springing from the Amazon green” (2010, 4) as its founder wanted it, the project collapsed as a result of corruption, pollution, disease, waste of resources and overpopulation. If, for Ford himself and for many of his contemporaries, this failure was hard to explain rationally, with the benefit of hindsight, the answer is self-evident. The project’s main flaw stemmed from its very “surety of purpose” and “incuriosity about the world” (2010, 17), from an idealism that was “frustrated” (2010, 15) at the onset, because the efforts made to create it were “conceived in disregard of [its] limitations” (2010, 17).

Fordlandia marked the moment when the optimistic belief in and the unlimited admiration for progress stopped being regarded as virtues, just as, in literature, utopia stopped being the favourite genre once the twentieth century, with its wars and economic crises, set in.

### A truly “dire cartography”

In her theoretical essay about literary utopias, Margaret Atwood points out that (science) fiction about an ideal world was *en vogue*, if not *de rigueur*, in the nineteenth century because of the technological and medical advances supported by the idealist thinkers who could swear that “humanity was almost perfectible if only society could change the way it was organized” (2011, 51). These works, which went in parallel with real projects, social, religious, political experiments, were the result of movements whose declared aim was to identify the means by which an improved version of the world could be made available.

The problem was, however, like in Fordlandia’s case, that, while these projects seemed utopian from their own perspective, they were dystopian from other points of view. Starting from Greg Grandin’s explanation that the utopian-dystopian settlement was the result of frustrated idealism, it can be argued that many grand projects were the same. The establishment of the first Puritan colony in the New World happened when the “Pilgrims” grew dissatisfied with the old order. Soon after, though, the founders were already disillusioned about their new ideal society and, in trying to remedy the situation and alter reality, they built the first prison and scaffold, while also considering moving further south, to Mexico and another promised land. More cynically and with a clearer reference to ecological issues, this tendency is summarized by the American poet e.e.cummings in his famous “Pity this busy monster, manunkind”: “listen: there’s a hell / of a good universe next door; let’s go.”<sup>1</sup> Once the world initially deemed flawless no longer meets our standards, we will discard it as less than ideal and move on to the next perfect project in sight.

This is how the projection of ideal universes seems to have always worked. At first, utopia was an island at the edge of the map. Then, as the corners of the world became more and more familiar, and maps filled in all the blanks, utopia moved further: underground – whether in the rabbit hole-portal fantasy of *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* or in the sci-fi geological realm of Jules Verne’s *Journey to the Centre of the Earth* – in other solar systems, in parallel universes, in the past or in the future. This “emigration” from a not-so-perfect real world to a potentially perfect universe was dictated, in Margaret Atwood’s words, “by a real estate problem” (2011, 22).

Margaret Atwood also explains the reasons for the constant dissatisfaction and restlessness that feed the utopian drive, but also the reasons why all utopias fail sooner or later (usually sooner rather than later):

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.poetry.com/poem/44807/pity-this-busy-monster,-manunkind>

"All too often you stretch [the people who somehow just don't or won't fit into your grand scheme] on a Procustean bed or dig a hole in the ground and shovel them into it. With so much stretching, hole-digging, and shoveling going on as the twentieth century ground on, it was difficult to place faith in the construction of utopias, literary or otherwise" (2011, 57).

At first sight, utopia, eutopia and dystopia are quite different things. *Utopia* is the perfection to be found "somewhere" (else) or "nowhere". *Eutopia* is the version which emphasizes the unequivocally positive side of the project, the good and beautiful side of the coin. And dystopia is the opposite, the dark, evil, chaotic, lethal deterioration of a possibly good world. Dystopia is utopia all gone wrong. Margaret Atwood comes up with a fourth term in the equation, *ustopia*, which means "neither – nor", "both – and". Because "dystopias are dire, but so are utopias viewed slantwise" (2011, 14), by those who don't approve or fail to meet the highest standards. Moreover, there is a dependency between utopia and dystopia which is not immediately apparent (and was not immediately apparent to authors of literary utopias or of utopian projects in real life), "like a *yin* and *yang* pattern": "if you scratch the surface of any utopia" you will eventually find a dystopian fabric (2011, 59). More sadly even, this dependency is not necessarily mutual, since, like in adventure romances, "heroes need monsters [...] to establish their credentials", "but monsters most emphatically do not need heroes" (2011, 17). This means that dystopias don't actually need utopias either.

This is why it is always safer to talk about *ustopia*, a very good world that can go very badly, or a very bad world which can contain a seed of redemption. Atwood's view is shared by the American essayist and thinker J.C. Hallman, who starts his meditation about the role of utopias in society with the metaphor of fire: "The historical drive toward utopia is best understood as a kind of light, or fire", but too much kindling of this fire by utopian thought risks "scorching the face of the earth" (2010, 4). It is not in vain that some of the earliest sci-fi dystopias written after World War II deal with fire (or scorching) and books. Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* (1953) imagines a future American society

dominated by censorship, in which books are banned and firemen burn any piece of printed paper they find. Stanislaw Lem's *Memoirs Found in a Bathtub* (1961) invents a laboratory nano-bioform, *papyrolysis*, which eats paper, so the worldwide library melts down and turns to ashes and dust in an age known as the Great Decomposition.

For Hallman, who was born and raised in a master-planned American community in the 1960s, even the most benign projects (or, perhaps, especially the most benign projects) have the disturbing habit of going terribly wrong when they are applied in real life: "Utopias slip in the transition from conception to implementation" (Hallman, 2010, 5). Before checking his hypothesis against fictional and non-fictional utopian promises, Hallman looks closer to home, at the community in which he used to live as a child, in a street, called, ironically, Utopia Road. Judging by the name, one might have imagined an "earnest visionary" behind this social and housing project. But "there was no earnest visionary responsible for Utopia Road [...] just a scheme to make a buck. The name Utopia Road was some real estate developer's idea of a joke" (2010, 6) because "Utopia Road housed us, but did not raise us" (2010, 5).

Many utopias, Hallman continues, started as someone's idea of a joke. The first one, so subtle that most readers didn't get the punch line, was Thomas More's prototype, *Utopia*, published in 1516, an essay of political philosophy and a work of fiction which, says Hallman, was not meant to be read as a plan, but as a satire. Unfortunately, the vast majority of More's followers had less humour than the English scholar, so they chose to follow the format while ignoring the irony. Humourless idealists, like Henry Ford in the story narrated in the Introduction, or like those criticized by Irish playwright George Bernard Shaw, are very dangerous. In *The Quintessence of Ibsenism* (1913, 24), Shaw imagines a community in which the majority are conforming, credulous, usually incompetent Philistines and the minority are the Idealists. Following the Philistines would be like adopting the herd mentality, but following the Idealists would be far more insidious and harmful in the long run, because of their obstinacy to defend some abstract values to the detriment of individual freedom. The first utopia was, therefore, not very different in



spirit from the perfect, though imperfect societies which Lemuel Gulliver encounters in his travels, such as the Houyhnhms, talking horses who live in a clean, just, reasonable, egalitarian world, but are alarmingly close to what today we would recognize as sociopaths. Utopias should be, ultimately, taken with a pinch of salt, but, tragically, they usually aren't. Hallman concludes: "The stigma now attached to utopia not only fails to get the joke, it blames hopefulness for hope's failures" (2010, 12).

The history of ideas, literary history, as well as social history have, time and again, indicated that utopian thought displays a vast array of dichotomies, contradictions and oxymorons. This process was suddenly accelerated, French historian Jean-Baptiste Fressoz (2012) believes, by the Industrial Revolution. Regarded by its contemporaries as an age of progress and unlimited opportunity, it is now the most telling example of the technological risk taken by humanity in modern history. While the real and fictional utopias of the nineteenth century were full of steam, steel and enthusiasm, they heralded, in Fressoz's words, a "joyful apocalypse". Industrialization propelled the West into the modern age, with unprecedented speed and finality, but also with a bad omen, the beginning of the end for man's moral substance and for the environment. "Joyful apocalypse" is also, in the eyes of fin-de-siècle Central-European writers like Hermann Broch, the irresponsibility and carelessness of the multinational empires, which waltzed nimbly but relentlessly towards war and dissolution in the first decade of the twentieth century (Schorske, 1998).

### Handmaids and ecofeminist tales

Margaret Atwood's first dystopia was *The Handmaid's Tale*, a piece of post-apocalyptic speculative fiction written in 1984, after a visit in East Berlin, where the Canadian author had the chance to experience a chunk of life in a totalitarian, though self-proclaimed utopian, political order. When the book appeared, it received negative or skeptical reviews because many critics saw it as too tall a tale to be told a readership born and raised in a democracy and on a clean and safe planet. *The Handmaid's Tale* warning "was not there, not quite", writes Atwood in *Dire Cartographies* (2011, 69), and

"I thought for a while in the 1990s that maybe it never would be. But now I'm wondering again. Of recent years, American society has moved much closer to the conditions necessary for a takeover of its own power structures by an anti-democratic and repressive government. [...] Now the United States are weakened by two draining wars and a financial meltdown, and America appears to be losing faith in the basic premises of liberal democracy" (2011, 71).

The ecological warning, though already there in the 1980s, was still more a matter of scholarly debate than an imminent danger. The first, pioneering environmental summits had taken place, under the auspices of the United Nations, in Stockholm and in Rome in the 1970s, with climate change and ecological disaster being mentioned for the first time. In literature and philosophy, ecocritical stances had been adopted since the Romantic age, when an earth-centred vision opposed the human-centred mainstream discourse. If the Romantic celebration of nature could be regarded as the first wave of cultural ecology, in the 1970s, when the second wave of feminism emerged, its fusion with environmental concerns created the second ecocritical wave, ecofeminism.

According to Karen J. Warren (1997, 3), women-nature connections are environmentally, socially and morally indispensable:

"Trees, forests, and deforestation. Water, drought, and desertification. Food production, poverty, and toxic wastes. Environmental destruction and women. And women? What do these environmental issues have to do with women? [...] important connections exist between the treatment of women, people of color, and the underclass on one hand and the treatment of nonhuman nature on the other. Ecological feminists claim that any feminism, environmentalism, or environmental ethic which fails to take these connections seriously is grossly inadequate. Establishing the nature of these connections, particularly what I call women-nature connections, and determining which are potentially liberating for both women and nonhuman nature is a major project of ecofeminist philosophy" (Warren, 1997, 3).

Margaret Atwood adhered to the ecocritical manifesto early in her writing career, as can be seen from a collection of poems published in 1968, *The Animals in That Country*. In “Progressive Insanities of a Pioneer”, Atwood turns the founding myth of the pioneer-explorer-colonist upside down, presenting a conflict between man and nature from which the latter emerges victorious. In the nineteenth century, when Walt Whitman wrote his ode to pioneers as brave, strong, positive-thinking young men, who conquered nature for a better future, progress was a beacon of hope. One hundred years later, progress had become regressive and the human race was being forced to face the limitations of its condition and change its plans of charting, subduing and transforming “wilderness” to either living in harmony with nature or perishing at its hands. Atwood’s stubborn pioneer, who insists, at the beginning of the poem, on “proclaiming himself the center” while “He dug the soil in rows, / imposed himself with shovels” is gradually weakened in his purpose and physical stamina by the “unanswering forest”, by “the ordered absence” of the vast, open Canadian interior, until he surrenders completely: “the green vision, / the unnamed / whale invaded.”<sup>2</sup>

More explicitly ecofeminist is Atwood’s second novel, *Surfacing* (1972), in which an unnamed female protagonist forsakes the small comforts of modern civilization and hides in the Canadian primeval forest, protesting against consumerism, large-scale tourism, male domination and American neo-imperialism. Little by little, she abandons the cottage, cooked food and clothes and gives birth to a baby amongst animals, in complete symbiosis with nonhuman environment. Unlike the obstinate male pioneer, the woman respects nature and admits to be small and insignificant, a key for survival, as Atwood argues in her 1972 *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature*. Humans, in contact with nature, can only adopt the position of victims, as they often do in Canadian literature. But this victimization should be understood dynamically, evolving from

negative victimhood (denial, rebellion, resignation) to creative victimhood, making the difference between “the role” and “the experience” of the victim and finally to being a survivor, who capitalizes on the experience of victimhood, by writing survivor narratives (2013, 27).

In the position humans adopt when they challenge or yield to nature we can trace Margaret Atwood’s theoretical views on the specificities of Canadian literature as being archetypally represented by the garrison (in opposition with the American frontier, for example, or the island, in British literature). The garrison mentality, first coined by Northrop Frye in his influential 1957 *Anatomy of Criticism*, is reflected in the human drive to build walls against the hostile world outside. This hostility appears in the emptiness and malevolence of the landscape (“the malevolent North” is often evoked by Atwood in her lectures<sup>3</sup>), which triggers the human desire to seek self-imposed incarceration out of a sense of powerlessness. The garrison mentality is akin to what medieval scholars identified as the siege mentality, the fear of the natural and supernatural unknown, than to the message conveyed by the archetype of the frontier – optimism, strength, endless opportunity.

In *The Handmaid’s Tale*, Margaret Atwood imagines the United States in the near future as a theocracy, where the political coup and religious radicalization were rendered possible by the chaos and instability growing in the wake of a nuclear disaster. The immediate and gloomiest consequence of this environmental catastrophe is the fact that the vast majority of the human race becomes sterile. The few women who are not yet barren are kept for breeding, in the houses of the most prominent families of Gilead, formerly the USA. The author explains, in *Dire Cartographies*, that her strategy, in concocting this first dystopian story, was simple: “I would not put into this book anything that humankind had not already done, somewhere, sometime, or for which it did not already have the tools” (2011, 65).

2

[http://281849408853532262.weebly.com/uploads/1/0/1/0/10106697/progressive\\_insanities\\_of\\_a\\_pioneer.pdf](http://281849408853532262.weebly.com/uploads/1/0/1/0/10106697/progressive_insanities_of_a_pioneer.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> These lectures were given in 1991 and collected in 1995 in a book called *Strange Things: The Malevolent North in Canadian Literature* by Oxford UP (quotations in the present article from the 2009 digital edition).

This first post-apocalypse was already a utopia, obtained from the opposition between the three temporal planes of the narrative. The past, our present, disenchanted as we may find it, is regarded by the characters in the book as a luminous landmark. Mental survival in Gilead is possible only if memories of this past are not erased or lost completely. The future (the present of the novel) is the endless suffering and self-annihilation brought by state regimentation. Finally, the second, very remote future contains a seed of hope: the novel ends in a time in which the tyrannical republic of Gilead has disappeared and historians present a paper about it at a conference. In Margaret Atwood's terms, "I suppose that's what happens to utopian societies when they die: they don't go to Heaven, they become thesis topics" (2011, 73).

#### **Ad(d)am, Eve, and anti-Edenic scenarios**

Twenty years after *The Handmaid's Tale*, Margaret Atwood returns to post-apocalyptic scenarios in a series of novels that make up the *MaddAddam* Trilogy: *Oryx and Crake*, 2003, *The Year of the Flood*, 2009 and *MaddAddam*, 2013. The connected stories imagine a future in which a laboratory virus manipulated by biological terrorists has escaped control and has destroyed the human race. The human survivors have become wild and aggressive predators and cannibals, while a genetically-engineered humanoid species lives a quasi-Edenic life of ignorance, harmony with nature and submission to the Creator.

The first novel of the trilogy presents the conditions of the biological catastrophe and the immediate post-pandemic reality. Snowman (Jimmy in the world "before"), one of the last "true" human beings, lives up in a tree by the seashore, overseeing the colony of "genmods", called the Children of Crake, a species which had been created by the scientist Crake, a friend of Snowman in the past, now dead, whom the Children revere as their Creator. The Children, or Crakers, had been designed to resist the imminent disaster: they don't wear clothes, they don't need protein to survive (they can eat only grass), have sunblock and insect repellent included in their bodies, mate seasonally, are free from such human passions as jealousy, greed, competitiveness, and ambition, are physically fit and racially blended. They are simple, can't hurt animals and like to sing (a humming noise

they make when references to their Maker are made). They are beautiful, coming in all sizes and colours – brown, yellow, black and white – with each muscle well defined and glistening, but there is something artificial and rudimentary in them: "their naked bodies like a fourteen-year-old's comic book rendition of how bodies ought to be" (*MaddAddam*, 2013, 20).

Snowman the Jimmy remembers the last years of the world "before": the Earth was segregated, divided between the Compounds, gated communities made up of the corporations who controlled everything with the help of their security, CorpSeCorps, and the pleeblands, outside the corporate walls, where everybody else lived in overcrowded conditions, finally succumbing to violence and chaos. He also remembers the OrganInc Farms, whose products were initially meant to do good, to respond both to the growing food crisis and to advance medical research up to the point where all human diseases could be eradicated. These laboratory organisms (such as the pigoons, pigs with human organs and brain tissue), in the post-pandemic world, turn against their designers and destroy whatever has not already been dissolved by bioterrorism. Other "genmod" samples of OrganInc are harmless yet grotesque and absurd, such as the Chickie Nobs, headless chickens with multiple legs, wings and breasts. But, in Margaret Atwood's own words, "Since *Oryx and Crake* was published, the Chickie Nob solution has made giant strides: lab-grown meat is now a reality, though it's probably not in your sausages yet" (2011, 75).

Snowman the Jimmy used to be friends with Crake, then known as Glenn, a brilliant gamer and scientist, whose skill was reversely proportional to his moral code. When empowered, working at Paradise Dome, the most advanced and generously funded bio-tech infrastructure in the world, Crake-Glenn made the pact with the devil, employing the bioterrorists he had met while developing computer games. The result was the promise of ecstasy which degenerated into agony, as the pills developed by Paradise didn't provide eternal youth and happiness, but painful death by the most contagious disease. The bioterrorists called themselves, cynically, *MaddAddams* (following a simple logic: Adam named the living animals, *MaddAddam* names the dead ones).

The fact that the anti-Adam model is characterized by the epithet *mad(d)* has to be understood in the logic of Atwood's earlier writing. Her debut poems announced the "progressive insanities" of the arrogant human male race in conflict with Mother Nature. In such a confrontation, man is defeated and his intervention becomes harmful to himself: in the middle of the vast wilderness, man loses his rational mind and succumbs to his dark subconscious. In *Surfacing*, the female protagonist's plan to become reunited with nature is deemed mad by her family and friends, who fail to interpret her actions in symbolic terms. Therefore, "madness" is, if not a *modus vivendi*, then a *modus operandi* of man and woman, who settle down amidst the natural environment.

The second novel of the Trilogy shifts focus from the limbo in which the Crakers and Snowman dwell to the pleeblands. Among the survivors, a fragile minority has preserved its humanity, after converting to an ecological religion. In the Year Twenty-five after the Waterless Flood – as they call the worldwide contagion – the Gardeners see redemption possible only in the blending between Nature and Scripture. Implicitly, they respond to the MaddAddamites' ambition to destroy, with the hope to restore what is left of the Earth to an Edenic state, calling themselves Adams and Eves, followers of Adam One. Their teaching is simple, almost as basic as the design of the Crakers: all creatures deserve love and protection, technology is dangerous, diet is restricted to home-grown vegetables.

The Gardeners are opposed by the Painballers (brutish ex-convicts and other ruthless survivors who take their name from a gladiator-like combat arena), who hunt down everyone else, like the monsters escaped from the laboratory. The protagonists of the novel, former or future Gardeners, are caught in an on-going fight with the predators. They are eventually reunited with the Crakers and Snowman the Jimmy.

In the third part, the flashbacks reveal another pre-pandemic reality, probably the closest to our present-day world. Apart from the well-meant but overambitious lab gurus who insist on improving the world and finally only manage to destroy it, there are also the less high-minded gurus, whose plans are determined by economic interests. "The Rev" extols the virtues of corporatism doubting that

environmentalist concerns are anything else but smoke-screen sabotage from frustrated NGOs. His son, Zeb, disillusioned by corporate hypocrisy, becomes one of the founders of the Gardeners, together with his half-brother Adam (One). The book ends with the humans and the Crakers settling a colony together, despite Painball adversity, and planning to rebuild civilization.

It is ambiguous whether this plan secures a happy ending to the trilogy or not. Utopian-wise, whatever good comes out of the survivors or the genetically modified humanoids is not granted by their civilization. The Gardeners fare better than the environmentally unfriendly inhabitants of the pleeblands because they willingly regress to an Edenic (i.e. pre-civilizational) state. The Children of Crake are projected with pre-civilizational limitations which turn out to be survival advantages on post-pandemic Earth: the absence of intellectual sophistication spares them unnecessary, harmful ambitions, while the absence of refined emotions spares them the danger of radicalization. As Margaret Atwood explains in *Dire Cartographies*: "They will never suffer the ills that plague *Homo sapiens sapiens*" (2011, 74). But, if this is the luminous side of the dystopia, a problem still lingers, if not dystopian, then at least non-ethical:

"They are designer people. But anyone who engages in such design – as we are now doing – has to ask, How far can humans go in the alteration department before those altered cease to be human? Which of our features are at the core of our being? What a piece of work is man, and now that we ourselves can be the workmen, what pieces of this work shall we chop off?" (2011, 74).

Equally dilemmatic is the rebirth of man and woman from the Gardeners' rib. They love flowers and bees and say a prayer if they have to kill in self-defense, but their archaic lifestyle and endless preaching is alarmingly reminiscent of the inhabitants of Gilead in *The Handmaid's Tale*: the commanders who read passages from the Bible before they rape fertile women, the Aunts who invoke a sacred mission before they send innocents to torture chambers and the gallows, the Wives who are unequivocally Puritan in dress and conduct but steal other women's babies, etc. If utopia

easily slips to dystopia, then Eden also slips to anti-Eden.

### *Et in Arcadia Ego*

The famous Latin adage has drawn the attention of many writers and artists during various historical and cultural periods. Arcadia was, in Virgil's *Eclogues*, one of the first utopias in the western hemisphere. Baroque painters depicted this idealized world as a pastoral scene, with elegant shepherds and shepherdesses in an aseptic décor. Artificially perfect as it was, though, this universe contained a dystopian element, too: *memento mori*. This dualism has been interpreted as the nostalgia for a lost Golden Age of innocence in which humans lived in harmony with nature, or, alternatively, as a warning that darkness and decay exist even in utopia.

W.H. Auden wrote, in 1965, a poem that can be labeled ecocritically dystopian, called *Et in Arcadia Ego*, where, responding to Nicolas Poussin's painting and, more generally, to classical idealism, he suggests that, even the best of all possible worlds is overwhelmed by contrasts, conflicting drives and contradictions:<sup>4</sup>

"Who, now, seeing Her so  
Happily married,  
Housewife, helpmate to Man,  
Can imagine the screeching  
Virago, the Amazon,  
Earth Mother was?"

Mother Nature has been subdued completely (by man), in a neat and consistent manner: the jungle has turned into pasture, the monsters are now grazing sheep and podging geese, lairs are visited by picnickers. Upon realizing this, the poet would almost rejoice, were he not to observe the ugliness of technological progress and the dangers of overexploiting the Earth's resources in the name of civilization's superiority:

"I well might think myself  
A humanist,  
Could I manage not to see

How the autobahn  
Thwarts the landscape

In godless Roman arrogance,

The farmer's children  
Tiptoe past the shed  
Where the gelding knife is kept."

Auden's gendered allegory satirizes one of the most recurrent and successful myths of the West, that of nature's femininity and inferiority, a presence to be tolerated as long as it follows the rules of patriarchal order. Ecofeminists agree with this, as we notice if we read Margaret Atwood's *Strange Things*. Her fourth lecture included in the collection, called "Linoleum Caves" nods to Alice Munro, another Canadian writer, and is explained thus: "[the title implies] the idea of domesticity as simply a thin overlay covering a natural, and wild, abyss. Or conversely, the suggestion that you can pave wilderness over, make it into a kitchen, however thin the linoleum veneer" (2009, 60).

Atwood wonders what would happen if the gender metaphor of the nature-civilization opposition were to go through sex reassignment surgery. What becomes of the juxtaposition of subject and landscape if the deepest, wildest, most hostile manifestation of nature, which is the "malevolent" North, were not a *femme fatale* but an *homme fatale*? Or, if actual gender is not changed, but gender roles are reversed? Does this juxtaposition become neutral, does it turn benign ("a kind of mother or sister or lesbian lover" – 2009, 61)? In analyzing a Canadian horror story written by a woman, Atwood shows how the sinewy male pioneer taming the ravine with his axe in nineteenth-century narratives metamorphoses as a rather effeminate scholar cannibalized by his wife turned Wendigo (the terrifying monster hiding in the Algonquian forests who eats human flesh).

Arcadia, like More's Utopia, and even like El Dorado and Atlantis, is so common in the western collective imagination and cultural legacy that it almost has a shape, that is, one can almost point it on a map. Writing about utopia, Atwood believes that, if in Romantic literature, "every landscape is a state of mind", utopian-dystopian fiction indicates that "every state of mind can also be portrayed by a landscape" (2011, 34). After all, judging from Milton's *Paradise Lost*, even Hell (or Heaven) is much more than just a physical space. Three questions need to be answered by a writer

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.nybooks.com/articles/1965/06/03/et-in-arcadia-ego/>

before the utopia is put on paper in order for readers to get truly immersed in this imaginary – though apparently not imaginary – universe:

“Where is it, when is it, and – in relation to maps – what shape is it? For unless we readers can believe in the utopia as a potentially mappable place, we will not suspend our disbelief willingly” (2011, 25).

Arcadia, whether in Virgil’s *Eclogues* or in Poussin’s and Guercino’s paintings, was a bountiful garden, a plain, a valley or a soft-sloping hillock: an Edenic topography. It is traditionally inhabited by shepherds in dignified yet benevolent poses. The visual representation of Atlantis also alternates natural with human perfection. Plato presented it as a set of concentric islands, where lush vegetation and abundant wildlife blended with graceful urban design (temples and palaces). As for its exact location, writers and geographers have competed in placing it off the coast of Spain in the Atlantic, under Antarctica, or on the island of Santorini, Greece (<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/article/atlantis>). Jules Verne depicts the lost city of Atlantis in *Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Sea*, his novel from 1870, as a vast walled structure, with giant decapitated statues lying at the bottom of the sea and piles of gold, silver and precious gems spilling through the broken doorways.

Renaissance authors, admirers both of Virgil’s Arcadia and of Plato’s Atlantis, nostalgic for the Golden Age of natural harmony and dissatisfied with the Iron Age of political corruption and sophistication, recreate this utopian space on an island. Thomas More’s map of Utopia presents it as a heart-shaped isle in the middle of the sea, right between “Oriens” and “Occidens”, full of winding rivers on whose banks the fertile land bears fruit of the most diverse description. Francis Bacon’s *New Atlantis* (1626) is the island of Bensalem, west of Peru, led by an enlightened governor and inhabited by a chaste population. This earthly paradise is Bacon’s hope of a New World far better than the old one, not entirely dissimilar from the Puritan settlers’ hopes when they fled England and crossed the ocean in search of a city on a hill, in 1620.

If, as we have seen above, fictional utopias had a tendency to be made factual until the end of the nineteenth century with a lot of panache, the best example of Plato’s Atlantis mapped in more detail than one’s own backyard is American politician Ignatius L. Donnelly’s pseudo-archaeological account of 1882, *Atlantis: The Antediluvian World*. In arguing that Atlantis was, in fact, the Garden of Eden and that all civilizations descended from it, Donnelly assures his readers that “There is nothing improbable in [Plato’s] narrative, so far as it describes a great, rich, cultured, and educated people” (2015, 14). While this self-proclaimed scientific opinion may not have harmed anyone, other interpretations of Atlantis paved, like so many good intentions, the road to hell. So did the Atlantis-based esoteric Nazism, which relocated the perfect civilization in the North, in Hyperborea and Thule. That the line between perfection and disaster is very thin indeed is proved by early twentieth-century fictional evocations of Atlantis as a socialist system which falls apart and breaks down from within, much like the volcanic eruptions or earthquakes which are said to have caused the extinction of this civilization (David Maclean Parry’s *The Scarlet Empire*, 1906). Other dystopian Atlantises are pictured as rational worlds obsessed to discover immortality, so bent on the future that they lose all connections with the past (Velemir Khebnikov’s “The Fall of Atlantis,” 1912). Others yet are more optimistic, locating the only chance for humanity’s redemption in the pure wisdom of Atlantis (Albert Armstrong Manship’s *The Ancient Atlantis*, 1915).

Travelling to utopia is a somewhat unilateral business, too, in terms of the means of transport. If it is an island, it must be reached by the sea. More’s map is surrounded by a combination of sea monsters, mermaids and trim vessels. Bacon’s Bensalem is discovered by a group of European explorers and sailors who had got lost in the Pacific. This is so because, as Atwood explains, utopia is “bracketed by two journeys: the one that transports the tale-teller to the other place and the one that transports him (or her) back so he can deliver his report to us” (2011, 27).

With Margaret Atwood’s *Adam One* and *MaddAddam*, the story of Eden turned upside down seems to have come full circle, since the first written evocations of the lost Atlantis and

the melancholy musings about Arcadia. New Adams and Eves, as God's Gardeners, fight to annihilate the consequences of the MaddAddamites' actions, in partnership with a new species designed to love animals and plants and distrust humans. The Gardeners have chosen to put a distance between themselves and elements that made up their identity kit for many centuries: their religious denomination, the Gregorian calendar, the need to explore and record the outer world, the need to domesticate wilderness and adapt it to their cultural codes, etc. The most important day in the Gardeners' calendar is Pollination Day, a moment to celebrate the bees, which, luckier and more resilient than the humans, have not been affected by the lab virus. The preachers of the new eco-religion have thoughts and actions which are shaped by the new language they use. To define survival after the Dry Flood as a necessary blending of faith, awareness, and respect for the planet, Margaret Atwood has the Gardeners coin up a new jargon to cover the areas of the Christian calendar and botany. The ancient practice of Christian holidays is "cut and pasted" in creating new calendar entries, reminders of environmental solutions more than of religious teachings:

"The rising moon signaled the beginning of the God's Gardeners Feast of Saint Julian and All Souls: a celebration of God's tenderness and compassion for all creatures. *The universe is held in the hollow of His hand, as Saint Julian of Norwich taught us in her mystic vision so long ago. Forgiveness must be offered, loving kindness must be practised, circles must be unbroken. All souls means all, no matter what they may have done. At least from moonrise to moonset*" (MaddAddam, 2013, 15).

The process of ascribing names to plants, in God's Gardeners' practices, follows the grammatical principles known to botanists today. Vernacular plant names are built on the mimetic principle, on the association between the properties of the plant and human elements, while scientific names, with a Latin form, are based on the principle of classification, mirroring a downward hierarchy of groups of plants (Percec, Șerban, 2011, 545-55).

To answer Atwood's own questions about the three rules of ustopia, the *MaddAddam* Trilogy's setting replicates but also pastiches the topography of Arcadia-Atlantis. All three novels share the same venue for their ending, which offer the promise of a life on Earth for the humans and the humanoids in various degrees of likelihood. This setting is the seashore, where Snowman, the character who best embodies the connection between the two species, contemplates the future, both in spatial terms, by scouring the horizon line, where the earth meets the sky, and in terms of weighing the legacy of Crake and Paradise. The other positive setting is the micro-Edens built by the Gardeners, who only resort to aggression when they have to protect their eco-work from post-human and non-human predators, such as the lab-designed creatures who had been meant to feed the planet, but ended up feeding *on* the planet. The makeshift gardens are placed on the rooftops of the slums in the pleeblands, spots of green hope on the otherwise flat, desert-like map of the world after the Dry Flood.

Faithful to ecofeminist solutions, Margaret Atwood makes sure the eco-religion is advanced by Adams as well as Eves, the latter being nothing like their archetype. Toby and Ren, while vulnerable to the attacks of the genetically modified creatures and the emotionally hardened human brutes, are, together with Amanda, a tough but warm-hearted pleeb, mainly responsible for the establishment of the human-humanoid colony that will presumably reconstruct civilization from scratch. Additionally, the Children of Crake's primitive cult worships both their maker, gene-specialist Glenn, and his wife, Oryx, who loved animals as her own children, taught the Crakers what to eat and how to make fire. Oryx was also Crake's muse, because the Creator's efforts – at least in the simplified mythology Snowman teaches to the Children – were all aimed at ridding the world of chaos and hurtful people in order to make Oryx happy. His alleged goal was to make Earth a safe place for his wife and Children to live on. It is not by accident that the muse-goddess has the name of a gentle, supple herbivore, a "large antelope with dark marks on its face and legs, and long horns," which

lives in dry areas of Africa and Arabia,<sup>5</sup> much like the world after the Dry Flood in which the human race is captive.

### Conclusion

Margaret Atwood's novels about how the technological man has condemned himself to extinction contain a warning about the fragility of our condition, but are also a guide about how to slow down, in our precipitation into the future, by carrying a closer, more objective examination of the present. While utopia doesn't exist and, when it does, it creates more unhappiness than happiness in the long run, this doesn't mean we are only meant to watch the whole process with our arms folded in resignation or disinterest. In *Dire Cartographies*, the Canadian author concludes that "maintenance work" needs to be carried constantly even if "Historically, utopia has not been a happy story". So "we should try to make things better, insofar as it lies within our power. But we should probably not try to make things perfect, especially not ourselves, because that path leads to mass graves" (2011, 83).

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<sup>5</sup> <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/oryx>



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## **B. MISCELLANEA**



## VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN THE MEDIEVAL BANAT (1350 - 1450)

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**Abstract:** *The present paper aims to highlight some aspects of the violence against women in the medieval Banat community, based on several unpublished and published documents still available to us. I do believe that the analysed cases reveal the inter-human relations, which substantially crossed the limits of decorum sometimes, even though I make no pretence that my research is exhaustive. Despite the limitations of the materials and since my objective is that of assessing a specific legal reality of the time, I will refer to other cases which allow us to understand the abuses the noble or subservient women had to face at that time. I do hope that, by correlating such cases, I will be able to offer a more vivid and nuanced image of the role the woman played within the family, or in society, without resorting to generalisations. Another explanation is needed here: given the nature of the preserved papers, the content of papers differs greatly; some of the cases are more detailed, whereas others record but sparsely the legal actions taken in cases of violence against women.*

**Keywords:** *the medieval Banat, Angevins' era, noble women, subservient women, violence.*

**Rezumat:** *Cercetarea de față încercă să surprindă câteva fațete ale violenței exercitate asupra femeilor din comitatele Banatului medieval pe baza unui număr de documente inedite și editate care au supraviețuit vremii. Fără a avea pretenția unei cercetări exhaustive, cazurile analizate considerăm că reflectă câteva modele de relații interumane care au depășit, uneori cu mult, barierele bunei conviețuirii. Cu toate limitele conținutului documentar, circumscris stilionarelor vremii și nevoii de a exprima strict o realitate juridică, micile detalii generate de particularitățile multor spețe ne-au dat posibilitatea de a observa o serie de aspecte ale abuzurilor cu care femeile, nobile sau aservite, s-au confruntat în epocă, ce merită a fi punctate. Împreună, aceste amănunte au conturat, sperăm noi, o imagine mai vivace și mai nuanțată a rolului pe care femeia l-a jucat atât în cadrul familial, cât și în cel social, desigur păstrând proporțiile și nerecurgând la generalizări forțate. Se cuvine a mai adăuga și o altă precizare: în mod aleatoriu, conținutul documentelor variază de la caz la caz, în funcție de tipul de acte păstrate; este motivul pentru care în anumite spețe am putut opera cu informații detaliate, în timp ce în alte cazuri nu am avut la îndemână decât date sumare asupra unor acțiuni judiciare generate de actele de violență asupra femeilor.*

**Cuvinte cheie:** *Banatul medieval, perioada Angevină, femei nobile, femei aservite, violență.*

In the last decades, gender studies have become increasingly present in historiographical research, on the basis of the finding that gender is a social and normative construct covering all social aspects. This new concept opened new avenues of research which had been previously ignored. The medievalist research for instance has been directed to non-traditional subjects, mainly to women, children or other so-called marginalized categories in the medieval society (Mitchell, 2017, 1). This new cultural lexicon the gender phenomenon provides us with allows analysing ubiquitous realities concerning men and women, which are present in any social constructions, but all the more so when speaking about historical

testimonies no matter the shape they have taken.

The women's role during the Middle Ages was clearly set by a series of patterns created and managed by a patriarchal society; her position and place within the family merely reflected the male ideals projected on women. Even in the centuries after the Middle Ages they noted that female was a marked and stigmatized gender in opposition to men whose gender was regularly not noticed (Bennett, Karras, 2013, 4). No one could deny that women were exposed to more offenses at the hand of the prevalent patriarchal system of that period. But if seen as a public/private relation, the presence of women in the public life is

considered today to have been more active than it was thought for a long time. The idea that only men performed in external relationship, as well as the one of women involved only in domestic and private one is not an accurate one (Menzinger, 2012, 119; Solcan, 2005, 6; Fodor, 2011, 17-18; Magina, 2015, 154-155). Historians agree more frequently now that European medieval women were not confined to “tight” places and it has been demonstrated that they enjoyed power and built their own personality in many social fields and circumstances. Some of those women for instance managed their own real estate or those of their entire family in certain circumstances, and these elements prove their administrative and financial capability as long as “there is no more public affair than owning an estate or politically machinating” (Vintilă-Ghițulescu, 2011, 17-18; Pecican, 2002, 40).

As for the female presence and roles in the medieval Banat counties we might start from a generally valid finding: we are speaking of a strongly male-dominated society in terms of administration and relation, and the men’s point of view and filter are our only sources of information regarding women at that time. The male preeminence is a natural consequence of the peculiarities of the era: a time of war, and of social and political instability within which the economic and social-juridical foundation was preponderantly left to heirs. There were realities to mark the female status the State and Church had boiled down to family. Practically, there are some impediments in studying women in the medieval Banat: first of all, any restitution can be done only on documentary basis, as no Occidental medieval literature could be found within this area, to facilitate the women’s private or public affairs. Secondly, we have to note the aleatory character of the preserved papers referring to female presence. Thirdly, the specific typology of the papers, their parsimonious references to female presence as being focused on land subjects, seriously limit the historiographical restitution.

A sensible subject that I try to approach is the shapes of violence against the women in the medieval Banat. That was a ubiquitous reality of human society, but difficult to reveal when specific evidence was missing. It is a subject that comes to round up a series of studies referring to female presence in the papers concerning the medieval Banat I have published before (Boldea, 2017; Boldea, 2018;

Boldea, 2019). Violence during the medieval era was taken as a natural, daily event the society had to face: conflicts, lands encroaching or rapes, and estates devastation, or robbery and crimes, nothing else but apparently common facts up to the modern age (Magina 2014, 47-48). Women were not the initiators of violent acts in most of the cases, but they became direct or collateral victims of violence. They became extremely vulnerable when losing the male tutelage and had no means to protect themselves against emergencies.

### Statistics

Even if the research is not intended to be exhaustive, as mentioned above, it covers 200 published and unpublished documents from the archives and collections of papers referring to the Banat counties. Certainly, there are more papers to refer to women’s existence and female subjects. But I do consider that these 200 documents make a substantial amount of information that allows us significant conclusions. There are 32 papers (15%) that aleatory noted acts of violence against women in the Banat counties. As for the social status, there is a clear difference between the noble women and those of a humble condition.

Social status	How many documents	Rate
Noble women	23	71%
Subordinate women	9	29%

Given their privileged status, it is implied that the noble ladies had certain opportunities to reach justice in looking for their rights and such situations ere no exception to the rule. The common women, who generally relied both on their husbands and landlords, were at their landlord’s mercy, as he was the only one able to claim violence against his servants. The law says that in such situations, the landlord was the one at a loss, thus justice had to do him right.

### Noble women as victims of violence

There are two aspects we should focus on when considering the quantity of the cases in that field. Firstly, the relation between the noble ladies and the act of violence: being victims or initiators of such an act. Foreseeable, the first category covers 72%, consisting in noble women submitted to various violent acts, while 28% were intensified acts of force

against other people. For the marital status, 63% of the cases involved widows, 33% wives and only 4%, young girls. Certainly the rates are relative but they could offer possible patterns of the social milieu at that time.

Undoubtedly, as an integrated part of the medieval society, women had to suffer during such violent times (wars, invasions – preponderantly in the borderlands, or inter-domains conflicts). Yet, there are few papers to note violent acts against the noble women. As long as the data on this subject comes from preserved judicial papers, situations that did not go to courts can never be approached, unfortunately (Rady, 2015, 110). I do not exclude any way such acts at that time; human nature and behaviour within the private relations did not substantially change in the course of the time. Probably most of the cases were taken to confessors, clerks or councils, because the church was the one to protect noble women and their interests in the Middle Ages. To conclude, we are not able to penetrate the intimate universe of the noble families in the medieval counties of the Banat for simply having no papers to allow us to do it. Except for a late case, by the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, that points out a regrettable mother-son relation, noted in the official papers: Nicholas Telegdi together with his servants forcedly entered his mother's house at *Szentlőrincz*, insulted and physically aggressed her, tumbled her down, and plundered all they could (silvering, crops, horses and other goods of 200 forints); he also took his sister and let her in the house of another nobleman (Grigore Maho of *Mahofalva*). The reason of such a blameable action was a notice in his father's will, that specified that his widow Margaret was to receive the house for the dowry and gifts they had got at their wedding. The real question consisted in Margaret's re-marriage, her son's legacy, and how these circumstances motivated her sons decision to go to the family of his mother's new husband (*Acta et Documenta*, 2020, 82-85). It becomes futile to mention how financial interests deeply altered the relations between a mother and her son instead of being set on mutual respect and material and emotional support.

All the cases I have analysed within this study are to be found in the law-suits the noble ladies or their spokesmen (husbands, relatives, and advocates) made in local or central courts. Their privilege allowed them to defend

themselves on the basis of common and written laws of that time. But certainly they could not have done it without support, as the lawsuits could have been expensive, and their results uncertain. It is worth mentioning that physical violence was not always directed to the noble women, but their people. The acts of violence were often initiated in their neighbourhood, by neighbour noblemen; few cases of intra-familial violence were documented or such cases maybe were solved inside the families or by the help of the parish they lived in.

The most known abuses consisted in estate robbing, especially in the cases of widows that managed their personal or familial goods (Solcan, 2007, 92),<sup>1</sup> but also of wives or daughters' who benefited of personal estates in the form of dowry, marriage gifts, inheritance or other situations (Galway, 2014, 65; Boldea, 2015, 235-251)<sup>2</sup>. We direct our attention mostly to the complaints in front of central courts in the kingdom, both for their severity and for cases unsolved in local (counties or councils) courts, where the denounced noblemen probably influenced the members of the courts. On the other hand, taking a case to the royal courts of Visegrád or Buda was not at the hand of any person. The noblemen of the Cheps of Gherteniş were the subject of an interesting case for the damage of 350 forints, by entering the estate of lady Anych, Benedict of Lelye's wife. We might suppose that such a fact was of a real severity as it was brought to court in 1398 (Fejér, 1834, 590-591) to one of the highest courts in the kingdom, in *specialis presencia Regia Maiestatis* (under the great chancellor's direction – d'Eszlary 1963, 195); the noble lady was represented by her husband

<sup>1</sup> A widow lived a series of paradoxes in a society dominated by men: as the head of the household for a while, she was able to represent her family in front of relatives, community and authorities. But, on the other hand, her situation became more precarious than before, as the society took her for a vulnerable being, which had to be either protected or abused.

<sup>2</sup> The noble women had frequently got and administrated real estate as their husbands (alive or dead) did, without renouncing to their domestic works; so they had a similar, even formal, authority. But in spite of their ability to manage their real estate, they were more vulnerable toward the specific abuses of the medieval nobiliary environment, much more exposed to male pressure and much less able to protect by their own forces.



in front of the court. The verdict of the court, communicated to the Cenad Council, asked for the aggressors pledging the noble lady shares of their *Buldie* (Novo Miloševo, Serbia today), county of Torontal estate, up to the moment they could integrally pay the damage they produced. There were no impediments in seizing the lady with those shares, and that proved the aggressors' indubitable guiltiness; that family was in fact one of the most conflictual noble families in the area (Boldea, 2009, 83-100).

