

# MARTOR



---

Title: "Introduction: Historicizing the Body"

Authors: Alexandra Ion, Corina Doboș

How to cite this article: Ion, Alexandra and Corina Doboș. 2015. "Introduction: Historicizing the Body".  
*Martor* 20: 7-10.

Published by: *Editura MARTOR* (MARTOR Publishing House), *Muzeul Țăranului Român* (The Museum of the Romanian Peasant)

URL: <http://martor.muzeultaranuluiroman.ro/archive/768-2/>

---

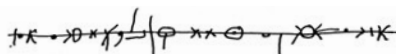
*Martor* (The Museum of the Romanian Peasant Anthropology Review) is a peer-reviewed academic journal established in 1996, with a focus on cultural and visual anthropology, ethnology, museum studies and the dialogue among these disciplines. *Martor* review is published by the Museum of the Romanian Peasant. Its aim is to provide, as widely as possible, a rich content at the highest academic and editorial standards for scientific, educational and (in)formational goals. Any use aside from these purposes and without mentioning the source of the article(s) is prohibited and will be considered an infringement of copyright.

*Martor* (Revue d'Anthropologie du Musée du Paysan Roumain) est un journal académique en système *peer-review* fondé en 1996, qui se concentre sur l'anthropologie visuelle et culturelle, l'ethnologie, la muséologie et sur le dialogue entre ces disciplines. La revue *Martor* est publiée par le Musée du Paysan Roumain. Son aspiration est de généraliser l'accès vers un riche contenu au plus haut niveau du point de vue académique et éditorial pour des objectifs scientifiques, éducatifs et informationnels. Toute utilisation au-delà de ces buts et sans mentionner la source des articles est interdite et sera considérée une violation des droits de l'auteur.

*Martor* is indexed by EBSCO and CEEOL.

# Introduction

## Historicizing the Body



**Corina Dobos**

*Researcher at the University of Medicine and Pharmacy "Carol Davila" in Bucharest and University of Bucharest*

**Alexandra Ion**

*Institute of Anthropology "Francisc I. Rainer" of the Romanian Academy*

This collection of original studies is intended to bring a contribution to the field of "body studies" and the cultural history of the body. Mediated through language, disciplined by sciences, placed under political control and the medium of social relations, the body continues to escape the rigors of discourses and representations. Therefore, under the title *Bodies / Matter: Narratives of Corporeality*, several articles, field notes, exhibitions and book reviews examine the ways in which the human body has been visually and narratively represented in different historical and scientific contexts. Through its multi-disciplinary perspective at the intersection of anthropological, sociological and historical reflection, the volume aims to explore how the concept of corporeality has been imagined in relation to identity, how it was shaped by scientific perspectives and how it was staged within exhibitions or artistic experiments. Beyond academic curiosity, the volume is linked to a growing interest in the body in contemporary society, which becomes – in the words of the sociologist Brian Turner – the "main field of cultural and political activity" in a "somatic society".

The volume is the result of a journey which started in May 2014 with a conference organized at the Faculty of

History, University of Bucharest. The goal of the event was to bring together Romanian specialists from the field of humanities and social sciences and to promote the "body studies" as a strong field of research within this local context. The cultural history of the body has been an intensely researched domain in the academia in the last couple of decades. Modernity opened the body as a field of study, paving the way to deconstruct its meanings and layers. The first generation of the Annales school (Mark Block), the postwar social history, historical demography and cultural anthropology (Mary Douglas and Victor Turner), or the history of medicine (Charles Rosenberg, Georges Canguilhem) placed high interest in the political symbolism of the human body (Kantoroviz), the health of the population in history, the status of the human body in the development of medical sciences or the different meanings the human body is invested with in local cultures (Jenner and Taithe 2003, 187-191). However, the "history of the body" emerged as an autonomous field of academic inquiry, becoming the "historiographical dish of the day" (Roy Porter *in* Cooter 2010, 393) in the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Jenner and Taithe 2003, 190-191). This advent is explained (Cooter 2010; Jenner and Taithe 2003) or prefigured (Duden 1990, 1-49) in the context of the general





development of the post-Marxist, post-structuralist and feminist historiography. The emergence of the “history of the body” as a new and diffuse domain of cultural history drawing from literary approaches to social constructivist traditions was made possible by the historicization of the human body, along the postmodernist lines set by the linguistic turn and New Historicism, greatly indebted to historical anthropology, Foucault’s historical epistemology, feminist studies and cultural history. As Cooter puts it:

*“Situating bodies historically in their appropriate ‘representational regimes’ was part and parcel of the re-thinking of the meaning, purpose and shape of history. Increasingly, therefore, history (as in the history of the body) was approached as a text: authored, discursive, and malleable in every respect. It was as a made up text that it became a resource for (historical) constructivist and (literary) deconstructivist analysis, neither of which was any longer very separable.”* (Cooter 2010, 397)

Thus, after authors such as Marcel Mauss and Norbert Elias introduced the body in the history of mentalities, Michel Foucault highlighted the way in which bodies have been used as a predilect place for the manifestation of modern state control over the individual, while Pierre Bourdieu explored the way in which social norms are appropriated in and through performing bodies. Feminist critic Judith Butler made us doubt that sex is a natural category and showed how gender is a learnt quality, while sociologists Brian Turner and Chris Shilling have highlighted the multitude of significances the human body acquires in the definition of a modern individual. Researchers have explored the history of collecting and dissecting human bodies, of gazing and learning from bodies, of constructing bodies in a capitalistic society, or breaking them down as commodities.

Nevertheless, the endurance of the

“history of the body” as an autonomous field of academic inquiry seems to be threatened not only by the changing historiographical context, but also by the methodological dilemmas and contradictions of the field itself, torn among representationalists (e.g. Laquer 1991), experientialists (e.g. Duden 1987) or idealists (Jenner and Taithe 2003, 194-197; Cooter 2010, 398). The emergence of the “material turn” in historiography could be seen as a compromise meant to rescue the “human body” from the return to a pure a-historical biological essentialism.

However, in Romania, this area of research is yet to be fully developed as standing on its own. Thus far, the interest has mostly been occasional, with very few researchers identifying themselves as specialists in the related fields. Among notable contributions<sup>1</sup>, in the sociology of the body, we would like to mention the works of Gabriel Jderu focusing on motorcyclists’ bodies, Ramona Marinache’s study of the body asleep, Laura Grunberg and the body of fighters investigated by Alexandru Dincovici; in cultural and medical anthropology – Andrei Mihail, Valentin-Veron Toma and Elena Bărbulescu. More studies focused on the construction of bodies have been in the area of medical history (Daniela Sechel, Constantin Bărbulescu, Lidia Trăușan-Matu, Octavian Buda, Adrian Majuru), the history of sexuality (Constanța Vintilă-Ghițulescu), the history of eugenics (Marius Turda, Maria Bucur, Tudor Georgescu), the history of childhood (Nicoleta Roman, Simona Preda), gender studies (Mihaela Miroiu, Luciana Jînga, Oana Băluță, Maria Bucur), the history of criminology (Corina Doboș, Gabriel Constantinescu) and the history of reproductive policies in communist Romania (Gail Kligman).

The studies in this volume cover a wide range of these fields, from history, anthropology, art history and literary studies. They all share an anti-essentialist

1) This is by no means an exhaustive list. On the other hand, there are numerous other researchers who have approached the body in their studies, but either it is not the main focus of their study, or their interest has been only occasional.

perspective on the human body, conceived as a historical artifact, a discursive construction at the intersection of inner experiences and societal projections, permanently negotiated and (re)invested with meaning. This perspective does privilege the historicity of both matter and representations: neither substance, nor its form are given entities with a “natural” existence, as the volume shows that form and matter are intertwined and historically determined.