Ursula, the unmarried daughter of Blasiu of Szer sent to the king a more explicit even similar complaint in 1371: she accused noble Nicholas of Reçaş of violently entering the estate of *Ewsy*, Arad County, where he set her house on fire, stole 4 oxen, and *humulos jobaginum suorum de eadem extirpari et deportari facissent* (DL 91775). It seems that the aggression took place after her father's death, when she lost her father's protection and was exposed to abuses. The royalty would take the protective role as Blasiu was one of the loyal noblemen to the crown and was since 1351 count of Arad and castellan of Haţeg (DL 91422).

There were frequent cases of aggressive entering on the neighbouring estate due to interests concerning access to sources of water in any area of economy. Peter Himfi's widow fell victim of magister Ladislav of Jank, in 1383 as he entered the estate of *Voya* to destroy the dam of a mill on the Caraş River (*ad predictam possessionem suam Voya vocatam veniendo vnum bonum equum suum potentialiter abstulisset... Clausurum cuiusdam Molendini sui in fluuio Crassow decurrentis permattare destrui et anichilari fecisset*), probably to get more water from his neighbour estate (Pesty 1882, 160-161; Răuţ 1993, 25-44). The named widow complained to Queen Mary and she demanded the Council of Arad to inspect the situation and report to palatine; the palatine would write the inspection letter and the queen would strengthen it by her seal (Pesty, 1882, 160, 161). The inspection confirmed the widow's complaint, and the denounced had to go before the palatine to give an answer within 15 days.

Another case of violation of an estate took place in 1446: Anych, John of Firiteaz's wife together with Valentine of Firiteaz and other noblemen, complained in front of the Council of Arad about the members of the Posa of Szer

family who had occupied by force the estates of *Symand* and *Földvár* in order to impose taxes and take the inhabitants' gains and fare (Pesty, 2014, 159; Szaszko, 2014, 101). The case escalated and reached Governor John Huniady that demanded the palatine and the judge in the Royal Court to investigate the cause; a series of adjournments succeeded after and we do not know today the denouement of that long lasting case.

The reality we may accept is that most of the women's complains for such acts of violence were disputed in front of local courts where their access was much easier. They were rather minor cases with common noble women involved, who probably couldn't claim their rights in central courts. Let's take a look at some of those cases: Nicholas of Szer's widow complained in Arad, Sedria that Jacob of Telegd, together with two servants entered the estate of *Aruky* and stole 3 horses worth 100 forints (*in villa domine relicte Nicolai filij Pouse Arok vocatam accedendo ibique tres equos eiusdem domine vallentes centum florenos furtim abduxissent*); that action was confirmed by the investigation of the nobiliary judge of the county and the lecturer of Arad church (Pesty, 1896, 240). The noble ladies took a strong stance even on damages produced by relatives or intimates, and sued them at court. It was the case of the widow of Jacob Chep of Gherteniş who demanded the court of Torontal County, in August 6, 1420, to prevent his son-in-law Emeric to enter the estates of *Bicach* and *Beodora*, for the misdeeds he had committed against some noble and common people (*quomodo nobilis vir Emericus sponsus suus, quicquid mali excessisset vel excederet contra aliquem nobilem vel ignobilem*) (DL 54147; Boldea, 2019, 141). Some years later, his daughter Anne, Emeric Himfi's widow at that time, came *in persona* before Caraş County to demand her relatives to be forbidden to occupy her possessions, take the crops and use the equipment there (October 4, 1438: Pesty, 1882, 366). Francis Parvo of Marthony (the foster brother of lady Anych's husband), was accused on April 24, 1443, by the familiar of lady Anych, John of Fireteaz's wife, before the Council of Arad, to have occupied by force the possessions of *Feyereghaz*, *Told*, *Berkenche* (Arad County), and *Kenezrekeze* (Timiş County) *imo absque sua benivolentia ac sub maximo timore* (Pesty, 2014, 131).

It is reasonable to suppose that there were many cases of violence against noble women's servants, so the noble women had to complain as victims. Either for physical aggression during violent raids inside the estates, or ravishment and forced removing of villagers, such facts disturbed the normal workdays, caused trouble in the manpower field, and prejudiced the landladies who were trying to keep their domains functional and productive. Those cases were generally debated in front of county courts, but not exclusively. So I have encountered the case of two widows, Elisabeth and Lucia, who accused Nicholas Kotorman, John Tolvay and his servant, in December 1, 1434, for entering by force and armed an estate where they injured many people, including two female servants (*ad curiam prefatarum dominarum manibus armatis et potentialiter irruendo ...quandam mulierem servientem ...minus iuste et indebite diris verbarum et wlnerum plagis affecissent potentia mediante*) (Pesty, 2014, 52). King Sigismund of Luxemburg himself demanded the investigation the Council of Arad had done in this case. Anne, Emeric Himfi's widow went to the court of Caraş-County twice, in 1435 and 1437, for injuring and removing villagers. Noble Michael Chepi was accused in 1435 of invading one of the woman's estate in order to steal her bonds, and almost killing her servant (*ad domum Johannis de Kere officialis ipsorum irruisset ipsum utique morti tradare machinasset*) (Pesty 1882, 348). Two years later the county court forbade George knez of Caraşova, to remove villagers of the noble lady from *Maruskenez* possession, but he did not obey and the woman suffered a great prejudice (Pesty, 1882, 359). The case of a bond of George Himfi and of Jacob Chep of Beldre's widow shows how the villagers could have been sequestered when riding; one was captured by noble Ladislás Hagymasy's intimate, together with a cart and 8 oxen; the case was reported to the county of Torontal court in February 1442 (Pesty, 2014, 126).

More vulnerable and exposed to many kinds of violent acts, some of the noble women looked for protection. Widows or married women that could not benefit from the protection of their husbands, were in such situation. Generally, the long lasting conflicts with the Ottomans made the southern border of the Magyar Kingdom a territory of rape, robbery, destruction of the unarmed ones', and

fright – so for the most part the local people were permanently exposed to the invaders' violence. Naturally the noble women tried to obtain protection for themselves, their families, and their belongings. A relevant case is that of Catherine, who became a widow after her husband Jacob Chep of Gherteniş death in 1416, during the royal campaign in Bosnia. Because her husband was one of the soldiers who accompanied the king in many of his battles, the widow and her daughters' protection was incumbent upon Filippo Scolari, count of Timiş, who informed his partners that the noble ladies, their possessions and other proper goods were protected through his authority against any danger (Pesty, 1896, 535).

Julianne, Nicholas of Egerseg's widow, was in a similar situation when writing in the summer of 1440, to the widow of the former royal cup-bearer, Lawrence of Tar, and explaining the bad situation she and her daughter had been brought after their possessions had been destroyed by the Ottomans. She asked for moral assistance and support, including a silk robe for her daughter to take part in ceremonies (DL 44297). At the end of the same year, Julianne demanded the castellan of *Crassofew*, George Orbanaz, to take charge of her and her belongings for being protected in front of the other sons of Hym, her husband's relatives. Given the permanent threat the Ottoman attacks caused in the territory, two years later, in 1442, the same Julianne demanded the officials of the fortress of Chery to leave her possession *Bosilofalva* (belonging to Duboz) in their charge for five years (DL 55229; Popa-Gorjanu, 2019, 158-159).

Unfortunately, there were probably many cases of abusive or violent acts even against the noble women if lacking certain protectors. There were in fact cases of attacks even in the presence of women's husbands, and one of them was that of the wives of Posa of Szer and his son Ladislás, in 1346. When going from Caraş County (where the family had their *honor*) to their estates in Arad County, the group was attacked by the men of Paul Magyar of *Petre* (*malitia preconcepta manu potenti*), nearby the estate of *Petre* (Petroman); the attackers took by force 300 sheep, fired on them, and killed three servants and three horses, and also destroyed the bridge over the Timis. The group was forced to linger for three days before leaving the place. The investigation was conducted in December 1346 at the king's

demand, by the court of Timiș County; the accused were found guilty of all the charges (DL 91375, 91376).

In April 1377, magister Nicholas, Alexander of *Lyphthovia*'s son, claimed another abuse, in the name of his sons Gregory and Ladislav, and his little daughter Anne. Benedict Himfi, a former ban of Bulgaria, was accused by Nicholas of taking away by force his children estate of Șoșdea, while the magister had been away worshipping the Holy Grave (*Gregorium et Ladislaum filios prescripti magistri Nicolai ...ac Annam (sororem) eiusdem propria sua potencia mediante de dominio possessionis eorundem Sasd et pertinenciarum eiusdem exclusisset et eiecisset omni sine lege*); the investigation made by the Council of Cenad certified the abuse (DRH-C XV 2006, 137, 151).

The case of George and Benedict of Voya's mother and sisters was more dramatic. The family was dispossessed of their belongings, between 1359 and 1361, and the well-known "Voya case" went on from 1361 to 1378, with the same Benedict Himfi and his family as the defendant. The case was documented before (Holban, 1962, 57-128, on the basis of the many preserved juridical papers), so I only refer here a moment by the end of the conflict, which proves the callous way the Himfis penetrated the area. Having lost all their properties, the two brothers Voya were allowed by the king, in 1377, to live together with their mother and sisters in the nobiliary curia on the estate; previously, touched by the women's scarcity, queen Elisabeth the Young had interceded in their favour (Miscellanea Heimiana, 264). The women had in the spring of 1378 to face an extremely violent attack from an intimate of John *Bissenus*, a key character at the beginning of the Voyas' dispossessing (Pesty, 1882, 143, 148; Holban, 1962, 117; Magina, 2019, 163). The attack took place on Good Friday when Thomas called *Bur* entered the house armed and extorted the women; he insulted and hit the brothers' mother, broke one of the sister's leg, and stroke the other one in the face, probably to browbeat that family for good and all, and forced them to leave the former property for ever (*manibus armati ad domum ipsorum Jacobi et Benedicti potencialiter veniendo, matrem et sororem ipsorum de ipsa domo per tempora extrahi ac ipsam matrem verberari, ac unius sororis*

*ip(sorum) unum pedem confregi alteram vero per facis wlneri fecissent*).

A special, unique case refers to Margaret Himfi, ban Benedict Himfi's daughter (or his niece according to others' opinions), Benedict being one of the magnates in the Banat counties during the reign of Louis I (Petrovics, 2017, 6-8; Magina, 2017, 70-71; Popa-Gorjanu, 2019, 161-165). Margaret was captured by the Ottomans in unknown circumstances (1375 or around 1390) and sold, as a slave, to a Venetian merchant, Georgio Darvasio, in the isle of Crete; two daughters resulted from that relation, Marieta and Jacoba. Nicholas Marczali, the former ruler of Transylvania, identified in 1405 where she was living and persuaded her consort to allow her to come back to Transylvania, probably for a ransom her family had promised. It seems that her return was a sinuous and slow one; she accompanied Darvasio from Crete to Venice, and finally she went to Hungary and set in Buda; the leader of the Italian community in the kingdom capital of Buda, Francesco Bernardi, took her under his protection. The destiny of that noble woman is a tragic one, but, surely, it wasn't a singular one. It is but a reflection of the life fragility in a territory marked by permanent conflicts and battles, where many people of different social status died in the Ottoman bondage. Margaret's case was presented in some Venetian sources, and that is how we encountered it. Without such papers, she would have rested unknown as the other prisoners had. It seems that she benefitted of a good life both in captivity and in his protector's company in Buda, but Margaret never came back to her home and family. Francesco Bernardi in fact had written in one of his letters that her return to Hungary wouldn't have been a good decision, and Nicholas Marczali had had to know that the women liberated from the Ottoman captivity were unkindly received within the Christian milieu and even within their own families. The Himfis did so and refused to reintegrate Margaret in their family. What was the reason of such an attitude: shame or fear of public opprobrium, or a simple and pragmatic consideration – she had the right of ¼ of her father's estate, as being a daughter unmarried to a nobleman? The silence of history still covers the answer.

There were also other categories of cases that called our attention: the noble women, who had to face a series of spiritual problems in

which the secular dimension unforgivably penetrated the confessional frame. A real conflicting situation happened in 1406 between Catherine, Stephen Himfi of Remete's wife, and the vice-archdeacon of Sebeş, when the familial church at Remete was under that priest's jurisdiction. The vice-archdeacon disposed that the chaplain of that church be captured in spite of the fact that the familial church had benefitted of many liberties since the time of Louis I; the noble lady accused the vice-archdeacon before the Bishop of Cenad, dissatisfied probably with losing the priest and family confessor (Kopeczny, 2013, 183). Some years later, the same Catherine and her daughters Margaret and Dorothea were to be excommunicated by the bishop of Cenad because her husband and sons had wounded and incarcerated priest Thomas of Chery and clergyman Paul. Bishop Dosa sent a letter to Peter of Chery in May 20, 1418, trying to rectify the situation; he conferred Peter the opportunity to forgive the litigants if they repent and confess the sin they had committed (Pesty, 1896, 556). Shares of possessions that belonged to Jacob Chep's widow were also under the church distraint; only in January 1438 the provost of St. Savior Church in Cenad allowed Thomas of Symigio, a *decimator* in Torontal County, to administrate the sacraments in those villages (*ut interdictum in Beldre, a porcione relicte Jacobi Chepy de dicta Beldre, recipere debeas et eisdem omnia sacramenta ecclesiastica administrari permittere debeas*) (Magina, 2012, 70).

### Noble women involved in aggressive and violent acts

The noble women who generated acts of violence are certainly an astonishing situation. Such cases could run counter to the women-victims, a general mark of that time. But we should not generalize as such cases were rare and without major results, generally involving the family or servants of the noble ladies. Estates occupied by force, robbing or larcenies are to be noted regularly in such cases. It is to note for instance the interesting case of Philip Kormos of Kenezrekezy's widow, who instigated two vice-counts of Timiș, in October 1437 (*de consensu et induccione nobilis domine relicte condam Philippi dicti Kormos de Kenezrekezy possessione de eadem egredientes*), to attack Ladislav Hagymas of Beregsău's servants—who were just passing

nearby her estate; the attackers took five carts, horses and oxen of 400 golden forints (a notable amount for that time) (Feneşan, 2016, 92). Moreover, they took 12 bonds and locked them up for 18 days in Timișoara, to the great damage of the nobleman of Beregsău. It is, unfortunately, impossible to find out how the widow determined the two local magistrates to commit such an illegal act; the case was taken to the central court and the king himself demanded the nobiliary judges in Timiș County to investigate the cause.

The widow of Jacob Chep of Ghereniș was also accused because her servant has produced a damage of 200 forints to some guests (*quodam hospes*) from Zemun, at *Beldere* estate, in January 1421. The widow pleaded not guilty before the court, through the help of her representative Benedict of Bochar, claiming that that familiar had left before, by her approval, but the court asked her to take an oath within 15 days (Magina, 2012, 65).

Another relevant sample refers to Anka, Emeric Himfi's widow; after her husband's death around 1432. She had to make efforts to protect her belongings and committed abuses against other properties (possible former properties of her family). Anka and her husband had got properties in three neighbouring counties (Timiș, Caraș, and Torontal) and it was more difficult to manage them, even with the help of her servants. She was in unfavourable position in 1433-1438 too: firstly, she was admonished by one of the vice-counts of Torontal not to plough the plots of George Brancović's servants from *Echechyda*, a possession nearby her one called *Beldre*, and to let free the passage of merchants along the area (Magina, 2012, 68). A situation that seems to have been reiterated in 1437, in the county of Caraș: Stephen of Thallowicz, ban of Severin forbade the widow to let her familiar Dimitrie to take the grains and crops of the royal villagers at *Chiglobanya* (Ciclova Montană) to the great prejudice of the crown (Pesty, 1882, 364).

In July 1446, the landlords of Firiteaz claimed an abusive occupation of two estates (*Apachya and Udvar*), and Margaret, Ladislav of Apachy's widow and her daughter Claire were noted among the guilty (Pesty, 2014, 160). Finally, the widow of Osvald of Bel and two of her bonds were accused of robbery; the authorities of Timiș County sent the cause to

the royal court in September 1446 (Iusztin, 2018, 187).

### Subordinated women (servants) as victims of violence

Another social milieu is the subject now. Because women relied on marital state, social status, concomitantly depending on their own family (father, husband, and sons) and the landlord – there were lots of elements that could generate the abuse. There were likely much more cases comparatively than the ones mentioned in the statistics above, but probably many of them were brought in front of the owners' judgement. Thus, there were no papers to reconstitute their history. Only some cases were brought before the court, if the owners of the prejudiced women decided to legally tackle the problems, especially in conflicts among different noble families. It was the result of a stratified society with rather rigid border between the social classes, the personal prejudice (a physical and material one) devolved upon the villagers while the legal, juridical one devolved upon their owner – no matter how unjust the history considers it today. We might say that the cases were more violent, even extreme now, with physical abuses with dramatic results. It was in fact a time of lightly hindrances in the field of violence, and the subordinated women were much more exposed to brutality, and much less protected.

Wounding to death in extreme brutal ways are the most serious cases. One of those cases took place in the summer of 1344, at *Zeudy*, an estate in Arad County, belonging to Posa of Szer, count of Caraş at that time (Fekete Nagy, Temesi bánság, 401). The four nobiliary judges of the county entered by force the estate (*potencialiter indebite et iniuste accessissent*), stole 20 oxen and 60 pigs belonging to the villagers; the local priest was cruelly and needlessly massacred, the familiar of Posa was dragged by his long hair following the horse, and a woman of a villager was trampled under the unleashed cattle during the murderous attack (*et unam mulierem consortem cuiusdam iobagionis eiusdem magistri Pouse in curia ipsius commorantis cum pectoribus eorum ad mortem calcariet percuti fecissent*). It was a surprising attack produced by some of the county magistrates against a royal count. Posa of Szer himself informed King Louis I, and he demanded the Council of Arad to investigate

the case. Ten years later, the same estate of the family of Posa of Szer was attacked by some noblemen under the royal flak; once landing the harbour of the Mureş, nearby that estate, they drove the boatman away, brutally attacked the territory; they robbed 6 bounds, assaulted the village judge in his home and killed two women (*potencialiter abstulissent sex iobagiones et duas feminas de eadem Zeudy interfecissent*) (Fekete Nagy, Temesi bánság, 695).

In April 1429 another act of cruelty was committed in Timiş County. Emeric Himfi of Remete informed the king about it, and the king demanded the county court to investigate the violent acts performed by Dimitrie, Wolk's son against a bound and his wife (Pesty, 1896, 623). The couple in fact tried to remove their belongings to Emeric Himfi's estate, after paying the so-called *terragium* to their former landlord; they were attacked by Dimitrie, who took by force a cart and 6 oxen and many other goods, captured them and cruelly crucified them (*insuper eundem Jobagionem simulcum discreta domina consorte sua captivasset captosque enormiter cruciarifecisset potentia mediante*).

Sometimes violence implied a similar reaction and so a whirl of vengeance took place at that time. A villager from *Zederes* was sued in law in Caraş County court in December 1437 for having killed two royal bonds at *Mezeusomlio*, whose corps he had broken on the wheel and so the law became useless (Pesty, 1882, 364). In fact, the two royal bonds had killed his wife but the papers did not note the circumstances of such a crime. The investigation was called to set if the accused one was really guilty and had to pay *homagium*.

Naturally, wounding frequently appeared during the inter-domains conflicts within the medieval times. Wounds were voluntary or involuntary produced by arms, by the doers' brutal power, or not rarely, by armed raids with incalculable results. Charles Robert for instance demanded the Council of Arad, in May 1351, to investigate a claim against Andrew, a familiar of magister Gall of Omor, a former royal notary, accused to have entered by force (*potencialiter veniendo*) the possession of *Herdeuhyg* where he had wounded nine people, two women among them, and many horses (*quosdam famulos eiusdem ac duas mulieres de ipsa possessione Herdeuhyg videlicet in toto nonem homines letalibus wlneribus wlnerasset*)

(Pesty, 1896, 69-70). The investigation there confirmed the accusations but the sentence received for the deed wasn't unfortunately preserved. The palatine meeting in May 1370 in Arad had to try a similar act, in the presence of the nobiliary community of the Councils of Arad and Cenad counties. The preposit or accused many people from Sâmbăteni, servants of the abbot of Sâmbăteni, who had entered 4 years before *ex preconcepta malitia manibus armati et potentiariis veniendo*, on their share of the estate, they sent clerk Konya and his servants away, and wounded with arrows many people there, among which the sister of bond Dionisie, who was killed in his home (*uno sororemque eiusdem Dionisi eodem modo uno vulneribus sauciassent*) (DRH-C XIII 1994, 776).

Kidnapping or robbing servant women was also frequent. In August 1446 (Pesty 2014, 162) for instance, the family of noblemen of Firiteaz accused Posa of Zeer's bonds for entering armed the estate of Fyves (Fibiș) wher they kidnapped the wife of bond Elye (*consortem cuiusdam Elye sclavi iobagionis...in eadem Fyves commorantis accipiendo abduxissent*). By the end of the century, in 1489, the papers presented such acts thoroughly: the wife of Oswald Magnus, Emeric Dóczy's familiar had fallen victim of an attack, on the way to Zădăreni, where they went to see their landlord; after a short time in a den, they were attacked by Francis Haraszti's servants, who unhorsed the wife as she was a women of loose morals, and captured her. Oswald desperately asked for his master's help; the two tried to rescue the woman, but they were also captured. We do not know how such an unexpected event ended (DL 19589).

Kozan, Stephen Himfi's bond, brought one of the royal bonds from *Factolan* in front of Caraș County court, accusing him of entering his house at night and stealing some male and female goods after spying on them for a while. The investigation proved the accused one guilt, and he was sentenced to death by hanging (DRH-C XV 2006, 719). Finally, we have to note the complaint of the wife of bond Mark belonging to John of Korog (*provide domine Margarethe*), in November 1443, against the castellans of Chery accused for having got 20 golden forints, 21 pigs, and 3 oxen, and 100 grains of salt from the couple, under the pretext of calumny. John of Korog denounced such a practice, by protesting in belief that those

goods were only a pretext of the two castellans, not the damages they pretended to be (DL 55265).

### Some final opinions

The present research has aimed to find out some aspects of violence against women in the Banat medieval counties, on the basis of published and unpublished preserved papers. I do believe that the analysed cases reveal the inter-human relations which substantially overlapped sometimes the limits of decorum, even if I do not pretend that my research is an exhaustive one. Violence was and still is a reality of all the eras, under different shapes; for the medieval society dominated by social and gender inequalities it is clear that females were frequently set in vulnerable situations, exposed to many abuses on the part of their own families, or the social milieu they lived in.

It wasn't possible to find out samples of domestic, married violence, but surely they happened at that time too. The nature and content of official papers do not offer such information. The social and juridical status of the women made the difference on how violence was exercised against them. Given their social level, the noble women were protected by customs and their privileged status, even if they were exposed to a series of abuses; this is the reason why there are extremely rare cases of physical abuses against the noble women. But in turn many of them, the widows especially, had to face offences that affected their belongings or people they owned or had in their service. I do specify that they benefitted of opportunities to defend themselves or claim their rights in law-suits, and obtained sometimes reparations for what they had lost. Things are totally different in the case of subordinated women (servants); given their large subordination (to family, landlord, and society) they suffered lots of abuses, from acts of physical violence (of an extreme range sometimes), to rapes and destruction of their belongings. Their humble position within the society at the time made them unable to ask for their rights by themselves. Only their feudal master could, eventually, take attitude in their name. Even if the female servants were the victims of damages or material loss, the prejudice was noted for their owners. We might conclude that violence of different shapes and results was a constant presence in the life of women in the medieval Banat. The present

research analyses a series of studies on women in the Banat medieval counties, aiming to present as many aspects as possible about their life.

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# FROM THE GRIM REAPER TO "PUNK'S NOT DEAD": THE ICONIC ATTRIBUTES OF DEATH'S REPRESENTATIONS FROM THE MIDDLE AGES TO THE AGE OF ROCK MUSIC

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**Abstract:** *The topic of this study is Death as absolute fear. The way it has been personified and reflected in literature and art has gone numerous changes over time. From the Grim Reaper of the Middle Ages to the abstract forms of modern times, death has always stirred imagination. A component of our culture, it remains a great mystery that each epoch views differently. There is a constant evolution of the way we relate to it, both as individuals and as society. This essay is an attempt to analyse a few iconic aspects of death.*

**Keywords:** *Death, Dead, Grim Reaper, mortality, iconic, iconography, media, rock music.*

**Rezumat:** *Subiectul prezentului studiu este Moartea, ca spaimă extremă. Felul în care aceasta a fost personificată și reflectată în literatură și artă a suferit numeroase mutații de-a lungul timpului. De la moartea cu coasa din Evul Mediu la formele abstracte din prezent, moartea a stârnit dintotdeauna imaginația. Parte din cultura noastră, ea rămâne o mare necunoscută, pe care fiecare epocă o privește diferit. Modul în care ne raportăm la ea, atât ca indivizi, cât și ca societate, e într-o evoluție continuă, prezentul eseu fiind o încercare de a surprinde câteva aspecte iconice ale morții.*

**Cuvinte-cheie:** *Moartea, doamna cu coasa, mortalitate, iconic, iconografie, media, muzică rock.*

We all speak about death. To turn the corner, to go to hell, to kick the bucket, to drop dead, to bite the dust, to pass to the eternal, to pass away, to depart are more or less used phrases that refer to a natural phenomenon that has always marked humanity in general and the individual in particular. Beyond the phenomenon itself, as a final stage of a biological process or as the result of an accident, there is an entire range of social, psychological and cultural phenomena which are perceived by the individual and by society as being more real than the actual event of death.

As a natural phenomenon, death represents the loss of the biological functions that support the organism and its proper functioning. As a fact, it is viewed as complementing life and everything that it involves. There is not enough time and space here for a debate upon the antithesis between the two notions, life and death; the topic is far too vast. It is however absolutely necessary to underline the primacy of life, which, by mechanisms that pertain to culture, domesticates death, shapes it, turns it from a

mere biological process into a phenomenon that is at the core of our concerns, both as individuals and as society. This explains the individual's reactions: at a personal level, one tries to escape death by one's own actions and works, since there is no posterity in the absence of death. For both society as a system and the individual, works of art, feats of arms, scientific and technological achievements, progress seen as a sum of human activities, are all means of escaping death, of leaving one's mark. By means of his achievements, the individual transcends death, lives on in the social memory and acquires a kind of symbolic existence, even more real for the others.

Death does not escape this process, either, as the collective memory incorporates it and represents it in various ways, tributary to societies and cultures that use them. Above all, there is a constant presence in most representations: terror, awe, fear of annihilation. Most religions take this approach to death, illustrating it and trying to explain it as a component of the sacred, which overdetermines it. That numinous, sacred without rational or moral elements (Otto, 1996,

13), which by means of its tremendum component creates fear and through majestas (Otto, 1966, 19, 30) is what determines the euphemising of death. Anthropomorphised, personified, part of a story in which she plays engenders humility well-determined roles recognisable (in Romance languages it is a “she”), Death becomes a presence that easily enters the imaginary of the European civilization.

Unique but with multiple hypostases, Death exists, takes shape, and finds her object, so to speak. Present in *Dance Macabre* as a defining element (fig. 1), she is a kind of collective character, in many hypostases and places, which, through actions and gestures, evokes everybody’s equality when facing death, irrespective of the social hierarchy. This image, an arbitrary choice, shows the defining characters of a dance of death: the Pope, the emperor, the courtesan, the nobleman. Still, the absentees are ordinary people, whose presence would show full equality before death. Therefore, in this allegory the accent is rather on the imperative aspect of death. It is a more elaborate representation of a *Memento Mori* (fig. 2), where the accent is on the characters’ social status, as opposed to their mortal, hence humble, condition.

Euphemising death by evoking it in *memento mori* scenes includes a touch of tremendum, which here is represented by the imminence of death. Hidden under the stones, present in every detail, death is on the watch, forgetting nobody and nothing. A completely different presentation is in Nicolas Poussin’s painting *Et in Arcadia ego* (fig. 3), where the presence of death is barely suggested by the tombstone and its inscription. We notice that death is merely suggested, it is not of an imminent nature, it is not personified and does not inspire awe. It is not hinted at by means of the associated personifications or representations (the skeleton, the skull), but by the use of a decorative element, a tombstone, with which, by deduction, the viewer associates the idea of transience (Panofsky, 1980, 384-385). The entire painting is descriptive, it is an allegory whose topic is not death as representation, but mortality as a phenomenon and its implicit nature. Quite naturally, this type of referential approach, where death is present only for those who have the necessary cultural knowledge, leads to the idea that associated representations must have

specific attributes, pertaining to the invented character. Death is part of a story, by all means, but what is her story?

In 1637, when Nicolas Poussin painted the above mentioned painting, Death already had a face, a function, a story, as well as specific attributes that made her. She is the fourth angel of the Apocalypse, riding a yellowish horse, and is followed by Hades, according to the description in the Holy Bible (Revelation 6.7-8). This specific representation often found in the Late Middle Ages, circulated by means of engravings, focuses on the generally destructive characteristic of Death (fig. 4). She is placed in a full narrative context, presented not as an isolated character but as belonging to a quartet, being the ugliest and most sordid, tattered and scrawny member, looking like a fool and riding a jade. Death is here the personification of alterity and of absolute decay, as the engraving makes use of the entire medieval imaginary, marred by diseases, wars, destruction and hunger. She is not represented as an independent character, with specific attributes, but rather as the personification of a collective fear, which is similar with suggesting mortality, as it appears later in Poussin’s allegory of *The Arcadian Shepherds* (fig. 3). The differences between the two, however, lie only in the way death is perceived, as *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* evokes its awful universality, while the shepherds of Arcadia experience it at an individual level, much more intimately, but just as present and irreversible.

A much clearer personification as far as the presence and irreversibility of death are concerned is illustrated in the *Grim Reaper*, the one who reaps people’s souls (fig. 5). Now, at the end of the Middle Ages, death already becomes a character in itself, a harvester of souls, who enables the passage from corporeal life to the afterlife. As such, she has a series of specific attributes that makes her identifiable, individualise her and make her shift from a collective character (mortality as a mere natural process) to Death, as a reaper of souls. Thus, the Grim Reaper becomes the last character that steps onto the stage of the individual existence, a guide that passes us over to the other side and, ultimately, our last companion. This is a universal character, but which can be included in various contexts, which can be a man or a woman, depending on the culture. Certainly, it takes on a series of

already present characteristics: it is Charon's brother or sister, or maybe even himself, transporting souls across the Styx, it feeds Cerberus, it may come in many different shapes. There is no time to describe her, but she is the Nothingness and has many faces.

Still, when illustrated, Death is androgynous, similar to angels, even if she is not the angel of death, as depicted in the Bible when she harvests the Pharaoh's newborns (Exodus 12). This androgyny, however, is just a physical characteristic and is easily explained, since a skeleton implies a total absence of flesh and implicitly of what is associated with it. Whether we refer to sex or to the biological processes specific to life, the skeleton, which represents Death's physical body, is an utter negation of flesh and blood in all its aspects, a kind of aseptic figment made of bones. If we are to speak of the Grim Reaper as representation, it is just a bag of bones, joined into a skeleton, dressed in a hooded cloak, somewhat similar to monks' robes. This pseudo-character holds a scythe, a characteristic attribute of its function, and is shown in various postures, the vertical one being the most common (fig. 4). Thus, leaving aside the scythe as a main attribute, a hint to the "soul reaper" function, Death as a character is mainly symbolised by the skeleton. We cannot, however, speak of Death as a flesh-and-blood character, but as a presence in bones and bone. We shall call this characteristic boneity, a word coined for this purpose (unless it exists already) in order to define a complete absence of flesh, more precisely of flesh and blood, implicitly of all the related sins, especially gluttony and sexuality. Certainly, this boneity is also present in the Memento Mori (fig.2) or Dance Macabre (fig 1) type of representations, but there Death is not personified, it is just included in an allegory or is a mere visual element. Thus, we come to a general symbol of death used in most cultures, namely the skull. It is a normal choice for the illustration of that boneity, as disconnected bones can easily be taken for remains of animal origin. It is not the case with the skull, due to its specific shape and size. Moreover, it shelters a person's essence, the brain and also the soul, according to not just medieval, but also universal beliefs.

In representations, taken as an independent element, the skull includes the idea of mortality, of transience. Quite normal,

since most works of art are portraits of various secular or religious characters. By transfer, the skull is a general portrait of death in the collective imaginary – even if isolated from the rest of the skeleton; it can be easily stylised, it can be turned into a symbol, being used in almost all cultures. A study of the skull in portraiture and in other fields of the visual domain would fill many shelves of a bookcase. There is no space for it here. The image of the skull is universal in Christian imagology and not only there. Be it in the Golgota, the Skull Hill in the orthodox icons of the Crucifixion (Dionisie, 2000, 116), where Adam's skull is shown at the foot of the cross (fig. 6), or the western Middle Ages with its imagery, the skull is a synthesis of death. It is normal, then, that, in its simplified forms, Death and everything related to it should be evoked by simply making use of the skull. A common version of this approach is present anyway in those memento mori which are a kind of visual epitaphs.

It is true, however, that the skull is highlighted by being included in a narrative context where it becomes a defining element, which refers to the inevitability of death and the ephemerality of life. Called *vanitas*, the images falling into this category put the skull to good value, turning it from a mere decorative object in a still life into essence and transience of life (fig. 7). The other objects in the still life, referring to exact or biological natural sciences, do nothing else but emphasise the inevitable mortality that cannot be opposed by the transience of life. It is slightly strange that life reflects death, euphemising it through works of art or literature, while converging to it itself. The skull is the symbol of death, a decorative object and a key to read still lives and compositions that include the idea of *vanitas*. This is a more present motif than the Grim Reaper, which is just a mere personification, a kind of universal character inviting you to your last meeting, unique to the individual and representative to us all, whether alive or already dead. The skull is the one that actually hints at death, implies it, reduces it to a sign. Becoming itself a defining brand. It is similar to a logo in advertising, like a trade mark. In the imaginary of the time it is of course represented like that or like the lady with the scythe. This is where its evolution begins, both as a sign and as a shape in itself.

This medieval obsession for the skull and for boneity is not new, but this is when the imaginary starts to use it differently. In all cultures, including the pre-Columbian (fig. 8), Death is symbolised by the skull. In the European culture, however, a mutation takes place and the skull starts to be aestheticized. The Middle Ages is full of ossuaries, which represent modalities of ordering the mundane chaos of death, in its physical aspects; at the end of this period, however, people begin to aestheticise them, to put them to good use, by somehow continuing those macabre dances. This euphemisation by contextualisation reaches its peak in the baroque period, where the skull and the bones are turned into ornamental modules through those bone collections used for decorative purposes. These approaches betray a wide scenographic vision, a kind of supreme vanitas, which impacts the viewer through its aesthetic effect of innovative character rather than through the feeling of tremendum. Such an arbitrarily selected example is the Sedlec ossuary in the Czech Republic, where the Bone Church is a kind of theatre of death (fig. 9). In a period when cabinets of curiosities are highly valued, it is only naturally that elements which denote Death should become novelties themselves. Thus Death is appropriated, becomes an oddity, it is decorative, while its attributes, the skull and boneity, become mere decorative elements; what adds to it is the aesthetic values, as the feeling of tremendum becomes catharsis.

It is an almost elusive mutation, and yet an entire process of negating death occurs. Literature tries to balance this with a plethora of horror stories. There is a boom in works of a fantastic nature, which herald the contemporary horror genre, with death and everything pertaining to it as subject. It is even defeated, as for example in "Frankenstein" published by Mary Shelley in 1818, but with a disastrous outcome, as the result is a monster. The entire 19th century has an unhealthy propensity for the macabre. The gothic novel, the symbolist literature, the obsession of the Victorian period to keep the image of the dead in photos of deceased people next to their living relatives, staged in scenes that betray a choreographic vision (fig. 10), these are all various ways of suggesting the presence of death in our vicinity.

Still, a problem arises, as death is rarely present as a character, being just suggested.

Only man is present, and everything pertaining to mortality and to its attributes: the graveyard, the grave digger, the coffin, semi-darkness, diffused light, etc. We believe that the decline of the entire medieval conception of death occurs at some point in the 19th century, with the surge of Realism in the fine arts. It is a triumph of life in art, even if the British Victorian subjects, members of the bourgeoisie, who could afford it, saved money to have a group photo with the deceased (fig. 10). These portraits which are a kind of memento mori are somehow in opposition to the painting "A funeral in Ornans" (fig. 11), painted by Gustave Courbet, one of the founders of Realism in art; the latter contains just a vague suggestion of mortality and of its attributes, as the artist focuses on the living people who participate in the event. Here mortality is just a pretext for a genre scene that has all the characteristics of a group portrait.

What is left of the Grim Reaper, then? Eluded in the Victorian group portraits with the dead, negated by French Realism in painting, death becomes only an assumed mortality, included in life as its final act. The image of death finds its place in allegories, in isolated representations where it loses its attributes, being present rather through its social and individual impact, skilfully suggested in literature and in the arts. Romantic sickly characters, horror stories, Frankenstein, Jack the Ripper, mad doctors, serial killers, Dracula, all the terrors of the 19th century are agents of death, without being Death herself. These horrors are much more present and represented than Death with the scythe. The latter is overrated and too general, society feels the need to narrow down and single out the phenomenon. Notable exceptions are recorded, as in the case of phenomena that involve a large number of dead people, such as pandemics and particularly wars (fig. 12). In this cartoon it is clear that, with the typical gestures and postures, Death is a mere representation of Adolf Hitler. There is also an interesting shift in the personification of Death. If in the scenes related to the Apocalypse she is one of the four horsemen (fig. 4), in modern times, as the Grim Reaper, she becomes their synthesis, overdetermining their functions. Illness, War, Hunger are all forms of Death, which is thus perceived as an absolute evil that has many faces borrowed from her agents. It is

a kind of polymorphic metacharacter that haunts the world embodying various tyrants.

A new phenomenon occurs: death as a brand. The skull, as essence of mortality, becomes a logo, quickly adopted under various forms with a multitude of meanings. Thus we find it in various versions among those living on the fringe of society: pirates. Jolly Roger, the flag with a skull and crossbones, sometimes with swords and other elements belonging to the panoply (fig. 13), is just a brand, an attribute of a category of buccaneers, and its purpose is simply to terrify opponents. It is a representation made only to intimidate, which betrays bragging, showboating, even infantilism. The interesting fact is that the skull itself becomes an attribute. It no longer connects to the Grim Reaper and the scythe, but it functions as a warning, as a form of intimidation.

The real transformation of the skull into a brand occurs in Nazi Germany, where the SS troops adopt it as an emblem. It is found on the SS rings, on flags, it is even present on the military uniform, as a badge (fig. 14). For the Nazi, the skull as an emblem signifies belonging to a master race, it is an attribute, a totem under which these swastika knights enrolled. This is a rather mediaeval vision, as the skull as an attribute reminds of a caste of warriors serving Death as her agents. This excessive use of the skull and of death may explain the fact that Death is no longer considered an enemy of life after World War II. The Nazis exacerbated the fear of death, but made it lose its value, as its agents. What is more frightening than Death itself is the fear of things that kill you: war, illness, accidents, natural disasters. The post-war man is more terrified of the idea of losing his job, of his wife leaving him, of falling ill, or of the atomic bomb than he is of death. Death does not exist in the material reality, does not have a precise shape, it is general and undefined. We are all bound to die, eventually. So let's enjoy life. *Carpe diem*.

As a result of the new threats and of their related frights, the image of death undergoes irreversible transformations. Death is completely tamed, it occurs in controlled conditions, in hospital or in equipped spaces, it is no longer chaotic, it is no longer an aim in itself. Even dying for a cause or for a concept is no longer feasible. *Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori* does not mean anything anymore.

Under these circumstances, what will be the impact of its image? Certainly, it is useful as a warning sign, on the poison bottles or on the high voltage posts. But in this case it is just a mere sign of danger. Where has Death fled to, be it as Grim Reaper, or just in the shape of the skull?

In the collective imaginary, Death and her agents are present through their visual forms (films and literary works) circulated in mass media. New genres appear, though, which are much more frightening; monsters from outer space are much more efficient than old Death, who is quite old-fashioned with her rusted scythe and filthy shroud. The old gothic or fantastic novels are replaced by the new horror movies, which stir the imaginary of the modern man and give it a good shake. Zombies, the living dead, aliens, genetic mutations, various monstrosities, the evil inside and outside us make Death seem a polite young lady. She is a member of the family, a gentle grandmother by whose side you lie down for your final sleep. Not so evil, after all.

This type of euphemisation completely reshapes the perception of Death. The Grim Reaper no longer exists or frightens us. Still, in its depths, our imaginary stores Death as a mental form of representation, but, through oversimplification, keeps only the skull out of its attributes, due to its boneity, the only thing that matters. It thus becomes the essence of death, although the lady with the scythe belongs to the family, to our culture. The skull becomes the absolute icon of death, and we, people, can place it in various contexts. We no longer fear it, so let's keep it as an attribute of death, by customising it, though.

This process engenders a misappropriation of Death, a total recontextualisation of the skull. It is a kind of *memento mori*, but of a different nature and expression. Death becomes an attribute of subcultures and is used for multiple purposes. It is a sort of universal totem, ready to be brandished. Subcultures are the new pirates of modern times, their representatives do not fight against somebody in particular, they are those who oppose the establishment, and their only fight for a certain lifestyle. Naturally, they have behaviours, actions, beliefs, codes and ultimately signs and symbols that individualise them. Among these signs and symbols, the skull will find its place, by combining with and intensifying the others. Death is triumphant



once again, but she is just a sign among others. She has lost her scythe, but has become a badge. She no longer belongs to a particular story, since visual oversaturation engenders postnarrative thinking, where the message must have immediate impact. It's not the story of Death, but her presence that is of importance. She is but a shadow of what she used to be, but she is still strong, since we know she is always there.

We find such contextualisations with Hell's Angels, who have become modern pirates. Present in their badge, Death takes the shape of the good old skull, which in this case has acquired the Devil's horns and wings suggesting speed (fig. 15). The analogy with pirates is correct, as the representatives of this culture advocate for a free, anarchic lifestyle. They are tattooed, violent, reek of sweat, they are the exact opposite of the modern standard of the individual that is socially adapted, civilised, washed, with a decent haircut. We believe that this subculture is somehow at the base of the emergence of the rock subcultures in the 70s'. There is no time to expound on their origin, but they were certainly influenced by the Hell's Angels freedom promoted in the Hollywood productions of the '60s and '70s. It is a rebellious generation looking for values and symbols.

We are not going into the rock trends, we only discuss Death. She finds her place in heavy metal – you can check Wikipedia to read what this musical genre is all about – where the slogan “Metal will never die” becomes a hit and is illustrated in various ways. Taking the shape of album covers, or badges, they can all be bought online, in one form or another (fig. 16). What is interesting is the use of the Grim Reaper, but this is normal, as the meaning of the slogan is very clear and the use of this representation is implicit, since one of the bands is even called “Reaper”.

There is a different recontextualisation in the case of Eddie, the mascot of the heavy metal band “Iron Maiden” (fig. 17). It has many versions, but we have chosen this variant because it is the best exemplification of the topic of this essay. The character is a synthesis of the image of Death as the Grim Reaper and the essence of heavy metal music. The scythe is replaced by the axe, absolute boneity makes room for écorché-like skin, the background is now urban, but it is Death that is represented here. Only she is an attribute of Eddie's and of

rock. Eddie is ultimately just a hybrid, a caricature of a long-haired Death. There is of course a similar representation of Death in Dürer's The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse (fig. 4), where she is emaciated and dishevelled. There, however, she is part of a story, while here she is a mere attribute, since Eddie is the character, and this is just one of his hypostases.

Thus we finally come to the syntagm in the tile: “Punk's not dead”. It is the title of the 1981 debut album of the punk group “Exploited”. The syntagm quickly becomes a motto of the punk subculture fans and takes various representations. Although the skull is not featured on the album cover, it is taken on from the group's badge, a crested skull, the latter being one of the punkers' symbol (fig. 18). We have selected this image as the essence of the recontextualisation process undergone by the skull, because of the message, which clearly implies death, although by negating it, and also because of the way in which a simple crest completely alters the meaning of the representation. The skull in no longer a menace, it becomes a mere bearer of a crest. Although initially not related to the syntagm “Punk's not dead”, this image will be associated with it and the two will become inseparable. This is version 0 of a large number of more or less successful variants, other details will be added, but the crest and skull will remain the visual emblem of this slogan (fig. 19).

This transformation of the “Exploited” skull image, which, after entering the collective mentality, is reinterpreted and recontextualised, probably shows most clearly what is going on in our times. A book on the presence of the skull in the rock music imagery can be easily written, but there is still time. What is of importance is that Death acquires multiple forms, becoming a badge, a ring on a finger (fig. 20), a tattoo pattern, and can be even a pyjama print. As an image, it is ubiquitous, but it is just a simple sign that causes no terror when we see it.

As an imaginary character, Death has lost her scythe and shroud. She still lingers at the back of our mind and we cross paths quite often. But she has ceased to be the frightening death, becoming mortality in essence, ours and our intimates'. This is what frightens us, not the Grim Reaper. Consequently, we turn Death into an image, we show it off, we wear it, we

tame it, we customise it. It belongs to us and to others, it has a face, it can be displayed. It is everybody's friend. It has quite an appeal these days!

### **As an ending note**

I confess I would have liked to write some more about this, not in order to make proof of some scholarship, but because I was hooked by the topic. It is however so general and so vast that I risk drowning in it. I have already ventured back and forth in too many directions and the risk of losing the thread of the story has been haunting me all along. For this reason I stayed away from the critical apparatus, yet a few references were mandatory. Those who might want details can find numerous sources online. Stories are made of other stories and I have given up on erudition for the sake of a narrative<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Translation in English made by Andreea Bratu, University of Craiova. This is the adapted and modified version of the article *De la Doamna cu coasa la "Punks not Dead". Atribute iconice ale reprezentărilor Morții din Evul Mediu până în epoca muzicii rock*, in *Studia Universitas Cibiniensis - Series Historica*, Volume XVII/2020, Sibiu, 2020.

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## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS/ LISTA ILUSTRĂȚIILOR

- Fig. 1.** Danse Macabre, Bernt Notke: Surmatants (Totentanz) from St. Nicholas' Church, Tallinn, end of 15<sup>th</sup> century.
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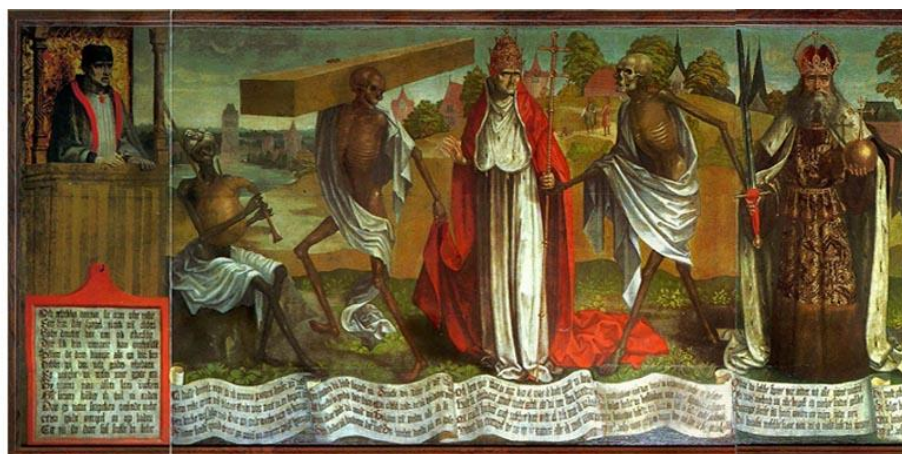


Fig. 1. *Danse Macabre*, Bernt Notke: *Surmatants* (*Totentanz*) from St. Nicholas' Church, Tallinn, end of 15<sup>th</sup> century (a,b)



Fig. 2. *Memento Mori*, Edinburgh.St. Cuthbert's Churchyard, Grave of James Bailie, detail, 1746.





Fig. 3. *Et in Arcadia ego*, Nicolas Poussin, 1637-1638, Louvre Museum.



Fig. 4. *The Four Horsemen of The Apocalypse*, Albrecht Dürer, 1498.



Fig. 5. *Death as Grim Reaper*, Cathedral of Trier, gothic style.



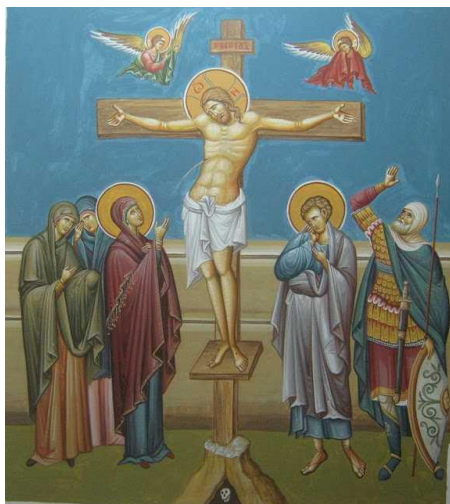


Fig. 6. *Crucifixion*, orthodox icon on wood 20<sup>th</sup> century.



Fig. 7. *Grande Vanité*, Sebastian Stoskopff, 1641.



Fig. 8. Palenque, Temple of the skull, detail.



Fig. 9. Church of Bones, Sedlec Osuary, 1870, František Rint.

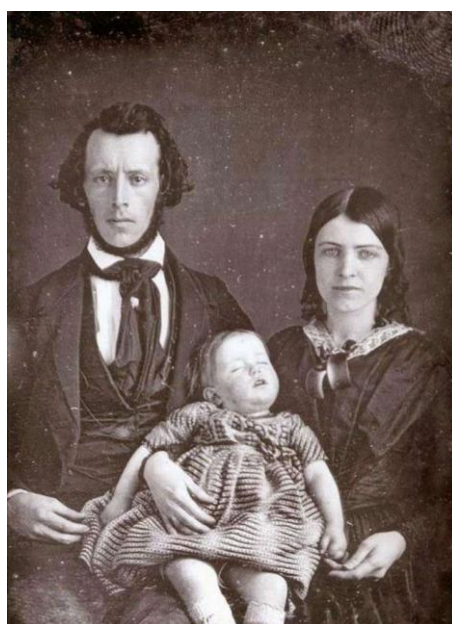


Fig. 10. Parents with a dead child. Second half of 19<sup>th</sup> century.



Fig. 11. *A Burial at Ornans*, Gustave Courbet, 1850.



Fig. 12. *Adolf Hitler, German Fuder, Nazi and Grim Reaper*, Georges, in *The Nation*, 1933.



Fig. 13. Typical Jolly Roger, Wikipedia.



Fig. 14. German SS uniform. Peaked visor cap with skull emblem. Division Totenkopf.





Fig. 15. Hell's Angel Jacket.

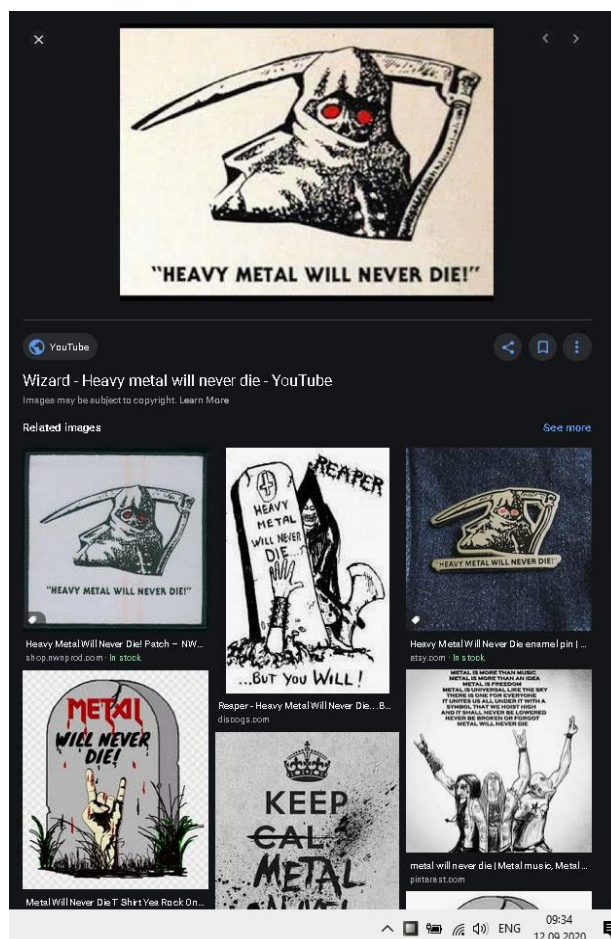


Fig. 16 . *Metal will never die!* Print screen (detail)

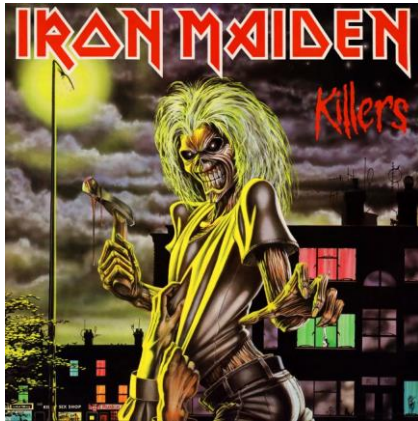


Fig. 17. Mascot Eddie, *Killers*, 1981, Iron Maiden, Album Cover.



Fig. 18. Exploited – logo.

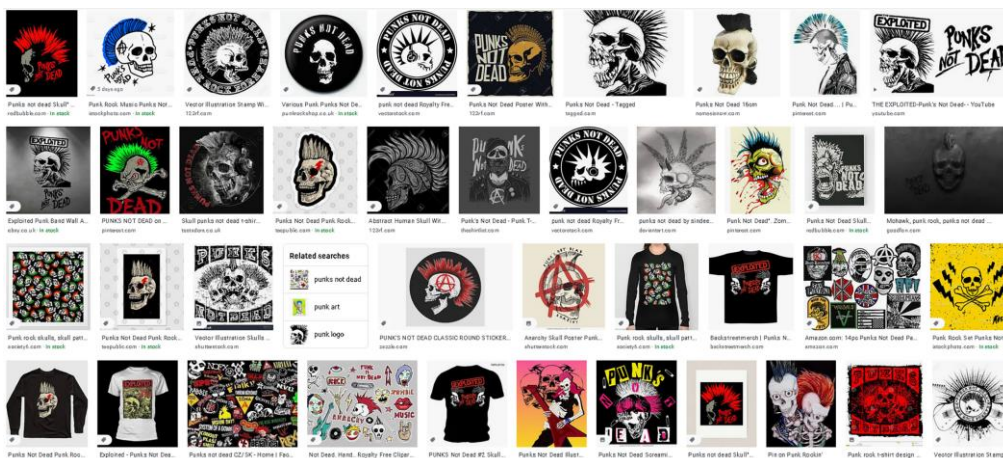


Fig. 19. Punk's not dead, various logos. Print screen

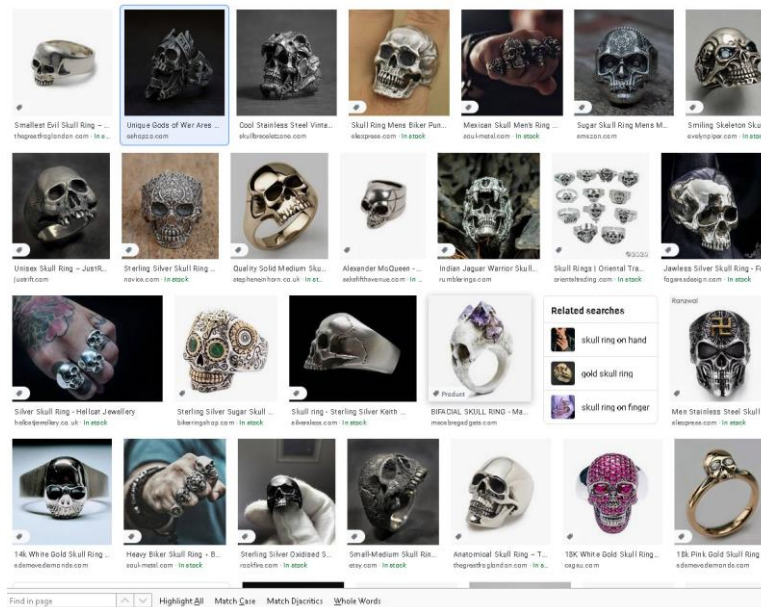


Fig. 20. Various skull rings. Print screen



## SOME IDEAS ABOUT THE ALLEGORICAL “DEATH OF OBJECTS”

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**Abstract:** *This short study seeks to offer an overview of allegorical conceptions of the “death of objects” that occur when objects become heritage and are exhibited in museums. To do so, we will take as an example the objects of extra-European ethnography, artifacts that in some societies have an “active life”. At the same time, in addition to objects, we will also consider the case of exhibiting naturalized animals, hunting trophies, or human remains. Following these considerations about their removal from their place of origin, museum collections, regardless of their nature, can be perceived either as “dead exhibits” or as objects that gain another life?*

**Keywords:** *museum, ethnographic collections, symbolic death, hunting trophies, human remains.*

**Rezumat:** *Această scurtă expunere dorește să aducă în atenție câteva concepții alegorice, referitoare la „moartea obiectelor”, survenită în momentul în care obiectele devin patrimoniu și sunt expuse în instituțiile muzeale. În acest sens vom lua ca exemplu obiectele de etnografie extraeuropeană, piese care, în cadrul unor societăți autohtone, au o „viață activă”. Totodată, pe lângă obiecte, vom lua în considerare și cazul expunerii animalelor naturalizate, a trofeelor de vânătoare sau a rămșișelor umane. Urmărind aceste considerente referitoare la scoaterea obiectelor din mediul de origine, colecțiile muzeale, indiferent de natura lor, pot fi percepute fie ca „exponate moarte” sau ca artefacte care câștigă o altă viață?*

**Cuvinte cheie:** *muzeu, colecții etnografice, moarte simbolică, trofee de vânătoare, rămșișe umane.*

**Life and “death of objects”**

We will discuss in this brief synthesis about the possible symbolic “death of objects” when they become part of museum collections, being “museumified”. According to the Larousse dictionary, the notion of *museumification* is the action of placing a work in a museum. *Museumification* is seen as a process of extracting something from its environment of origin, endowing it with a museum artifact status (Martin, 2011, 19-20).

The phenomenon of collecting and exhibiting objects has been known since Renaissance, the 16th century being famous for the formation of Cabinets of curiosities that included objects from the category of *naturalia*, *artificialia*, and *exotica*. These Cabinets of curiosities are also known as the forerunners of museums in the 19th century. Museums – specifically the ethnographic ones – over time have accumulated various definitions such as cemeteries, catacombs, mausoleums, cathedrals, temples etc (Van Beek, 1990, 26).

While undertaking research for my doctoral thesis on the methods of collecting objects of African origin, which are exhibited in Western museums, I came across the idea expressed by some researchers, and by some populations about museums, that the objects presented in these institutions do not have a life because they are removed from their context of origin. According to them, an African mask cannot exist without the costume of the performer and without the music that accompanies a certain ritual, festive or funeral (Phillips, 2009). In West and Central Africa, masks play an important role in agricultural or funeral ceremonies. These ceremonies are complex performances with music, recitations of myths, poems, all of which are components of an animated choreographic ensemble that takes place over several days (Wondji, 1998). The masks worn on the occasion of funerals, the opening or completion of agricultural work have, as their power, inscribing the event in the consciousness of those present, the remarkable events that have a role in



organizing the world and society (Laude, 1966, 200). During the ceremonies, the mask generally represents a deity, it can be an ancestral spirit, a mythological being, or a spiritual animal, the latter being seen in the faith of many tribes as their founder.

Thus, these objects used in certain rituals, such as masks or statuettes, when no longer fulfill various criteria within a community, lose their functionality, as such and the purpose for which they were created, becoming simple objects without a social life and being replaced with other items that meet the new requirements of that community. These objects have often been collected and brought into museum collections, most of which are on exhibit. Objects of extra-European ethnography, especially those of African origin, were brought en masse to Europe during colonialism.

Babacar Mbaye Diop debated about the decontextualization and recontextualization of objects through the museums display cases, which led rather to the mummification of the objects collected from Africa. Objects of traditional African art have, from the perspective of Africans, a sacred principle, but in the Western interpretation, African art began with a curious, scientific vision, finally having an aesthetic appreciation; nonetheless, once part of a museum, African art was stripped of its sacrality. In his opinion, the Western perspective takes into account the authentic nature of the artifacts, which provide information on the manufacturing technique and the beliefs and rites, being essentially a "material archive". Whereas in the conception of Africans the function and utility of objects are closely related to cosmological systems and complex religions (Diop, 2018, 64-68). Various researchers will seek to describe objects from the point of view of shape, but it would be impossible to study a mask or a statuette just starting from the form because the objects need to be discerned in the original hypostases; these details will determine if they have a social or religious purpose (Diop, 2018, 76).

It is considered that ethnology is a specialty that studies living cultures, so an object ceases to be ethnographic when it is no longer used. Therefore, an object without a practical or symbolic utility ceases to be a landmark for the members of a group, the ethnographic object becoming perishable

because it dies at the same time as its functionality (Grognet, 2005, 10). However, these ethnographic objects that lose their usefulness in contemporary society become a kind of testimony and from the perspective of a scientific document, turn into works of art over time (Grognet, 2005, 11).

Objects are also carriers of memory, in this direction historian Andi Mihalache discusses objects as witnesses of time (Mihalache, 2012, 228), and reflects on the human-object relationship through the example of things that die with people who could say something about them, the "deceased" artifacts being those which were not narrated (Mihalache, 2012, 236). Similar to a human being, objects have a life cycle, the artifact has a biography that is connected to the community that created, used, abandoned, or "killed" it (Bogdan, 2018, 230).

The writer Claude Roy states, in "L'art à la source. Arts premiers, arts sauvages" (1992), that "art is the one that keeps a dead idol alive, art is the one that in an object continues to serve when it is useless" (Grognet, 2005, 11). As such, we can talk about two possible "allegorical deaths", one in which ethnographic objects lose their original function, the second when they lose their real identity as ritual objects, becoming museum objects.

Regarding the extraction of the ethnographic object from its environment of origin, the author Michèle Coquet also formulated some ideas. The artifacts presented in the museum are viewed from the perspective of their function and value, the object having a purpose only if it is in an active state. Nevertheless, as the author argues, the museum is also a place that rebels against oblivion (Coquet, 1999, 15-17).

The film "*Les Statues meurent aussi*" (1953), directed by Alain Resnais, Chris Marker, and Ghislain Cloquet, at the request of Alioune Diop – founder of the magazine *Présence Africaine*, mirrors the conception formed around African art in the European context. It represents the beginning of the expression of anti-colonialism, which led to its prohibition at the time, being screened in its entirety only in 1968. It should be noted that objects of African origin during the period of the 19th and 20th centuries went through a series of transformations. Depending on the "judgments" with which they were analyzed,

they passed from one status to another, from “exotic”, “primitive”, “tribal”, “trophy objects”, to finally begin acknowledged as artworks by artists of the avant-garde from the beginning of the 20th century. All this patrimony is currently being reexamined in the light of restitutions.

Matthias de Groof<sup>7</sup> in his study makes a complete analysis of the film. Giving some transcribed examples from the film’s narrative, the following are related: “when people die, go down in history, when statues die, they become art. This botany of death is what we call culture” (*Les Statues meurent aussi*, 1953, 0:43-0:53). An object is “dead” when the look assigned to it disappears (De Groof, 2019, 73). The film emphasizes the idea of the “death” of African statuettes once they enter the museum, in which their only function remains to certify a “primitive” past (De Groof, 2019, 90).

In the case of African objects, often the collecting activity is seen as brutal because it induces a kind of death of lived reality, the way of removing an object from its natural context (Van Beek, 1990, 30). The anthropologist Gosewijn Van Beek points out in his article “The Rites of Things. A Critical View of Museums, Objects, and Metaphors”, the example of masks in different societies, in which the mask has a ceremonial role, but he discusses the situation in which masks are deposited in a certain sacred place during the period when they are not used, consequently speaking of their temporary “death”. For such objects in certain situations, a revival is necessary after the period of inactivity. The author discusses this example to draw a parallel to the “museumological death” of objects when they are stored, being a period of rupture in the biography of objects that are removed from the culture of origin, in consequence leading to a symbolic “death” (Van Beek, 1990, 32-33).

A notable situation is therefore the museum warehouse, which in people’s imagination is either classified as a “cemetery of objects” or as a “box of surprises”. In the warehouse there may be objects that have never been brought to light. Can we consider such objects as “dead” or forgotten forever? While some of the objects may have the opportunity to be brought to the surface in temporary exhibitions, others are completely forgotten and finally, the warehouse is seen

more as a “cemetery”, or as a collection of orphaned pieces without a label, provenance, or date of acquisition, as is the case with many pieces of extra-European ethnography – as the ethnographer Jean-Claude Muller rightly specify in his paper “Rester sur sa reserve ou en sortir? Dans le ventre du musée cannibale”. However, in his view, the museum deposit remains an important database (Muller, 2002, 122-124).

Other researchers, in contrast, do not see the museum as a “cemetery of dead objects”. On the contrary, it is a place where objects regain a second life. As the object goes through different stages of cleansing, it is measured, inventoried just like a newborn (Grognet, 2005, 1).

### **Hunting trophies and human remains in museums, a morbid atmosphere?**

Another framework that must be mentioned in an attempt to discuss a possible conception of the “death of objects”, would be the display of hunting trophies or naturalized animals in private collections and museums. Presenting a mounted animal to an audience is not a new activity. In the past, specimens were exhibited in Curiosity cabinets, and they were a symbol of human triumph over nature (Jeanne, 2019, 1).

The ensemble of naturalized collections introduces the idea of the interaction with a nature that is not inexhaustible insofar as it is perishable. According to the ethnologist Antoine Jeanne, there are two major typologies of museography of the dead animal. The first is found in natural history museums that express a paradigm of the evolution of science and museology because naturalized animals are exhibited for a scientific purpose, which illustrates biological, ecological, and evolutionary concepts. The second is present in hunting museums that lean towards the notion of hunting trophies (Jeanne, 2019, 9-10). Museums dedicated to hunting must pay homage to the animal and emphasize its greatness, so as not to look like an animal cemetery (Jeanne, 2019, 12). Isabelle Borsus’s dissertation “Sous la peau de l’animal naturalisé : approche anthropologique de la taxidermie entre attachements, bricolages et petits arrangements”, presents the world of taxidermy and the animals that go through the stuffing process. This brings into question the transformation of the animal that becomes an

object, but also the illusion of living, that the dead animal is trying to give (Borsus, 2014, 61).

The passion for animal taxidermy is fashionable and, nowadays, some people prefer to decorate their house with such specimens, but do not want to create an atmosphere that exposes the dead animal, on the contrary, to renew the connection with the animal world (Bernardina, 2013, 57). The hunting trophy itself presents the history of a pursuit of the hunted animal, of the moment of its death and a posthumous valorization (Bernardina, 2013, 69).

The last approach exposed at the end of this synthesis is the presence of human remains in museum collections. Certainly, many visitors were either perhaps shocked or fascinated by the various museum exhibits that may suggest a morbid ambiance, such as a mummy, bones from an archaeological context, jars that included anatomical preparations, shrunken heads of Jivaroan people, or other relics. This raises several questions that include their ambiguous status: Is the body an object? To whom do these specimens presented in the museum collections belong? Patrimonialized human remains are, on the one hand, by their nature, human remains. On the other hand, for scientific purposes, they are cultural subjects (Cadot, 2007, 9). The close connection of local communities with the ancestral world and the world of the dead makes them protest the presence of human remains that have been collected by anthropologists, ethnologists during scientific expeditions in the past.

The history of the Saartje Baartman is one of the best known. Of Khoisan origin and born in South Africa, she was brought to London in 1810. Exhibited in various places, due to her

steatopygia, she attracted the attention of many people. After her death in 1815, a mold was made after her body at the request of Georges Cuvier. The body was dissected and exhibited in the Museum of Natural History in Paris. Following the claim of the body in 2000 by South Africa, in 2002 the body was repatriated by France and buried according to Khoisan traditions (Renold *et al.*, 2013, 2-3).

In accordance with the "ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums", human remains are part of the category of sensitive exposures, so their presence should be made in agreement with professional norms, taking into account the beliefs of the community, ethnic or religious group of origin. The same Code of Ethics also calls into question the possibility of withdrawing them from public exposure if the community of origin so requests.

### Conclusion

As presented above, although the objects lose their original essence, it cannot be concluded that they have a symbolic "death" once decontextualized and exhibited behind a window display in the museum; rather it is assumed that an object can be considered "dead" when ignored, and forgotten in a box or on a shelf in the warehouse, never being brought to light or valued. Of course, museums should not be seen, in the end, as a space in which objects are interred in a metaphorical "death". Another perspective must also be looked at, in which these collections are brought back to life through various restoration processes such as is the case with damaged objects or archaeological artifacts. At the same time, through the process of *museumification*, this heritage becomes a living testimony of the past and a cultural evidence of the world's civilizations.

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## THE USE OF VISUAL LANGUAGE IN THE TRANSYLVANIAN MAGAZINE “CALICUL”

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**Abstract:** *The article analyses the use of visual language, in the Romanian Transylvanian humor magazine Calicul. The original illustrations that accompanied the main columns appeared in the first few issues of 1881 and were reused consistently until 1933. After the Austro-Hungarian Empire is dissolved, the main political target of the magazine disappears. In its second phase, after 1918, the quality of the articles decreases and Calicul does not succeed in creating a new, consistent identity, suited for the new political climate. While the written content changes after Transylvania becomes part of Romania, the illustrations that remain unchanged, in most part, are the ones that offer continuity and consistency to the publication.*

**Key words:** *illustrations, humor magazine, Calicul, visual studies.*

**Rezumat:** *Articolul analizează limbajul vizual al reviste românești din Transilvania, Calicul. Ilustrațiile originale care însoțeau principalele rubrici ale revistei, apar încă de la primele numere din 1881 și sunt folosite consecvent, până în 1933. După disoluția Imperiului Austro-Ungar, principala țintă politică a revistei dispare. În a doua fază, după 1918, calitatea articolelor scade și Calicul nu reușește să își creeze un program nou, bine definit, adaptat noului context politic. În timp ce partea textuală se schimbă după unire, ilustrațiile rămân în mare parte aceleași, oferind continuitate și consistență publicației.*

**Cuvinte cheie:** *ilustrații, revistă umoristică, Calicul, studii vizuale.*

The inter-war period was the most flourishing time for many different types of Romanian magazines. This wasn't the case with regards to humor magazines, which reached their peak quality in the second half of the 19th century.

Romanian humor magazines, targeted at Transylvanian readers first, appeared in Pesta. During this first phase, some of the most remarkable publications were Tutti Friutti and Umoristul, which were first printed in 1861, respectively 1863 (Grămadă 1971, 18). After the Austro-Hungarian Empire was founded, the Banat region became the main hub for Romanian humor magazines. During this time, press laws loosened up, which explains why the content of humor magazines leaned more towards political topics and became increasingly aggressive. This period also coincided with a rise in Hungarian nationalism and consequently, a similar response on the Romanian side (Grecu 1996, 133-147). An important magazine for this period is Priculiciul, edited by Pavel Rotariu, that appeared in Timișoara in 1874 and Gura

Satului, which appeared in Arad in 1877, moving its editorial board to Gherla for a short period, then returning to Arad (Grămadă 1971, 20). During the last decades of the 19th century, the most prolific areas for the development of humor magazines became Sibiu and Brașov.

In 1881, the magazine Calicul, edited by Ioan Pop was launched in Sibiu, while Vulturul, edited by Iustin Ardelean, was launched in 1892 in the same city (Grămadă 1971, 20). This last phase is considered to be the peak of Transylvanian Romanian humor magazines and Calicul is often referred to in specialized publications as the best Romanian humor magazine in Transylvania (Grămadă 1974, 14). Still, these magazines never reached the quality level of similar publications from Bucharest, such as Moftul român (Cherciu 2012, 15), that collaborated with one of the best Romanian inter-war writers: I.L. Caragiale and one of the best Romanian inter-war illustrators: Ct. Jiquidi (Ionak, Costin 1971, 25).

The Transylvanian editors were aware of the high-quality press published in Bucharest. Ioan Pop stated that he was intending to move the magazine *Calicul* to Bucharest – even though this change was never made (Grămadă 1971, 31), since that environment was better suited for the development of these types of magazines. Even so, the primary sources of inspiration for Transylvanian Romanian humor magazines were Austrian and the Hungarian ones. Austro-Hungarian humor magazines started to appear at the beginning of the 19th century. One of the most important humor magazines from this first phase of development was *Der Humorist*. It appeared in 1837 and was the most popular humor magazine in Vienna for two decades (Grămadă 1971, 8). After *Der Humorist*, more magazines appeared, such as: *Figaro*, *Humoristische Blätter*, *Neue Fliegenden* and so on. As for Hungarian humor magazines, its golden age is considered to be the period between 1860 and 1867, because of publications such as *Bolond Miska* and *Ludas Matyi*. As for these publications, they were inspired by similar magazines from Berlin.

Hungarian humor magazines deeply influenced the Romanian magazines that appeared in the Pesta phase, especially in the way in which the illustrations were conceived. During this phase, many caricatures from Romanian magazines are clearly inspired by caricatures from Hungarian magazines and in some cases, one can also see caricatures that were taken as such from Hungarian magazines, with the accompanying text or joke modified as to serve specifically Romanian problems or circumstances (Grămadă 1971, 197-200). The magazines that most often borrow caricatures from Hungarian magazines were *Umoristul* and *Gura Satului* and the sources that were most frequently used were: *Fekete Leves* and *Ludas Matyi*. As a whole, the Hungarian and Romanian illustrations from this phase display a clear French influence, the impact of Daumier being visible in the manner in which all characters are represented with oversized heads and very small bodies. As for *Calicul*, which will be presented in detail in this article, the visual model adopted will be quite different.

The shutting down of magazines such as *Umoristul* or *Gura satului*, at the end of the 19th century or during the inter-war period, as well as the small number and low quality of

new magazines are often explained in specialized literature as natural consequence of the fulfillment of the Romanian wish that Transylvania unite with Romania. The main argument given for this explanation is that the humor in the magazines that appeared before the First World War was primarily a critical stance against the oppression and discrimination of minorities, respectively Romanians, in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Once the problem was solved, the need for such types of magazines is presumed to have disappeared. Although this explanation is quite plausible, the issue demands more questioning. A large percentage of the jokes and the satires from late 19th century Transylvania were about the issues faced by Romanians as a minority in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, but not all of them. The magazines usually address general human flaws. Many jokes and jabs point not only to the incompetence and avarice of the political class, but also to stereotypical characters such as: “the dumb peasant”, “the wicked old hags”, „the nouveau riche, demagogue bourgeois”, „the loose woman that is hungry for money” and so on. There are also jokes pointed at various types of religions and confessions and jokes about the educational system, respectively the inefficiency of pedagogical practices and the students’ lack of interest. As the magazines often pointed out themselves, after the unification with Romania, all these issues did not disappear.

The way the content of the magazines impacted the readers was surely not homogenous. The jokes regarding the situation in the Austro-Hungarian Empire were probably the most anticipated and appreciated by Romanians. In *Calicul*, the front page was usually reserved for this topic. The humor in this magazine was, generally speaking, of much higher quality than that of other inter-war Transylvanian magazines. As for the front page of *Calicul*, it tended to be the best written part, in comparison to the rest of the jokes in the magazine.

To judge the quality of humor from different historical eras is a difficult and risky task – among many other reasons – due to the great importance of the context in which the humorous content was created. Usually, the humor in these magazines is constructed around historical events of the time. With the passing of time, a lot of them become

impossible to reconstruct, since subtlety and elusiveness are part of the joke. Also, often, the type of language chosen in jokes and the stylistic inflections that the writers opt for, loose their impact because of the changes in humoristic „trends”. All of these apply to any type of artistic creation, but with regards to humor, its ephemeral nature is more pronounced. Even if some jokes were extremely funny to their readers, in the historical context in which they were created, it is possible for us nowadays to completely miss the humoristic value of the historically dislocated joke and even to be very confused by it. The Romanian interwar magazines from Transylvania are full of such jokes. Still, like with any type of artistic creation, what is certain is that, if a joke, a satire, an aphorism, a comedy, remains amusing with the passing of time and the humor can be applied on different historical contexts, this indicates greater value. In *Caliucul*, some of the jokes land in this category. An example, in this regard is „Jalba cânilor din Ungaria către puterile europene.” (Dr. Zeno 1903, 266-272) (transl.: Letter from the dogs of Hungary to the leading European countries.) This epic poem is a response to a fictitious crisis that the dogs of Hungary are supposedly going through after Parliament voted for their mass killing as a way to prevent the spread of rabies. The protagonist, Pudli, „cel cât o pisică/ Al Xantippei frumușică/ Favorit, care de ani/ Trăia printre bogătani/ Cu bucate boerești/ Și în brațe muerești” (Dr. Zeno 1903, 266) (transl.: the one like a cat/ Belonging to the beautiful Xantipa/ Her favorite, which for years/ Lived amongst the rich/ Being served fancy dishes/ And held in the arms of ladies) – who hears about the awful law in the Prime-minister’s office while his mistress was visiting him – decides to take action and „Să convoace adunare/ Și să facă protestare” (Dr. Zeno 1903, 269) (transl.: To rally up a gathering/ And to start a protest.) After Pudli manages to rally all the dogs of Hungary, tensions arise between them with regards to the tactic that should be adopted. One dog suggests „Dar stăpânii, dragii mei/ Ei ne-au făcut din buni rei,/ În ei turbarea se naște/ Și apoi și pe noi ne paște!/ Deci ei trebuie să moară/ Mai întâi și-ntăia oară” (Dr. Zeno 1903, 270) (transl.: But the owners, my dear friends/ They turned us from good to wicked/ They’re the ones that first went mad/ And

passed the illness on to us./ They’re the ones that should go/ First and foremost). Pudli manages to convince them that they, the dogs (unlike the Serbians) should listen to their sense of reason and conjure up a letter defending their rights and to let others decide who the real guilty party is. The letter boasts about the dogs’ achievements: „Noi oile le-am păzit,/ Noi curțile le-am grijit,/ Noi doamne am desmirdat/ Cu ele am dormit în pat” (Dr. Zeno 1903, 271) (transl.: We defended all the sheep/ We protected all the yards/ We soothed the ladies./ Slept with them in their beds). The letter eventually falls into the hands of the Hungarian noble ladies who mobilize and take measures to revoke the law.

Another such example is the fictitious letter addressed to Calicul, from the editing board of *Bolond Miska*, an actual magazine that appeared in Pesta during the same time as *Calicul*. Given the historical context in which Kálmán Tisza’s government was pushing for a „Hungarian-isation” of the entire state (Chiorean 1995, 50), the letter, written in wonderfully broken Romanian, reads as such: „Szpunye Kálík barátom?! Kind noj vre sze făcse binye./ Voj făcse la noi rușinye/ Și halmozi ku szuszpinye./ Oláh papok márj rumunyi/ Făcse lá voj totz nyebunyi/ Ke szpunye sze nu szkultá/ Gye porunká cse noi dá/ Ká se primi lyimbá noszt/ Ke á vostonu jesztye proszt./ Nu potye fi boldogság/ Lá mare magyarország./ Gye nu totz bészédui/ Limbá gyela Unguri.” (B. Miska 1885, 98) (transl.: Tell me why, brother Calic/ When we are trying to do good/ You are rattling things up/ being upset by what we are saying./ You are making all Romanians/ stubborn/ Because you are telling then not to listen/ To the order that we are giving/ To learn our language/ Since yours is not good enough./ Things can’t go well/ In Great Hungary/ If we’re not all speaking/ the Hungarian language). In the friendly three page letter it is argued that, for the good of the country, everybody should learn the official language.

By looking solely at the front page, one can argue that *Calicul* is as much a political magazine as it is a humor magazine.

Usually, modern epoch political magazines that do not have a humorous side to them, take on a very firm position against an opposing faction, be it political party or ruling nation, while creating a strictly positive, bias image of their own faction. By this I am

not referring to the ominous struggle of having an objective, detached political press, but to the fact that the type of mindset that is required from those that write and read political magazines should be based on a set of very strongly founded principles that dictate the way they act in society (but that are not always objective).

Humor opens up the possibility of a more moderate position, first of all due to the fact that it possesses appropriate and widely accepted mechanisms for self-criticism and self-irony. Classic political magazines cannot afford the luxury of dwelling on its own mistakes, just the ones the opposition made. In *Calicul*, the attitude we often see is that of “we are none the wiser”. Besides the Austro-Hungarian Empire, a frequent target of the magazine is the clergy. While the papacy is named „afurisită creațiune a timpurilor întunecate” (transl.: the retched creation of the dark times), most jokes in this category are made at the expense of Greek-catholic priests (who’s religious beliefs are said to be grounded solely on the freedom of not having to keep such as drastic fast as the orthodox priests). Still, many jokes are aimed at orthodox priest as well.

Furthermore, irony, the type of humor most often used in these types of magazines, is not the type of critical response to a problem that offers a concrete solution to the problems it is aimed at. Irony simply points out that something is not properly working, which then entails that doing the opposite might be the solution (although the opposite is often vague and hard to define). The stance of irony is more detached than the one afforded in mainstream political discourse, helping maintain the impression that the one making use of it isn’t actually a political agent, but simply an observant bystander who, through irony, gets the satisfaction of engagement and expression. The major advantage in the use of this type of criticism that is „hidden” behind humor is the accessibility and attractiveness to a broader, more diverse audience: on the one hand, that part of the rural population that does not dispose of the language, education or, simply, the social habit of being involved in politics and on the other hand, those from urban and rural areas that do not trust or appreciate politics or those that strive for the individualistic refinement that humor may offer, in comparison to rigid political

discourse. The popularity of these magazines isn’t due only to the fact that people buy them to laugh, but also because they offer an indirect gateway to being politically involved.

Taking this into consideration, the downfall during the interwar period is explainable. After the Austro-Hungarian Empire fell apart and Transylvania became part of Romania, the main purpose of Transylvanian humor magazines was no longer relevant. Although the criticism aimed towards various aspects of society (such as priests, loose women and – given the anti-Semitic nature of the times – Jewish people) continued, they didn’t have as much political weight, but were more socially or morally charged. Right after the unification of Transylvania and Romania, *Calicul* vehemently criticized the liberal party, which led the country between 1922 and 1926, but did not affiliate itself to the opposition or to any other political faction (which was rare for that time). Such an affiliation would have facilitated a shift from criticizing the Austro-Hungarian Empire to criticizing the political opposition, as so many humor magazines of the time did. At the beginning of the 20th century, most Romanian Transylvanians, although nationalists, did not have the exercise of adhering to an ideological identity, making them unable to fully take part in the multiparty system they were now a part of. Thus, a reorientation of *Calicul* toward one political party would have alienated many of its readers. This presupposition is founded on the fact that Transylvania leaning toward PNȚ is more a consequence of local inheritance, than a newly discovered political identity.

Although the interwar period will be one of qualitative decline for *Calicul*, the magazine will nevertheless continue its activity until 1933. The idea that humor magazines begin declining once their political aim has been reached is a type of discourse that is applied to other cultural phenomena as well, such as Romanticism (Honour 1983, 280), which is often described in specialized literature as ending in 1848, due to the fact that political aims associated with the phenomenon are partially obtained, partially destroyed, during “the Springtime of the people”. Still, the complexities of Romanticism go far beyond its political aims and even after 1848, many traces of the style still survive in Europe after 1848. This

continuity is mostly due to an aesthetical attachment and the comfort and habit of using the same visual and literary language. This type of evolution, of a cultural phenomenon, is more obvious in the case of Romanticism, but it also applies to the evolution of Transylvanian humor magazines during the interwar period, especially to *Calicul*.

#### **An overview of the magazine *Calicul***

*Calicul* launched in Sibiu in 1881 and it continued to be published there until 1895. After a hiatus, it reappears between 1903 and 1906 and between 1924 and 1933. Ioan Popa, the editor of the magazine studied law before going into publishing, but tried to maintain a humble public image, pointing out that: „se trage din opincă” (Grămadă 1974, 21) (transl. he was born in a peasant family). Next to the public image he will try to build, he will also hide part of his contributions to the magazine behind the pseudonym Dr. Amnariu (Grămadă 1971, 31). Next to Ioan Popa, a frequent collaborator of the magazine will also be I. Pop Reteganu who will use the pseudonyms Dr. Zeno, Dr. Detunărescu and Stan Pățitu (Grămadă 1971, 30). The magazine, run by a person that came from a rural area, but also had a higher education, turned out to be a very pertinent reflection of the political, economic, social and religious issues in the Ardeal region during the dualist era. The same can be said about the period in which the magazine first came back, during 1903-1906. In this last phase, before The First World War, *Calicul* becomes more aggressive towards the Austro-Hungarian Empire. This phase ends on account of the poor health conditions of the editor: „Medicii oprindumi ori-ce ocupație spirituală, sistez edarea foarei până la însănătoșare. Daună nime nu va suferi” (Pop 1906, 113) (transl.: Doctors have advised me to cease any activity, thus I shall stop editing the magazine until my health improves. There will be no losses for other parties.)

During the 1924-1933 phase, when Țepeluș becomes editor, the quality of the magazine decreases dramatically. On one hand, the humor is built strictly around criticism aimed at politicians, the clergy and some social groups. Staying true to the magazine's tradition, the format most often used was the same as the one used a few decades ago: rimes. During this phase, large portions of the magazine consisted of unfunny, simplistic rimes, void of any consistent

meaning or message. At the beginning, the “piece de résistance” of the magazine was the opening page, which consisted of a text written in verses, several pages long, usually about pressing political matters, done in a way that was creative, as well as funny. On the other hand, during the interwar period, one can find such paragraphs:

„La ieslea blândului Iisus,/ La islea cea săracă,/ Sufla un bou blanjin, supus,/ Căldură ca să facă,/ Și ieslea pruncului divin/ S-a încălzit ca din senin./ La ieslea fericirii țării,/ A scumpei noastre României/ Din baerele disperării/ Dar parcă este făcătura/ Că-n iesle încă nu-i căldură/...../ La ieslea fericirii țării/ Pândesc irozii și dușmanii/ Iar vântul suflă-n faptul sării/ C-au ros și ieslea șobolanii...” (Țepeluș 1924, 1) (transl.: In the stall were Jesus lied/ A modest stall/ A harmless devoted bull was breathing/ To give warmth./ The stall where Jesus lied/ was suddenly warm./ In the stall of our nation's happiness/ Our beloved Romania/ Built on prolong suffering/ Strangely/ There is no warmth yet/.../ In the stall of our nation's happiness/ Herods and enemies lurk/ And the wind is blowing/ And the rats have even chewed up the crib).

Taking up a third of the first page, these verses are not only void of any significant meaning, but are also lacking any humorous or poetical value.

During the interwar period, the magazine does not seem to have a clearly structured political aim. It simply criticizes the political party in power, but it does not offer an in-depth analysis of the mistakes being made by the government. No arguments are brought forward for the criticism, it just is. The magazine criticizes PNL, which held power during 1924–1933, by addressing its leader, I. C. Brătianu: „Către tine lup ce astăzi ești ministru peste oi/ Secundat de-al tău tovarăș – preaevlavios cotoi” (Țepeluș 1925, 1) (transl. To you, prime-minister, wolf among sheep/ Seconded by your mate – the faithful jackal), without explaining why the prime minister is worthy of this characterization. When the government changed, *Calicul* celebrated as follows:

„Vestesc în largul țării că Domnul a-nviat/ Scăpându-ne de chinuri, de rele, de păcat./ Că țara noastră scumpă acum răsuflă iar/ Scăpată de regimul așa zis liberal./ Căci pentru neamul nostru cel adăpat cu fiere/ Azi pretutindei este-ndoită înviere.” (Țepeluș

1926, 1) (transl.: I come bearing the news, that The Lord has risen/ Delivering us from pain, evil and sin/ That our beloved country can rejoice again/ Freed from the so called liberal regime/ For to our bitter nation/ There are two resurrection today.)