The opening section, **Bodies as Scientific Objects at the Turn of the Century**, will focus on processes that have **objectified the body**, as part of scientific or legal practices. In Baudrillard’s words (1981), “mummies don’t rot from worms: they die from being transplanted from a slow order of the symbolic, master over putrefaction and death, to an order of history, science, and museums.” The articles signed by Oana Mateescu, Alexandra Ion and Corina Doboş examine such processes, more specifically, the way the human body is subjected to the exercise of power and control, and what was / is an individual becomes a specimen open to scientific questioning, subjected to manipulation and used to produce knowledge. Case studies address unpublished or unique archival material, which highlight the way the materiality of body has been closely constructed in relation to scientific paradigms in the first four decades on the 20<sup>th</sup> century: from the phenomena of materialization studied by Austrian baron Albert von Schrenck-Notzing to the history of the first anthropological collection in Romania, that of Francis I. Rainer and the construction of the criminal body in interwar Romania.

The second section of the volume, **In Sickness and in Health: The Medical Body**, gathers three contributions that explore different aspects of the medicalized body, the contributions of Constantin Bărbulescu, Zsuzsa Bokor and Andrei

Mihail. All three articles tackle with the human body as objectified by the medical gaze, produced by the medical discourse and subjected to medical and political intervention, in different times and settings of modern and contemporary Romanian history, showing how these medical constructions translate specific professional objectives, social hierarchies and political interests. In addition, Andrei Mihail’s anthropological study gives the perspective on the subjective, corporeal experience of the lived, “real” body. Together with Anca-Maria Pănoiu’s notes on the field, dealing with the experience of pain, this study represents an attempt to depart from a purely representationalist or social-constructivist approach of the medical body, bringing into the picture the patients’ subjective bodily experiences.


**Corporeality: From Performance to Representation**, the third section of the volume reunites four studies inquiring different representations and postures of the human body, in different historical times and settings: mastering the Old Hebrew language, Raluca Boboc investigates the representations of the human body in the Jewish book of Proverbs, while Cristina Bogdan focuses on the feminine representations of the sin in the 18<sup>th</sup> century iconography from Transylvania. Closer to our times, Melinda Blos-Jáni explores the visual culture of early 20<sup>th</sup> century Transylvania, as expressed in home movies. Laura Grünberg makes an excellent synthesis of various dimensions in understanding identity in a contemporary setting: a view of the body placed at the cross-road of the state’s control, of new technologies and scientific perspectives. As Barthes would say: “Which body are we talking about today?”

The museology section, **The body on Display**, contains two recent exhibition reviews: one (“The House of the Soul”) addressing a project by Cosmin Manolache





and Lila Passima focused around an “alms house”, a house for the dead; the second one is signed by Gabriela Nicolescu Cristea, a visual anthropologist, in conversation with a curator (Lila Passima) and a documentarist (Corina Doboş) of an exhibition on abortions during Ceauşescu’s regime (“Cei din Lume fără Nume” / “Nameless in the World”), displayed at the National Museum of the Romanian Peasant at the end of 2012. They are accompanied by pictures from the two exhibitions (courtesy of Lila Passima, Cosmin Manolache and Mihai Bodea), collated by Lila Passima and Cosmin Manolache.



In the fifth section, **Field Notes on Corporeality**, we grouped together three researchers who are presenting original fieldwork: Jana Al Obeidyine’s auto-ethnography on dance transmission and revival of history through the body, Mirela Bănică’s notes on the performed body of the pilgrim, and Anca-Maria Pănoiu’s anthropological investigation in the

experience of pain in disabled patients.

Lastly, the readers can find two captivating book reviews by Călin Cotoi and Lidia Trăuşan-Matu.

Furthermore, the volume contains an important visual insert, comprising images from the archive of the Institute of Anthropology “Francisc I. Rainer”, some of which have never been published before (more about the context and content of this archive and collection in Ion 2015, this volume). These are some of the first anthropological photographs in Romania, showing living or dead subjects, and depicting: peasants from Drăguş (Transilvania) and Fundul-Moldovii (Bucovina) villages taken during Francisc I. Rainer’s field campaigns in 1927-1928 and 1932 along the Social Romanian Institute, subjects from Maria Dumitrescu’s studies, criminals skulls (possibly a gift from Dr Nicolae Minovici) and undated images of archaeological specimens.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Baudrillard, Jean. 1981. *Simulacra and Simulation*. Michigan: University of Michigan Press.