The PNȚ government won't be received with much enthusiasm: „Și să nu-mi uit vorba, Maniu-Mihalache/ Mănoși pe țară și pe partid – frache/ Au plecat în lume. (De n-ar mai veni,/ Carul țării Doamne, cum ar mai porni)” (Țepeluș 1933, 2) (transl. Before I forget, Maniu and Mihalache, owners of the country and the party, are out traveling. / If only they didn't come back/ This country would start running again.) The only major political figure that Calicul endorses is Octavian Goga (Țepeluș 1932, 2), but the positive mentions of this personality start appearing only in 1932, a year before the magazine disappears. The magazine will present itself as being neutral and objective: „Am rămas singura gazetă serioasă din țară. Cele politice s-au înscris în școlile speciale de mahalagii. Se ceartă și se batjocoresc mai tare ca dracul cu Țiganul.” (Țepeluș 1927, 10) (transl.: We are the last serious magazine in the country. The political ones have joined the special schools for gossipers. They fight and mock each other worst that the devil with the gypsy). The irony in this self-characterization lies not only in the fact that the magazine was bringing no real contribution to the public debate on political issues, but also in the fact that it is comparing itself exclusively to political magazines. During this phase, many issues have a front page that is completely lacking in political content or of social relevance of any kind (as opposed to 19th century phase where all were exclusively political). Some issues publish literary pieces that drastically deviate from the magazines initial profile, not only in subject matter, but also in tone. In „Viziunea Dezmoștenitului” (transl.: The Disinherited's Vision), published on the first page of the third issue of 1924, a monk is presented as having a vision about a world in which all evil and all troubles are eradicated. After having this vision, he starts regretting his choice of seclusion and wishes he had just enjoyed life. After realizing his vision was not true and that the world is still corrupt, he dies. The monk's story displays no attempt to be funny, and instead of humor, the readers get a pathetic tragedy of no literary value.

During the magazine's two phases of the XXth century, the columns established during the 19th century continue, but their quality and type of content vary significantly. Among these, the most popular were „Sus Marcule!”, „Urzică Scandalografescu”, „Scânteie și cenușă din filosofia lui Dr. Amnar”, „Stan Pățitul”, „Colac și Puăză”, „Cocoana Gurădulce”. For many of these, the length of the columns' text will shorten (and the quality will decrease as well), but one important detail will be consistent throughout the magazine's existence: the illustrations associated with each column.

### The illustration in Calicul

The illustrations in Calicul are original pieces of content, created especially for the magazine. They are not borrowed from foreign publications (as was often the case with Romanian magazines, such as *Gura satului* or *Umoristul*). They are anonymous. The first issue of the magazine states that: „Ilustrațiunile făcute de desemnatori exacti, se chemigrafează în institutul vestitei firme: C. Angerer & Goschl din Viena” (Pop 1881, 2) (transl.: The illustrations, made by crafted etchers, are translated to print by the prestigious institute C. Angerer & Goschl from Vienna). These illustrations consisted of human and animal characters some of them simply sketched out, some of them caricaturized. Of these, some of the most remarkable are: Urzică Scandalografescu, Cocona Gurădulce, the priests Colac, Pupăză, Condac and Prohod, Dr. Amnar and Stan Pățitu. These characters play the role of a narrator, either for short jokes or for longer stories, full of irony, aimed either at political and social issues or at the negative trope that some of these characters represent. Although the illustrations are not produced during the inter-war period, they are a telling visual component of this period, as well. The choice to recycle the visual content, even though it didn't have political use anymore, can be explained by the fact that the readers were accustomed with and attached to these images. These images can be analyzed in correlation to the context in which they were created as well as the context in which they were reused.

There are no caricatures of recognizable personalities in Calicul. For instance, there are no caricatures of the prime-minister of Transleithania, Kálmán Tisza, who will take

up this position during 1875 and 1890, thus often being the target of jokes and criticism in the textual parts of *Calicul*. Most illustrations are built around stereotypical Romanian characters, with some specific flaws accentuated for comic relief. Despite their shortcomings, the characters are built so as to draw sympathy from the reader/viewer and not only contempt or disappointment.

The illustrations belong to several different authors and they do not follow a unitary visual program.

One important differentiating characteristic is that some illustrations are caricatures, some are not.

One of the most frequently used illustrations, displayed in the magazine between 1881 and 1932 is not a caricature. Illustrating the column „*Sus Marcule!*”, the image shows a bear and a tamer who is luring him with a tambourine. The animal is holding a pole with his front paws, while standing up. It is seen from behind and the position it is represented in makes it slightly anthropomorphized. The taming, training and show of a dancing bear was a popular type of local entertainment. Although the illustration is not funny in itself, it captures an event that was usually staged in such a way as to make people laugh. The bear is tricked into behaving in a way that is unnatural and forced into displaying gestures belonging to another species.

The text of the column „*Sus Marcule!*” is structured as a folk poem. Usually, in the first verses, Marcu is being teased for his refusal to cooperate. This introduction is used as a pretext to recap the disconcerting political and social events of the moment. There are several parallels between traditional Romanian cheering poems that are recited during that winter holidays and the „*Sus Marcule!*” poems. For one, the way Marcu is being teased to get up follows similar arguments and threats as the ones used to persuade the host to open the door: „*Că d-aseară stăm p-afară./ De opincile-nghețară, [...]*” (Transl.: Our shoes have frozen./ Because we have been out all night), respectively „*Amploaiații ce iați pus/ Vor vota cum zic de sus / Și toți cei din primărie/ Tot încarcă datorie/ Bietul popor tot plătește/ Datoria crește-crește*” (Anonymous 1905, 130) (transl.: The clerks you chose/ Will vote as they are ordered/ And everybody at town hall/ Keeps increasing the debt./ The nation keeps paying./ The debt keeps growing.)

or „*Liberalii dau târcoale/ Zi de zi în spre putere/ Ar linge și ei sireacii/ Puțin fagurul cu miere*” (Anonymous 1907, 4) (transl.: The liberals keep lurking/ More and more, towards power/ They would also like a taste/ Of the honeycomb). Usually, the issues before 1918 criticize the Austro-Hungarian ruling, while the ones after 1918 focus on Romanian political parties.

Within this structure, the correlation between text and image transforms Marcu into an allegory of the common Romanian, who is being forced to play a role he does not wish to play, by the ones ruling. He is portrayed as being stuck in a situation in which he has no freedom. Placing the Romanian people in the role of helpless victim will persist throughout the entire magazine. During the Austro-Hungarian ruling, its problems stemmed from it being a minority whose national identity was being infringed upon, while after 1918 its oppressors become the political parties. The column withers away during the last few years of the magazine. It gets shorter and shorter and, in some issues, the content is reduced to pleas that Marcu get up and dance, without any further context or political message.

As for Marcu's tamer, he is not a representation of the political forces that decide the course of history. He is not the evil circus master, amused by the suffering he is putting an animal through. He is just a simple gypsy, doing his job with intelligence and devotion. The man is the image of the narrative voice, *Calicu's* voice. In the context in which *Calicul* is observing the Romanian people's state and their unfavorable situation, a note of irony about Romanian passivity can also be read in the „*Sus Marcule!*” column. In some issues – especially during the last phase of the column – Marcu isn't simply lured with words, but also teased: „*Las-o focului de lene/ C-a-nflorit frunza pe fagi/ Și tu tot la cușcă trași*” (Anonymous 1925, 12) (transl. Leave your laziness behind/ The beech trees are already blooming/ But you still want to lay in your den).

The illustration representing Stan Pățitul (Fig. 1) is another image that does not fit in the category of caricature. This is the only picture that has a minimal amount of special rendering and some background characters. All the characters, although just briefly sketched, are anatomically proportioned and have natural looking gestures and expressions.



Stan Pățitul, a middle-aged man with a beard, can be distinguished from the other characters because he is placed alone on the right side of the image on a bench. He is represented as a narrator. He has a serious expression and he is talking with his hands, while the other characters, who seem to be family members, are listening and smiling. All the characters are wearing traditional rural Romanian clothing. The woman in the image has a spindle, while Stan Pățitul has a staff.

The entire image is a generic frame of rural life. Any readers from the country side could have recognized themselves either in the narrator or the listeners. The text of the column, which is narrated by Stan Pățitul, is phrased as funny anecdotes. The main characters of these anecdotes are, most often, priests, Jews and industrious householders. The plot is usually built around their flaws that somehow turn against them, altering the course of their lives. These anecdotes can be read as moralizing tales that invite on self-reflection and personal discipline. They could have been read as essential lessons, in a rural society that still depended on oral tradition; the intimate, homey atmosphere in the image underlining this possibility as well.

At the same time, given the types of narratives and the fact that they focus mostly on priests and Jews, they don't necessarily have an introspective role, but are meant to be taken as cautionary tales. The critical attitude that can usually be seen in Calicul towards these two groups makes Stan Pățitul a keeper of wisdom who tries to help his listeners (the readers) rid themselves of naivety towards certain groups that should always be approached with caution and skepticism. Because of repeated bad experiences (as his name suggests) Stan Pățitul becomes a promoter of negative stereotypes. These stereotypes are not pushed in an aggressive or hateful manner, but more with lighthearted humor. The relatively innocent intention of the magazine is also indicated by the fact that Stan's listeners are all smiling, even though the narrator expression is very serious.

Another character that is shown inside its home is Cocona Gurădulce (Fig. 2). Unlike the image showing Stan Pățitul, this illustration is a caricature. The character is represented as an older woman and her caricature consists of visual stereotypes specific to representations of witches. She has

an evil smile, an exaggerated large, curled nose, with a hairy mole next to it. The frontal part of her bonnet is flared out so as to create the impression that she is wearing a crown made of spikes. A parallel can be drawn between the steaming pot she is holding in her hand and a witch's cauldron. Also, there is a cat at her feet. Next to these symbols that point towards the maleficence of the character, Cocona Gurădulce displays the visual hallmarks of the generic old woman. Her cloths are not necessarily rural, but could be seen in any environment. The glasses on her nose may be an indicative that she is an urban character. Cocona Gurădulce represents the stereotype of the gossiping old woman. The written part of the column consists of bitter mean comments concerning different categories of women, all interlaced with her catchphrases „Câț!” and „Mițluc!”. One social aspect that is frequently criticized is women's choice not to wear traditional folk cloths, but to spend excessively on trendy new cloths. Generally, Cocona Gurădulce condemns the easy-going, promiscuous nature of young women from the city and advocates for traditional rural values. The tone used in this column is not a sarcastic one. The humor of this section is derived simply from the straight-forward, mean attitude of the character. In a particularly creative manner, through this column, Calicul manages to aim at two negative stereotypes of the time, which are put in conflict with each other: the young promiscuous city girl and the old, bitter, gossiping woman.

Of all the important characters illustrated in Calicul, Cucoana Gurădulce is the only one whose illustration changes (Fig. 3). In the new version that appears in the magazine last years she is portrayed as an old bourgeois woman. Even though her nose is still big, she is no longer a caricature. The vulgar smile is replaced by a very stern expression and in this case, the only object that can be seen next to the woman is the book she is holding in her lap. Through the initial illustration, an antithesis between the young promiscuous city girl and the old, bitter, gossiping woman was constructed. Cucoana Gurădulce simply had a moral deficit that wasn't necessarily tied to a certain social group. The new version seems to represent a stuck up, mean snob (as indicated by her cloths, posture and expression), her double sided nature being

underlined by the fact that the language, tone and even the catchphrases in the column stay the same as always. The criticism in the column is still aimed at young city women. For example, in the third issue of 1927, events organized by women in universities with the purpose of commemorating historical figures, are criticized as being pointless and the product of boredom. These events are described as replacements for the tradition „hora” and, in Cucoana Gurădulce’s opinion, since they are a simple pretext for socializing; the women’s refusal to include dancing in the events is absurd.

The discrepancy between visual and textual language points to the snobbish nature of Cucoana Gurădulce: she is neatly dressed in conservative cloths and is holding a book while having a stern, respectable expression. One could expect this to be an educated, wise, respectable woman, but the language associated to the character points to a vulgar opposite. Although there is humoristic value in this, the discrepancy is so pronounced that the column suffers, stylistically speaking. As for the readers from the 1920s that might have been unaware of the initial illustration, the connection between image and text might have been completely lost. The fact that the text wasn’t adapted at all for the new image is symptomatic of the general decline of the magazine.

Even though the language stays the same, the message of the column somewhat changes during the 1920s. It still tries to point out some ridiculous and dysfunctional aspects of society, especially regarding women, but it does so at the expense of modernism. The column becomes anti-feminist. The major flaw of Cucoana Gurădulce is no longer a moral one: the fact that she is a mean, bitter gossip; her new flaw is belonging to the snobbish bourgeoisie. As for the women criticized in the column, they are no longer targeted for being shallow and materialistic, but for being socially active.

During the same time the magazine changes the illustration of Cucoana Gurădulce, two new illustrated female characters appear and they will be used recurrently in these last years. Chiva and Vuța represent the uneducated, simple women from the city. They are middle-aged, overweight and their faces are slightly distorted and masculine. They are sitting at a table, cheering with two

glasses of what is insinuated to be alcohol. The humor in their conversations is built around their errors, especially linguistic ones. Usually, the two are fighting about social issues, which they both misunderstand and end up calling each other „stupid”. A telling sample of the language they used is: „Cum hantătaru să nu știi tu la doamna aia, unde tot mere popa nost cu mâerenii de beau aldămașurile” (Anonymous 1924, 7), phrase which phonetically captures mispronounced, poorly articulated words. The two characters are very similar in age, social status, education and language to the initial version of Cucoana Gurădulce, but they are lacking the sharpness and wit that made the original character funny, due to her sarcasm and irony. Chiva and Vuța replace to original Cucoana Gurădulce with a far more simplistic type of humor built around them being stupid and naïve.

The way in which Calicul represents women, suffers a constant downfall. Not only does the number of negative female characters increase, but they become less and less nuanced. If, during the first phases of the magazine, the criticism of female characters seemed to be aimed at general, mendable moral flaws, the last phase of the magazine blatantly depicts woman as awful people.

Another illustration that appeared in this same phase, telling of this negative direction, is the one representing Baba Hârca (Fig. 4). This female character is represented as Medusa, her hair being replaced with snakes. Unlike typical representations of the mythological character, Baba Hârca is a thin old woman with no teeth, a crowded nose and long sharp nails. Her dress is pulled down revealing her elongated breasts. Built on a highly popular Romanian folk trope, Baba Hârca’s column consists of curses. The humor in these curses consists in their inoffensiveness: „Tot după miniștrii să vă măritați fetele, iar după cununie să vedeți că ați luat de ginere pe dracul” (transl. Marry your daughters with ministers, to later find out you married then to devils.). The initial Cucoana Gurădulce was a caricature that had some endearing qualities: her bonnet, her glasses, the cat next to her; Baba Hârca on the other hand is simply a grotesque character (which is meant to be funny because of her awkwardly exposed breasts), while the text associated to her is funny for the simple fact

that it is more mellow than one would expect after seeing the image.

Curses were present from the beginning in Calicul, but initially they were correlated with another character: Radu Ciubuc. Titled „Din afuriseniile lui Radu Ciubuc”, the column was paired with the illustration of a middle-aged man in rural clothing. Unlike Stan Pătitul – a positive, wise character – Radu Ciubuc does not have a beard, carries a knife and his rod is fallen on the ground. The two are drawn in a similar manner, but Radu Ciubuc has a slightly caricatured aspect due to his cross facial expression and exaggerated gestures. The column often includes references to the socio-economic situation of the time, as it will continue to do when Baba Hârca appears.

Among the illustrations representing men from rural areas, there is also Stan Vorbălungă. He, as well, appears during the 1920s. His tales are very similar to the ones told by Stan Pătitul, but his stories usually end with a joke and not a moral. Stan Pătitul represented the intelligent, witty man, while Stan Vorbălungă was closer to the prankster type. Even though the two columns were quite similar and the two shared the same name, Stan Pătitul and Stan Vorbălungă will coexist in many issues. The visual representation of the later will lean more towards a caricature: he is short, overweight and has a large mustache. He represents the typical man from the Ardeal region, his nickname also being correlated to the stereotype that people from this region of Romania are generally slower in demeanor, speech and reactions. Given that this illustration appears only after the unification of Transylvania with Romania, it is possible that this image represented an attempt to draw in new readers outside of Transylvania.

In general, the columns from Calicul are built around a symbiotic relationship between text and picture. Each part, taken individually cannot be said to have artistic value. Their value firstly lies in their political criticism, but the format in which this is presented, transforms the gravity of the message into issues that can be taken lightheartedly, with even a bit of joy and pleasure. Even when the images are not caricatures, even when the text is not particularly funny or insightful, the simple story-like mixture of text and image can be delightful. The reader is immersed in a text in which the narrator speaks to him

directly. Furthermore, that voice has „a face” which the reader sees monthly, yearly. In some cases, not only does the reader have a specific type of language and a picture associated to the recurring characters, but even a sound related component. The name Stan Vorbălungă implies a certain kind of tone and cadence to way the column should be read. To a certain extent, especially in this character’s case there is element of kitsch in the way the column is built. Although the character is very expressively charged, his complexity is lessened in comparison to Stan Pătitul, for example. Stan Pătitul had a story and personality shaped by the experiences he went through, which he shares with the reader. Stan Vorbălungă is more a generic character meant to illustrate a local Transylvanian stereotype.

The same thing can be said about the way they are represented in their illustrations: Stan Vorbălungă is a caricature, built around the accentuation of his round belly and large mustache. He is very short and has small hands. He is the chubby, happy bonhomme (but nothing more). On the other hand, Stan Pătitu’s illustration is not a caricature. Even though the image is not very complex, narratively, compositionally or formally speaking, there is more nuances in the character’s expressions and interactions.

The best balance between entertainment and valuable information is reached in the column „Urzică Scandalografescu”. Next to „Cocoana Gurădulce” and „Sus Marcule!”, this column’s illustration will be one of the most popular and frequently used by the magazine.

The column’s text is written in prose, but unlike Cocoana Gurădulce’s angry outbursts or Stan Pătitul’s moralizing tales, this column comes closest to a journalistic investigation. The narrative voice is still that of a simple observer who is stating impressions and opinions, the sarcastic tone and jokes are still there, thus the column is not an objective and neutral journalistic rapport. Still, large amounts of the text offer actual information about local political, religious or social events.

As his name suggests, Urzică Scandalografescu (Fig. 5) holds the important members of various political institutions, accountable for their actions. He takes jabs at them and tries to start intrigues where he feels necessary. The most interesting part of the

column is the illustration: the character's bust is upright, dignified and imposing. He is elegantly dressed and is holding a box in one hand, while reaching for his pocket with the other. Although it is not clear, the box seems to be a cigar case. The ambiguity of it makes it easy to mistake the object for a notebook and the reaching hand as a gesture of picking up a pen, accentuating the journalistic inclination of the character. If what he is about to do is smoke a cigarette while narrating, the specific oral tone of the magazine is preserved. Regardless of the actual gesture the character is making, his grace and elegance are accentuated by the way his long pointy fingers are fanned out on the black background of his coat.

Even though there is a mysterious air about the characters gestures and intention, the most bizarre part of the image is the head. Urzică Scandalagrafescu's head is not a human head, but an animal head of an uncertain species. The zoomorphic head seems to be a combination between dog, monkey and bear. There is something anthropomorphic about him as well, since his fur is sleekly combed to the back, he is wearing glasses and behind his bear ear, a writing quill is tucked. The column offers no clues with regards to the symbolic significance of this mixture, although such significance might have existed. Regardless, the image is sufficiently intriguing and funny to make the reader interested, without it being to strange or intricate to alienate him.

Next to all these images, two more caricatures are worthy of mention: Dr. Amnariu and Prorocul Bileam (Fig. 6). These two characters are special because the style in which they are illustrated is inspired by the typical French 19th century caricature. These two are represented from the side, standing up: position which accentuates the fact their head is disproportionately large, in relation to their body. The unprecedented influence of Daumier can be seen in these images. A particularly talented portraitist, the French artist managed to perfectly encompass character traits through facial expression. The humor of his images lies not only in the disproportion between head and body, but also in the subtle details the artist introduced in these large faces, as can be seen in his famous caricature of Balzac and many others. Daumier's expressive subtleties are far

superior to the illustrations in Calicul, but the intention is similar.

Prorocul Bileam's column consists of a series of short, fictional reportages - usually political - that are sometimes inspired by real events, sometimes completely made up. The humor of this column lies in the absurdity of the mentioned events, as well as the match between the temperamental predispositions of the political characters mentioned in the column and the written content. The illustration shows an old, skinny, balding man. He is elegantly dressed and has a beard, which, as was seen in the general profile of the magazine, was used to symbolize wisdom, joined, in this case, by bushy eyebrows, as well. The character has a series of objects that indicate he is an intellectual: the glasses, the writing quill behind his ear and the book he is holding. This is the only character in the magazine that represents this social category and given the fact that even the editor of the magazine tries to represent himself as a peasant, it is understandable the Prorocul Bileam rarely appears in Calicul.

Unlike him, Dr. Amnariu is a recurring presence in many issues, in all the stages of the magazine. The column associated with him: „Scânteie și cenușă din filosofia lui Dr. Amnariu”, consists of aphorisms. Dr Amnariu is a middle-aged man with a very large nose on which his glasses are positioned. His pensive attitude is captured by his heavy lids, cross expression and the gesture of scratching the tip of his nose. He being a doctor does not seem to point to a medical profession, just to a higher education. The status quality of the all-knowing thinker is mocked through the cloths he is represented in. He is wearing a cloth that resembles an ancient tunic, giving him the status of philosopher. What is funny about this tunic is that it is very short and similar to a dress. Also, instead of wearing sandals, the doctor is wearing modern shoes. Being highly educated, pensive and inappropriately serious as well as having a very big nose might indicated that, using stereotypes of the time, Calicul was trying to introduce a Jewish character.

The typical French style in which these two characters are represented seems to be tied to the correlation between their status as intellectuals and them having very large heads, disproportion which, in the case of these two, is not only stylistically motivated, but has a

symbolic load as well. The over developed intellect distorts these two characters. Showing an intellectual as being slightly ridiculous seems to be the best option for this magazine, since that social category is not the target audience and also, since the ones most frequently mocked by the magazine, politicians and clergy, were usually intellectuals, as well.

Due to the fact that the clergy and the churches they belong to are such a frequent target of the magazine's criticisms, the last analyzed illustration will be that of Popa Colac and Popa Pupăză. One is an Orthodox clergyman and the other is a Greek-Catholic one. The column is a dialog between these two. The humor is primarily based on the naivety of the Greek-Catholic priest. The two have an amusing exchange of ideas on Christianity and the problems of the people they come into contact with. The Orthodox priest, Popa Colac, is not personally mocked, only the church he belongs to. His name is an ironic reference to the strong accent placed on rituals regarding the commemoration of the dead in the Orthodox Church and especially regarding the importance of alms. Popa Colac is more straightforward and uncivil, but he is portrayed as being more intelligent and free thinking.

The two are not individually caricaturized, but their juxtaposition creates the effect of a caricature in the image as a whole. Popa Colac is very tall and large and he is leaning over the other priest who is small and feeble and has energetic gestures. The interaction between the two is similar to that between a parent and a child.

The evolution of the picture on the cover of the magazine clearly points to the significance of the pictures in this periodical (Fig. 7; Fig. 8). The change will occur in January 1880 and the new cover will remain the same during the 20th century.

Several Romanian magazines in the inter-war period changed their covers. The cover changes normally meant a moment of rebirth for the magazine and it usually involved the beginning of collaboration with a new artist. The new picture or pictures pledged a sure aesthetic improvement by means of the personal style of the artist, and the cover could have a totally new look as compared to the previous one, keeping only the title – namely the linguistic side, not the visual one.

In the case of Calicul (The Poor Wretch), the change in cover meant not a rebirth, but an evolution. The new cover was very similar to the first one, from an iconographic perspective, but the graphic style, the humor and the general presentation of the periodical are significantly improved by the opening picture.

The front cover has a central character wearing a folk outfit, long hair, a moustache and a hat. Right in the middle, he is dancing while holding a bottle. Behind him, on the plain that contains the scene, there is a shepherd playing the flute and a dancing couple. The shepherd is sitting on the ground, lying against a tree that closes the composition to the right of the picture. To the left, symmetrically, there is another tree with a crow at the top, holding a cat by its tail. In its turn the cat seems to be spied on by a snake wrapped around the tree-trunk. This visually humorous fragment, in which the beasts interact in a slightly ludicrous, unnatural manner, is completed by the wordplay in the title. The word „Calicul” (‘the poor wretch’) – in which the first syllable in Romanian, „cal-”, is also the word for ‘horse’ – is represented by a pictogram, the first section of the word including a wooden shelf that is decorated with a horse's head on its upper side. On the wooden shelf there is also an inkstand with two pens in it, one of them being topped by a hay-fork, the other one by a broom. Next to this object whose decoration at the top should be read as “horse” (“cal”), the title continues with the letters of the rest of the word (-icul).

The program of the magazine is clearly harbingered by its cover. The magazine is going to assume a laid-back attitude, suggesting that none of the subjects tackled should be taken too seriously. Although this is a partying atmosphere, the ‘poor wretch’ performance is not devoid of skill. He dancing with a bottle in hand is indicative of a good mood, while his accuracy in movements is similar to the well-honed, piercing language the magazine will display regarding such topics as politics or the church.

Another clear indication given by the cover is that the magazine is not elitist. It speaks to the peasants, representing them through the voice of the ‘poor wretch’. Although they do not have the certainty of this interpretation, the two pens: one ending in a

fork, the other in a broom, could indicate, however, that the magazine endorses both the critical attitude of men and women. This interpretation, though unlikely, could make sense considering the recurrent presence of *Cocoana Gurădulce* in the pages of *Calicul*.

The cover that replaces the 1880 one keeps a lot of the initial visual elements. This consistency is not due to the editors' disregard for the look of the cover or to the meagre funding meant for the illustrators, since other elements that were maintained are redrawn in a slightly different style and composition. The dancing „poor wretch” holds centerstage again, this time holding a glass. The background still has a shepherd playing the flute and a dancing couple. Both the characters and the landscape surrounding them are represented in more detail and in a more expressive graphical manner.

The pun in the title is no longer present, and the crow holding the cat's tail is integrated in the title, whose letters work as a physical support for the two beasts. The inkstand itself leans against the last letter, „l”. The most important change consists in the new elements added to the new cover. At the bottom of the picture there are images of sheets of paper with pictures from the inside of the magazine on them: „*Sus, Marcule!*”, *Cocona Gurădulce*, *Urzică Scandalagrafescu*, *Doctor Amnariu*. All of them are drawn from a perspective suggesting that the sheets do not lie against the ground the poor wretch is dancing on, but are slightly curved, as if rising. This is not likely to come from the artist's technical limitation, given that the lowest lying of these sheets, topped by all the others, is rendered in the correct perspective. While the slightly raised sheets of paper (which makes them more visible) revisit the most popular characters in the magazine, the bottom one reproduces quite an insignificant image, namely, the image that accompanies the „*Poor Wretch's Mail*” column. The column contains answers to those who have asked questions, made suggestions or sent humorous material to the magazine. It represents a coach drawn by four galloping horses. This picture is generic and purely ornamental, offering no extra meaning to the contents of the magazine; therefore it was not discussed above. Nevertheless, there is the interesting issue of integrating it in the context of the cover, which turns it into a ingenious

image concerning the relationship with the readers and the very publishing strategy of *Calicul*.

A slightly confusing side of it is the artist's choice of representing the characters on sheets of paper instead of integrating them in the natural scenery in which the „poor wretch” is having a good time. The framework, as well as the contents of the sheets of paper, is illustrated in the same style and technique, so it is not a matter of that kind of incompatibility. One could argue for a reticence to overcharge the scene, though it would not be such a stretch of the imagination to see all those characters partying and laughing around a table. Yet, the artist underlines the fictitious nature of the characters, which he does not wish to grant a larger scope of action, nor an independent story within which they might be imagined. „*The poor wretch*” appears as a „living” character, most likely because the owner, Ion Pop, identifies with the character and with the magazine, while the others remain just whims of *Calicul's* imagination and avatars of the readers.

The artist's choice of integrating the picture of the *Poor Wretch's Mail* on the cover – with all its visual insignificance, admitted, as well, by the fact that, on the cover, although recognizable, very little of it is seen – can be explained as a choice to underline that the content of the significant columns in the magazine is generated and inspired by the readers' experiences. That the illustrated sheets „spring” from „*The Poor Wretch's Mail*”, points to the use of the material offered by the readers to build those columns, or that the readers themselves, mostly peasants, are the inspiration. Thus, *Calicul* is more than a magazine that amuses its readers, it offers them a keen analysis of the political situation and it also represents them, reflecting their thoughts and their nature. *Calicul* does more than offer information to its readers; it is a real channel for their expression. It is obviously debatable whether *Calicul* can actually represent the thoughts and opinions of most of the Romanian peasantry, but it most certainly succeeded in creating this impression to its readers.

Thus, the magazine assumes the double function of emitter and expression channel for the readers. The receivers are not just the other readers, but also the ones who

personally contributed, capitalizing on the general satisfaction people get in feeling listened to, taken – both them and their opinions – into consideration. Given that the type of content found in *Calicul* is that of the person „complaining”, sarcastically and cleverly, but not aggressively, against institutions or targeted people, one can think of the reader recognizing himself in the magazine as in a therapeutic stance. In order to create this dynamic, which definitely contributed to the longevity of the magazine, the new cover confirms the crucial impact of these columns’ illustrations.

### Conclusions

The use of visual language in the Romanian Transylvanian humor magazine *Calicul*, which was published between 1881 and 1933, with a few short breaks, was a key factor for its longevity.

From a historical perspective, the magazine goes through two major phases: before and after the reunification of Transylvania with Romania. During the first phase, the main focuses of its content are the unjust regulations and treatments of Romanians in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. After losing its main political target, the magazine is characterized by a clear decline in content quality during the second phase.

Although the written content changes, the original illustrations that first appeared in the magazine during the 19th century, are used in the second phase as well, with some small

adjustments. The aim of this study was to show how the continuity and survival of the magazine during the second phases is mainly built around its pictures. The images in themselves – that were used over and over again to illustrate specific columns – are not artistically impressive, but they were tightly interlinked to the written content of the first phase. The images, charged with rich meaning that the public was attached to, represent the backbone for the new feeble content, pertinently reflecting changes that took place in the Romanian Transylvanian society from the end of the 19th century, to the beginning of the 20th century.

From being conscious of their inferior status in the Empire, to feeling like pawns in the hands of politician after 1918, the Romanian people of Transylvania are best represented in their political evolution by the „Sus, Marcule!” column, as their invariable disappointment and passiveness is captured by the representation of the bear, Marcu, which is forced to do things he does not want to do. On a more prideful note, the image of characters such as Stan Pățitul or Dr. Amnariu encompasses values such as wit and humorous skepticism as counterbalances for ill fate. The numerous female characters like Chiva, Vuța, Baba Hârca are a testament to the increase of misogyny during the first decades of the 20th century, but the nuance and evolution of *Cocoana Gurădulce* can be seen a worthy counterpart to Stan Pățitul: as witty and, maybe, even more complex.

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## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Fig. 1.	“Stan Pătitul” – anonymous	<i>Calicul. Humor și satiră</i>
Fig. 2.	“Cocona Gurădulce” – anonymous	<i>Calicul. Humor și satiră</i>
Fig. 3.	“Cucoana Gurădulce” – anonymous	<i>Calicul. Humor și satiră</i>
Fig. 4.	“Baba Hârca” – anonymous	<i>Calicul. Humor și satiră</i>
Fig. 5.	“Urzică Scandalografescu” – anonymous	<i>Calicul. Humor și satiră</i>
Fig. 6.	“Prorocul Bileam” – anonymous	<i>Calicul. Humor și satiră</i>
Fig. 7.	The first cover of the magazine <i>Calicul. Humor și satiră</i> – anonymous	<i>Calicul. Humor și satiră</i>
Fig. 8.	The second cover of the magazine <i>Calicul. Humor și satiră</i> – anonymous	<i>Calicul. Humor și satiră</i>

## LISTA OF ILUSTRĂȚIILOR

Fig. 1.	“Stan Pătitul” – anonim	<i>Calicul. Humor și satiră</i>
Fig. 2.	“Cocona Gurădulce” – anonim	<i>Calicul. Humor și satiră</i>
Fig. 3.	“Cucoana Gurădulce” – anonim	<i>Calicul. Humor și satiră</i>
Fig. 4.	“Baba Hârca” – anonim	<i>Calicul. Humor și satiră</i>
Fig. 5.	“Urzică Scandalografescu” – anonim	<i>Calicul. Humor și satiră</i>
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Fig. 7.	Prima copertă a revistei <i>Calicul. Humor și satiră</i> – anonim	<i>Calicul. Humor și satiră</i>
Fig. 8.	A doua copertă a revistei <i>Calicul. Humor și satiră</i> – anonim	<i>Calicul. Humor și satiră</i>

Stan Pătitul.



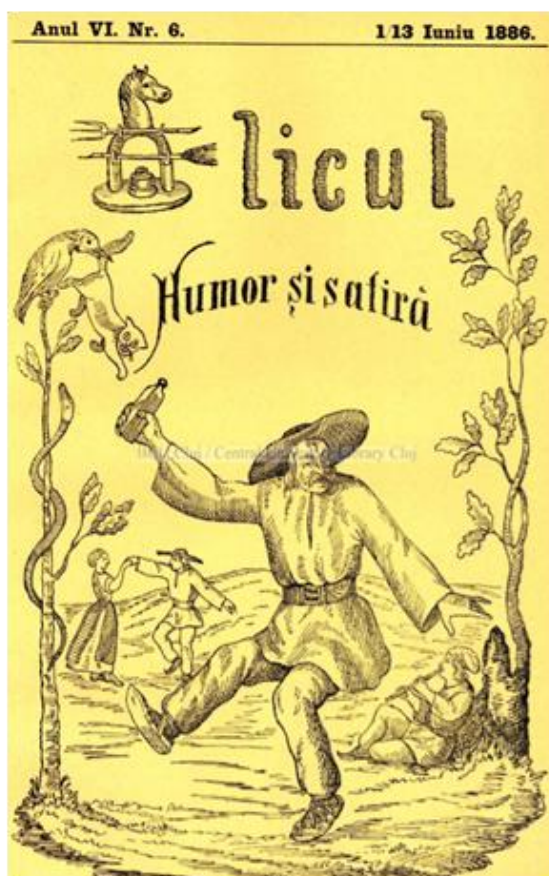
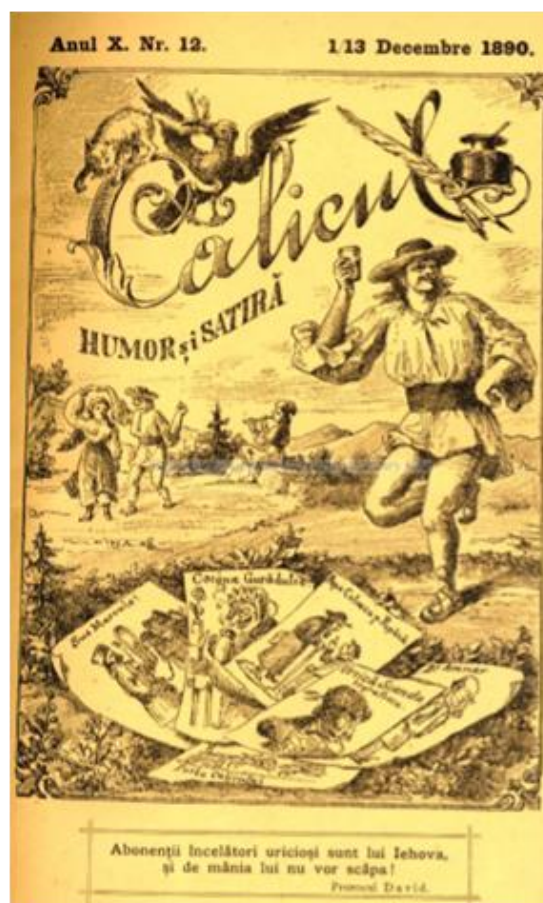
Cucoana Gurădulce.



**Cucoana Gurădulce**

Urzica Scandalografescu.





## THE CROSSING OF A MYTHICAL FRONTIER AND ITS DIFFERENT ILLUSTRATION IN TWO AMERICAN MOVIES

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**Abstract:** *Topics as war or other violent conflicts have been in the attention of filmmakers since the dawn of cinema, as they have found a rich source of inspiration in the historical past. The public's perception of the historical events rendered by cinematography was strongly influenced by the artistic work that illustrated by them, but also by the contemporary socio-political context. The Western, considered the most American of all film genre presents, in the classical period, a strong symbolic load, being part of North American mythology. As the Cold War intensified, some American filmmakers moved the background of the action of these films from the western border to the southern border of the United States, with frequent incursions into Mexico, a territory with a well-defined place in the American imagination. One of the first films of this kind, in mentioned era, is "Rio Grande" (1950), which briefly presents the punitive expedition in Mexico, executed with great accuracy by a regiment of American horsemen to neutralize a group of Apaches who constantly attack American bases in Texas. In the mid-1960s another film "Major Dundee" (1965), presents a scenario identical to the 1950 film: American soldiers illegally cross the border into Mexico to punish a band of Apaches outlaws, only in this case this crossing brings for the heroes a much more complex set of consequences.*

**Keywords:** cinema, Western, frontier, Mexico, conflict, politics, Cold War.

**Rezumat:** *Subiecte precum războiul sau alte conflicte violente s-au aflat de timpuriu în atenția cineaștilor, aceștia găsind în trecutul istoric o bogată sursă de inspirație. Percepția publicului asupra evenimentelor istorice redată de cinematografie, a fost puternic influențată de operele artistice care le ilustrau, dar și de contextul socio-politic contemporan. Western-ul, considerat genul de film american, prin excelență, prezintă, în perioada clasică, o puternică încărcătură simbolică constituindu-se ca parte a mitologiei nord-americane. Pe măsură ce Războiul Rece se acutiza unii cineaști americani au mutat fundalul desfășurării acțiunii acestor gen de filme din lumea frontierei vestice spre granița de sud a SUA, cu dese incursiuni în Mexic, teritoriu cu un loc bine definit în imaginarul american. Unul dintre primele filme de aceste fel, în epoca amintită, este „Rio Grande” care prezintă pe scurt expediția punitivă, în Mexic, executată cu mare acuratețe, a unui regiment de cavaleriști americani pentru a neutraliza un grup de apași ce ataca constant bazele americane din Texas. La mijlocul anilor '60 ai secolului trecut un alt film „Major Dundee” (1965) prezintă un scenariu identic cu filmul din 1950: militari americani trec ilegal granița în Mexic pentru a pedepsi o trupă de apași, numai că în acest caz trecerea frontierei aduce eroilor un set mult mai complex și complicat de consecințe.*

**Cuvinte cheie:** cinema, Western, frontieră, Mexic, conflict, politică, Război Rece.

### **The Frontier, a region of extraordinary force in American history and culture**

The enlargement, starting with the acquisition of independence at the end of the 18th century, of the United States of America from the 13 original colonies on the Atlantic coast, carried out simultaneously in several directions expanded greatly the Union's borders, even before the space between them was fully populated. The West's colonization

is not only a picturesque and exotic episode, but an important chapter in the history of the United States, which greatly contributes to the affirmation of their originality, leaving strong marks on national character as well. This phenomenon has been, and is, an inexhaustible source of imagination and offers the United States of America their great national epic. The USA was at the forefront of all colonizing nations, through the scale of its territories and

demographic movements, the colonization of the West is the most important chapter of the global white expansion of the 19th century. An almost empty stretch, from the perspective of the American pioneers, which offered to populate, a vast framework as a continent, in which the epic of the West was to be deployed during the 19th century. The surface was not empty, however, here there were already predecessors of the Anglo-Saxon colonists: the so-called Indians. In the US East-to-West expansion, Indian tribes are either exterminated or closed in reservations or progressively pushed to the west. In 1826, an important threshold is passed, the Indians are transferred entirely to the other side of the Mississippi River (Remond, 1999, 56-57).

Besides the fact that the two groups that met were in completely opposite ways, the contempt of the new arrivals from those already found there, and the indignation of the Indians toward their spoilers made the coexistence not a peaceful one. From time to time the latent conflict materializes in rebellious acts: An Indian tribe unexpectedly attacks several settlements, massacres the inhabitants, devastates the plantations; in reply, volunteer groups and federal troops then start punitive action. In this small war of harassment, volunteer troops are gaining military experience, their leaders are covered by glory, becoming legendary folk heroes.

In 1846, after two decades of dispute, in the North West, the United Kingdom surrendered to the USA, the Oregon. The US now has a window toward the Pacific. After in the previous decades SUA had acquired large territories known as Louisiana from France and Florida from Spain, the expansionist circles from Washington will now turn to the south. Already until then, a large number of Anglo-Saxon colonists had settled in northern Mexico, especially in Texas. These territories were difficult to control both during the Spanish rule and later in the independent Mexico. A warrior tribe such as Yaqui, for example, will oppose the Mexican authorities until the '20 of the last century.

Intertwined with the story of Texas was the devastation and depopulation of northern Mexico following decades of raids by Indian tribes as the mentioned Yaquis, Comanches, Kiowas, Apaches, Navajos and others. Because of the constant conflict these territories were sparsely populated and poorly

developed as town after town was emptied and terror reigned in the 1830s and 1840s. Mexico had in fact allowed white U.S. citizens to move to Texas in the hope that they would control Indian raids. U.S. expansionists, meanwhile, pointed to raids to further justify going to war with a Mexico that was too weak or too neglectful to police its north. The fracas with Texas and Indian raids led to war with the most important U.S. intervention in Latin America so far (McPherson, 2016, 20).

After Texas proclaimed its independence (1836) from Mexico and is then annexed by the USA in 1845, the American-Mexican war of 1846-1848, concluded by the treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo, results in Mexico losing its northern territories: California Superior, New Mexico, the northern regions of the provinces of Sonora, Coahuila and Tamaulipas, a quarter of a century after Mexico gained independence, the surface of Mexico is reduced to less than half. The treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo also stipulated that the United States was to "restrain" the "savage tribes" from remaining Mexican territory or capturing and selling Mexicans (McPherson, 2016, 23).

Six years after the war with Mexico, the annexation, according to Gadsen Purchase, in 1854, of a strip of land south of New Mexico and west of Rio Grande which would improve the communication routes between Texas and California and rectify the border in that part to the exclusive benefit of the USA, gave the federal territory its definitive outline. Although Mexican President Benito Juarez will later sell some strategic territories in the north to the US (Blair, 2014, 188). The Rio Grande River will become the natural border between the state of Texas and Mexico and a well-defined geographical reference in American mythology. Mexican-American border, made up of the current California, Arizona, New Mexico and Texas, from the US side, will be open until 1924, allowing free transit from both sides for characters commonly found later in western films such as bandits, fugitives, military, cowboys, a sort of desert no-man's land. It is only in 1924 when The Border Patrol is established that it becomes more difficult to get through (Garcia Riera, 1987, 124).

American historian Frederick Jackson Turner will be the first to look into the importance of this mobile border in American

history as a cause of American exceptionalism. He saw the border as a defining element in the process of building an American national identity, a broad safety valve for social tension, giving a tight identity opportunities for victory and enterprise. He denied the doctrine according to which US institutions originate only in European ones and demonstrated his theories in a series of essays. In *The Significance of the Frontier in American History* (1893), he claimed that features of particular American character have been shaped by the border life and by the end of this period. His essays collected in the volume of *The frontier in American History* (1920) greatly influenced those who wanted to know this phenomenon, although in the coming years the conclusions he reached were challenged by other scholars. Turner has seen in the decline of this world since the end of the 19th century the danger of the American spirit being affected by the offensive of the modern world and of industrialization to the detriment of the romantic era of the cowboys, cattle breeders and daring adventurers of great mobility in search of new pastures for their herds. The conclusions he reached by analyzing the border world and its themes related to the disappearance of this world were also shared by other contemporary personalities such as Owen Wilson, American novelist who, through his novel, *The Virginian* (1902), is considered the founder of the Western literary genre through which he helped establish the cowboy as a popular American hero and a typical literary character, but also by the future president Theodore Roosevelt.

The pacification of the Indian tribes in both the south-west of USA and northern Mexico, the end of the unrest caused by the Mexican Revolution and a new stable political regime in Mexico, the creation of The Border Patrol in the mid-20 of the 20th century, the increase in the population in that region, has made the old frontier world, once full of mobility, conflict and dynamism, as well as the characters who used to be populating it, disappear but keep their place in American mythology.

### **The Western, the border and Mexico**

Cinema, the youngest of the arts, has been energetic and has quickly gained public attention and became soon after its appearance

in the last years of the 19th century, the most popular of the arts. Historical subjects, war and conflicts have been the focus of various forms of art since the dawn of civilization, and the public's perception of these events is strongly influenced by the artistic works that illustrated them. The seventh art was no exception, with filmmakers finding in the historical past a source of inspiration from the silent movie era, when the drama, emotion, terror and tragedy of the conflict were attempted to be captured, and artists faced the challenge of condensing often confused and chaotic events in a coherent narration. As the technical means evolved, film-makers find increasingly expressive ways of transmitting, through parallelism, contemporary political and social ideas, more or less explicit, set in various historical ages, whether they respected the historical truth or not.

Before World War I, the European film industry was at its level, even beyond the US. The illustration of the 19th century Wild West frontier in primitive cinema, basically an American creation, which is almost as old as cinema, also attracts European film producers, in French, German, British films appearing in addition to cowboys also Mexicans and redskins. Thus, the taste for the most American of the film genres is generalized in Europe as well. In this way, the image of the Mexican, for example, offered to the first moviegoers all over the world is almost exclusively the one offered by this kind of films. Although the Western was not just the American's prerogative, the legitimate history of this kind is that of the American Western. When the bandit shoots a gun at the camera in *The Great Train Robbery* (1903)<sup>1</sup>, Westerns are already becoming a classic genre. Mexicans, constantly present in western films, in those years, does not exceed the pattern of some characters designed by simplicity, racism and prejudice, inherited by the *dime novel* type literary of the second half of the 19th century (Robinson, 1977, 27). To these are added a landscape of human constructions, such as monasteries and Catholic missions, flora and adobe houses, all of which indicate a often imprecise location of extended territories

<sup>1</sup> *The Great Train Robbery*; director: Edwin S. Porter; script: Scott Marble, Edwin S. Porter; actors: Gilbert M. "Broncho Billy" Anderson, A. C. Abadie, George Barnes; 1903



belonging once to Mexico, and which retain their names from those times. Over the years, the Western is turning into a historical genre, as is its literary version, which makes reference to contemporary events. Just three years after the end of a famous band (The Wild Bunch) after the last members of it flee to Mexico, director Edwin S. Porter offers the public a Western, which will be a pattern of genre, of an unusual duration, almost 10 minutes, for those years. It's about *The Great Train Robbery* (1903).

However, this primitive cinema did not intend to give a different picture of the Mexicans from the stereotypes inherited from the Texas conflict era, for example, but only sometimes to increase the melodramatic load of the product. The redskins could also be presented in the same context. Mexico and the Mexican were in the antithesis of North-American heroes and the US. Mexicans were represented, in particular, as bandits, illustrating features and moral values such as greed, cowardice, betrayal, brutality. The female characters were generally equally negative in character, in addition to excessive sensuality, but could also be innocent *senoritas* abused by their countrymen and saved by the North American hero. This image of Mexico and the Mexican people in American cinema it will turn out to be of a great endurance.

Notable exceptions appeared, however, such as the film *Rio Grande* (1920)<sup>2</sup>. Here two young people (brother and sister) are raised by a Mexican father and a North American mother. The true daughter grows in Mexico with the father and becomes revolutionary, and the adoptive son, raised in the US, becomes a Texas Ranger. At the end of the movie, the heroine crosses the river in the title, to urge the Mexican people to view their northern neighbors as friends.

Classic topics such as conflicts between white colonists and Indians or between livestock owners and farmers, standard topics such as law violations and armed conflicts remain typical of genre until the run-up to World War II. The end of the above-mentioned conflict and the beginning of the Cold War, which opposes the free world led

by the US, the USSR and the communist states that are under its influence, are making the USA increasingly involved: the era of isolationism is long gone. Wherever USA suspects there is a threat of unrest, intervenes, especially in the Americas, the area considered vital to their security. This confrontation also affects the US film industry.

As the Cold War intensified some American filmmakers moved the background of some films from the western border world to the southern US border, with deep incursions in Mexico, a territory with a well-defined place in the American imagination. This re-orientation is anticipated in the last movie of John Ford's "Cavalry Trilogy", *Rio Grande*<sup>3</sup>.

### **Rio Grande, a surgical strike south of border**

When the film *Rio Grande* came out on screen in 1950, its director, John Ford, was already a veteran of Hollywood, his film opera influencing through his technique the American Western. Respected by the cinema community and with a rich filmography appreciated by a large audience, he was the master of long frames and wide-angle style. His first films were simplistic, often carrying out the American natives in a caricatured manner. But in one of his silent films, under his real name Sean Aloysius O'Fearn we also find *Marked Men* (1919)<sup>4</sup> title. The film tells the story of three generous bandits adopting an abandoned girl in the desert. One of them, Tony Garcia, is a Mexican (Riera Garcia, 1987, 87). The film is one of those who prepared the way to another image of the Mexican in the film world.

*Rio Grande* stars a Cavalry Officer, Kirby York, who is captain in the first two trilogy movies, *Fort Apache* (1948)<sup>5</sup> and *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon* (1949)<sup>6</sup>, promoted as

<sup>2</sup> *Rio Grande*; director: Edwin Carewe, script: Madge Tyrone, Edwin Carewe; actors: Rosemary Thebe, Allan Sears, Georgie Stone; 1920

<sup>3</sup> *Rio Grande*; director: John Ford; script: James Kevin McGuinness, James Warner Bellah; actors: John Wayne, Maureen O'Hara, Ben Johnson; 1950

<sup>4</sup> *Marked Men*; director: John Ford; script: Peter B. Kyne, H. Tipton Steck; actors: Harry Carey, Winifred, J. Farrell MacDonald; 1919

<sup>5</sup> *Fort Apache*; director: John Ford; script: Frank S. Nugent, James Warner Bellah; actors: John Wayne, Henry Fonda, Shirley Temple; 1948

<sup>6</sup> *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon*; director: John Ford; script: James Warner Bellah, Frank S. Nugent,

Lieutenant colonel in this latest trilogy film. Now the main character, played by John Wayne, Ford's favorite actor, at the command of a cavalry regiment, is posted at the Texas border in order to protect the civilian population from attacks by the Apaches who retire to Mexico after every sting raid on American territory. As Lt Colonel Kirby Yorke returns to base from one of the unsuccessful pursuits of the elusive Apaches, he informs his commander that this quarry: "reached the Rio Grande and crosses into Mexico. Pursuant to orders I halted on our side of the river. The men didn't like it very much". The seemingly boundless and mobile American frontier has come to an abrupt halt, and reaching the periphery of the nation has thrust Yorke's command reluctantly into the arena of more complicated international politics.

To the colonel's problems caused by the conflict with the Apaches, the arrival of his alienated son, as one of the recruits sent to complete the regiment, is added. The family drama is also completed by the appearance, after many years of separation, of Colonel's wife, Kathleen, who arrives to bring the son of the two, Jeff, home, but he chooses to remain in the army. The movie is placed 15 years after the end of the American Civil War.

The situation becomes even more tense when the Apaches attack the fort and despite the losses suffered, they manage to release the leader that had been previously captured at the beginning of the film. After this event, York is visited by his former Civil War comrade, General Philip Sheridan, now the commander of his division. He decides that York should cross Rio Grande and follow the Apaches in Mexico to neutralize them. The proposed plan has serious implications as it violates the territory and sovereignty of another state. If York fails to annihilate the Apaches on Mexican territory, it would risk facing the Court Martial. Accepting these risks and the mission, Kirby is leading his people to the Rio Grande River, the border with Mexico, after having sent women and children from the garrison to another fort for more safety. The planned punitive expedition in Mexico turns into a rescue mission when the caravan carrying women and children to safety is

attacked by the Apaches and children are kidnapped and taken to their camp from a abandoned village beyond the Mexican border

One of the colonel's men reports that he has scouted the Apache camp in the Mexican village where the children are being held in a ruined church. As his son is one of the members of a party of three that sneaks into the church, Yorke leads his regiment across the Rio Grande. Once the children are organized, one of the girls rings the church bell to summon the soldiers. During the ensuing battle, Yorke is shot in the chest with an arrow, but the cavalrymen rescue all the children unharmed. The colonel is taken back to the fort by his victorious troops, where Kathleen meets him.

Made as relations with the Soviet Union were souring, as that same enemy attained nuclear capability, *Rio Grande* posits a dualistic worldview. The communist threat was completed at the other end of the planet when the Americans failed to establish an understanding between their ally, Chiang Kai-Shek and the Chinese Communists, and nor to prevent the latter from taking over the whole of China (1949). On 25 June 1950, the North Korean military invade South Korea: It is the first break in the balance established after the war. US President Truman responds quickly and throws the troops stationed in Japan into battle. The UN is guardianship the whole operation, other nations are sending contingents, placed under the command of General MacArthur. The situation is reminiscent of the eve of World War II; in Europe and Asia, two coalitions are again regrouping into positions.

In the movie the Apaches once more assumes his role of villains, attacking wagon trains and abducting children. These blood-thirsty insurgents were scantily disguised frontier equivalents of the communist threat. The title of the film draws the gaze of the public to the border for good reason, for the threat to American can no longer be fought exclusively within the nation boundaries. When Yorke's men make an audacious, and illegal, foray into Mexican territory to rescue the abductees, there are no repercussions. It is simply seen to be the right thing to do. This scenario presages the direction in which the Western genre would find itself moving with increasing regularity as the Cold War intensified. The act of crossing of this national

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Laurence Stallings; actors: John Wayne, Joanne Dru, John Agar; 1949



boundary line in particular gained an ever more contemporary imperative, but the moral certitude of the covert operation would simultaneously become more and more ambiguous, in the following years.

### **Major Dundee, crossing the boundaries of a traditional western and questioning the moral requirement of the intervention**

In the early 60s Sam Peckinpah was a young director in full swing, who had created a solid reputation by working in television. In 1965, he had the chance to direct a film, *Major Dundee*<sup>7</sup>, funded by a major film studio. The film, in addition to a generous budget, benefits from the presence of Charlton Heston as the film title officer, an international star, as well as other names known on the big screens as British actor Richard Harris, American actor James Coburn and Austrian-born actress Senta Berger. The Western genre suffered a decline in popularity that was not at all negligible in the early '60 of the last century. The causes of this decline in popularity relate mainly to the socio-political context in the USA of those years, dominated by social unrest. At international level, the failure of American intervention in Cuba, the beginning of the Vietnam War, the process of decolonisation in Africa, the confrontation between the right-wing and left-wing forces in Western Europe, will leave a strong impression on the US public. Therefore, the conservative values promoted by the classic western are starting to seem old-fashioned for a new generation of audiences, especially since in Italy the coordinates of the genre changed in the form of what would be called "Spaghetti Western."

The American Western was openly questioning its own mythologies too, starting from these years. This is most conspicuous in Sam Peckinpah's movie which, as direct counterpoint to *Rio Grande*, displays the steady erosion of US self-righteousness. In the movie the story is set towards the end of the American Civil War, in 1864, when a Union cavalry major, Amos Dundee, due the frequent Apaches raids decides to cross Rio Grande, into Mexico, leading a contentious troop of army regulars, Indian scouts and confederate

prisoners. The expedition is aiming to destroy the band of Apaches who have been raiding U.S. bases in Texas.

The illegal pursuit of abducted children, in Mexico, recreate John Ford's 1950 scenario to the letter, but assumptions of legitimacy and success which in the earlier film are taken for granted now become problematic. Far from the clinical strike effected under Yorke's command, Dundee and his men become inadvertently embroiled in Mexico's revolutionary turmoil. If in the John Wayne's movie, we deduce the year in which events take place by reference to the civil war between North and South, in *Major Dundee*, the historical context is well emphasized and is provided by an important period in Mexican history: The proclamation of the second Mexican Empire, the French invasion and the resistance of most Mexicans to this aggression.

The civil war between the Mexican Conservatives and Liberals (1857-1860), which erupted after the removal of the dictatorial regime of President Santa Anna, ends with the victory of the Liberals led by Benito Juarez. The radical reforms of Juarez, the first Mexican president of Indian origin, trigger the conservative reaction and the moratorium imposed on Mexico's external debt, trigger an armed intervention by France, Britain and Spain in 1861. After the withdrawal of the British-Spanish forces (1863), the emperor of France, Napoleon III, trying to create a Central-American Catholic empire under French tutelage, imposes the Austrian Archduke Maximilian von Habsburg as the Emperor of Mexico (1864-1867) (Beezley, 2011, 68-69). The reaction of the liberal forces is particularly energetic and makes the new Emperor and the French expeditionary body that provides him with protection, capable of controlling only a small part of the country. After the withdrawal of the French troops under US pressure, Emperor Maximilian is captured and shot by Juarez in 1867.

The mission takes Dundee and his men deep into Mexico, where they free the children but now find themselves being stalked by the very Apache that they were hunting, as well as having to fight off the French troops stationed here, as they quickly see the French troops treat the native Mexicans, far worse than expected, though the French were white and supposedly "civilized" like themselves.

<sup>7</sup> *Major Dundee*; director: Sam Peckinpah; script: Harry Julian Fink, Oscar Saul, Sam Peckinpah; actors: Charlton Heston, Richard Harris, Senta Berger; 1965

Liberating, from the French, a Mexican village Dundee shares food supplies with hungry locals who do not delay showing their gratitude. The Apaches prove more difficult to pin down as they engage the Americans in several bloody battles, until their leader is finally killed during an ambush. Thus the aim of the mission is concluded, but the vengeful French appear. The two cavalry forces clash at the Rio Grande. The enemy, as apaches, who are brushed aside without a second thought in *Rio Grande* catch up, as French lancers, with the American adventures at the climax of *Major Dundee*, inflicting huge losses and forcing the survivors to flee back to Texas.

This catastrophic reversal is indicative of the sea-change in American culture, which will gather pace in the late 1960'. The evacuation, in *Major Dundee*, of unambiguous righteousness motivating US adventurers abroad anticipated another wave of films that will challenge the American myths. The realization that America's moral high-ground is being steadily surrendered, meanwhile, contributes to a nihilistic trajectory within the Western genre.

#### **A conclusion - One story, two films and two different approaches to an American incursion into Mexico**

The propagandistic role of cinema and the ability of feature films to carry ideas and political messages was early on intuited by both filmmakers and various political forums. The American Western, familiar and popular among the American public, was used, by drawing parallels between the past and the present socio-political events, after the end of the World War II, to legitimize the emergence of the US as a world superpower and bastion of freedom as the rivalry with the USSR accentuated. The US has avoided the revival of the post-World War I isolationist policy, engaging after the defeat of Nazi Germany and Japan in international politics by providing economic or military aid in different parts of the world to stop the communist offensive illustrated by the other super power, the USSR. *Rio Grande* can be seen as an allegory to the war in Korea, and to the recent crossing of the Yalu River, by Chinese "volunteers", as do the Apaches in the movie.

Mexico is used as a background in time and space as well as for political comments on contemporary political events. Mexico present

in the last part of the film seems like an all-time, empty space waiting for the rescue of American heroes. The presence of Mexicans on the screen is rather low. It is worth noting a scene when in the middle of Rio Grande river, Yorke's men meet with some Mexican soldiers. Yorke suggests that they disregard the order of their government and work together to catch the renegade Apaches but cannot persuade the Mexican lieutenant. There is an allegory here to the inability of some governments, particularly in Latin America, to protect their own citizens, thus making American intervention and a gesture of help to the unprotected population. The same goes for the band of heroes led by Major Dundee, when they find a larger cause in their quest – bigger even than their own survival – as they discover something uniquely fine and honorable in being an American and in American ideals. It takes the sacrifice and deaths of many to get to that point, but the movie, gets us there, if in decidedly and grim fashion. But unlike *Rio Grande*, Peckinpah's movie ultimately proves to be a rousing disturbing examination of what it means to be an American and the meaning of American ideals.

Another notable difference between the two films is the presence of Mexico and the Mexican in the economy of the two films. If in John Ford's film the intervention in Mexico takes place only toward the end of the film in an anonymous locality near the river, without any other geographical markers but with stereotypic features that the American public accustomed to, in *Major Dundee* most of the action of the film takes place in Mexico, the heroes reaching almost to the middle of the country, with the public receiving numerous geographical landmarks. The presence of Mexican, at least discreetly, in *Rio Grande*, is significant in the 15 years later, and Sam Peckinpah even staged Mexican folklore inserts and we even see American heroes wearing Mexican traditional clothes.

The propagandistic exploitation of western film is also visible through the support provided to *Rio Grande* by the film studio that produced the film. We recalled director John Ford's role in American cinema, as did the actor who interprets the main character, had an iconic status. John Wayne was one of the most representative Hollywood figures, a performer of dominant heroes, mostly in Westerns. his name becoming synonymous with this type of

film. In 1965, Peckinpah was able to cast for the role of major Dundee, another international star, Charlton Heston, a star displaying an image supported by conservative values. Although the story is inspired by *Rio Grande* and Amos Dundee's heterogeneous troop displays traits such as heroism, altruism, patriotism, the way the director led the story and the moral dilemmas of the central hero have made him lose control over the film, which is being remounted by the studios (Prince, 1999, 6). It is only several years after the director's death that the film will appear in the way he wanted. The failure of the (indirect) US intervention in Bay of Pigs, which was supposed to lead to the overthrow of the Communist regime in Cuba, the increasing involvement of US forces in the Vietnam War, has called into question US policies still legitimate by the Monroe Doctrine or the Manifest of Destiny. A constant crossing of the border in Mexico remains a politicized act in *Rio Grande* as well as in *Major Dundee*. In Mexico more than in other Western Hemisphere territories encountered in western films will materialize the promises of assistance from US Presidents such as Harry Truman and in particular John F Kennedy.

From the shift in the symbolic functioning of the Hollywood genre in the post-war era, emerges a clear sense that the Mexican border, as a political and national boundary line, possesses a fundamentally different function to the largely mythic role of America's internal frontier. Frederik Jackson Turner himself depicted the frontier, as the defining feature of the nation's development, to be constantly mobile and ambiguous. Here, wilderness and civilization, individual and community, nature and culture, form binary, yet flexible, oppositions within and between which the folkloric mechanism of the frontier negotiate US national identity (Fisher, 2014, 123). As Lt. Colonel Yorke and Major Dundee discovers and come to realise, the Mexican border presents an alternative boundary line. The crossing of it holds an altogether different set of implications for both the protagonist and the allegorical pertinence of the Western genre. The "Mexico" of Hollywood's collective imagination was always already both a projection of North America values, and a reflection of US self-perception on the world stage.

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- Fig.8.** Confrontation between American and French in Mexico



Fig. 1.

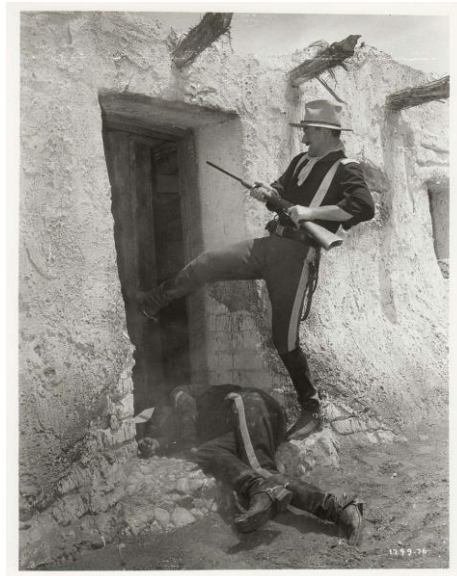


Fig. 2.



Fig. 3.



Fig.4.

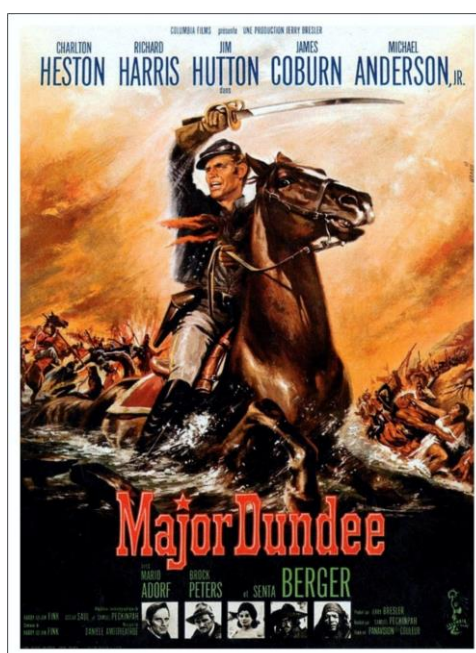


Fig. 5.



Fig. 6.





Fig. 7.



Fig. 8.

## SOCIAL CRITIQUE AND VISIONARISM IN KON SATOSHI'S ANIMATION MOVIES

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**Abstract:** *This paper observes critically Kon Satoshi's (今敏, 1963-2010) animation works as messages of hope and faith which do not lose themselves in lofty denials of historical circumstances. Both his singular animation TV series Paranoia Agent (『妄想代理人』 Mōsō Dairinin, 2004) and each of his four animation movies – Perfect Blue (『パーフェクト・ブルー』 Pāfekuto Burū (1997), Millennium Actress (『千年女優』 Sennen Joyū (2002), Tokyo Godfathers (『東京ゴッドファーザーズ』 Tōkyō Goddofāzāzu (2003), Paprika (『パプリカ』 Papurika (2006) – carries an unique weight in conveying to the world a particular vision on a specific phenomenon, accompanied by suggestions of solutions; while these suggestions are, at first sight, painfully conservative serving the anachronistic status quo, obviously in a state of crisis which is not diminished by being ignored in the name of general blindness and the “living in the moment” ideology, in a more attentive approach to Kon Satoshi's animation movies, a very subtle sense of irony emerges, which leads to a creative re-evaluation of his legacy. While Madhouse as a production and release studio for all his four movies is in itself a beneficial background, it was Kon Satoshi's own strategy of not challenging the Japanese establishment and the complacent Japanese audiences – at least, not challenging them too strongly –, while still pursuing his ideals, the golden solution to address burning issues within the Japanese society and not to burn his own bridges to that very Japanese society and its (more or less financially influential) members. This fine balance between “fan service” towards audiences, professional or amateurs, and the display of one's own creative insights, points of view, revelatory ideas, is masterfully attained and kept by Kon Satoshi, both ideologically and aesthetically.*

**Keywords:** Kon Satoshi, Japanese animation, animation movies, social critique, visionarism.

**Rezumat:** *Acest studiu științific își propune analiza sistematică a filmelor de desene animate regizate de către Kon Satoshi (今敏, 1963-2010): prin semantizarea acestora drept mesaje purtătoare de speranță și încredere, lucrarea de față accentuează realismul reputatului regizor japonez în raport cu circumstanțele istorice, și caută să descopere atât în unicul său serial de desene animate Agentul Paranoic (『妄想代理人』 Mōsō Dairinin, 2004) cât și în cele patru filme de animație – Albastru Perfect (『パーフェクト・ブルー』 Pāfekuto Burū (1997), Actrița Mileniului (『千年女優』 Sennen Joyū (2002), Nașii din Tokyo (『東京ゴッドファーザーズ』 Tōkyō Goddofāzāzu (2003), Paprika (『パプリカ』 Papurika (2006) – acea viziune individuală care îl face pe Kon Satoshi unul dintre cei mai de seamă creatori ai ultimelor decenii, la nivel mondial. Pe un fundal neașteptat de conservator ce susține un status quo anacron și lipsit de sensibilitate față de cerințele prezentului, o ironie subtilă, dar în același timp univocă reverberează dincolo de superficialitatea impusă de convențiile industriei de amuzament generalizat și pătrunde în conștiința consumatorilor-spectatori. Drumul către conștientizarea propriului rol în mișcarea de ignorare a realității poate trece prin straturile complexe ale subconștientului, însă echilibrarea cu eleganță și măiestrie a viziunilor artistice ale regizorului în raport cu așteptările comode, insașiabile, greoaie ale publicului (într-un gest adesea identificat drept “fan service”), face acest parcurs nu numai agreabil, ci și surprinzător de educațional. Adoptând strategia combinării creatoare a propriilor idealuri estetico-ideologice cu inerția mentalo-emoțională a unui segment covârșitor al populației vizate drept “consumator cultural”, pe de o parte, și expunerea cu discreție a acestei strategii în structuri dramaturgice elaborate și complexe, pe de altă parte, i-au permis lui Kon Satoshi realizarea unor capodopere indiscutabile în domeniul animației globale, cu un impact profund asupra producțiilor cinemactice viitoare.*

**Cuvinte-cheie:** Kon Satoshi, desenul animat japonez, filme de desene animate, critică socială, vizionarism.



## 1. Introduction: the tension between potential realities

In the landscape of post-Cold-War Japanese animation, Kon Satoshi occupies a very special position: to start with, his (unfortunately) very short life-span allows clear stylistic delimitations as part of greater trends while simultaneously imposing him as one of the leading names of the era. Kon Satoshi was an animator, director of animation works, screen-writer and manga artist; more importantly, probably, is the fact that he was a disciple of Ôtomo Katsuhiro 大友克洋 (born 1954), who impacted the world at large by delivering the breathtaking animation movie *Akira* 『アキラ』 *Akira* in 1988, the hallmark of Japanese animation in the Western mind and the breakthrough-moment of the Japanese animation industry in non-Japanese territories. (Further masterworks credited to Ôtomo Katsuhiro are *Rôjin Z* 『老人 Z』 from 1992, in which two fundamental problems of late-modern Japan – [re-]militarization and the over-aging of the population – are half-sarcastically, half-worriedly displayed, on the background of the blind faith in technology which, for better or for worse, can turn uncontrollable; the trilogy *Memories* 『メモリーズ』 *Memorîzu* from 1995, of which the first short-movie *Memories* 『彼女の思い出』 *Kanojo no omoide* (literally “Her Memories”) is a haunting love-story in the unknown depths of the universe on Kanno Yôko’s 菅野 よう子 [born 1963] piercing and equally memorable monumental music; *Steamboy* 『スチームボーイ』 *Suchîmubôi* from 2004, in which the steampunk backdrop serves as narrative pretext to imagine alternate realities of the world; Standish, 1998, 63.)

In accordance with his apprenticeship under Ôtomo Katsuhiro’s guidance, Kon Satoshi continued the employment of a critical view of society and its increasing alienation from whatever might have been previously perceived as normal and common-sense. This process of alienation occurs, in a first step, inside the individual, who more often than not finds him/herself caught between contradictory loyalties of social conformity and one’s own dreams, aspirations and natural inclinations. From his very first animation, *Perfect Blue* released by Madhouse in 1997, Kon Satoshi keenly observes the individual’s

transformation under external pressures, as well as the calamitous consequences of this transformation. On the basis of the same “male gaze” so viscerally hated by militant-activist feminists, in Kon Satoshi’s second animation movie *Millennium Actress* released in 2002 by Madhouse, the alternative is explored – that of not giving in to societal pressures and of preserving a child-like innocent view of the universe, of love and of oneself, which brings to light the beauty and the freedom of spirit available at large. In his last two animation movies, both released by Madhouse, Kon Satoshi, in line with Ôtomo Katsuhiro’s greater-than-life critical vision of the world, and in particular, of the Japanese world, moves towards social critique in *Tokyo Godfathers* from 2003, with its comedy-like storyline as well as its Christmas-miracle-like ending and the dancing skyscrapers on Ludwig van Beethoven’s *Ode to Joy* in a comical Big-Band/1970s-pop version during the final scrolls: altogether, an unexpectedly fresh infuse of humour and vitality in a creative space dominated by rather dark and bleak tones. Furthermore, there is a specific sense of ambivalence regarding technology, strongly visible in his last movie *Paprika* from 2006, in which the complicated plot spanning several plans of reality and involving characters carrying various identities, depending on the reality plan they find themselves at a specific moment in time, requires focused attention and the so often necessary “suspension of disbelief for the moment” in William Wordsworth’s memorable words, while simultaneously bringing the interlocked dimensions of possible realities to a gradual implosion.<sup>1</sup>

The goal of this paper is to observe and to analyse Kon Satoshi’s animation works as messages of hope and faith which do not lose themselves in lofty denials of historical

<sup>1</sup> In 2004, Kon released the 13-episode television series *Paranoia Agent* 『妄想代理人』 *Môsô Dairinin*, in which the theme of the blending of imagination and reality is revisited with particular focus on additional social themes; it involves a juvenile serial assailant named Lil’ Slugger, active in Tokyo’s Musashino area. The series first aired on Japan’s WOWOW (a private satellite broadcasting and premium satellite television station in Japan) from February 2 to May 18, 2004; it was created from an abundance of unused ideas for stories and arrangements that Kon felt were of value, but could not find a suitable place for in any of his main projects.

circumstances. Each of his animation movies carries a specific weight in delivering to the world a clear vision on a particular phenomenon, accompanied by suggestions of solutions; while these suggestions are, at first sight, painfully conservative serving the anachronistic *status quo*, obviously in a state of crisis which is not diminished by being ignored in the name of general blindness and the “living in the moment” ideology, as to be shown in the last part of the current paper, in a more attentive approach to Kon Satoshi’s animation movies, a very subtle sense of irony emerges, which leads to a creative re-evaluation of his legacy (see Allison, 2000; Condry, 2013; Lamarre, 2018). Each of his four movies are regarded, methodologically speaking, in themselves, as the result of an idiosyncratic historical environment and subject to powerful mechanisms of the market dynamics and audiences’ expectations. While Madhouse as a production and release studio is in itself a beneficial background to Kon Satoshi’s visions and artistic engagement, it was his own strategy of not challenging the Japanese establishment and the complacent Japanese audiences – at least, not challenging them too strongly – while still pursuing his ideals, the golden solution to address burning issues within the Japanese society and not to burn his own bridges to that very Japanese society and its (more or less financially influential) members.

As to be shown further below, this fine balance between “fan service” towards audiences, professional or amateurs, and the display of one’s own creative insights, points of view, revelatory ideas, is masterfully attained and kept by Kon Satoshi, both ideologically and aesthetically: thus, from an ideological perspective, he adheres to the concept of a “gradual change” in which bits of potential innovation are delivered slowly, incrementally, together with greater bits of more conservative, and therefore, more re-assuring information. In time, the bits of change will prevail, having been subliminally implemented in the consumers’ unconscious by bypassing the resistance of their conscious minds (Ivy, 1995; Kristevac, 1989, Lamarre, 2009). From an aesthetic perspective, Kon Satoshi combines, following in the footsteps of his master Ôtomo Katsuhiro, familiar glimpses of teenage idols and the inherent sexuality

attached to their imagery with striking interferences of adult symbolism, with its inevitable dark humour and gloom expressions of unmet affection, breeding conformity, repression, alienation, which in fact conceal aggression, melancholy, loneliness. The solutions are there, Kon Satoshi seems to be telling us thorough his movies – but we must find the courage, the integrity and the self-love to grasp them.

## 2. *Perfect Blue*: unravelling voyeurism, stalking fandom and the brutality of cultural consumption

When it was released in 1997, *Perfect Blue* did not seem by any means to turn into the cult-movie which it has become more than 20 years after its initial publication. A typical Japanese animated psychological thriller, Kon Satoshi’s animation movie *Perfect Blue* is based on the novel *Perfect Blue: Complete Metamorphosis* 『パーフェクト・ブルー：完全変態』 published in 1991 by Takeuchi Yoshikazu 竹内義和. (Born in 1955, Takeuchi Yoshikazu is a Japanese writer of fan guides and novels, as well as a radio co-host; the novel *Perfect Blue: Complete Metamorphosis* serves as basis for the live-action movie *Wake Up from Your Dream* ... 『PERFECT BLUE: 夢なら醒めて』, a Japanese fantasy suspense movie from 2002, directed by Satô Toshiki 佐藤としき [born 1961] (Napier, 2005, Ôtsuka, 2004). The animation movie *Perfect Blue* follows Kirigoe Mima 霧越 未麻, a teenage member of a Japanese idol group, who retires from music to pursue an acting career. Gradually, without she noticing it, she becomes a victim of stalking by an obsessive (male) fan, and simultaneously, gruesome murders begin to occur. Slowly, Mima herself starts to lose grip on reality, while at the same time turning increasingly dependent on her (female) manager Hidaka Rumi to sort out her life. Like much of Kon’s later work, such as *Paprika* (2006), *Perfect Blue* deals with the blurring of the lines between fantasy and reality in contemporary Japan – a disturbing phenomenon driving millions into mindless consumption and loss of personal freedom as well as of individual accountability. At the end, Mima manages to incapacitate Rumi in self-defence after a chase through the city despite being wounded herself, though Mima

saves Rumi from death after she steps out in front of an oncoming truck. Rumi remains permanently delusional and institutionalized. Mima has grown from her experiences and has moved on with her life with a newly found independence and confidence.

There is a subtle social critique in *Perfect Blue*, on two levels: the first level addresses the consumption society and the mindless chase for quick fixes in contemporary Japan, which does not allow for quiet solitude and self-reflection. Moreover, this more often than not calculated loss of individuality for the sake of collectivist identification clearly puts the interests of corporate media over individual safety and personal needs (Ôtsuka, 1992, 55; Satô, 1992, 121). The second level refers to the loss of identity apprehended as loss of touch with reality which gradually turns into clinical madness: more than a cinematic trope, Kon's movie is a keen observation of social mores and their alienating effect on individual choices. In this reading, Mima herself is less a victim of her ambition and rather a prey of corporate management within the faceless conglomerate of the entertainment industry (Suzuki, 2008, 39; Thomas, 2012, 57). This becomes most obvious in the rape scene, both in the shooting as part of the movie-in-movie narrative strategy and its replication in real life (in the latter part of the movie itself): it is a daunting more-real-than-real-life introspection into the cruelty of a system which denies personal decisions while charging the individuals for the consequences. Later down-the-road, Rumi's madness is a metaphor for an alienated society which has started to forget the meaning of life and its intrinsic value. Altogether, *Perfect Blue* stands out as a courageous denunciation of Japan's cultural establishment: its bottomless hypocrisy, its cynicism, its perverse sadism.

### 3. *Millennium Actress*: the joy of life at historical crossroads

When *Millennium Actress* was released by Madhouse in 2002, it appeared in stark contrast to Kon Satoshi's previous animation movie, *Perfect Blue*. Loosely characterized as a Japanese animated drama movie, it is based relatively freely on the lives of actresses Hara Setsuko 原 節子 (1920-2015, born as Aida Masae 会田 昌江) and Takamine Hideko 高峰 秀子 (1924-2010): it tells the story of two

documentary filmmakers investigating the life of a retired acting legend, Fujiwara Chiyoko 藤原 千代子 (Napier 2005, 31, Ruh 2004, 13). Throughout *Millennium Actress*, she tells them the story of her life and, like in *Perfect Blue* previously, the boundaries between reality and cinema turn increasingly blurred. Soon, it is revealed that, as a teenager, she was given a key by an artist and political dissident opposing the Sino-Japanese War (a military conflict fought primarily between the Republic of China and the Empire of Japan from July 7, 1937, to September 2, 1945): she had helped him escape from the authorities and after his departure, decided to become a film actress in the hope that he would recognize and find her. Her quest continues for decades; increasingly famous, Chiyoko acts in films ranging from *jidai-geki* (時代劇, literally "era drama" or "period drama", a genre of film, television, video-games and theater in Japan, most often set during Edo period [1603-1868]) to *kaijû* (怪獣, literally "strange beast", Japanese monster movies featuring giant monsters, such as *Godzilla*). Despite not hearing from the mysterious artist, she never loses hope, and keeps on appearing in a great variety of movies. Towards the end, although she does not receive any information about the mysterious artist's torture and death, Chiyoko abandons her quest, accepting the fact that she is no longer the girl the artist once knew. Eventually, back in the present, an earthquake strikes during the interview, upsetting Chiyoko's fragile health. On her hospital deathbed she reflects on her life, telling Tachibana that despite never seeing that artist again, she realized that the search for him was what she loved most.

In his uniquely engaging style, Kon Satoshi has created in *Millennium Actress* a powerful combination of both his memories and his imagination, striving to deliver a second interpretation of the same concept presented in *Perfect Blue*: it is the story of the feminine main character told from two different perspectives, both held by what the feminist discourse has identified as the "male gaze" (Butler, 1990, 1993; Fielding, 2008, Grajdian, 2019; Kinsella, 2000). However, this speculation about his intention of the two films as sister films explores the capacity of the "male gaze" as an empowering instance, which allows for differentiation and

individualization: while in *Perfect Blue*, the gaze is depicted as a negative, patriarchal one, in *Millennium Actress*, it is projected in a more positive light, allowing Chiyoko to retain her identity untainted. Therefore, the female identity moves away from being solely, plainly a reproduction of male desires and projections and turns, gradually, into a symbol of self-fashioning and self-stylization (see Baudrillard, 1983; Castells, 1997; Giddens, 2020). It is the “male gaze” which creates the emotional-mental space for unfolding of the female entity’s freedom of expression and cognitive recognition.

The film presents various references to Japanese history, including Edo period and the invasion and creation of Manchukuo; one might say that it invests the Japanese past with nostalgic undertones, in a sequence of events displayed retrospectively, in a rather lighthearted manner, instead of embedding it in real time (Grajadian, 2008, 55; see Köhn, 2005). In adopting this approach, Kon reconstructs history as a personal narrative interwoven within the flow of individual experiences and their subsequent processing. The perception of history and its representation on-screen serve as powerful reminders that social actors play a fundamental role in constructing and re-living history, and carry a vital responsibility both in telling it to future generations and in remembering it in an as accurate as possible version.

#### **4. Tokyo Godfathers: micro-worlds of transgression**

*Tokyo Godfathers*, released in 2003, is an intermediate animation work: an animated comedy movie, it is based on Peter B. Kyne’s (1880-1957) best-selling novel *The Three Godfathers* (1913, which happened to be also his first published novel). The original novel *The Three Godfathers* described the adventures of a trio of bank robbers who become godfathers to a new-born child. Throughout the decades, it turned into the inspiration for several film adaptations carrying various titles: *Three Godfathers*, a 1916 film with Harry Carey (1878-1947), which was re-made in 1919 as *Marked Men*, also starring Harry Carey, considered a lost film; *Action* (1921), considered lost; *Three Godfathers*, a 1936 film featuring Chester Morris (1901-1970); *Hell’s Heroes* (1930)

starring Charles Bickford (1891-1967); 3 *Godfathers*, a 1948 film with John Wayne (1907-1979).

Kon Satoshi’s animated version of *The Three Godfathers* depicts three homeless people – a middle-aged alcoholic man named Gin, a former drag queen named Hana, and an underage runaway girl named Miyuki – who find an abandoned new born on Christmas Eve while searching through garbage. Deposited with the unnamed baby is a note asking the finder to take good care of her and a bag containing clues to the parents’ identity. The trio sets out to find the baby’s parents. Hana decides the baby’s name as Kiyoko (清子), based on the Japanese translation of *Silent Night*: “Kiyoko” literally means “pure child” and her name is supposed to allude to her miraculous, accidental rescue on Christmas Eve. The plot develops with the group encountering outside a cemetery a high-ranking yakuza trapped under his car. The man happens to know the owner of the club where Kiyoko’s mother used to work; his daughter is getting married to the club owner that day. At the wedding, the groom tells them that the baby’s mother is a former bar girl named Sachiko. He gives them Sachiko’s address, but the party is interrupted when a maid, revealed to be a Latin-American hitman in disguise, attempts to shoot the bride’s father. The hitman kidnaps Miyuki and the baby and takes them back to his home. There, Miyuki befriends the hitman’s wife and shows her some pictures of her family. The story unfolds rapidly towards a Dickensian denouement with the characters reunited with their loved ones.

*Tokyo Godfathers* is a disturbing part of a specific trend in animation and comics which depicts families in an increasingly dark fashion, showcasing the problems with traditional families, while highlighting characters’ attempts to construct “pseudo-families” out of an increasingly fragmented and isolating modern Japanese society (see Luhmann, 1996; Morris-Suzuki, 1998; Sugimoto, 2013). Despite the apparent criticisms of the traditional family throughout the movie, however, it ends with a more conservative feeling as everyone returns to their original families. Unknowingly, the three homeless vagabonds form an ad-hoc “pseudo-family” to protect themselves from the outside world and to overcome their personal hardships, hence

practically reinforcing “pseudo-family” as a perfectly valid type of alternative family: the conservative happy-ending is, in fact, a warning, as it implies a heavy load of “magical realism” (Storey, 1996; Takahata; 2013; Wells, 1998). In this train of thoughts, *Tokyo Godfathers* puts a strong emphasis on the theme of “synchronicities” or “meaningful coincidences”: the small yet significant ties that each of us have with supposed strangers, embedded within a heartfelt story of miracles, family, love, forgiveness and hope.

### 5. *Paprika*: when the unconscious takes over the conscious

Based on the eponymous novel by Tsutsui Yasutaka 筒井 康隆 (born 1934) from 1993, *Paprika* was released in 2006. It falls into the category of Japanese science-fiction psychological thriller animation movie. It is about a scientist psychologist who uses a device that permits therapists to help patients heal by entering their dreams: in the near future, a revolutionary new psychotherapy treatment called “dream therapy” has been invented. A device called the “DC Mini” allows the user to view people’s dreams. The head of the team working on this treatment, Dr Chiba Atsuko (voiced by the unique Hayashibara Megumi 林原 めぐみ, born 1967), begins employing the machine illegally to help psychiatric patients outside of the research facility, under her alter-ego “Paprika”, a sentient persona she assumes in the dream world. The plot evolves as “Paprika” counsels detective Konakawa Toshimi, who is plagued by a recurring dream. Its incompleteness is a great source of anxiety for him. She gives Konakawa a card with the name of a website on it. As this type of counseling is not legally approved, Chiba, her associates and Konakawa must be cautious that word does not leak out regarding the DC Mini and the existence of Paprika. Chiba’s closest allies are Dr Shima Toratarô, the chief of the department, and Dr Tokita Kôzaku, an obese, genius man-child and inventor of the DC Mini. Until the climactic, almost dystopian ending, the story unfolds in a Freudian manner, disclosing deeply seated disturbances in the human prototypes, intrinsically immersed in a world in which dreams and reality merge.

*Paprika* is a sophisticated work of imagination, a challenging, unnerving,

uncanny construction in the ways it captures the nature of dreams; not a movie meant to be enjoyed or understood so much as simply experienced – or maybe dreamed, as Kon maintains a charming faith in cinema’s ability to seduce fearless new (theatre) audiences, even one viewer at a time (see Žižek, 1989). It compels a sense of unease about the rapidly changing relationship between our physical selves and our machines, as Kon shows the dark side of the imaginative world in *Paprika* that he himself has perceptively brightened. Eventually, *Paprika* proves once again that the great science-fiction does not need to rely on giant robots and alien worlds, but simply has to delve into the depths of the human psyche.

A live-action adaptation of *Paprika*, to be directed by Wolfgang Petersen, was in development in 2010. However, since the release of *Inception* in 2010, the Christopher Nolan film which came out that same year and had a similar premise, there has not been any significant update to whether Petersen’s adaptation will be produced (Hendry, 2000; McQuail, 2015). This launched the so-called “*Inception* controversy”: several critics and scholars have noted many striking similarities between *Paprika* and *Inception*, including similar plot, scenes and characters, arguing that *Inception* was influenced, and possibly even inspired, by *Paprika*. The similarities are too numerous to be plain coincidences, from the focus on dream-sharing technology to Ariadne’s wardrobe and to the numerous references to Greek mythology, the physics-defying hallways, the significant dream-elevators, and the choice of having a Japanese businessman (Saitô) be the one to hire Cobb and the dream-team, among other things. Certainly, there are several scenes which undeniably link the two works: in the climactic dream sequence, when Paprika is trying to escape the chairman and his helper, she defies gravity by running across the wall instead of the floor; the ever-stretching long hallway where Toshimi witnesses a murder; the visual effect of the dream world shattering like glass; the strikingly similar scenes where Paprika and Ariadne both enter an elevator with each floor representing another layer of the host’s subconscious.