Duden, Barbara. 1991. *The Woman beneath the skin. A Doctor’s Patients in 18th century Germany*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.

Cooter, Roger. 2010. “The Turn of the body: History and the politics of the corporeal.” *Ciencia, Pensamiento y cultura*, 186 (743): 393-405.

Laqueur, Thomas. 1990. *Making Sex: Gender and Sex from the Greeks to Freud*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.

Jenner, Mark and B. Taithe. 2003. “The Historiographical Body.” In *Companion to Medicine in the Twentieth Century*, eds. Roger Cooter and John Pickstone. London: Routledge, 187-200.

# MARTOR



---

Title: "The Medium of the Body: Photography and the Senses in the Psychic Laboratory"

Author: Oana Mateescu

How to cite this article: Mateescu, Oana. 2015. "The Medium of the Body: Photography and the Senses in the Psychic Laboratory". *Martor* 20: 13-24.

Published by: *Editura MARTOR* (MARTOR Publishing House), *Muzeul Țăranului Român* (The Museum of the Romanian Peasant)

URL: <http://martor.muzeultaranuluiroman.ro/archive/768-2/>

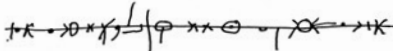
---

*Martor* (The Museum of the Romanian Peasant Anthropology Review) is a peer-reviewed academic journal established in 1996, with a focus on cultural and visual anthropology, ethnology, museum studies and the dialogue among these disciplines. *Martor* review is published by the Museum of the Romanian Peasant. Its aim is to provide, as widely as possible, a rich content at the highest academic and editorial standards for scientific, educational and (in)formational goals. Any use aside from these purposes and without mentioning the source of the article(s) is prohibited and will be considered an infringement of copyright.

*Martor* (Revue d'Anthropologie du Musée du Paysan Roumain) est un journal académique en système *peer-review* fondé en 1996, qui se concentre sur l'anthropologie visuelle et culturelle, l'ethnologie, la muséologie et sur le dialogue entre ces disciplines. La revue *Martor* est publiée par le Musée du Paysan Roumain. Son aspiration est de généraliser l'accès vers un riche contenu au plus haut niveau du point de vue académique et éditorial pour des objectifs scientifiques, éducatifs et informationnels. Toute utilisation au-delà de ces buts et sans mentionner la source des articles est interdite et sera considérée une violation des droits de l'auteur.

*Martor* is indexed by EBSCO and CEEOL.

# The Medium of the Body: Photography and the Senses in the Psychic Laboratory



**Oana Mateescu**

Lecturer at the Faculty of Sociology, University of Bucharest

## ABSTRACT

This essay discusses the experiments carried out between 1909-1913 by German psychologist and psychical researcher Albert von Schrenck-Notzing on the phenomena of materialization, involving the biological shapes and images excreted by the body of a female subject (in this case, Eva Carrière) who acted, at the same time, as a spiritual and technological medium. It underlines the indexicality of visual and tactile evidence as it is graphically and photographically recorded by the scientist. In the psychic laboratory, science is deeply anchored in the physiology of the female body, embracing animism and vitalism as a philosophy of life, while also veering close to eroticism as a somatic mode of knowledge.

## KEYWORDS

ectoplasm photography, indexicality, body, medium, psychical science

Imagine a room bathed in red light, multiple cameras flashing simultaneously, a naked, writhing female body, a scientist whose fingers are sticky with vaginal fluids and, at the center of it all, the “living” matter – strands, veils and masses of it extruding from the orifices of the medium and then flowing, creeping, jumping and even morphing into objects, organs and images. We are in the very thick of materialization, a space where science, spiritualism and eroticism are uncomfortably exposed to one other by the gaze of the photographic camera. More precisely, we are in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century “psychic laboratory” of Baron Albert von Schrenck-Notzing (1862-1929), a German psychologist and famous psychical researcher, who is in the midst of a scientific experiment devoted to the study of “teleplastic structures” produced by the medium Eva Carrière (pseudonym of Marthe Béraud) under the guidance of Madame Juliette Bisson, her companion and mentor.