More generally speaking, both *Paprika* and *Inception* explore similar themes of computer technology enabling people to enter

the realm of the subconscious and to experience time on multiple levels; the similarities are comparable to those which exist between *Ghost in the Shell* and *The Matrix* (see Condry, 2013; Lamarre, 2018). Kon confronts his tormented audiences with visual poetry, not just a remix of tropes and familiar segments. *Paprika* goes more deeply and asks uncomfortable questions even – or more particularly – when no answers are available (yet), while *Inception* simply acknowledges depth and darkness but, as a screen experience, sticks with glib pyrotechnics. Kon Satoshi's last movie, *Paprika* reminds us of the fragility of reality and its indelible connection with our inner world, our dreams and our desires – and most importantly, reminds us of the reasons which turn those dreams and desires beneficial and necessary, while pushing us to observe them, to listen to them and to learn from them. In doing so, we would certainly become happier – and freer.

## 6. Conclusion: the red thin line between entertainment and fear

In outlining and constructing his animated worlds, Kon Satoshi starts from a unique premise: the increasingly blurred boundaries between the outer reality and the inner reality, dialectically involving both characters and the development of the plot structure. It is a bold approach in the historical context of a gradual dissolution of the “grand narratives” (religion, divine lineage, community and [extended] family) of the past, which had fulfilled two major functions in delivering significance and cohesion to the existence of the human being: firstly, they had been serving as orientation goal-posts on the more often than not complicated journey of finding – and understanding – one's role among the others; secondly, they had been setting clear limitations between “now” and “then”, between “us” and “them”, between “here” and “there”. In more abstract words, the “grand narratives” of the historical past transcending geography, had been keeping alive the unconscious, very powerful, barriers which delimited self from other, without explanations or possible interrogations (Bauman, 2002; Giddens, 1990; McLuhan, 1964; Riesman 1950). Once the boundaries between the well-defined and precisely

delineated “reality” became blurred, even in the very incipient process of attempting to look beyond the inexorability of time – a process which might have been set into motion by Albert Einstein's formulation of the theory of relativity –, the indissoluble scaffold of binary oppositions, to which the dynamics of outer/inner reality belongs, started to crumble apart. Kon Satoshi begins, with all the inevitable hesitations this type of endeavours entails, to slowly, but decidedly draw attention to the phenomenon of navigating between possible realities, and even to mix them up, creatively (Bauman, 1991; Castells, 1996; Eagleton, 2003). His four animation movies follow this pattern of questioning, enlarging, dynamizing the interaction of parallel realities, while interlocking them in playful combinations.

In *Perfect Blue*, Kon Satoshi explores by means of an unusual animation style the Japanese entertainment industry with its highly corporative structure prone to corruption and repetitiveness of proven marketing strategies instead of promoting authenticity, creativity and authentic values; simultaneously, it unravels the complex networks of power, sexuality and repressed desires as well as expectations in mass-media. Rather than being a victim of the system, Mima is part of it, or at least, enables its functioning through her passivity and eagerness to make a name for herself outside of the teenage idol image (Eagleton 2003, Fielding 2008). Her alter-ego, Rumi, on the other hand, understands way too well the mechanisms of the system and loses her sanity in the process of attempting to rescue Mima's alleged innocence from the delusions of consumerism and paid-for success. Her failure – and Mima's supposed recovery – is an ironic acknowledgment of the supremacy of the “system” over individual efforts at challenging it; moreover, in the very irony of the movie's finale, the seeds of hope – that the “system” itself might not be as irrefutably corrupt, that there is still hope and faith, that Rumi's madness might have served, after all, to the noble goal of awakening Mima from her self-induced complacency for an apparent reward – are planted (Eagleton, 1990, Lamarre, 2009). Kon's mastery in creating this swift feeling of hope despite the general sordid atmosphere of the movie is unique in Japanese animation, and affectionately reminisces of

Takahata Isao's warm humanism in his construction of characters as well as in their embedding into uncomfortable life situations. Like Takahata, Kon finds precisely in this dirty hopelessness of life the very signs of resurgence and revitalization, as if from late-modern exhaustion a fresh paradigm of life, including unconditional joy, gratitude and love, might emerge. *Perfect Blue* is the overture to such a worldview, as the subsequent animation movies directed by Kon Satoshi prove.

*Millennium Actress*, on the other hand, delivers positive aspects of the "male gaze": a similar main character – an actress, this time at the end of her life and more than thirty years after having mysteriously ended her career – is brought into the limelight during interviews conducted by two male reporters. Chiyoko's identity slowly emerges from her memories of the past, both as a citizen living in Japan's tumultuous twentieth century and as an actress crisscrossing the boundaries of time and space in her movies while transcending the flow of history in her personal quest for a man she had encountered as a teenager. The "male gaze" is an empowering mechanism, as it opens unlimited pathways crafting the female identity as a permanent journey of initiation, in which the self-imposed rites of passage serve not so much as means towards self-discovery and rather as access-points to a powerful process of self-creation (Ôtsuka, 2004; Satô, 1992). Chiyoko's journey becomes the journey of every female citizen willing to put in the effort to disclose her existential potential, in a rainbow-like palette of colourful opportunities and life-changing options. It takes courage and it takes integrity to face the multitude of chances with which women are confronted nowadays: Kon's movie *Millennium Actress* is an impactful reminder that empowerment and liberation come with a price-tag; unless women are willing to pay that price-tag, their emancipation remains solely a "guerrilla war" carried out in academic discourses and "safe spaces" on college campuses (Butler, 1993; Standish, 1998). Last, but not least, *Millennium Actress* as an artistic product carries refreshing messages of a world based on hope and faith, in which gender boundaries blur as a result of more freedom and individual responsibility, effacing old models of rules and regulations constricting individuals' access to

self-fulfilment and self-stylization. Chiyoko becomes, hence, the arch-model of the first truly emancipated woman who does her best to find – or to be found by – the man she craves for.

Social critique turns strong in *Tokyo Godfathers*, Kon Satoshi's third animation movie: homelessness, alcoholism, runaway underage children, domestic violence, mental illness as well as old-age poverty and gender confusion are the main issues addressed in this flamboyant masterpiece, with its impactful humour and challenging animation style. Heavy loads of "magical realism" are employed to soften the impact of the message of the movie, delivered with the acuity of a Christmas present under the colourful tree: the final scenes, in which a strong wind-gust saves Hana from his certainly fatal fall and thus leads to a (necessary) happy-end to this intense movie, attempt a lightening of the depressing atmosphere despite the cheeky humor (Eagleton, 2003; Ruh, 2004). Moreover, the conventional solutions displayed by Kon – the return of the mentally disturbed Sachiko to her estranged husband and her husband's willingness to take care of her as well as the reunification of Gin's and Miyuki's disparaged families – are not only disturbing in their alleged lightheartedness, but also implausible. Up to a point, Kon's dramaturgic strategy is understandable – Takahata Isao's *Grave of the Fireflies* from 1988 is a powerful example full of lessons no sane director, regardless of the genre, wants to repeat (Takahata, 2013; Suzuki, 2018). However, it is almost a duty not only to address social issues in their debilitating rawness, but also to face the irrefutability of the conventional solutions, their damaging effect resulting from the delusion of applying the same old approaches to pressing problems and hoping for new, refreshing results. It simply does not work that way. Somehow, in *Tokyo Godfathers*, Kon Satoshi gives in to that creative tendency many authors, directors, producers of entertainment works display, which compels them to either ignore the unsolvable in the world they are born in and are at some point confronted with, or to do their best to transcend their misery. Any sort of compromise between these two creative strategies leads to inner cognitive dissonance as well as alienation from audiences – and ultimately, financial disgrace at the box-office.

In his last animation movie, Kon Satoshi solidifies his legacy: *Paprika* is an intensive immersion into the unconscious which dominates us, the entirety of our lives and of our world(s). In the movie, in its complex story-line involving several plans and multi-layered characters which challenge themselves in their dramatic evolution, Kon asks difficult questions about quotidian choices without necessarily waiting for answers – mainly because the answers might not be available yet. While it served as a source of inspiration for the Hollywood blockbuster *Inception* a few years later, *Paprika* itself is what might be labelled a “hermetic work of art” as it delivers more questions and addresses more issues than could be possibly answered or dealt with constructively in such a short time-span as the duration of a movie (McLuhan, 1964; Suzuki, 2008). The exploration of the world of dreams is a tricky endeavour as it implies putting aside prefabricated ideas about our own selves – and the characters in this animation movie find this out themselves in the most dramatic, and sometimes even lethal, ways. *Paprika* is also a warning: delving too abruptly into the uncharted depths of our own unconscious is dangerous, not so much due to the external challenges which might lurk down there – the educational biases, the socio-cultural layers of conditioning, the family traumas – but rather due to our own repressed desires and dreams of grandiosity (see Lamarre, 2018; Orbaugh, 2006). One of the possible solutions to this chaos threatening to efface the world is to face the complicated array which is that big unknown dark – the unconscious – and to deal with it in the same manner one deals with a frightened little child: with compassion and care, with unconditional love and acceptance, with unlimited openness about what the unveiling of its abysmal dimensions might reveal. Unlike *Tokyo Godfathers*, in which eventually Kon returns to the conventionality of socially sanctioned, approved solutions (as detrimental as they might be in the immediate reality), in *Paprika*, Kon dares to speak up the unspeakable, to allow for divergent opinions, to puzzle over the impossible. In this concern, *Paprika* is a masterwork of creative honesty and artistic vulnerability.

At the end of his journey, as an animation director and as a human being on this planet,

Kon Satoshi could be regarded as the type of creator who had delved deeply into the unknown realms of life, had observed and mocked them, and then delivered his own interpretation of those phenomena. While he never “dares” radical solutions as potential answers to the crises depicted in his works. Incidentally, no Japanese artist who has reached some sort of public acknowledgment does this, not even Miyazaki Hayao (born 1942) or the late Takahata Isao (1935-2018), for reasons which move far beyond the purpose of this paper. One notable exception is Tezuka Osamu (1928-1989), but the disastrous trajectory of his career within the Japanese corporate entertainment industry stays as a powerful warning of what happens when the rules of the establishment are being questioned too openly (Eagleton, 2003; Takahata, 2013). However, the simple act of addressing them in an artistic form and, thus, of giving a voice to those social acteurs plagued by the invisibility of general (self-imposed) blindness, inter-generational trauma and economic-political neglect, is a gesture of courage under the sign of moral integrity. By bringing urgent socio-cultural issues into the forefront of public perception, Kon Satoshi “dares” to transgress the *status quo* and to transcend the common sense of what is and is not allowed: his characters are full-fledged grown-ups (not immaculate teenagers as in most Japanese animation works) who find themselves in compelling situations, to which disturbingly conservative solutions seem to impose themselves, naturally (Giddens, 2020; Nye, 2004). Eventually, precisely in the interplay of the palpable reality and of the potential realities co-existing in the virtual realm of parallel space-times (a topic New-Age supporters greatly welcome and debate), a subtle irony emerges, elegantly by-passing the censorship of the Japanese popular culture establishment and the all-too-comfortable resistance of the audiences in front of any sort of fresh existential paradigms. This subtle irony is what undermines any potential reproach of conservatism in the works of Kon Satoshi, and places him among the impactful names of the world cultural heritage.



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# **“TO LOVE OR NOT TO LOVE”: THE ROMEO AND JULIET FRANCHISE AND ITS GLOBAL RAMIFICATIONS**

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**Abstract:** *This paper approaches phenomenologically the Romeo and Juliet thematic complex and observes it in cross-cultural perspective: while William Shakespeare’s original play, published in 1597, has been adapted countless times for a great variety of genres, predominantly in Western contexts, the goal of the forthcoming analysis is to critically underpin the transformation of the Romeo and Juliet significance beyond Western set-ups, e.g., in Takarazuka Revue’s eponymous performances since 2010. Based on Gérard Presgurvic’s highly successful Roméo et Juliette: de la Haine à l’Amour (2001), Takarazuka Revue’s versions display paradoxical concatenations, both textually and contextually, underscoring conservative messages of masculinity and nation on the background of meta-narrative, subliminal associations of power, enlightenment and love.*

**Keywords:** *William Shakespeare, postmodern love, annihilation of identity, joy, self-awareness, phenomenology*

**Rezumat:** *În acest studiu, complexul tematic “Romeo și Julieta” este analizat prin prismă fenomenologică și cu implicații interculturale: este bine știut faptul că piesa originală a lui William Shakespeare, publicată în anul 1597, a fost adaptată de-a lungul secolelor de nenumărate ori pentru o varietate uriașă de categorii artistice, însă lucrarea de față își propune ilustrarea critică a transformării semnificației inițiale a tragediei lui Shakespeare prin transcenderea reprezentărilor din Vest și contextualizarea spectacolelor eponime puse în scenă în mod repetat în afara spațiului cultural vestic de către reputata instituție teatrală japoneză Takarazuka Revue începând cu anul 2010. Pornind de la spectacolul muzical cu un succes fulminant și constant al lui Gérard Presgurvic Roméo et Juliette: de la Haine à l’Amour (2001), versiunile ulterioare prezentate de către Takarazuka Revue se disting prin paradoxuri semantice profunde, atât din punctul de vedere al substratului literar, cât și din cel al arhitecturii dramaturgice, scoțând în evidență mesaje conservatoare referitoare la concepte precum “masculinitate” și “națiune” configurate pe fundalul unor structuri ideologice și de reprezentare scenică asociate subliminal noțiunilor seducătoare de putere, iluminare și iubire.*

**Cuvinte-cheie:** *William Shakespeare, iubire postmodernă, anihilarea identității, bucurie, conștiință de sine, fenomenologie*

## **1. Introduction: a tragic love-story in the era of globalization**

*Romeo and Juliet* is, arguably, William Shakespeare’s most famous play as well as one of the most staged, interpreted and promoted themes of the world literature: since William Shakespeare’s original play was published in quarto edition in 1597, it has been adapted innumerable times for theatrical representation, live-action cinema, musical, ballet, opera venues and has served as ideatic background for products of visual arts, songs,

poems, novels, etc. Throughout the centuries, *Romeo and Juliet*, as a dramatic topos, has known diverse variations depending on medium, targeted audiences, historical context; the central narrative line of a tragic romance between two young star-crossed lovers remained unchanged, though, so that the main characters gradually turned into human archetypes and their story into a symbol of “ideal love” (despite being a doomed love-story).

While for most part of its history, the *Romeo and Juliet* theme has been openly available mainly to Western audiences and readerships, the increasingly fast-moving globalization of recent decades has allowed its democratizing expansion beyond the geographical limitations of the West. This paper observes critically the transformation of the *Romeo and Juliet* significance beyond Western adaptation into its Japanese contextualization. Taking as an example Takarazuka Revue's eponymous performances (2010 star troupe, 2011 snow troupe, 2012 moon troupe, 2013 star troupe, 2021 star troupe) based on Gérard Presgurvic's *Roméo et Juliette: de la Haine à l'Amour*, world-premiered on 19 January 2001 at Paris' Palais des Congrès, this paper observes the paradoxical ramifications of the original French musical, both textually and contextually. While Presgurvic's production has had an immense success worldwide, with the inherent dramaturgical modifications, the current analysis showcases the conservative atmosphere of Takarazuka Revue's version, backed by the meta-narrative, subliminal association of star troupe with strong, charismatic *otokoyaku* (男役, literally: "man-role", female impersonators of male roles in Takarazuka Revue) and with overwhelmingly powerful messages to be conveyed to (predominantly) female (predominantly) Japanese audiences. In doing so, Takarazuka Revue's (predominantly male) administrators distance themselves from the prevailing interpretation of *Romeo and Juliet* as a tragic love-story and re-imagine it as a site of female identity projection and fulfilment, transcending the conceptualization of "love" as yearning and desire into a vision of "love" as responsibility, self-awareness and existential coolness – lavishly encapsulated in the synthetic character of Romeo.

In a phenomenological approach to *Romeo and Juliet*'s thematic complex, the current paper proceeds in three steps: firstly, the brief historical overview of *Romeo and Juliet*'s processing and adaption throughout the centuries, with a sharp focus on those productions which facilitated its perpetuation, particularly in recent decades – the sensitive integration into the spirit of the audiences at the moment of specific releases (e.g., Franco Zeffirelli's movie from 1968, Baz Luhrman's movie from 1996, Presgurvic's musical play

from 2001) allowed for the rejuvenation of the star-crossed love theme. Secondly, the history of *Romeo and Juliet*'s staging by Takarazuka Revue is presented with detailed explanation and analysis of its staging and repeated re-staging of Presgurvic's version since 2010, in the third phase. In the *Conclusion*, several explanations for the success of Presgurvic's version, both in Japan and worldwide, are delivered, with potential pathways for the future.

Methodologically, we take into account the multiple layers of the Takarazuka Revue's administration and self-orchestration such as performance politics, the economic supervision of brand-related consumption, the socio-cultural management of actresses and fandom (fans and fan communities) as well as the performances themselves and their meta-narrative concatenations. The sources consist of extensive archive research of Japanese documents and interviews with Japanese producers as well as with Japanese and Western consumers.

Takarazuka Revue (宝塚歌劇 *Takarazuka Kageki*) is a highly popular musical all-female theater in Japan – a dynamic institution with a strictly stratified corporative structure. Founded by Kobayashi Ichizō (小林一三, 1873-1957),<sup>1</sup> one of the most important entrepreneurs in prewar Japan, in 1914, as part of an economic-political project to develop the North-Western area of Osaka within the rapidly emerging industrialized society, Takarazuka Revue (Company) developed rapidly from the initial small organization of 16 teenage girls who had their first performance at a theatre converted from an indoor swimming pool in a building attached to the main hot-spring resort, into an increasingly successful enterprise carrying various denominations throughout the decades. Eventually, it became in 1940 Takarazuka Revue Company (宝塚歌劇団 *Takarazuka Kagekidan*) – the name under which it is currently registered (Tsuganesawa, 1991, 22-36; Watanabe, 1999, 29-33)<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> In this paper, personal names are employed according to the conventions of the country of origin: first name followed by family name (Western system) and family name followed by first name (Japanese system).

<sup>2</sup> Since 1919, the exclusive, very competitive two-years Takarazuka Music School (宝塚音楽学校 *Takarazuka Ongaku Gakkō*) delivers yearly 40 (female) graduates

In tandem with *otokoyaku*'s representation of masculinity on Takarazuka Revue's stage and public advertisement, *musumeyaku* 娘役 (literally: "daughter-role" with the subliminal image of "maiden") refers to female impersonators of female roles in Takarazuka Revue. Both *otokoyaku* and *musumeyaku* are subsumed to the category of "actress", while their denomination within the Takarazuka Revue Company and its related contexts is *seito* (生徒 pupil) or *takarasienne* (タカラシエンヌ), introduced by the director Shirai Tetsuzô (白井鐵造, 1900-1983), who compared the cute Takarazuka Revue actresses with the beautiful Parisiennes at Moulin Rouge. Within the extremely strict hierarchy of Takarazuka Revue's educational and performance system, the concept "golden combination" refers to the *otokoyaku-musumeyaku* pair (in Takarazuka Revue jargon: "topstar[s]") at the top of every of the five actively performing ensembles. It is important to mention that, while the acting staff is exclusively female, the administrative staff is to a great extent male, and was exclusively male from Takarazuka Revue's inception until 1999. As to be shown further below, this clear-cut separation of functions has been playing a fundamental role in Takarazuka Revue's evolution and its preoccupation with staging *Romeo and Juliet* with a strong emphasis on Romeo in recent years.

## 2. William Shakespeare's play and legacy

While *Romeo and Juliet*'s first world-premiere as a play is unknown, since its first publication in quarto in 1597, it has been staged and re-staged countless times, mostly in Western countries and for Western audiences: with increasing globalization and popularization of Western cultural assets beyond the geographical limitations of Europe and USA since the end of WWII, *Romeo and Juliet* has been gradually presented on non-Western stages and for non-Western audiences. Therefore, it has turned into a focal source of inspiration for romantic love even in those areas which have been traditionally

rejecting romantic love, such as Arabian, African or Asian sociocultural spheres.

*Romeo and Juliet*'s intricate narrative development, centering around a doomed love-story and implying, in the broader scheme of things, essential elements of humanity such as the duality of light and darkness and the tremendous power of fate in human life, allows the characters' construction and evolution within the restrictive boundaries of the dramatic play. It offers profound insights into the mechanisms of emotionality and rationality which, in spite of being rebuked by the forthcoming Enlightenment movement, would still find their conflicting way into modernity with its claims of almighty reason. Of particular interest seem the condensation of time and the conscious exclusion of anything which does not sustain the illusion of singularity, eternity and you-and-me referentiality in the plot-concatenation, so that death, eventually, does not appear as damnation, but as the only way to keep alive this illusion.

Throughout the centuries, besides being a play to be read individually or in group in classes on classical literature or to be represented on-stage, *Romeo and Juliet* has been adapted for a great variety of other genres, such as visual arts of all kinds, ballet (of which Sergei Prokofiev's version from 1938 is probably the best-known) and opera (with more than 24 compositions being arguably the most prolific category after the original theatrical type). Moreover, it expanded in other areas of symphonic display during the nineteenth century, in which it served as lyrical pretext for the expression of what might be labelled "grand emotions" in tune with the Romantic movement and the discovery of nationally backed interpretation of legends and individualism, ranging from despair in front of the inexorability of fate and the damned character of love as the entity per se which could save the human being if only allowed to unfold freely.

During the twentieth and into the twenty-first century, the narrative idea of *Romeo and Juliet* conquered the domains of jazz and popular music as well as cinema and musical, with *West Side Story*, world-premiered on Broadway in 1957 and in the West End in 1958 being its most famous musical theatre adaptation. With music by Leonard Bernstein (1918-1990) and lyrics by Stephen Sondheim

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who join the team of ca. 350 actresses performing on Takarazuka Revue's stage. Similarly to Takarazuka Revue (Company), Takarazuka Music School changed its official denomination several times since its inception. The current name dates back to 1946.

(born 1930), *West Side Story* moved in 1961 on-screen as an equally popular film: its major contribution to the history of the *Romeo and Juliet* topos is that it updated the setting of fourteenth-century Verona to mid-20<sup>th</sup>-century New York City and the warring families to ethnic gangs.

Among the myriad of *Romeo and Juliet*'s cinema adaptations, Franco Zeffirelli's (1923-2019) version from 1968 is possibly the most successful release on the topic, due mostly to the employment of young, vibrant actors close to the age of the characters themselves (Leonard Whiting as Romeo and Olivia Hussey as Juliet, who were 17 respectively 16 years old at the time), to the careful set-up visible both in the filming locations chosen from among scenic, symbolic places of fourteenth-century Renaissance Italy and in the costumes and the overall construction of the characters. More importantly, though, it was subtly anchored in the reality of the late 1960s, with its hippie-movement of free love and open sexuality. Robustly supported by Nino Rota's (1911-1979) unforgettable – and unbeatable – soundtrack, Zeffirelli's *Romeo and Juliet* played with the youthful vulnerability of the leading actors, with which many of the teenagers in audiences identified: they could, therefore, find a reflection of their own insecurities, overwhelming emotions of inadequacy, confusion, powerlessness as well as elation, exuberance and exhilaration in front of the impulse to break the rules. Even more, the open display of sexuality and of naked bodies – as objectifying of female nudity as it might appear from today's perspective – contributed in a crucial manner to the emergence of the necessary awareness of love as a complex phenomenon rather than a purely ideatic one.

More than a re-interpretation of Shakespeare's play, Zeffirelli's version pushed the topic into universality through its unabashed representation of sexual encounters which do not imply the loss of innocence; the casting of Juliet's actress Olivia Hussey into the role of Mary, Jesus' mother, in Zeffirelli's British-Italian blockbuster movie from 1977 *Jesus of Nazareth* delivered a *posteriori* meta-narrative strength and significance to the female presence as a juxtaposition of light and darkness, of purity and depravation, of insight and despair. In doing so, Zeffirelli dealt with an indelible impulse on the perception of

femininity as more than the classical, still prevalent image of the “woman” in the 1960s and the 1970s as either “whore” or “saint”, changing it into the direction of a complex entity of warmth, ingenuity and desire.

On a similar note initiated by *West Side Story*, Baz Luhrmann's (born 1962) *Romeo + Juliet* (or in its complete denomination *William Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet*) from 1996, with Leonardo DiCaprio and Claire Danes in the leading roles, relocates the original plot to Verona Beach in contemporary USA, where the Capulets and the Montagues are two rival business empires in the warring mafia with legitimate financial fronts. While it retains the original Shakespearean dialogue, swords are replaced by guns with brand names such as “Dagger” and “Sword” and a FedEx-style delivery service is called “Post Haste”. In its non-conformist brand manner, which would make history in such movies as *Moulin Rouge* (2001) and *The Great Gatsby* (2013), the Australian director turns the *Romeo and Juliet* topos in this American romantic crime tragedy into a production of punk anecdotes with an aggressive, deafening soundtrack supporting the idea of contemporary updates of the perennial themes of love, hatred, death, faith and the necessity of (well) informed decisions. Particularly the music facilitates the transition of the doomed love into late-modern times by a X generation of directors and actors – on which, for better or for worse, any commercial success of the *Romeo and Juliet* topic resides – who started to sense that, unlike the hopeful, free baby-boomers with unlimited possibilities, their era carried the burden of intergenerational conflicts and unspoken resentments which, sooner rather than later, would burst to the surface of the social contract.

On this background with a gradual referentiality to present times and the growing self-awareness of the impossibility of free love, Gérard Presgurvic's (born 1953) French musical *Roméo et Juliette: de la Haine à l'Amour*, which world-premiered in Paris at the Palais des Congrès on 19 January 2001 with Damien Sargue (born 1981) and Cécilia Cara (born 1984) in the leading roles, seems somehow out of place. It belongs to what has been constructed as “opéra-rock” (“rock-opera”) since the 1970s with *Starmania* (music by Michel Berger and lyrics by Luc Plamondon, world-premiered in 1979 in Paris)

as one of the points of reference in its history of resistance and brazen freedom rather than conditional submission. Presgurvic's *Roméo et Juliette: de la Haine à l'Amour* brings to the foreground the romantic flavour of the subject and relies heavily on powerful melodies to resonate with audiences' nostalgia of a better world in which humans were free to die in the name of what they believed in.

Throughout the two decades since its initial premiere, *Roméo et Juliette: de la Haine à l'Amour* has had a huge success, staged in numerous countries with translations in dozens of languages – and turning into the version of Shakespeare's play to break the boundaries of Western adaptations in a significant manner. Its Japanese staging – both in cross-gender performances by Takarazuka Revue and its mixed-gender shows by Tôhō, which is the parent-company of Takarazuka Revue – made possible, on the one hand, the popularization of the topic in Asian areas reluctant to be confronted with such highly romanticized interpretations of life, duty and love, and on the other hand, the extensive processing of the theme in a way which might allow a dynamic reiteration of emotions in late modernity, not as a dangerous, uncontrollable force to disrupt social conventions and to threaten the prevalent order and hierarchy, but as a beautiful flow of energy which conveys messages of faith, compassion and insightful harmonization – as well as practical tools to attain individual fulfilment without breaking apart the socio-economic network.

### 3. Takarazuka Revue's history of staging *Romeo and Juliet*

The history of *Romeo and Juliet* performances by Takarazuka Revue Company goes back in time to the year 1933, when it was staged by the moon troupe with Sayo Fukuko 小夜福子 and Kumono Kayoko 雲野かよ子 starring Romeo, respectively Juliet. This version edited and choreographed by Tsubouchi Shikō (坪内士行, 1887-1986), the adoptive son of Tsubouchi Shōyō (坪内逍遙, 1859-1935), a well-known novelist, educator, critic, translator, playwright and one of the intellectuals who had laid the foundation for Takarazuka Revue during the 1910s, took place at a smaller theater in the city of Takarazuka, named Takarazuka Chū-Gekijō (宝塚中劇場), and not at the customary

Takarazuka Grand Theater (with a capacity of ca. 4,000 seats, built in 1924), which existed under various names and with different functions until 1972. Designated an "operetta" instead of a theatrical play as such, it seemed to have been dramatically cut in contents from Shakespeare's original, as there was only one book out of four. According to the performance programme, the synopsis seems considerably shortened, with five scenes (1. Capulet's House Garden; 2. in the street; 3. Laurence's chapel; 4. Juliet's bedroom; 5. the graveyard) pointing out the major stations of the narrative development. According to eye-witnesses, Sayo Fukuko's delivery of Romeo's character was not particularly spectacular due to a poor voice, but as a female impersonator of male roles, her face was strikingly cute so that her male impersonations carried a feminine aura.

In the post-war era, star troupe with its leading combination Minami Yūko 南悠子 and Asaji Shinobu 浅茅しのぶ performed *Romeo and Juliet* again in 1950. It had been dramaturgically reorganized and directed by Hori Seiki (堀正旗, 1895-1953), a literary scholar specialized in German culture and literature who, like Tsubouchi Shōyō, had been one of Takarazuka Revue's major promoters in its early days. The striking element in this version was the finale, which brought in front of audiences Romeo and Juliet standing on white clouds surrounded by angels and gods, presumably in heaven or on their way to heaven. Again, eye-witnesses recall Yūko Minami as delivering a rather mature Romeo, hence surpassing the teenage-like allure of pre-war Romeo.

Afterwards, there was no further restaging of *Romeo and Juliet* by Takarazuka Revue Company until 1979, when Takarazuka Bow Hall (a 500-seat theater that opened the previous year within Takarazuka Grand Theater) hosted the romance show *Romeo and Juliet*, written and directed by Shibata Yukihiro (柴田侑弘, 1932-2019). Due to its astonishing success, that version of *Romeo and Juliet* was performed repeatedly by star troupe with the increasingly popular *otokoyaku* Mine Saori 峰さを理 and by moon troupe with Daichi Mao 大地真央 in the roles of Romeo. Interestingly, this version by Shibata Yukihiro was a symbolical return to Shakespeare's tragedy through its faithful interpretation of



the Japanese translation of the English play pursued by Odashima Yûshi (小田島雄志, born 1930), a specialist in English literature – which had been considered unsuitable for Takarazuka Revue's ideal of purity due to its partially open display of juvenile sexuality and quest for lust underscoring romantic love. This version was revived in 1990 by moon troupe with Amami Yûki 天海祐希, one of the legendary *otokoyaku* actresses still active on television and on stage outside the Takarazuka Revue Company, after her retirement in 1995.

In 1999, a new version of the *Romeo and Juliet* topos starring Mizu Natsuki 水夏希, a newcomer to the flower troupe, strongly reflected the tendency of the times in the script and directorial vision of Ueda Keiko (植田景子, born 1966), one of the first female directors at Takarazuka Revue Company, which had previously been an institution with exclusively male administration. That is, the carefully avoided sexual innuendoes in Shakespeare's play were allowed to flow more freely into the "pure, virgin" world of Takarazuka Revue, which led down the line to an increased acceptance of physical expression of affection both on-stage and in the Japanese society, at large. The introduction of sexual tension as part of inter-gender relationships in the 1999 version of *Romeo and Juliet* was a huge leap forward in promoting the phenomenon of love as a complex concatenation of emotional and physiological micro-interactions in Japan, transcending the prevailing *status quo* of feelings being a beautiful, but annoying appearance, endangering the stability of socio-economic structures (such as the family unit supposed to be built upon the reliable values of obedience and dutifulness) and therefore to be carefully deflected or, even better, outrooted altogether. As to be shown further below, the repeated, increasingly accelerated restaging of *Romeo and Juliet* in Gérard Presgurvic's version reflects to a great degree this paradigm shift in audiences' consciousness, showing the necessity of emotions as fundamental in the construction and consolidation of the human being, and urging, at the same time, the acknowledgement of this necessity within educational and cultural curricula.

#### 4. Takarazuka Revue's staging of Gérard Presgurvic's *Roméo et Juliette: de la Haine à l'Amour*

The Takarazuka Revue version of Gérard Presgurvic's *Roméo et Juliette: de la Haine à l'Amour* was world-premiered in 2010 under the title *Roméo & Juliette* (『ロミオとジュリエット』 *Romio to Jurietto*) by the "golden combination" Yuzuki Reon 柚希礼音 and Yumesaki Nene 夢咲ねね of the star troupe at Umeda Arts Theater Main Hall in Osaka (from 10 July 10th until July 26th) and then at Hakataza in Fukuoka (from August 2 until August 24th). It was a sort of pilot-project to test the waters with its relatively controversial topic in Japanese perspective, *giri* 義理 and *ninjô* 人情 in everyday life, translated as "social obligations", respectively as "human emotions". These two notions reminiscent of premodern restrictions refer to the insolvable conflict between what individuals are supposed to do according to social regulations and what they would like to do according to personal feelings. The tragic clash between these conflicting loyalties – towards one's group or community, respectively towards one's own self – appears at the foundation of the vast majority of artistic works in Japan, with the refuge in death of the star-crossed lovers, displayed as both a treason to those around them whom they should have served, protected, obeyed, and to themselves, as they betray their true nature of serving, protecting, obeying those around them in accordance with over-individual instances of divine ancestors' origins.

It was Takarazuka Revue Company's director Koike Shûichirô's (小池修一郎, born 1955) task to find the middle-way between the highly entertaining, musically speaking version of Presgurvic's *Roméo et Juliette: de la Haine à l'Amour* and the neo-conservatism of mass-media and political discourse in the late 2000s. Koike had already very successfully brought to fruition Takarazuka Revue's project of adapting Michael Kunze's and Sylvester Levay's Vienna-premiered musical *Elisabeth* from 1992 into its own version, resulting into *Elisabeth: The Rondo of Love and Death* (『エリザベート: 愛と死の輪舞』 *Erizabêto: Ai to shi no rondo*), premiered in 1996 by snow troupe: Koike's *Elisabeth* expresses, subtly, the failure to reinforce clear ideals in the here and now

based on historical relevance as Elisabeth, the cult-empress Sisi, derives her power and charisma precisely from the rejection of traditional images and roles and defies both her husband, emperor Franz Joseph, and *Tôto* トート (i.e., Death from the German “[der] Tod”) while independently determining her destiny and status.

The transition from the motherly female figure prevalent in Japanese predicament of femininity, yet unable of developing herself and of protecting those around her, into a self-confident, empowered woman and, to a certain degree, self-centred person finds its expression in Sissi’s statement “I only belong to myself” (

「私だけに」) in her main aria: her inability, though, at saving her own son from suicide in spite of her political vision transforms her into a pathetic figure; successful fulfilment of state-relevant attributions does not compensate for her failure to accomplish basic motherly tasks which are – the audience is (in)directly told – the real function of a woman (Kawasaki, 1999, 142).

In bringing the *Romeo and Juliet* topos in front of Japanese (mostly female) audiences, as it is the case with Takarazuka Revue performances, without blatantly denying past ideologies, star troupe was chosen as the messenger of change: star troupe (星組 *hoshigumi*) had been established in 1933, in the same year as the original Tokyo Takarazuka Theatre, but banned from performing between 1939 and 1946. Its very special feature is that it delivers strong, charismatic *otokoyaku* performers (such as Kozuki Wataru 湖月わたる 2003-2006 and Yuzuki Reon 2009-2015) embedded in message-strong performances, e.g., *A Song for Kingdoms* (『王家に捧ぐ歌』 *Ôke ni sasagu uta*, 2003, based on the opera *Aida* from 1871, composed by Giuseppe Verdi on a libretto by Antonio Ghislanzoni)<sup>3</sup> and *Napoleon – The Man Who Never Sleeps: Beyond Love and Glory* (『眠らない男ナポレオン：愛と栄光の涯に *Nemuranai Otoko Napoleon : Ai to Eikô no Hate ni*, 2014, composed for Takarazuka Revue Company by

Gérard Presgurvic). In doing so, there was a twofold purpose: firstly, Yuzuki Reon’s *Romeo* displays a strong sense of self in his burgeoning masculinity, and seeks validation by means of reflecting his own individuality in those around him; secondly, the powerful message that *Romeo and Juliet* is not a story about star-crossed lovers belonging to hateful families, but a lesson in *Romeo*’s masculinity and masculine presence, a reinforcement of the slogan “this is a men’s world”, dubbed by the centuries-long tradition of female yearning for sheltering and romantic belonging.

Similarly to the central position of *Death* (*Tôto*) in Takarazuka Revue’s version of *Elisabeth*, with its all-encompassing omnipotence of a Death-God (*shinigami* 死神) and the indelible impact it has on audiences, on-stage *Romeo* experiences a deep transformation from a weak womanizer-in-becoming to a responsible, apparently self-reliant citizen of the city. In turn, *Juliet* serves to underscoring *Romeo*’s evolution without her own full-fledged characterization and narrative strength. Contractual limitations have not allowed Takarazuka Revue’s administrators more ideologically loaded changes from the French original, so that stage time and architectural design played important additional roles in highlighting *Romeo*’s prevalence.

The 2011 version of *Roméo & Juliette* brought an unusual incurrence: the snow’s troupe topstar-*otokoyaku* Otozaki Kei 音月桂 was counterbalanced by two *Juliet-musumeyaku* in a so-called W-cast – Maihane Mimi 舞羽美海 and Yumeka Ami 夢華あみ. Staged at Takarazuka Grand Theater from 1 January until 31 January and at Tokyo Takarazuka Theater from February 17 until March 20<sup>th</sup>, this version was more experimental in nature, due both to the rotating role-system and to the employment of the snow troupe: inaugurated in 1924, simultaneously with the opening of what would later become the first Takarazuka Grand Theater, the snow troupe (雪組 *yuki-gumi*) is considered the upholder of Japanese traditional dance and musical plays for the whole company, which rather draws on Western sources in more than two thirds of its performances, and has the reputation of being the vanguard of classical Japanese drama. On this backdrop, the fact that it premiered in

<sup>3</sup> However, when *A Song for Kingdoms* was re-staged in 2015 by cosmos troupe, its message changed radically, from the imperative perspective to keep and protect the peace in the name of human love and life (as it had been originally in 2003) to the open acknowledgment that war might be at times necessary for restoring peace.

Japan the Vienna-original musical *Elisabeth: The Rondo of Love and Death* in 1996 has symbolical underpinnings, with (cultural) “appropriation” and “Japanisation” at the top of the main concepts. Likewise, its *Roméo & Juliette* version seems softer and somehow feminized, due to *otokoyaku* Otozaki Kei’s Romeo with a warmer, more tender demeanour.

One year later, in 2012, Romeo’s role was delivered in a W-cast by moon troupe, with Ryû Masaki 龍真咲 and Asumi Rio 明日海りお embodying alternatively Romeo and Tybalt, and Manaki Reika 愛希れいか playing Juliet. A highly controversial staging in fans’ view, presented at Takarazuka Grand Theater from 22 June 22<sup>nd</sup> until July 23<sup>rd</sup> and at Tokyo Takarazuka Theater from August 10 until September 9th, this version strikes as a typical moon troupe performance: the moon troupe (月組 *tsuki-gumi*) was created in 1921, and was the one to push forward the performance strategy towards an ideology of grandeur and splendour in alignment with Japan’s future position of an international leader. This reputation originated in the 1970s, when it staged the world-premieres of the hugely acclaimed *The Rose of Versailles* (『ベルサイユのばら』 *Berusaiyu no bara*, 1974, based on the equally immensely popular *shôjo* manga [少女漫画, comics for female teenagers in Japan] of the same title by Ikeda Riyoko [池田理代子, born 1947], published by Shûeisha between 1972-1973 and 2013-2018) and *Gone with the Wind* (『風と共に去りぬ』 *Kaze to tomo-ni sarinu*, 1977, based on Margaret Mitchell’s eponymous novel from 1936 with heavy influences, particularly in the stage design, costumes, hairstyles as well as historical layout, from the movie version of 1939, directed by Victor Fleming with Clark Gable and Vivien Leigh in the leading roles). Presumably due to the confusing W-casting of the main character, this version of *Roméo & Juliette* pays more meticulous attention to the performance as a group phenomenon and less as a story of individual characters, in particular, obvious in powerful expression of chorus singing – the trademark in other

numerous adaptations from Western topics by the moon troupe.<sup>4</sup>

In 2013, the star troupe delivered at Takarazuka Grand Theater from May 31 until July 8<sup>th</sup> and at Tokyo Takarazuka Theater from July 26<sup>th</sup> until August 25 the next staging of *Roméo & Juliette* with the original cast from 2010: Yuzuki Reon as Romeo, and Yumesaki Nene, as Juliet. Once again, Romeo was definitely at the center of the entire performance, with an additional atmosphere of quasi-non-conformist coolness surrounding his stage-presence. Juliet’s exuberant femininity decisively underscored the prevailing image of a more-masculine-than-ever Romeo, potentially transcending death and pain and resurrecting into a ray of hope for the “herbivore men” (草食男子 *sôshoku danshi*; Fukasawa, 2009) of late-modern Japan.

After an eight-year break, in 2021, the star troupe’s fresh “golden combination” composed of Rei Makoto 礼真琴 and Maisora Hitomi 舞空瞳 offered a new and somehow unusually rejuvenated version of *Roméo & Juliette*. Scheduled at Takarazuka Grand Theater from February 14 until March 29 and at Tokyo Takarazuka Theater from April 16 until May 23 (and with performances cancelled between April 26 and May 11 due to the sudden third State of Emergency due to the coronavirus pandemic in Japan), the

<sup>4</sup> Apart from these three troupes, there are two more performing ensembles: the flower troupe (花組 *hana-gumi*) was formed in 1921 and is largely perceived as the most treasured of the five ensembles, with bigger budgets and more lavish stage and costume designs as well as more powerful and impactful performances (such as *Casanova* from 2019, on the life of the renowned Italian adventurer and seducer Giacomo Casanova, 1725-1798, with its opera-like outfits and strong message of freedom and individual responsibility as the foundation for social stability, prosperity and cohesion). Lastly, founded in 1998, the cosmos (or sky) troupe (宙組 *sora-gumi*) is the youngest among the five ensembles of the Takarazuka Revue Company, each staging a performance lasting 32 days at the main Takarazuka Revue theater, located in Takarazuka City: Takarazuka Grand Theater, with a total of nine new performances every year. Each of the nine performances is subsequently staged at Takarazuka Tokyo Theater in the capital’s fancy district of Hibiya. In comparison to other troupes, the cosmos troupe is regarded as more experimental and less bound to any sort of tradition. Moreover, some of the actresses who reach the age of retirement prefer to join the ranks of the so-called “superior members” (専科 *senka*, literally translated as “specialist[s]”). They are commonly employed for more complex roles in the performances alongside with each of the five ensembles.

performance brought a fresh, glamorous Romeo, almost too perfect to be true, but lacking somehow the relatability of the former Romeos. This impression might have emerged at least partially from the supporting *otokoyaku*-actresses' powerful stage acts, which were more discrete in the previous versions. Tybalt, Mercutio, even Death (an additional voiceless character introduced by Presgurvic and enhanced in Takarazuka Revue performances with beautiful, breathtaking ballet scenes) or the Prince of Verona are brought to life by highly skilled *otokoyaku*-actresses which throw a shadow over Romeo's uniqueness. Moreover, in tune with the distressed times the world is facing currently, the stage architecture as well as the overall atmosphere are calm and, to a certain degree, dark: *Romeo and Juliet* is not anymore about forbidden love and death as liberation, but reminds us of the necessity of solidarity and acceptance, at a point in history when these appear increasingly necessary, unquestionable, and painfully absent.

## 5. Conclusion: mirroring history, transcending national fallacies

Initially, William Shakespeare's play *Romeo and Juliet* delivered an opportunity to experiment with uncomfortable themes of the day, such as forbidden love and family rivalry on the background of increasingly social acknowledgement of individual propensities. Throughout the centuries, this exploration of individual love and collective hatred, of darkness which cannot exist without light, of poetical enhancement of life and its necessary perils, gained momentum, both horizontally, in its socio-cultural acceptance, and vertically in its political-economic relevance. After the Second World War, political stability and economic prosperity in the USA allowed the extrapolation of the initial setup, so that romantic love has gradually turned into a pretext for historical analysis: the advent of mass-media and the democratization of culture saw, on the one hand, the transformation of the theme of star-crossed lovers into an opportunity to address socio-economic disparities and ethnic-racial tensions in consumption societies and, on the other hand, evolved into potential premises for the integration of classical topics into the landscape of modern times. Furthermore, the spread of informational technology made it

possible that consumers from all strata with various financial means could access the shows and enjoy their teachings, without the elitist filter which was so often the privilege of the most affluent and/or educated.

As the current, phenomenologically oriented analytical pursuit has been revealing, when Takarazuka Revue took over Gérard Presgurvic's version, its main focus was, from the beginning, on the quest for a new form of masculinity, more in tune with the challenges, limitations and contradictions of late modernity, but still able to resonate with its highly conservative – and cautious – audiences. From 2010 until 2013, this intent was obvious: Takarazuka Revue's *Roméo & Juliette*, regardless of the troupe or of the topstar-*otokoyaku* embodying Romeo, is Romeo's life-story, his doubts and his choices, from an immature, impulsive teenage boy prone to chasing girls without serious thoughts, towards a self-reliant, responsible young man, able to stand behind his actions and to face his regrets. For better or for worse, Juliet's role is reduced to solely underscore Romeo's evolution, in spite of the contractual clauses which substantially restricted Takarazuka Revue's administrators in their adaptation of the French original.

In 2013, an important step in Takarazuka Revue's performative orchestration of the masculine identity was the restaging of *Gone with the Wind*, from September 27 until November 4 at Takarazuka Grand Theater and from November 22 until December 23 at Tokyo Takarazuka Theater by the cosmos troupe with topstar-*otokoyaku* Ōki Kaname 鳳 稀かなめ, as Rhett Butler, topstar-*musumeyaku* Misaki Rion 実咲凜音, as Melanie Wilkes, and the secondary *otokoyaku* Asaka Manato 朝夏まなと, as Scarlett O'Hara:<sup>5</sup> the cosmos troupe, the youngest and therefore the most progressive among the five ensembles of Takarazuka Revue, served in that particular performance as a trendsetter in the Takarazuka Revue's tackling of masculine identity. The fallible and soft Rhett Butler, while keeping his highly stylized stature, became a symbol for and a powerful symptom

<sup>5</sup> In a different casting version of the same performance, secondary *otokoyaku* Asaka Manato embodies Ashley, meta-narratively highlighting even more Scarlett's "masculine/masculinized femininity" as well as Ashley's imploding masculinity.

of the process of a fading ‘white obsession’ and the emergence of what might be described as a ‘masculinity of self-sufficiency’ occurring currently worldwide. In the version from 2013, *Gone with the Wind* changes more than ever before since its Takarazuka Revue premiere in 1977 into Rhett Butler’s life story, and employs the *otokoyaku* in both main characters (Rhett and Scarlett), as commonly dealt with ever since. Rhett Butler’s struggling masculinity clashes against Scarlett O’Hara’s intimidating personality, while Melanie’s soft vibrant femininity is represented as a standard to be internalized individually and promoted publicly. *Gone with the Wind* is Rhett Butler’s “way of life”, even “the way of life named Rhett Butler” (「レット・バトラーという生き方がある。」), as officially advertised in the performance poster and on the DVD released after the performance. Moreover, Rhett Butler metamorphoses into the prototype of the “new man”, deeply in touch with his emotions and conflicting loyalties, so that he can face the painful realities of life and take uncomfortable decisions, like breaking up with Scarlett in the aftermath of the death of their daughter, in spite of his feelings of love and affection for her.

Like in Romeo’s case, Rhett Butler’s topstar-*otokoyaku* reacts with the reinforcement of her position as a mirror of the self and a window to the other, the female counterpart, while incorporating her position as a female impersonator of male figures. In doing so, the *otokoyaku* turns into a figure of longing and, paradoxically, belonging – which is the essence of “self-love”, as initially postulated by Erich Fromm in *The Art of Loving* more than 60 years ago: a concatenation of self-acceptance, self-compassion and self-respect, compounded by courage, integrity as well as kindness.

Eventually, the 2021 version of *Roméo & Juliette* returns to a space of calmness and emotional vulnerability in tune with the tumultuous times the world is experiencing nowadays: the slender, fragile stature of *otokoyaku* does not mirror anymore purely the instability and ambiguity of Japanese modernity as a reputed monolith, but challenges Takarazuka Revue’s self-assigned position as the self-conscious icon of modern Japan and a unique synthesis of Japanese spirit and Western knowledge/technology. In Romeo’s all-too fluid identity representations from early 2021, a sense of acknowledging the existence of a greater whole than the national limited geography seems to become palpable, with perfectionism questioned in light of the necessity of the many “others” who share historical avenues with Japan on planet Earth. Japan’s (in)famous exceptionalism seems to have lost its charm and *raison d’être*. What has started like an inconspicuous cultural import decades ago, even more intense since late 2000s, turns gradually from a means to define and re-define masculinity, Japanese and otherwise, into a paradigm of coping and cooperating with the “others” in the universal vortex. In doing so, Takarazuka Revue – its actresses, its administrators and last, but not least, its faithful audiences – orchestrates an impactful discourse on the redemptive power of love, of culture, of acceptance, while negotiating its position within the world community.

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# THE FUNERAL AND ITS CUSTOMS: A CASE STUDY- ORĂȘTIOARA DE SUS VILLAGE, HUNEDOARA COUNTY

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**Abstract:** *This study represents a chapter from my dissertation. The study aims to describe all the details of the funeral ceremony and the customs related to it in Orăștioara de Sus village. Each part of the funeral ceremony has a certain meaning behind it, whether it is the religious service and practices, or the customs specific to the community. Thus, with the help of interviews of the people from Orăștioara de Sus, that have been taken between May and August of 2019, this work analyses the symbolism behind religious and popular customs and how they interfuse in the practice of burial rites and the mentality of the people from Orăștioara de Sus.*

**Keywords:** *funeral, customs, religious practices, burial rites.*

**Rezumat:** *Acest studiu reprezintă un capitol din lucrarea de disertație. Scopul studiului este acela de a descrie detaliile ceremoniei funerare și ale obiceiurilor legate de această ceremonie, în satul Orăștioara de Sus. Fiecare parte a ceremoniei este practică cu un motiv, fie că este vorba de slujba și practicile religioase, fie că este vorba de obiceiurile specifice comunității. Astfel, cu ajutorul interviurilor cu informatorii din Orăștioara de Sus, luate în perioada mai-august 2019, această lucrare analizează atât simbolistica din spatele obiceiurilor religioase și populare, cât și modul în care acestea se împletesc în cadrul ritualului funerar și al mentalității oamenilor din Orăștioara de Sus.*

**Cuvinte cheie:** *înmormântare, obiceiuri, practice religioase, burial rituri funerare.*

The most important moments in a person's life: birth, marriage and death have been accompanied since ancient times by certain customs or rituals, different from one geographical area to another, from one historical period to another.

The individual can decide whether to marry or not, whether to have children or not, but will never be able to decide between dying and not dying. No one can share the experience of death, not even those who have experienced clinical death. The transition from mastering the laws of life to mastering the laws of death has frightened people of all times. Thus, among the major events that man goes through in life, death has been and will remain for a long time shrouded in mystery. This mystery generated, however, the birth of certain beliefs about death, beliefs that took the form of superstitions and rituals related to the funeral rite.

In Romania, there are a plethora of different customs, traditions, beliefs, or rituals related to the moment of man's transition to the

eternal ones. These customs, whether related to the Christian religion or related to the specificities of certain geographical areas, are fulfilled in order to ensure the peace of the soul of the past in the afterlife.

I chose the village of Orăștioara de Sus, which houses a mainly Romanian and Orthodox community, as my case study. I wanted to find out about the funerary practices in this village, after previously visiting the village and being informed about certain interesting customs specific to the area and practiced in the village. Orăștioara de Sus is a village of 469 inhabitants that is part of the commune with the same name located in the eastern part of Hunedoara county. The village is also the residence of the commune. Here are located the main institutions of the commune such as: The Village Hall, Primary School, Human Dispensary, Veterinary Dispensary, Communal Police Station, Cultural Center, Post Office, and others. The commune consists of eight villages that fall into three types of settlements: meadow, located on the Grădiște

river (inhabitants being also called "răureni"), hill (the inhabitants being also called "delureni") and mountain (the inhabitants being also called "mărgineni"). The village of Orăștioara de Sus is part of the meadow settlements, and the occupations of the inhabitants are raising animals, especially cattle and sheep, and cultivating crops, the latter only of subsistence<sup>1</sup>.

After two days in which the relatives and acquaintances participated in discussions about the deceased and other customs related to the wake period, the funeral takes place. The funeral is the ensemble of religious ceremonies and local customs that take place before the placement of the deceased in the tomb. Each ceremony and custom has an important significance when it comes to the deceased person's journey towards the afterlife. Thus, funeral customs are of particular importance.

In the village of Orăștioara de Sus, the funeral usually starts on the third day after the person's death, around one o'clock in the afternoon, and the morning of that day is intended for preparations, as Vasile told me:

"But in general, in the morning, the preparations are made: the yard is cleaned, swept ... Around half-past twelve, never faster, the priest comes. At half-past twelve, about one o'clock, that's the rule for when the priest must come"<sup>2</sup>.

Lidia mentioned that the morning of the day of the funeral is also important for preparing some key elements of the funeral ceremony:

"They buy towels, because you have to give towels to the priest, and a large sweet bread (colac), and for the gravediggers, they have to buy pots. In the past, they would buy towels to give to the relatives, but they do not really do that anymore"<sup>3</sup>.

The large sweetbread<sup>4</sup> that Lidia was talking about has a circular, woven shape that represents eternal life and the crown of thorns of Jesus Christ. Also, a very important role is occupied by smaller sweetbreads that are given as alms alongside a candle for the soul of the deceased after the funeral (Măndiță, 2004, 19). Thus, around one o'clock in the afternoon, the funeral begins, and the choice of this hour is not a coincidence and has a practical reason behind it, Marin told me:

"Here at about one o'clock, [the funeral service starts] that's about it. So even if the father is at church on Sunday or it's a holiday, at twelve he gets ready and at one o'clock the funeral begins with the actual service"<sup>5</sup>.

Marian indicated an interesting detail about the service:

"At one o'clock the priest from the respective parish comes. They can also be brought from another parish. Usually, we have about two or three priests who come (for the funeral service) alongside the parish priest. At one o'clock the service starts and lasts up to half-past three or four o'clock"<sup>6</sup>.

Trandafir also mentioned to me that it is customary for several priests to attend the funeral:

"At one o'clock, on the third day [since the person died] the funeral is held. Right then, the priest from the parish comes, also two or three other priests come, but for the parish priest is mandatory to come. He comes with verger, with the singers, and the funeral begins"<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> <http://comuna-orastioaradesus.ro/>, accessed 07.08.2018.

<sup>2</sup> Interview with Dunca Vasile, resident in Orăștioara de Sus village, 50 years old.

<sup>3</sup> Interview with Romășan Lidia, resident in Orăștioara de Sus village, 80 years old.

<sup>4</sup> *Colac* in Romanian, "Bakery product, usually in the shape of a ring, woven from two or more rolls of dough", <https://dexonline.ro/definitie/colac>, accessed 29.03.2021.

<sup>5</sup> Interview with Urican Marin, resident in Orăștioara de Sus village.

<sup>6</sup> Interview with Gridan Marian, epitrope in Orăștioara de Sus village, 56 years old.

<sup>7</sup> Interview with Muntean Trandafir, resident in Orăștioara de Sus village, 48 years old.

But the presence of several priests is not necessarily seen with good eyes, but rather as a way of showing off, as Emilian told me:

“The family of the deceased can invite more priests; there can be a priest, two or more priests at the funeral. It is not written anywhere that the funeral is done with a priest, or two, or three, or four... It can be done with as many as they (the family) consider. But for them to rise to a higher status, if there is a prominent family in the village, they bring three or four priests. You know what? The same job is done! Either you have one, or you have three, or you have four, the same job is done, after which a small sermon is given and they tell the stories about how that person was and it is a pity that he died”.

After the priest, or as the case may be, the priests, together with the cantors and the verger, arrive at the house where the deceased is, they enter the room that houses the coffin, as Emilian mentioned:

“The funeral goes along as following: from within the church the firsts that go to the house are me (the verger), the priests, the singers. Me, being the verger, I set the tone to enter the home”<sup>8</sup>.

Then the service takes place both in the house and in the courtyard of the deceased's house, as Olivia said: “After that, they take the dead man out into the yard and there the service is continued”<sup>9</sup>.

We should pay attention to the funeral service and its significance. First of all, it should be noted that this service differs in certain situations: “The Church has made four special ordinances of the funeral service: one for the elderly lay people; the second for infants and children up to seven years of age; the third for deacons and ordained priests and

the fourth for monks and bishops” (Măndiță, 2004, 15).

The funeral service has an important role in forgiving the sins of the deceased, and in this service, a central role is played by the prayer of release and forgiveness: “To release from all curse and malediction and to forgive the soul of the deceased who confessed and was forgiven by the loved ones before death, but who out of forgetfulness and human weakness remained with unresolved and unforgiven sins, may he be protected by those powers horrors of darkness...” (Măndiță, 2004, 15).

Also, this service does not take place in certain cases, as Emilian explained:

“For people that committed suicide the priest doesn't make a service, I [the verger] am not allowed to bring the cross and the incensory to his head and the flag [prapure] cannot be taken out of the church for the funeral... So he [the person that committed suicide] is a person who they say that... That the end of his life came because of Satan, the devil. He embraced it, disrespecting the Orthodox faith and not going to church to pray, knowing that prayer was something useful to a man. If you come and try to distance yourself from the church and the Christian faith, satan, who also went against Jesus Christ... You have seen how much has happened because of Satan! Know that it exists! So many broken families, so many troubles in the world, that's where they come from. Thus, there is no service, absolutely nothing and then they bury him and then they give the alms”<sup>10</sup>.

Oprița confessed to me that although there is no funeral service in the case of suicide, a release of sins can be made:

“And normally the priest should not come to bury them [the people that committed suicide]. But the priest comes, even if he is not allowed to do a small sermon. A release from the sin,

<sup>8</sup> Interview with Dănescu Emilian, verger in Orăștioara de Sus village, 64 years old.

<sup>9</sup> Interview with Bodea Olivia, resident in Orăștioara de Sus village, 74 years old.

<sup>10</sup> Interview with Dănescu Emilian, verger in Orăștioara de Sus village, 64 years old.

not a proper sermon. Only an apology for his sins, because he says he caused his own death”<sup>11</sup>.

Claudia told me the same thing:

“Those who commit suicide are buried by the priest only through a service of release, the funeral service is not done because they are considered not to be with the faithful ones, because they took their own lives”<sup>12</sup>.

Part of the service takes place when the coffin is in the house, and another part of the service takes place in the courtyard of the house when the coffin is taken out, as Claudia also explained:

“On the third day, the one with the funeral, the priest comes to the house and makes a part of the service about ten or fifteen minutes, after which the dead man is taken out in the courtyard and all the service is done in the courtyard”<sup>13</sup>.

When the coffin is taken out of the house, there is a custom that Marian described to me:

“When taking the dead outside, you slam the doors three or four times and you overturn the chairs”<sup>14</sup>.

Silvia also told me about this custom:

“And when they take him out of the house, they turn over the table where the dead man was, they overturn it. And when they leave with him [out of the house], they knock on the door three times so that he doesn't come back”<sup>15</sup>.

The role of this custom is to remove evil spirits and drive away death from the house. Only after this habit is fulfilled can the people that were in the house go out into the courtyard (Loleanu, 2018, 167). The overturning of chairs and tables after removing the coffin from the house, apart from having the role of removing evil spirits, represents how life is disturbed by the unfortunate event of having one of your loved ones die (Burada, 1882, 20). The custom has pagan origins, and for this reason, the Orthodox Church discourages its practice. However, these practices meant to protect the family and relatives of the deceased are more prevalent in people's mentality, to the detriment of the church canons (Măndiță, 2004, 29).

Most customs take place after or during the courtyard service. Perhaps the best-known one is that of depositing objects in the coffin. The moment when these objects are placed in the coffin is a specific one, according to Trandafir:

“The one that bathed the deceased has to rip a part of the veil [the veil placed over the body is ripped for certain rituals], before closing the coffin -a moment that takes place halfway through the courtyard service- and the priest goes around the coffin with a glass of wine and if someone wants to put objects in the coffin, he allows them to put in the coffin what they want. They can put shaving razor, for those who liked drinking they would put some drinks, he also puts a bottle of something like liquor [vinars<sup>16</sup>] or food, a watch, a scarf, finally... whatever they want”<sup>17</sup>.

Rodica offered more explanations about this custom:

“They do all kinds of stupid things now, if [the deceased] is a woman, they put [in the coffin] a needle for sewing and knitting utensils, wool,

<sup>11</sup> Interview with Muntean Oprea, resident in Orăștioara de Sus village, 80 years old.

<sup>12</sup> Interview with Pascu Claudia, daughter of epitrope Gridan Marian, ex-resident in Orăștioara de Sus village, 31 years old.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>14</sup> Interview with Gridan Marian, epitrope in Orăștioara de Sus village, 56 years old.

<sup>15</sup> Interview with Lătareșcu Silvia, resident in Orăștioara de Sus village, 76 years old.

<sup>16</sup> Vinars is a “brandy extracted from cereals, fruits, potatoes or wine yeast”, <https://dexonline.ro/definitie/vinars>, accessed 29.03.2021.

<sup>17</sup> Interview with Muntean Trandafir, resident in Orăștioara de Sus village, 48 years old.

stupid stuff like these, they put two sweetbreads in the coffin near the dead. I told my kids to not do such things. As I came on this world, so I'll go! I do what I can, but I don't need anything else. Who can use something after you put it in a coffin? The important thing is to care for the ill ones so that they can depart after he confessed and he received communion, it is the duty of the head of the household. Everything else is superstition, as they say on TV. Too bad! There is no use for this. Anyway, they still do this, I saw how they put in liquor (vinars). They put it in even at my midwife, and she was the most faithful. I told them: Do not do this thing. But they eventually came with the bottle during the service and his it under the clothes. Each to their own stupid stuff. You can put a small icon, or a little cross on the chest, you can do that"<sup>18</sup>.

Mariana also told me how they kept this custom at her husband's funeral:

"I put the cell phone, the shaving kit, the sweet cake, the red egg, as the funeral was between Easter and the Whitsuntide, the candle, anything he used"<sup>19</sup>.

Thus, in addition to the objects considered to be specific to one's gender, either food or other objects dear to the deceased are deposited in the coffin, as Aurelia told me:

"Some people put snacks. Sweetbread, bacon, boiled eggs. For women, they put combs or what they liked more"<sup>20</sup>.

Marian added:

"They put tools if he is a man, a shaver. For example, at my father's

funeral, God forgive him, we put in a scarf because he liked that one, he wore it all the time". Emilian also told me some details about this custom: "In the coffin are placed objects which belonged to them [the deceased] and that they used a lot, namely: shaving utensils, cutting knife, spoon, fork. You can also add basil, incense or incense powder from the censer, stuff like these"<sup>21</sup>.

When depositing objects in the coffin, the profession for which the deceased was known for is also taken into account, as Vasile explained:

"For example, if the dead liked something, if he was a piper let's say, that instrument is always deposited [in the coffin]. So always [the relatives put in the coffin] what they liked best. I don't know if today's youth are still depositing or paying attention [to this custom], but here it has been taken into account almost all the time. If he was a mason, let's say, he put a bad trowel or a piece of it"<sup>22</sup>.

The reason why this custom is practiced and is considered so important is that the family of the deceased, by depositing in the coffin everything they consider dear and representative of the deceased, directly assigns to him the respective objects to use them on the way to or in the afterlife (Marian, 1892, 244-245). Probably for this reason there are deposited grooming items such as combs and shavers, communication items, such as the cell phone or objects representative of the deceased's profession. As for the deposition of food in the coffin, a practice performed rather when the death took place around Easter or immediately after, it can be said that it is intended to serve as supplies for the deceased for the long journey to the afterlife.

In addition to the objects mentioned above, another category of objects placed in the coffin are objects whose purpose is to protect the family of the deceased. The fear of the undead

<sup>18</sup> Interview with Muntean Rodica, resident in Orăștioara de Sus village, 84 years old.

<sup>19</sup> Interview with Muntean Mariana, resident in Orăștioara de Sus village, 53 years old.

<sup>20</sup> Interview with Gridan Aurelia, mother of epitrope Gridan Marian, resident in Orăștioara de Sus village, 75 years old.

<sup>21</sup> Interview with Gridan Marian, epitrope in Orăștioara de Sus village, 56 years old.

<sup>22</sup> Interview with Dunca Vasile, resident in Orăștioara de Sus village, 50 years old.

(*strigoi*<sup>23</sup>) and their evil effects on people or animals are still present in the village of Orăștioara de Sus and around the area. Those close to a deceased who became an undead, especially his family and animals, are targeted by the unfortunate actions of his. About these, Olivia told me the following:

“But in the past, there were many *strigoi* in our country, they were bothering people, they bothering cattle, so they [the *strigoi*] were dug up. They found them [the alleged *strigoi*] in the tomb, inside the coffin, turned over and with blood on their mouths”<sup>24</sup>.

Septimia told me about such protective objects:

“They put [in the coffin] some dolls, out of the ones they make out of some rags and sticks and name them like the people that live in the house. [they look] Like q-tips and you give them the names of the people from the household [they name a doll for each member of the family / or for those who lived in the same house with him] to say that he has them with him, to not come back after them. And they used to take the hair of the cattle and put it in the coffin so that the dead would not come and take the animals. No one is coming back! This is just what the elders used to say”<sup>25</sup>.

These dolls were also mentioned by Emilia:

“They made these dolls so that they [the dead people] wouldn't come after them. Like those q-tips. They put [in the coffin] a doll for each person who lived with the dead in the same house”,

<sup>23</sup> “*Strigoi morți*, invisible ghosts from the souls of the dead who do not reach the afterlife after the funeral, return to the world where they take the lives of close relatives, bring plagues, hail and other sufferings”, Ion Ghinoiu, *Dicționar de mitologie română*, București, Editura Univers Enciclopedic Gold, 2013, p. 269.

<sup>24</sup> Interview with Bodea Olivia, resident in Orăștioara de Sus village, 74 years old.

<sup>25</sup> Interview with Groza Septimia, resident in Orăștioara de Sus village, 76 years old.

as well as Claudia: “[...] sticks are named as the people in the household so that the dead doesn't come back to take them”<sup>26</sup>.

It should be noted that the practice of depositing objects of any kind in the coffin is not recommended by the canons of the church, as this is considered a custom of pagan origins. The work *Funeral and proper memorial service*, conceived as a guide with questions and answers about the conduct of Christians in funeral ceremonies, has a chapter entitled *Deviations and pagan customs practiced at funerals!* in which the custom of placing objects in the coffin is mentioned and explained as follows: “And this is a superstition and a lost faith which also has its origin in paganism. After its separation from the body, the soul, which is the spirit, has a spiritual party, no longer needing food, clothing, air, water, all that is necessary for earthly life” (Măndiță, 2004, 30).

However, in people's mentality, the community practice prevails, as a precaution taken by those close to the deceased to ensure both the safe passage to the afterlife, as well as the peace and security of the family.

Oprița even told me an incident about the undead that scarred her because the case happened to her neighbors:

“But in the old times there were *strigoi* and they were nailed. [It happened] To an old woman who died. I would close the door on the sidewalk and when I was in the house it would open. And that old woman's cows died and her daughter-in-law slept at the church, across the river. She called her brother-in-law to stay with her husband. And the sheets and the lamp all did so [gesturing that things were moving unnaturally]. Alas, they were so afraid! And then they had to dig up the dead. They [the family] gave liquor to some people to dig her up, and they found the coffin overturned. They put her in place and they put a nail in her heart, and that's it, she didn't come. The cows had died and the people in the house were sick. Oh my, I have never liked that old woman”<sup>27</sup>.

<sup>26</sup> Interview with Muntean Emilia, resident in Orăștioara de Sus village, 49 years old.

<sup>27</sup> Interview with Muntean Oprița, resident in Orăștioara de Sus village, 80 years old.

Exhumation is disavowed by Christian dogmas because after sealing the graves (the last step of the religious burial ceremony) they should no longer be opened or disturbed until the second coming of Jesus Christ. But traditional beliefs about the possibility of turning the dead into undead prevail over the Christian dogmas. The belief in the undead is considered to be pagan and disavowed by church canons (Măndiță, 2004, 29), but even in this case the traditions and beliefs of the community take precedence over those prescribed by the Church.

The signs considered distinctive for the fact that someone has returned from the dead in the form of undead are: the unusual movement of objects, people and animals close to the deceased that show signs of illness or are about to die, and the actual death of someone in the family of those suspected to be undead. Also, any of these signs entails the need for the person suspected of being undead to be exhumed to confirm or refute the hypothesis. Most of the time the certainty that people are actually dealing with the undead is given by the fact that the deceased is found intact (no signs of decomposition) or in a different position from the one they were initially in (Marian, 1892, 416-418). It seems that in the village of Orăștioara de Sus the method of fighting the undead is beating nails in the corpse. This way the protection of those affected is ensured.

In reality, the change in body position in the coffin is not uncommon and could be explained by changes occurring in the body after death. A few hours after death, rigor mortis manifests itself, a phenomenon that involves contracting the muscles and causing rigidity of the body, which can last up to two days, although the time may vary. After these two or more days (a period that would coincide with that of the wake and burial) the muscles relax, and this could explain the change in body position in the coffin. Also, findings of corpses without signs of decomposition could be explained by the fact that the natural process of decomposition of the body is slowed down quite a bit when the body is underground (Mims, 2006, 132-134). Of course, the fear of the undead or other evil spirits also leads to anecdotal situations, such as the following, narrated by Emilia:

“Long time ago, in Orăștioara de Jos, they didn't beat the nails in the coffin correctly so the dead was standing up in the coffin [and the lid fell]. The women were running away and the priest was saying: Don't run, don't run, because someone has to come and hit the nails again and bury the coffin!» You realize that you have to nail the coffin, otherwise the coffin will fall apart and the dead man will be uncovered. That's when the women ran away”<sup>28</sup>.

Because it is preferable to avoid situations of confrontation with evil forces, prevention is the best choice. An important role in protection rituals is played by the veil that covers the body of the deceased from head to toe. In other parts of the country this cloth may have different names: *giulgiu*, *sovonu*, *respeti* or *paioră*, but in the village of Orăștioara de Sus we found it either under the name of *sălie*, or under the name of the *veil of the dead* (Marian, 1892, 85).

The role of this veil was explained to me by Claudia:

“During the service, close relatives also take a piece from the veil that is placed on the coffin because when the people of the household are sick or their loved ones die or get sick, they smoke the room with the piece of veil or with the cloth with which the dead man was washed, and everything returns to normal. Because it is said that the dead return to their loved ones or if they have dear animals. If the problem persists even after smoking, from the wooden cross from the cemetery, a chip is taken and the relatives are smoked with it”<sup>29</sup>.

Emilia also mentioned this custom, the difference being that the expected result she mentioned was to remove fear:

<sup>28</sup> Interview with Muntean Emilia, resident in Orăștioara de Sus village, 49 years old.

<sup>29</sup> Interview with Pascu Claudia, daughter of epitrope Gridan Marian, ex-resident in Orăștioara de Sus village, 31 years old.



“You remove some veil from the dead and you smoke [the room] with it so that you are not afraid. If you are afraid, you smoke with it and it goes away!”<sup>30</sup>.

The symbolism of the veil according to folklore is the following: it can have the role of a shield to defend the soul from the dangers that threaten it until it reaches heaven or it can represent a bridge to the afterlife (Marian, 1892, 85). But there is also a religious significance of the canvas: “The body of the dead covered with a long white veil, from the top of the head to the soles of the feet, shows that the deceased is under the cover of the Church and of our Lord Jesus Christ. This represents the purification of the soul of the dead. If the canvas is the veil preserved from the Holy Baptism, it represents the purity of the soul acquired by preserving until death the true Christian faith, according to the guarantee given by Holy Baptism” (Măndiță, 2004, 10).

Another important custom that takes place either when getting the coffin out of the house or after the funeral service is the assigning of food over the coffin, as told by Emilian:

“[...] instead, on the day of the burial, when the dead man is taken out of the house, food is given, and all the goodies in the house, and a knife and a spoon and a fork are given. There is also a hen handed over the coffin because they say that if the person was a farmer and had many animals, only by doing so they will have it (the livestock) in the afterlife. In the other world, we do not know what will be, but we will not have chickens, I am telling you”<sup>31</sup>.

Vasile detailed everything that the bag handed over the coffin must contain:

“We give a sweetbread and a candle as alms after the funeral, but before the funeral, after removing the dead person from the house, then we also give alms. Chickens are given, those

with more livestock also give sheep, calves, piglets. And at the same time, there is a bag with food in which everything is put: knife, salt, everything, everything a man needs in life. That is given anyway, even nowadays. The little bag is given, so it is said, the bag with food and everything a person needs: a bottle of liquor (țuică), salt, thread, needle, everything a man needs, and also a chicken. That is not missing at any funeral: the chicken and bucket of water”.

And the practice of giving alms over the coffin is considered to have pagan origins and is discouraged by church rules (Măndiță, 2004, 31). However, even in this case, the beliefs practiced by the community are predominant, to the detriment of church teachings.

The objects that are given as alms over the coffin will be given to the deceased in the afterlife and, for this reason, it is considered important to fulfill this custom:

“The transmission of the objects that are given as alms, from the one who receives them in real life, the mediating recipient, to the deceased, as their recipient and beneficiary in the mythical plan, is done through consecration formulas, and, in some cases, through how they are communicated. The category of consecration formulas that indicate the deceased as the recipient includes the expressions uttered by the agent, by the one who transmits the alms: «let this be his alms» (să-i fie de pomană lui cutare), «let this be his» (să-i fie lui cutare), and the answer uttered by the recipient, which comes to strengthen its destination: «to whom it turned was destined» (să-i fie cui s-a sorocit)” (Larionescu, 2000, 91).

Mariana detailed how she organized this custom at her husband's funeral:

“A lot of people come, I gave the sweet cake over the coffin to one child, not to all. It is given over the coffin when the service is almost done. I gave a bucket, which is said to be a

<sup>30</sup> Interview with Muntean Emilia, resident in Orăștioara de Sus village, 49 years old.

<sup>31</sup> Interview with Dănescu Emilian, verger in Orăștioara de Sus village, 64 years old.

spring, with a candle and a sweet cake there in the bucket. I gave a round, woven sweet cake with a candle and a towel. And after that, I also assigned a hen and a bag as alms”<sup>32</sup>.

And Mioara, the priestess, told me some details about this custom:

“At the dead person's house, they assign (food) over the coffin to the relatives. A bag with food, during the funeral, before the dead is taken to the grave. They give away a bag, a bucket of water and a spoon. And to relatives, they shout and give over the coffin a towel or a handkerchief. A close relative is given a pot, and the others are given a towel with a sweet cake”<sup>33</sup>.

It can be said that this is the first moment in the funeral when alms are given, including practically everything a person would need.

The significance of the bucket given over the coffin would be the following, explained by Emilian:

“They give to a persona a ten-liter bucket with a cup tied from it, the person that receives the bucket has to bring water for thirty days to a person who will use the water in the house for drinking and preparing food”. This custom is called bringing a spring of water (a duce izvor de apă) and the duration of execution varies depending on the reports. It should be mentioned that not in all cases water is brought with the bucket given over the coffin, as Vasile told me: “And the person that receives the bucket has to bring water for six weeks. They keep the bucket and for six weeks they bring a spring of water because that's the good thing to do. Some people have animals and thus they bring milk, but not with the bucket”<sup>34</sup>.

The custom of bringing a spring of water is related to the significance of the spring which is a source of untouched water considered to be clean, thus suitable for performing rituals (Larionescu, 2000, 54-55). The custom described by informants is similar, or even identical to the custom of *carrying water* (*căratul apei*). The custom of carrying water, found in the east and south-east of Romania, involves carrying a bucket of water fresh out of the well, every day for forty days, to one of the gates of the villagers so they can use it for daily household activities. This way, the water will be received by the deceased in the afterlife (Larionescu, 2000, 31-32).

After the service is over and the food and objects are given over the coffin, the funeral procession will leave for the cemetery.

Before the procession could start, alms were offered again at the gate of the house, as Marian explained to me:

“Always, at the gate, when they leave with the priests, with the floral crowns, they all go to the cemetery. Then, during that time, they give sweet bread at the gate, a glass of wine or liquor (*țuică*<sup>35</sup>) depends on preference, sliced sweet cake and juice, sparkling water, stuff”<sup>36</sup>, and Aurelia added: “They also given sweet bread to children. Money is put in nine of those breads, a penny, and it is given to the children living near the area of the dead person's home”<sup>37</sup>.

At the departure of the procession, the order in which those who are part of the procession must be placed is the following, as told by the priest of the village of Orăștioara de Sus:

<sup>32</sup> Interview with Muntean Mariana, resident in Orăștioara de Sus village, 53 years old.

<sup>33</sup> Interview with Sturza Mioara, wife of father Mirecea Sturza, 58 years old.

<sup>34</sup> Interview with Dănescu Emilian, verger in Orăștioara de Sus village, 64 years old.

<sup>35</sup> *Țuică*, “Alcoholic beverage obtained by fermentation and distillation of plums or other fruits”, <https://dexonline.ro/definitie/%C8%9Buic%C4%83>, accessed 29.03.2021.

<sup>36</sup> Interview with Gridan Marian, epitrope in Orăștioara de Sus village, 56 years old.

<sup>37</sup> Interview with Gridan Aurelia, mother of epitrope Gridan Marian, resident in Orăștioara de Sus village, 75 years old.

“First comes the cross, after that the flags (*prapuri*)<sup>38</sup>, the priest, the floral crowns, and at last the coffin with the four people carrying it”<sup>39</sup>.

Olivia told me how the coffin was transported in the past:

“[...] They used to take it with their hands or if [the house] was further away from the cemetery would put it in a chariot, because there were no cars then. People brought flower crowns and put on them on the chariot. And whoever was closer to him put him in the chariot and sat on the coffin crying, especially for young people [that died], mother, father”<sup>40</sup>.

However, as Vasile mentioned, lately the coffin is taken to the cemetery with a car:

“In the past, they would take them with their arms, the gravediggers came and took the dead, only the gravedigger that started the pit had to stay by it. He never leaves the pit. The one that starts digging the pit, has to stay until the pit gets covered. And these other four carried [the dead] nicely, on two sticks, to the pit. Not nowadays. Now they put them nicely in the car, because there are enough, and take it by car”<sup>41</sup>.

A ritual that takes place on the way to the grave is described by the priest of Orăștioara de Sus village:

“While the coffin is in the yard, because we don't have a chapel, after the service is over, a spoon and a pot of holy water are given [to a person],

[the holy water] is thrown all the way from the deceased's house to the grave, where the litany is made and the coffin is stopped. The holy water is thrown with the spoon under the coffin and along the way at every stop until they reach the grave, and at every stop, the Gospel is said until you reach the grave”<sup>42</sup>.

And Silvia detailed the unfolding of this custom:

“We have five people to dig the pit, four of whom come to take the dead [to the grave] and one that must not leave the grave. One must sit by the pit until he [the dead] is buried. When they [the procession] leave with the dead, they put a pot of water under the table where the priest sings. And he [the priest] gives the pot of water to a widowed woman when they go to the grave. And that woman throws water whenever the priest stops and does sermons. And when they reach the grave, she gives it to the priest [the water] and he throws it there onto the grave”<sup>43</sup>.

The custom of stopping the funeral procession twelve times on the way to the cemetery and singing the litany of the dead at every stop is a widespread one in all parts of the country (Burada, 1882, 27).

The gravediggers are called *gropași* in Orăștioara de Sus. The custom says that there must be five gravediggers for every grave, all of whom are men from the village. A condition that could exclude someone from being a gravedigger is whether they helped bathe and clothe the deceased, as Marin said:

“And the people who washed and clothed him (the deceased) cannot be gravediggers or carry the flags

<sup>38</sup> *Prapur*, “Church flag depicting images of saints or biblical scenes, worn in processions or various other religious solemnities”, <https://dexonline.ro/definitie/prapur>, accessed 29.03.2021.

<sup>39</sup> Interview with Sturza Mircea, parish priest in Bucium village and Orăștioara de Sus village, 64 years old.

<sup>40</sup> Interview with Bodea Olivia, resident in Orăștioara de Sus village, 74 years old.

<sup>41</sup> Interview with Dunca Vasile, resident in Orăștioara de Sus village, 50 years old.

<sup>42</sup> Interview with Sturza Mircea, parish priest in Bucium village and Orăștioara de Sus village, 64 years old.

<sup>43</sup> Interview with Lătărescu Silvia, resident in Orăștioara de Sus village, 76 years old.

(prapuri), because they had contact with the dead”<sup>44</sup>.

This prohibition is given by the fact that once the body is lifeless it is considered to be defiled and thus anyone who touches it is excluded from the important roles in the funeral service (Argatu, 2016, 17-19).

The role of the gravediggers is a well-defined one and it is not limited to digging the grave, as Marin also explained:

“At the grave, there must be five gravediggers, four of whom must come to the service and take the dead man to put him in the car and to take him out [of the car], to put him back when they arrive, and one who stands to guard the grave. Because the tradition is that the gravediggers do not receive any monetary reward, they are rewarded for their work in another way, Claudia told me: “At the end of the funeral, a pot is given to each gravedigger and the one who started the grave receives soup in that pot”<sup>45</sup>.

About the last part of the funeral service, which takes place at the grave, the priest from Orăștioara de Sus mentioned the following:

“After the grave is done and they (the precession) get to the cemetery, I make the litany of the dead (ectenii morților) and then the dead is placed in the grave. It is sung «with the spirits of the righteous»”<sup>46</sup>.

A more detailed description of the litany of the dead is as follows:

“The priest utters these words, «Eternal remembrance, worthy of happiness and everlasting remembrance, our brother» (veșnica pomenire, vrednicule de fericire și pururi pomenire, fratele nostru), after

which it is sung three times: «Eternal remembrance» or «Lord, to Your sleeping servant (Name) make eternal remembrance» (Întru fericita adormire, veșnică odihna ta, Doamne, adormitului robului Tău (Name) și îi fă lui veșnică pomenire, after which the singers sing: «Eternal remembrance» (Veșnica pomenire) three times” (Măndiță, 2004, 16).

The importance of the litany of the dead is that through it the deceased remains both in the memory of the living and in the eternal memory of God (Măndiță, 2004, 16).

After the litany of the dead, other prayers are said for the soul of the deceased, followed by the descent of the coffin into the grave. Other customs take place when the coffin is lowered, as mentioned by Claudia:

“Some people throw some more coins in the pit, because it is said that it is the money with which he will appear up there [in Heaven] and then throw another lump of dirt so that they are not afraid”<sup>47</sup>.

This custom is common throughout the country because it is said that the coins thrown in the pit help the deceased to reach the afterlife, by using them to pay for customs (vămi<sup>48</sup>). The living give as much money as possible for getting through these customs, because the number of customs at which the deceased will be stopped is not known exactly (Larionescu, 2000, 81), considering that this number would be directly proportional to the number of sins the deceased has (Larionescu, 2000, 86).

<sup>44</sup> Interview with Urican Marin, resident in Orăștioara de Sus village.

<sup>45</sup> Interview with Urican Marin, resident in Orăștioara de Sus village.

<sup>46</sup> Interview with Sturza Mircea, parish priest in Bucium village and Orăștioara de Sus village, 64 years old.

<sup>47</sup> Interview with Pascu Claudia, daughter of epitrope Gridan Marian, ex-resident in Orăștioara de Sus village, 31 years old.

<sup>48</sup> *Vămi* (customs), “Places where the deceased is checked to see if he has sins [...] Customs security is provided by fierce beings, known generically as «customs officers». Incarnations of the genius of evil, «customs officers» are mythological creatures, with human physiognomy or belonging to the animal kingdom”, Sanda Larionescu, *Apa în riturile legate de moarte*, București, Editura Univers, 2000, p. 86.

This custom of throwing money or coins into the pit is one disapproved of by the teachings of the church:

“You do not put money to the dead's fingers or into his hand, you give them to poor children and to helpless old people. The money, thus given as alms, eases the soul of the deceased; and those put to the finger, hand, or thrown into the pit, plunge into sin the people who give them for the dead and the soul of the dead” (Măndiță, 2004, 28).

Also, the custom of those present at the funeral to throw a lump of dirt is a well-known one in all areas of the country, but, unlike what we learned from informants about the protective role of this gesture, it is performed with the phrase “Să-i fie țărâna ușoară” (Marian, 1892, 326), a translation of the Latin expression SIT TIBI TERRA LEVIS<sup>49</sup>, which is synonymous with the expression “Rest in peace!”<sup>50</sup>.

Then the priest pours oil, ashes and wine over the coffin, custom that has a Christian meaning:

“The oil poured over the dead reminds us that he finished the good fight and that the Tree of Jesus Christ remained, that he was nourished by the oil of the Divine Gift. The ashes poured out of the censer show that the words of Scripture are true: «I am dust, dust, and ashes» (Acts of the Apostles 18:27). The wine, called «paus» (kinship) is an icon, a symbol of the Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Măndiță, 2004, 17).

Another important moment that marks the end of the service is the sealing of the tomb, which takes place just before the coffin is covered with dirt, and is explained by Claudia:

“[...] the priest throws earth on the coffin in the sign of the holy cross and says that the tomb will only be opened at the second coming”<sup>51</sup>.

We must also dwell on the role played by the decorated fir tree in the funeral, explained by the priest of Orăștioara de Sus:

“And on the day of the funeral the fir tree is brought home to the family and then they all go to church with the procession. They dig the hole and make a square hole half a meter below the grave, about the thickness of the tree. The fir tree is placed first and the coffin is left at the edge of the grave, and after the fir tree is placed and lifted because it is difficult to lift, the coffin is placed. And on the road, a verse is sung. This is a tradition, it is not part of the Orthodox custom. Elsewhere where I lived, for example at Ilia, they did not bring a fir tree to young people”<sup>52</sup>.

Coincidentally my visit for the second round of interviews coincided with the death of an unmarried man from Bucium village, a village that is also part of Orăștioara de Sus commune. Father Mircea Sturza (responsible for the Orthodox parish in the villages of Orăștioara de Sus and Bucium) told me about a death in one of his parishes:

“Now in Bucium, I had a dead struck by lightning at Grădiște. He was in my parish. He was a 46-year-old boy from Bucium. They took the fir tree, they left it at the end of the village, they decorated it with ribbons, handkerchiefs and a bell placed on top of the tree”<sup>53</sup>.

Father Sturza urged me to go to the Bucium cemetery to see the tree and take photos for documentation (can be seen at Fig. 1.) Although it should be mentioned that the tree in the pictures is an atypical one due to an

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<https://dexonline.ro/definitie/a%20fi%20C8%9B%C4%83r%C3%A2na%20u%C8%99oar%C4%83>, accessed 3.05.2020.

<sup>50</sup> <https://dexonline.ro/definitie/a%20fi%20C8%9B%C4%83r%C3%A2na%20u%C8%99oar%C4%83>, accessed 3.05.2020.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>52</sup> Interview with Sturza Mircea, parish priest in Bucium village and Orăștioara de Sus village, 64 years old.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibidem*.

incident that took place at the funeral and told by Emilia:

“At Bucium the tree broke and fell on the people. Well, it broke because they brought it from a plantation, and those are thin, and the tip was too long. When they picked it up, it broke in two. Normally they should lift it with a crane. But with hands and ropes, how do you lift it, as it has I don't know how many meters because he was 46 years old”<sup>54</sup>.

The fir tree has to have the same amount of meters, as the dead person's age. Breaking the tree is considered a bad sign, foretelling that the next man in the village who will die will be unmarried.

After the funeral, an important moment is the alms. Those who attended the funeral are invited by the priest or the family to a meal, as told by Emilian:

“After the funeral, there is the alms with a proper meal, with the procession that took the dead man from home to the cemetery where he is buried, and the whole population is invited by the priest to the hall, where food, drinks are served and that's it”<sup>55</sup>.

The alms can take place either at home or, in the case of Orăștioara de Sus, there is the option to keep the alms at a former bakery, transformed into a place for such events, as Trandafir told me:

“We have a former bakery here which we did for events like these: for weddings, baptisms, funerals, and the people make them there. Well, it's better than in houses or yards, maybe it's raining too. There they have everything, everything they need”.

A condition that must be taken into account in the preparation of dishes for alms is that, if the period in which it takes place

coincides with the period of fasting (post<sup>56</sup>), the food must be fit for fasting, like the priest from Orăștioara de Sus points out:

“And the alms after the funeral is made depending on whether it is fasting time or not”<sup>57</sup>.

However, Trandafir told me that this situation is still flexible and exceptions can be made:

“If it is a normal day, they make normal food, it is fasting, for fasting. It depends on how it goes. Now it is up to the family, if the family does not want it [the food to be made for fasting], the priest did not impose himself, he allowed it”. The priest says how we should do it, but I had a case in which people said: «My father did not fast all his life, he only wanted normal food!» and the priest was not so imposing as to say, «It is not possible!» He made it work all the time, there were never any problems in our parish”<sup>58</sup>.

Nevertheless, it seems that the alms at the house of the deceased is rather specific to the past because people now opt for renting the former bakery's venue, as Rodica explained:

“In the past, it (the alms) was done at the house of the dead and you would arrange tables, chairs and borrow cutlery. It has always been like this for me, I have had eight funerals here, at this house, since I came”<sup>59</sup>.

Olivia told me how alms were performed in her childhood:

<sup>54</sup> Interview with Muntean Emilia, resident in Orăștioara de Sus village, 49 years old.

<sup>55</sup> Interview with Dănescu Emilian, verger in Orăștioara de Sus village, 64 years old

<sup>56</sup> Post, “Restriction on eating certain foods (of animal origin) prescribed to believers by the Church on certain days or at certain times of the year”, <https://dexonline.ro/definitie/post>, accessed 29. 03. 2021.

<sup>57</sup> Interview with Sturza Mircea, parish priest in Bucium village and Orăștioara de Sus village, 64 years old.

<sup>58</sup> Interview with Muntean Trandafir, resident in Orăștioara de Sus village, 48 years old.

<sup>59</sup> Interview with Muntean Rodica, resident in Orăștioara de Sus village, 84 years old.

“When we were young at the alms everyone went to the table and cut the bread in four and gave to each person a candle and a piece of bread. And they ate at the table, and the relatives were called there to help to give alms, and they [the relatives] were given another meal after they had helped”<sup>60</sup>.

Lidia mentioned to me a custom that is not around anymore, called evening alms:

“And another custom was lost, in the past they would do evening alms. After they (the dead) are buried, they [the family and acquaintances] had dinner the next night. And you didn't give the same leftover food from the other day: if there was sour soup for alms, the next evening you would give noodle soup and something else”<sup>61</sup>.

Another alms can be organized six weeks after the funeral, as well as on other occasions, as Marian told me:

“They give alms at six weeks [from the person's death], no longer than six weeks, and all the acquaintances of the family and also the priest, deacons, verger and epitrope are invited. Another alms is given at six months, there the alms are made at the church and a sweet cake is made specifically for alms, a candle is given, a glass of juice and a package is given with what each person wants, wafers, and other stuff. Alms are given after one year [from the person's death], as well. And when alms are given at six months and a year, a memorial service is made at church. A memorial service, and the memorial they bring the sweet cake (*parastas*<sup>62</sup>), and sweets are placed next to it, a bottle of wine, a candle, and the dead must be written on a

table (from which the priest will read its name)”<sup>63</sup>.

The threshold of six weeks is marked by a series of customs: if the fir tree taken to the grave breaks within six weeks, someone unmarried will die next; the duty of the one who received the bucket over the coffin to bring a spring of water to the family of the deceased comes to an end; the period in which the soul of the man traveled everywhere where he had been in life, comes to an end; at the six-week memorial, the person who bathed and dressed the deceased receives clothes.

The days after the funeral are still important for the soul of the deceased, so a series of rituals and customs take place to help the soul reach the afterlife safely. Such a custom was mentioned by Rodica:

“And three days after burying the dead, the person's family goes to the cemetery and incenses the tomb, goes around the tomb with a candle on and calls someone to give a sweetbread and a candle over the grave”<sup>64</sup>.

The giving of sweetbread and candles over the grave has the same meaning as the other moments when alms are offered, the fact that everything offered by alms will belong to the deceased in the afterlife, with the mention that the candle would be the source of light used by the deceased to reach the afterlife safely (Larionescu, 2000, 100).

Mariana told me about a custom that takes place in the days following the funeral:

“After the person's death, in the house where the wake was held, food and water and liquor (*țuică*) are put on the table for three days and the light bulb is left on for three days. For three days I left the light bulb on and put food there from everything that was on alms, I put it on plates and the light bulb stayed on for three nights. They say the dead man comes and tastes everything left there. And usually

<sup>60</sup> Interview with Bodea Olivia, resident in Orăștioara de Sus village, 74 years old.

<sup>61</sup> Interview with Romășan Lidia, resident in Orăștioara de Sus village, 80 years old.

<sup>62</sup> *Parastas*, “The sweetbread used for the memorial service and given to the priest”, <https://dexonline.ro/definitie/parastas>, accessed 29. 03. 2021

<sup>63</sup> Interview with Gridan Marian, epitrope in Orăștioara de Sus village, 56 years old.

<sup>64</sup> Interview with Muntean Rodica, resident in Orăștioara de Sus village, 84 years old.

drinks liquor (țuică). Someone [from the household] drinks either the liquor or the water and says: «Oh, he drank the liquor because he liked it!»<sup>65</sup>.

Of course, this custom is based on local traditions, not Christian teachings, and is consistent with the belief that the soul travels after death to the places where it was during life.

If the dead person was unmarried, the whole week after the funeral they (family, villagers and friends) go to his grave and sing the Song of the Fir Tree, as Mariana said:

“Yes, to someone young, who is not married, a fir tree is brought (by family, villagers and friends). As old is the person, as many meters the tree must have. And they put it at the end of the village, they do not enter the village with him. At the end of the village, they decorate it, as you decorate the gate when you have a wedding with ribbons and handkerchiefs. They decorate it and then the girls and boys come and sing the Song of the Fir Tree for three days, until the deceased is buried. After that, another week after burying him, each evening, they go to the cemetery and sing the Song of the Fir Tree”<sup>66</sup>.

We must specify that all the preparations and funeral customs, including the meal after the funeral, are the responsibility of the family and the friends of the deceased. The way the family executes all the customs is important for the deceased peace in the afterlife. Thus, there is the problem of those who do not have family or close friends to take care of these preparations.

There was a very dramatic case in the village that most informants knew about, but the story was told to me in detail by Vasile:

“It happened here in our village, many years ago... a man from Maramureș. They (people from the village sent a message to the man's son when he died) sent a nice message to his son to

come. He came and he didn't recognize him. His wife did not recognize him and they kept him at the morgue for almost a year! And after almost a year, so he had 29 days until one year was up, someone called the hall from the morgue in Deva and asked if anyone could bury him otherwise, he would be cremated. And we collected money from everyone who wanted to give it, we didn't force anyone... Someone went from house to house and they collected money, made a nice alms and a funeral and buried him”<sup>67</sup>.

Thus, if there is no family or relatives to take care of the funeral and other customs, this responsibility is assumed by the local authorities and the villagers who want to help. Emilian explained to me that in no way the absence of the family or relatives of a deceased person means that no one will take care of everything necessary for a funeral:

“The priest announces the people's council together with the mayor. And we get in touch and the mayor alongside me [the verger] does everything, the funeral, everything and we bury him. So no one remains unburied”<sup>68</sup>.

In conclusion, during the funeral, there is a set of customs, either of religious origin or related to the specifics of the region, organized according to an order well known by the community and even by the parish priest.

From the discussions with the informants and with the priest of Orăștioara de Sus, Mircea Sturza, I understood that, although for the priest the distinction between local traditions and church norms is clear, for those in his parish this distinction is not clear, the two being combined at the level of people's mentality. Thus, the father accepts the practice of these non-Christian habits because he understands their importance they hold for the

<sup>65</sup> Interview with Muntean Mariana, resident in Orăștioara de Sus village, 53 years old.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>67</sup> Interview with Dunca Vasile, resident in Orăștioara de Sus village, 50 years old.

<sup>68</sup> Interview with Dănescu Emilian, verger in Orăștioara de Sus village, 64 years old.



peace of the family and relatives of the deceased.

As we have mentioned above, many of these customs are spread throughout the country, others are specific to the geographical area, but all are performed according to an important order of rituals to ensure the safe passage of the soul to the afterlife. In cases where the performance of these rituals is endangered, the consequences can be serious and in this sense, we have the example of transforming the soul into undead. However, in all situations, efforts are made to ensure that the funeral ceremony and the related customs are carried out according to the usual course to avoid possible repercussions, as in the example of the deceased person without family or relatives in the area. Also, even after the funeral, the responsibility of the living towards the soul of the deceased does not end but continues throughout their lives through memorials and alms.

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## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS/ LISTA ILUSTRĂȚILOR

**Fig. 1.** Fir tree decorated with ribbons and handkerchiefs in the cemetery of Bucium village.





## THE PURGATORY OF REGIONAL IDENTITY FIRST PART

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**Abstract:** *In this article we propose a theoretical approach to regional identity – starting from the example of Alsace and Transylvania in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries – from a transdisciplinary and non-canonical perspective for research methodology specific to historical studies. We will bring into play concepts and practices in the field of theology, literary criticism and esotericism.*

**Keywords:** *Purgatory, regional identities, transdisciplinarity.*

**Rezumat:** *În prezentul articol ne propunem o abordare teoretică a identității regionale – pornind de la exemplul Alsaciei și Transilvaniei din secolele XIX-XX –, dintr-o perspectivă transdisciplinară și necanonică pentru metodologia de cercetare specifică studiilor istorice. Au fost valorificate concepte și practici din domeniul teologiei, criticii literare și ezoterismului.*

**Cuvinte cheie:** *Purgatoriu, identități regionale, transdisciplinaritate.*

The process of creating nation-states in nineteenth-twentieth century Europe inevitably generated a strong phenomenon of polarization of collective identities, the connection between *us* and *others* being translated by the group of “the good”, irreducibly opposed to the group of “the bad”. If we place this relationship between identity and otherness in an archetypal geography, then it would give rise to two antinomic spaces, which, by their mutual exclusion, confirm each other, in a way full of contradictions. In other words, “our camp”, “the camp of the good”, will always be placed in *Paradise*, while their camp, “of the bad”, will always be placed in *Hell*. In these conditions, there is no middle ground, and in order to be better understood, for example, the creation of Greater Romania was done to the detriment of Greater Hungary, the two nations fighting for one and the same territory with all the conviction of the justice of their cause: Transylvania<sup>1</sup>. The specificity of this relationship of maximum opposition, which works according to its rules *either-or* (“either

us, or you”) is that of an image reflected upside down: for *us*, *the others* (in the sense of the other nation with which we entered into a conflict of interest) are the embodiment of *the opposite*. Inevitably, others relate to *us* according to the same principle.

As in the imaginary realm of fairy tales or legends, the actions of the main character monopolized the entire narrative, all reduced to how, for example, a Romanian Prince Charming, Făt-Frumos fought the forces of evil, how he killed the dragon and how, in the end released, the Queen of Flowers, Ileana Cosânziana, with whom he lived happily ever after. Wasn’t the same scenario applied for the Romanian-Hungarian conflict, in the case of Transylvania, or for the Franco-German one, in the case of Alsace? On this occasion, we can distinguish some archetypal characteristics, which have applicability in real life: the winner of the war also takes the role of Făt-Frumos; the one who loses the war gets the role of “zmeu”/ dragon; the conquered province (Alsace, Transylvania, etc.) acquires the feminine role of Ileana Cosânziana with all its attributes.

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<sup>1</sup> To which Banat, Crișana and Maramureș are obviously added.

As in the field of literary criticism<sup>2</sup>, in historical studies the narration was made mainly from the “perspective of Făt-Frumos”, i.e., from that of the winner. We could rightly object that there was a “dragon’s perspective” on the events, a vision that competed with that of the winner. Yes, that is right, only with the mention that, permanently, the dragon considered himself a Făt-Frumos, being convinced that he had every right to fight for his cause and for his happiness, because he was really in love with Ileana Cosânziana, with whom he wanted to start a family. As for the latter, she had a passive role, being stolen by the dragon and locked in a tower/ castle placed on *the Other Realm*. Until her release, Ileana Cosânziana did nothing but *wait and cry*, and shortly after, she married Făt-Frumos and “[...] they lived happily in peace and quietness for many years, and if what the world says is true, that for prince charmings time is everlasting, then maybe they are still alive today” (Eminescu 2011. 10).

We were too little interested in what was happening with Ileana Cosânziana or, otherwise reformulated for our case, with *the collective identities of the second degree* or with the regional identities. From the little information we have about Ileana Cosânziana, we know that when Făt-Frumos came, “she threw herself on his neck, but, dumbfounded by joy, she could only straighten her dull and blind eyes on him, with which she would have wanted to suck him into her soul. Then she took his hand and showed him the bath of tears” (Eminescu 2011. 10). In other words, we can deduce from here the following characteristic features of Ileana Cosânziana: she was a character of extreme feelings, suddenly passing from agony to ecstasy, from the feeling of acute depression to that of absolute happiness; due to the shock of the meeting with Făt-Frumos, Ileana Cosânziana had serious communication problems, as she could not express herself verbally coherently, but only gesturally, in a spasmodic way; she

had a long, painful waiting. We could say that in this way the general characteristics of *Purgatory* are drawn, a space of expectation, uncertainty and suffering, placed at the confluence of good and evil.

Meditating on the regional identities of Alsace and Transylvania (19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> centuries), of which we were particularly interested, we reached the conclusion that, to return to the metaphor of archetypal spaces, they could neither be placed in Paradise, nor in Hell, but in a *third space*, in *Purgatory*, seen as a huge territory of development of psychic instability and polymorphism of regional identity (Grancea 2009. 15). The allegory described by Ileana Cosânziana’s situation is revealing for deciphering the general characteristics of collective identities in many border regions, as well as for the almost psychoanalytic decoding of cultural regionalism, in its hypostasis of external manifestation of regional identity.

Despite its position between Paradise and Hell, Purgatory is not in the middle, at a symmetrical distance from the two extremes, one positive and one negative, one above and one below. Rather, as Jacques Le Goff – whose ideas, moreover, triggered and stimulated this study – observed, Purgatory is “a proper spatial interval, which wanders and widens between Paradise and Hell.”, the “attraction of the two poles” being exercised on it (Le Goff 1995. 26). It comes to replace and, at the same time, to put together, what the Christians of the West have imagined, on the one hand, through those pre-paradises in the *refrigerium* or through the “place” designated by *the bosom of Abraham*, and on the other hand, through the upper part of Hell. The invocation of Purgatory marks the transition from a binary scheme of thought to a ternary one, thus placing on the mental map an intermediate concept/ space (Le Goff 1995. 28). However, an important thing to emphasize is that we are dealing with an asymmetrical ternary scheme, because “in the end, Purgatory will not be a true, a perfect intermediary. Reserved for the complete purification of the future elect, it will incline to Paradise. A staggered intermediary, it will not be in the center, but in an upward deviated interval” (Le Goff 1995. 27). At the same time, it is a “lame triad”, because Purgatory is transitory and ephemeral, no matter how long

<sup>2</sup> There should be noted the major paradigm shift introduced by Virgil Nemoianu in his work, *O teorie a secundarului/ A Theory of the Secondary* (Nemoianu 2017), which emphasizes the importance of secondary characters in the general framework of the narrative of a novel.

the wait for penance, while Hell and Paradise are eternal and “irreversible”. Like Ileana Cosânziana, who waited sadly for her release by Făt-Frumos, in the case of regional identities in Alsace and Transylvania, there were also several similar moods in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Purgatory predisposes those inside to experience strong and contrasting feelings. The hope of entering Paradise and the threat of falling into Hell are constantly alternating, because, by definition, Purgatory is a space of waiting and temporary, without knowing what the final conclusion is. Moreover, even in moments of optimism, when the possibility of liberation from suffering is glimpsed, insecurity and anxiety are not dispelled (Carpov 1995. 8), all being reduced to a sudden, dizzying and endless whirlwind around the same chain of penance and addiction. We can say that the psychology of Purgatory is a bipolar one, where the feelings of euphoria, depression, melancholy, enthusiasm, irritation or inner emptiness coexist and follow one another. But Purgatory is characterized not only by a two-stroke action, but also by an anxious expectation and a defeated passivity; the whole suite of intense feelings smoldering, being clogged in a swamp or sunk at the base of a stagnant and motionless lake<sup>3</sup>.

It is no coincidence that we have just alluded to fire and water. The dungeons of Purgatory are, to a large extent, similar to those of Hell. Among the various tortures, those that burn (which are the most common) and those that freeze stand out in particular (Le Goff 1995. 28). In other words, fire and water have become a pair of opposing elements, which do not neutralize each other, but alternate in a sadistic way. To a large extent, Purgatory consists of the juxtaposition of “a place of fire and a place of moisture, a place of warmth and a place of cold, a burning element and an icy element. And the fundamental test to which they are subjected to

death in Purgatory is not the simple passage through fire, but the alternative passage through fire and water, a kind of probative Scottish shower” (Le Goff 1995. 31). The same is true of regional identity, which always passes from states of exaltation and enthusiasm to states of depression and melancholy.

From a hermetic perspective, the presence or absence of the fire element is responsible for the presence or absence<sup>4</sup> of: action, enthusiasm, courage, optimism, patience, etc. Regarding the mode of action of the water element, it is responsible for the presence or absence of: love, happiness, satisfaction, etc. But as we are dealing with Purgatory, if we were to make a tarot display dedicated to regional identities, in terms of fire, the following minor arcana would fall into a straight position: five of wands and ten of wands; and in the upside-down position: Ace of wands, two of wands, three of wands, four of wands, six of wands, seven of wands, eight of wands, and nine of wands. As for the water element, the following minor arcana would fall into a straight position: four of cups, five of cups and seven of cups; and in the upside-down position: Ace of cups, two of cups, three of cups, six of cups, eight of cups, nine of cups, and ten of cups.

We have mentioned the minor arcana – except for the “court cards”, for reasons of space – because they are best suited to the situation of Purgatory; in their case – unlike the major arcana, which belong to the logic of the divine or destiny –, people have a greater power of action, there is the possibility of changing the given situation<sup>5</sup>. Keeping the same hermetic interpretation lens, we can see that the air element is absent. Rather, we could say that the air element is blocked. Returning to Ileana Cosânziana, she was “dumbfounded by joy” (and certainly just as dumbfounded by sadness, before the sight of Făt-Frumos), thus

<sup>3</sup> We can mention here the silent lake formed by the tears of the ex-wives – locked in the castle, like Ileana Cosânziana – of the Blue-Bearded Prince, from the homonymous opera (*A kékszakállú herceg vára*) composed by Béla Bartók, on a libretto written by Béla Baláz.

<sup>4</sup> Either good or bad use of the elements.

<sup>5</sup> Very often, both tarot textbooks and scholarly research or hermetic interpretations were limited to the analysis of the twenty-two major arcana. From our point of view, it would be worth paying equal attention to the minor arcana, because life is not only made up of the marks of destiny, but also of the small things which are “human, too human”.

emphasizing the inability to communicate and externalize the true inner feelings. If we were to synthesize these states of mind through tarot cards, the following minor arcana would fall into a straight position: two of swords, three of swords, four of swords, five of swords, seven of swords, eight of swords, nine of swords, ten of swords; and in the inverted position: Ace of swords and six of swords.

We apologise for this too dry and too encrypted sequence of tarot cards! But those familiar with divinatory techniques can easily decode, through a completely non-canonical approach to the science of history, the psychological characteristics of the *Purgatory of regional identity*. The detailed description of each tarot card, applied to our case, would take us dozens of pages, which is not the purpose of this short introductory text. However, this approach should be explored in a separate article.

As we were saying, fire is the main element through which torture or purification is carried out in Purgatory. Similarly to Jacques Le Goff, we ask ourselves what are the properties of this sacred fire? In response, the French historian stated: “«In the rites of initiation,» says G. van der Leeuw, «it is the fire that erases the period of past existence and makes possible a new one.» So a rite of passage is very appropriate in this transitory place. Purgatory is one of those marginal rites, as van Gennep called them, the importance of which anthropologists have not always realized, being absorbed in the phases of separation and aggregation that open and end the rites of passage” (Le Goff 1995. 28-29). In this order of ideas, the collective identities of Alsace and Transylvania of the 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> centuries – the situation can be applied to other historical and geographical areas – were “burned” by this fire which had the role of erasing past or present traumas and prepare for entry into the new political, administrative and national structures. However, as the psychology of Purgatory is bipolar, even after the event considered liberating – the creation of Greater Romania or the return of Alsace to France, also after the First World War –, marked by an overflowing short-lived enthusiasm, regional identities re-entered a depression, which, in fact, changed only the form, not the substance of the problem. In this

sense, the phenomenon “le malaise alsacien” is known, characterized by a discomfort, an indisposition of the Alsatian collective identity, due to the multiple incompatibilities with France, which occurred after 1918. For the case of interwar Transylvania, after the initial exaltation, many Romanian Transylvanians were disappointed in their expectations by Greater Romania, so that a large part of the Hungarians would enter into a real collective depression caused by the loss of the war, a depression from which they have not fully recovered to this day.

Purgatory is a “place of punishment [which] involves the clarification of the soul’s connections with the body,” in conditions where “the souls detached from the body were endowed with a *sui generis* materiality, so that the punishments of Purgatory could torment them as bodies are tormented” (Le Goff 1995. 26). In this way, the alchemical element earth, which is directly related to the body and all the material aspects of life, comes to our attention. If we were to perform another tarot display, in order to decipher the psychology of regional identity, the following minor arcana would appear in an upright position: two of coins, five of coins and seven of coins. In the inverted position there would be: Ace of coins, three of coins, four of coins, six of coins, eight of coins, nine of coins and ten of coins.

An important fact to emphasize, Jacques Le Goff recalled that – capitalizing on the ideas of Edward T. Hall in *The Hidden Dimension* – “the territory is an extension of the animal and human organism [...] and that the territory is an internalization of space, organized by thinking. [...] The organization of different spaces: geographical, economic, political, ideological, etc., in which society moves, is a very important aspect of their history” (Le Goff 1995. 23-24). In this interpretive direction, we could say that the sufferings of regional identity are caused, to an important extent, by the complicated relationship of regional communities with the space they live in. The problem of otherness is first of all a problem/ expression of space, this being demonstrated even by the Latin origin of the word: “Thus, the same word (*altus*) means both «high» and «deep»: what [language] retained is the distance in relation to the

inhabitant, not the situation in an objectively oriented space” (Brague 2002. 36).

Living in an intermediate space, positioned between good and evil (or between other forms of manifestation of binary systems), does not offer a reassuring state at all. The feeling is that of endless oscillation between paradigms *both-and*, *neither-nor*, respectively, translated by this paradoxical double hypostasis: “both outside and inside”, “neither outside, nor inside”. In other words, it is the mood of waiting on an entrance hallway in a house: we are inside the building, but we are not “really” or “completely”, in the sense that we are no longer outside the house, but not in the living room or in the bedroom, either, i.e., in a stable space, where we can relax freely. The fact of being in Purgatory generates an extremely uncomfortable experience, due to *the long stay in a liminal or passage space*, which can be compared to waiting (indefinitely) on the corridor of a hospital, in front of the door of the doctor who can save our life/ soul. But the greater the hope of salvation, the greater will be the disappointment that *it is no longer possible to cross the threshold of the office door*. We can see that the patient has made great progress because he has reached the doctor’s door (so he is no longer outside the building), but, nevertheless, he still remains unconsulted and untreated, his only certain condition being the expectation marked by the double absurd feeling, yet true, of hope-despair.

Purgatory, being neither Paradise nor Hell, *is a neutral interstitial space*. However, *Neutral is not as neutral a concept as we would think at first glance*, in the sense that *it is not something devoid of features, neutral, neutralizing or something that stays on the sidelines forever and does not get involved on either side*. On the contrary, according to Roland Barthes, “the Neutral does not refer to «impressions» of gray, of «neutrality», of indifference. Neutral – My Neutral – can refer to intense, strong, unique states. «To defeat the paradigm» is an ardent, hot activity” (Barthes 2017. 39), all this in the conditions in which, in the conception of the French man of culture, “Neutral [is] everything that defeats the paradigm”; “The opposition between two virtual terms of which I update one, to speak, to make sense” is understood by paradigm

(Barthes 2017. 37). Thus, the Neutral is no longer innocent, because it still makes a vital choice for the Principal – producing meaning, direction and imbalance – between One and Two, between Male and Female, between Up and Down, between Right and Left, between Good and Bad, etc. To express ourselves in a pretentious legal language, the Neutral is the third party that decides the power ratio in an initial binary system, by adding a structuring codicil.

The neutral is not at a *crossroads*, but is placed in a *trivium*, as the Romans understood the intersection, as a meeting of three roads, not four<sup>6</sup>. Expressing ourselves in a metaphorical but eloquent way, returning to the issue of regional identities, we can say that the *trivium* we mentioned consists, in our case, of the intersection of two competing highways (representing national “strong identities”) with a winding path (representing the regional “weak identity”<sup>7</sup>). Being put in the situation of choosing one of the two major identity paths that are looming in front, the regional identity will become, willingly or unwillingly, *a random and/ or electing identity*, as well, an appendix, either completely unimportant, or as “small stumps that overturn the big cart”.

In the conditions of the occurrence of an asymmetrical tripartition/ triad, we must also mention Hecate, the three-headed goddess, who, as a protector of the crossroads, was located at the intersection of the Greco-Roman roads (*trivium*). Through her attributes, Hecate describes very well the problematic interstitial positioning of the Neutral as well as the psychological characteristics of Purgatory, seen as a third space: the state of death and rebirth (since Hecate is a goddess of the “New Moon” or “Dark Moon”), confusion (since Hecate is a goddess of fog) and inconsistent or less orthodox things (since Hecate is a goddess of magic) (Kernbach 1989. 216).

Returning to the unbalanced triadic relationship imposed by the Neutral, it is the generator of a new meaning, of a “flat”

<sup>6</sup> “What we call a crossroads (of four roads), Latin saw as a *trivium* (three roads); while we rise above space and see here four directions, the novel does not see where it comes from” (Brague 2002. 36).

<sup>7</sup> On “strong identities” and “weak identities”, cf. (Trifescu 2019. 25-26).



meaning, an impure one, which escapes the binary logic of *either-or*, due to the destabilization triggered by a conflict that is no longer symmetrical. In this order of ideas, Roland Barthes argued that: “from a Saussurean perspective, to which, in this respect, I remain faithful, the paradigm is the source of meaning; where there is meaning, there is paradigm, and where there is paradigm (opposition), there is meaning → elliptically speaking: meaning is based on conflict (choosing a term against another) and any conflict is a generator of meaning: you choose *one* and you reject *another*, this always means sacrificing meaning, producing meaning, consuming it” (Barthes 2017. 38), all this considering that “Neutrality as desire always stages a paradox: as an object, it means suspension of violence; as desire, it is violence” (Barthes 2017. 49).

After all that has been stated so far, we consider that these ideas and examples – which can give, at first sight, the idea of an ideational mess – should be capitalized by historians in their research on regional identities. This (perhaps too) theoretical material must be applied to concrete examples, Alsace and Transylvania of the 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> centuries offering us an extremely fertile ground for its intellectual exploitation. The research methodology specific to historians has not satisfied us for a long time. For us, it is not the sequence or description of past events that truly represents History, but the understanding of the inner mechanisms of historical phenomena which are almost invisible. Only an eclectic approach – in which to combine in a functional way subjectivity, intuition, randomness, contradiction, ambiguity, mystery and transdisciplinarity – can free us from the grip of: intellectual convenience, commonplaces, scientific capping and the false impression that we have discovered the “Historical truth.” In this sense, Gaston Bachelard’s ideas, which can be successfully applied in our case, are also widely cited: “We will ask philosophers for the right to use philosophical elements detached from the systems in which they were born. The philosophical force of a system is sometimes concentrated in a particular function. Why should we hesitate to propose this particular function to scientific thought

which so desperately needs principles of philosophical organization? Is it a sacrilege, for example, to take an epistemological apparatus as wonderful as the Kantian *category* and to demonstrate its interest in the organization of scientific thought? If an eclecticism of ends unjustly mixes all systems, it seems that an eclecticism of means is admirable for a philosophy of science that wants to cope with all the tasks of scientific thinking, that wants to account for different types of theory, that wants to measure the beating of their applications, which wants, first of all, to emphasize the very varied procedures of discovery, be they the most risky. We will also ask philosophers to break with the ambition to find a single point of view and a fixed point of view in order to judge the whole of such a vast and changing science [...]. In order to characterize the philosophy of science, we will then arrive at a single philosophical pluralism capable of informing the so diverse elements of experience and theory, so far from being all at the same degree of philosophical maturity. We will define the philosophy of science as a dispersed philosophy, *a distributed philosophy*. Conversely, scientific thinking will appear to us as a well-ordered method of dispersion, as a very fine method of analysis, for the various philosophies too massively grouped in philosophical systems.// From scientists we will demand the right to divert science for a moment from its positive work, from its will to objectivity in order to discover what remains subjective in the strictest methods. We will begin by asking scientists psychological questions and gradually prove to them that any psychology is in solidarity with metaphysical postulates. [...]” (Bachelard 1986. 277-278).

Studying the psychology of regional identities can be extremely useful for understanding the world and history in general. Looking at things from the binary perspective of national identities, we can agree with Jean Paul Sartre, according to whom: “Hell is other people”. But from the ternary perspective of regional identities, long neglected by *mainstream* historiography, we can say that: *Purgatory is in us!*

Translated by Ana-Magdalena Petraru

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## **C. REVIEWS**



**LOOKING FOR THE RE-FOUND BODY. AN EGO-ANALYSIS OF THE HOSPITAL BY  
VINTILĂ MIHĂILESCU  
(REVIEW)**

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Vintilă Mihăilescu, perhaps the most famous Romanian anthropologist of our time, needs no introduction about his work and cultural involvement. The present review will concern, therefore, only his last book and the exceptional circumstances that made it possible. It is still difficult to speak of the *late* anthropologist, of his *last* work, or of the things concerning him, in the past tense. But unfortunately this is the case. Being so much passionate about the Story as a fruition of life, he (re)shaped his own *exitus* as a gripping narrative, rendered in this book as it unfolded. So, how did it all happen?

Already a victor in two previous games with Death, Vintilă Mihăilescu finds out that he is seriously ill one more time and tries to put up a good fight. He constructs a sense of the menacing present by writing about his experience. For the disciplined anthropologist, his own illness is a case study in which the analysand and the analyst are one and the same person. He manages to tame the anxiety of the terrible diagnosis of acute myeloid leukaemia by keeping a diary, conducting an anthropological research, and converting both into a (this) book. In light of the events that were yet to come, we know now that the experience he was undergoing was that of approaching death. He intellectualised his coming-to-terms with death by calling the disease into question and thus postponing the final confrontation. The defence he built eventually collapsed after about two years of illness (he was diagnosed with leukaemia in 2018, published *Looking for the Re-found Body*<sup>1</sup> in 2019, and died on March 21, 2020). But while writing the book, he could have at least hoped for the opposite outcome, as shown by the dedicatory lines praising the

doctors, wife and friends that are being thanked for keeping the author alive.

The autobiography *Looking for the Re-Found Body* illustrates an optimistic point of view. The paradoxical title reflects the idea of a new beginning: the so-called *re-found body*, different both from the healthy body prior to the illness, and the sick body laying in a hospital bed, reveals itself at home, during the short permissions taken from the oncological “camp”, as *the present body* which incarnates the author’s extreme hope to still have a future. Vintilă Mihăilescu calls his own body “poor Gaspard”, possibly a hint to Dickens’ poor, revengeful and finally avenged Gaspard from *The Tale of Two Cities*. It is an unknown body, full of possible surprises, but able to support life. We may ask why should one still look for it, if it has already been found? The metaphoric quest in the title refers to getting to know that new-found body, its processes, its possibilities, its needs. The new-found body becomes a partner, hopefully even a friend, or maybe even more than that. As he lays dying (to paraphrase a famous title), the anthropologist made an important discovery: “we don’t *own* a body, we *are* a body” (emphasis his, p. 70).

The seven chapters of the book do not reflect the chronology of the illness. They place some landmarks in the hospital scenery, instead. They seem to have been all simultaneously written. Like a puzzle, the book is made of bits of observation, research information, personal reflection, and educative insights into the oncology as a particular social milieu.

The first chapter speaks about *The two bodies back home*: realizing that being at home on a leave for a few days between two hospitalizations felt less relaxing than he could have expected, the anthropologist discovers that a part of himself – his sick self – had remained at the hospital. Hence the

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<sup>1</sup> Vintilă Mihăilescu, *În căutarea corpului regăsit. O ego-analiză a spitalului*. Iași: Polirom (2019), 237 p.

conclusion: the hospital is a go-between in the relation of the two bodies, i.e. the defeated body and the striving body of the patient.

*The road to the hospital* offers a description of Romanian public health system, in comparison with those of some other countries. Here, health is a matter of good luck and recovery happens as a miracle. The state does little, if any, efforts to cut amenable mortality (the deaths that could have been avoided); lack of interest, perpetually improvised solutions and chronic money shortage rend the system ineffective.

The third chapter – *Hospitalization* – focuses on bribery, power relations and medical corruption, analysing the patient's selfishness as a drive in most situations he faces while being hospitalised. A very suggestive subtitle reads *Hospital admission, a passage rite*. The sick and their family members undergo a deep transformation entering the hospital. Patient relatives have to deal with the anxiety of long waiting periods, as do patients themselves: at this point, the author's wife, Ana, comes into scene in full light, telling him case stories from the hospital courtyard, news from the medical stuff, conversations among patients or relatives, and thus providing the anthropologist food for thought.

*Taming the hospital* is a chapter dedicated to intimacy, acceptance, humour, sadness and other ever so human emotions that the patient gradually regains, once he gets accustomed to the idea of a long hospitalization.

The next chapter deals with *The doctor-patient relationship*. A tribute to his father, a well-known cardiologist and clinician whose views on patient-centred care have shaped much of the Romanian medical practice in the former decades, the chapter focuses on the need for empathy and trust in doctor-patient relationship.

*Illness, hospital and self-defence mechanisms* is one of the most impressive chapters, packed with intertwined self-analysis and psychological observation. The most significant self-defence mechanisms of the patients are intellectualisation, story-making, denial of reality, affiliation, compulsive tidiness and regulation, compulsive openness in sharing information on one's diagnosis and health condition, compulsive talking, compulsive sleeping, violent and/or abusive behaviour. A less frequent self-defence mechanism is using one's sense of humour in order to counter the gravity of the situation (a few personal samples of good quality humour and an elaborate cultural account on laughter illustrate the thesis). As for the physicians, their self-defence mechanisms are intellectualization, refusal of empathy, displacement of difficult topics. Unfortunately, the only psychological counselling usually available in the state hospitals is the one offered *in extremis* by the priest to the dying patients.

Psychosomatic medicine fascinates Vintilă Mihăilescu, the anthropologist, as well as Vintilă Mihăilescu, the patient; the nonbinary (usually primitive, archaic or traditional) theories on the individual are re-read through the lenses of the fallibility induced by the illness, in the last chapter (*Figuring the body out*).

"A soul made of words and memories" is Vintilă Mihăilescu's legacy, generously shared with so many friends, disciples, admirers and readers. He even devised a name for this giveaway process: "memory quantum" survival. Thus spread into memory quanta, his presence may hopefully still be around for who knows how long in "the Milky Way of the psychic metaspace".

**THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF THE IMAGINARIES. III. THE HISTORICAL IMAGINARY**  
**EDITED BY SORIN MITU**

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The reviewed volume<sup>2</sup> is part of a series dedicated to the imaginary field, including the literary imaginary (the first volume), the linguistic heritage and imaginary (the second volume), the religious imaginary (the fourth volume) and the artistic imaginary and heritage (the fifth volume). According to Corin Braga, the general coordinator of this editorial project, the aim of this massive and more than necessary Encyclopedia was to give scholars and the general public a synoptic perspective on the cultural heritage and spiritual identities in Romania.

The third volume presented in this review is dedicated to the historical imaginary. The volume was coordinated by Sorin Mitu, whose research work on the national identity and representation is acknowledged and acclaimed by the scientific community. Moreover, his merit consists of bringing together a group of historians with a consecrated research activity in history or related historical thematic fields. The careful selection of authors, which is one of the most important assets of the volume, resulted in the display of a wide range of themes related to the historical imaginary, from founding myths to escapism. These themes were grouped in five chapters preceded by an *Incipit*, an introductory study signed by Toader Nicoară, the well-known historian with contributions in anthropological history. Before focusing on the content of the volume, and in order to give readers an overview of its value, we must credit this introductory study as it gives the necessary historiographic and methodological references for understanding the evolution and the state of the art of this historical domain in Romanian historiography. Up to a certain point, this *Incipit* sets the main topics included in the volume. Moreover, the study also underlines that in what the history of imaginary is concerned, the Romanian

historiography produced consistent and convincing scientific contributions that demonstrate the need to synchronize with contemporary historiographies. Furthermore, the study also includes a definition of the historical imaginary, a useful conceptual delimitation for understanding the manner in which the subjects were approached by the contributors.

Thematically, the volume is organized in five chapters, each covering one of the most significant subjects of the historical imaginary. They address five of the most significant subjects that contribute to a better, and different, understanding of the Romanian history. In this context, I must underline that, thanks to the subjects addressed by the studies, this volume is a valuable contribution to a better understanding of Romanian history and historical imagination. Moreover, the volume can be understood as a plea for a different history which does not focus only on facts and palpable things. In fact, Sorin Mitu, underlines, in the introduction of the volume, that the past should no longer be studied only in the positivist manner, but rather focus, through an interdisciplinary dialogue, on such topics as what people believed, created, imagined about their past, their origins, their surroundings, their heroes, the others etc.

The volume includes 20 studies (with Toader Nicoară's introductory chapter). The other 19 were grouped in five chapters dealing, in a logical and chronological manner, with the following subjects: the founding myths; the imagined communities; identity and alterity; commemoration and escapism. They are not disparate, independent subjects as one might think at the first glance, as there is a sense of unity among them in such a manner that, despite the encyclopaedic structure, they can be read in a natural, fluid succession. This sense of unity is achieved, to a certain point, by the choice of ordering the studies in each chapter. The first one explores the founding myths and the foundation of the medieval

<sup>2</sup> *Enciclopedia imaginariilor. III. Imaginar istoric*, coord. Sorin Mitu, Iași, Ed. Polirom (2020), 407 pp.



states. This is also perhaps the chapter which deals not only with the historical imaginary but also with the historical imagination. With no intention to rank the studies, as they have an equal scientific value, we appreciate the study signed by Gelu Florea which deals with the subject that still generates lots of debates, the Dacians and their contribution to the genesis of the Romanian people, putting in an antithesis the scientific imaginary with the collective one, of the common people.

The second chapter, about imagined communities, follows logically after the founding myths, as it deals with different forms of solidarity and cohesion experienced by the Romanians from the medieval to modern times: "Church and Religiosity", a study signed by Nicoleta Hegedűs, "The Social Body", by Remus Câmpean, "The Nation", by Simona Nicoară and "The Race" by Constantin Barbulescu. The studies have also the sense of unity, as in the previous chapter, for instance, if Nicoleta Hegedűs explored the role of the church and religion in the national discourse, the subject of the nation is also present in Remus Câmpean's study, making Simona Nicoară's article on the nation follow naturally, developing the subject of the national imaginary and national mythologies. Her study also includes references to the founding myths, the subject approached in the previous chapter. The second chapter ends with the study by Constantin Barbulescu, "The Race", focused on identity and alterity, which leads logically to the topic of the third chapter of the volume. The Romanians' self-representation imposed references to origins and the community, but also to the image of the others. This is also the chapter that includes two very valuable studies on the Saxons, by Edit Szegedi, and the Szecklers, by Gustav Mihály Hermann. The studies also explore the self-representation of these ethnic groups, which enables a comparative perspective on how the Romanians, the Saxons and the Szecklers perceived and interpreted the past in the course of history with the purpose of finding and defining their individuality among the others. The studies provide insights on how the historical records were interpreted according to the imperatives of the moment. In this sense, we must mention one of the conclusions reached by Edit Szegedi which has, from our point of view, a high degree of generalization when it comes to

interpreting the past events as well as the historical imagination: that it did not matter so much what historians wrote (she was referring to G. D. Teutsch's work), but rather what the next generations projected and interpreted in his works. The last study of this chapter is so well set in the context that it can be perceived as a final conclusion of this chapter. It approaches the issue of alterity giving insights on how Romanians imagined the others, including the Saxons and the Szecklers, yet completing the list with the image of the Hungarians, the Jews (a subject also approached by Constantin Barbulescu in his study) the Gypsies, the Russians and the Westerners. Perhaps, in the logic of the chapter, a study on the image of the enemy would have completed the mapping of the self-representation and the representation of the others.

The fourth chapter, "The Constellation of History and Politics", includes four studies dealing with the issue of the collective memory about heroes, a study by Cătălina Mihalache; "The Museum and the Management of the Past", a study focused on how these institutions manage the past as content providers, a study by Andi Mihalache; "The Revolution and Revolutionaries" by Mihai Chiper and the study "The Providential Leader" by Sorin Mitu. This chapter, as the previous ones, has the same sense of unity. For instance, Cătălina Mihalache's study approaches the issue of the national heroes which is also addressed by Sorin Mitu. Andi Mihalache's study instead, discusses an issue that would deserve more attention in the Romanian historiography. Museums shape opinions, impose a certain discourse of the past, thus creating or contributing to historical, imagined narratives, which also need contextualization. Thus, Andi Mihalache's study gives a well-documented perspective on how the Romanian Museums shaped the Romanians' representation of their past by focusing on the study case of the National Museum of Antiquities. In the same thematic area, Sorin Mitu's study deals with the image of the leader, the so-called Providential Leader. Instead of a chronological exposition of the Romanian leaders, the author analyses them, selects them by certain criteria, offering a typology of such heroes: The Savior; the Martyr; the Vigilante etc. The chapter also includes the study signed by Mihai Chiper

about revolutions and revolutionaries, which explores, of course, the events from the perspective of the historical imaginary and imagination. His point of reference is 1821, when the idea of the revolution actually came to the attention of scholars. The study is also an analysis on the two levels of the imaginary: the historical and historiographic one.

The final chapter of the third volume of the Encyclopedia, "The Constellation of Escapism", includes three studies dealing with three major subjects of the historical imaginary. They all have in common a thematic thread, the same sense of unity. The idea of the journey, admiring, interpreting and imagining the landscape and the idea of death, a different journey, provides insights about how individuals and communities defined themselves. And, of course, by approaching these subjects, the studies deepen the understanding of some of the themes presented in the previous chapters. For instance, Alexandru Istrate's study also approaches the issue of how the organized tours contributed to the definition of the national imaginary. Doru Radosav's study deals with the landscape in a national context. His study is to be noted for the conceptual and methodological background, as well as for the types of analysis and reenactments which include: the landscape as a metaphor, the landscape as heritage, the physical landscape, the utopian landscape.

The last but not the least study in the chapter, and the final study in the Encyclopedia, also a deliberate choice in the logic of the volume, is the article signed by Mihaela Grancea. It approaches the issue of death, from a historical-anthropological perspective. A valuable dimension of the study is the fact that it provides an overview of the state of the art on the subject. Moreover, the

typologies of death she discusses for analyzing different perspectives on death, understood as a living history, are a basic and essential dimension of humanity. The author is one of the most reputed exegetes of cultural history, thus her study provides a good methodological framework for those historians of the younger generations who might approach the subject in the future.

Each study included in the volume provides an insight on a subject of the so generous and complex domain of the historical imaginary. Thus, the volume represents a necessary and useful overview of the evaluation and the state of the discipline in Romanian historiography. Of course, due to the inherent limitations imposed by such a monumental project, some subjects as well as some historians were not included, for instance, a gender perspective in the chapter dealing with identities would bring some balance to a long-time marginalized subject in Romanian historiography. We think that it is quite impossible to include in an editorial project all the themes covered by the history of the imaginary. Thus, we must appreciate what this encyclopedia stands for, the proof that the discipline has reached that level of scientific maturity which deserves a synthesis, but also that, in what the Romanian historical writing is concerned, it is dynamic and synchronic with the major trends in European historical writing. *The Encyclopedia of the Historical Imaginary* must be understood as a plea for a thorough search of the past from this perspective as researching the historical imaginary can offer a review and an innovative synthesis of the main representations of our history.