*Phenomena of Materialization: A Contribution to the Investigation of Mediumistic Teleplastics* (Schrenck-Notzing 1923, henceforth *PM*), the work that records four years (1909-1913) of such experiments with physical materialization, is the kind of document that actively encourages the suspension of disbelief. How this is achieved – by means of which sensory, graphic and photographic modalities – is a question that brings to the forefront a genre of visual and tactile evidence grounded in indexicality. It also forces attention to the self-reflexivity of photography as a technology of embodiment that strives to graft materiality (of bodies and biological life) onto immateriality (of spirits and the unconscious).

Photography itself has always wavered between iconicity and indexicality as discursive claims to the truth. Used here in their Peircean sense (see also below) as relations of resemblance, respectively causality and contiguity between signs and the objects they represent, iconicity and indexicality cover an interpretive



continuum that takes photographs from images to proofs. It is the latter sense that was central to Schrenck-Notzing's psychical research – not only because phenomena of materialization had been so often exposed as hoaxes (and were, thus, in dire need of scientific redemption), but also because of the eminently intimate (and, thus, causal and indexical) link between the medium's female body and the mysterious substance it externalized and shaped into animate forms.



### From Spirits to Animate Matter

*“The medium is not only the unconscious producer of phantasms, but is the physiological source of material for making them visible.”* (PM, 282)

By late 19<sup>th</sup> century, and particularly after 1882, when the international Society for Psychical Research (SPR) was founded in London, a sizable group of scientists and philosophers were busily displacing spiritualism from the realm of religion and superstition into that of science and natural law. SPR members – philosophers and psychologists (F.H. Myers, Henri Bergson, William James), physicists (William Crookes, William F. Barrett, Oliver Lodge), physiologists and biologists (Charles Richet, Hans Driesch) – were all engaged in trespassing boundaries. This was a ground-breaking work that entailed the creation of new vocabularies and instruments, the imposition of laboratory standards onto the séance and the elaboration of flexible theoretical frameworks that could accommodate phenomena such as hypnotism, ectoplasmic materialization, telepathy or telekinesis (Thurschwell 2001; Wolfram 2009).

The new relationship between the psychical and the physical was made plausible by the redefinition of matter as

a plethora of forces, energies, vibrations, waves and rays. Late 19<sup>th</sup>-century discoveries – electromagnetic waves (1888), X-rays (1895), uranium radioactive emissions (1897), wireless waves (1899), N-rays (1903) – turned matter itself into “a kind of phantasm” (Tiffany 2000, 169), severing the links between materiality, visibility and transmission. New iconographies of matter allowed the visualization of previously inscrutable and imponderable phenomena: just as the microscope had generated debates about degrees of sub-visibility and invisibility (Wilson 1995), radiography and, of course, photography reinforced each other in the creation of a pictorial physics of degrees of materiality (Wilder 2011; Smajic 2010). The physics of this intangible matter – persuasively illustrated by Oliver Lodge's “etherial bodies” (Raia 2007), William Crookes' “radiant matter” or Cromwell Varley's “electrical spiritualism” (Noakes 2008) – allowed the mind to escape the physical confines of the brain and to propagate as vibrations of different frequencies into the ether. Telepathy, in particular, carried over the vocabulary of brain-waves and cerebral radiation into a “photographic model of consciousness” (Enns 2013, 182). Radiating brain waves could be recorded by thought-photography, a practice that even did away with the camera and the lens: thoughts as visual impressions could be directly imprinted onto sensitive photographic plates and emulsions. (Technological) Media replaced (spiritual) mediums.

Undoubtedly, new communication technologies – telegraphy in particular (Otis 2001, 180-219) – did much to promote this fantasy of a dematerialized, instantaneous and apparently unmediated community of thought. Indeed, the new psychical science relied extensively on the parasitical relationship that modern spiritualism had already established with technology. As Kittler (1987, 111; see also Gunning 2007) argues, it was the emergence of media such as photography that promptly called



Fig. 1. Flashlight photograph by the autor, 7 June, 1911

forth the spirits of the dead in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>1</sup>:

*“...the tapping specters of the spiritualistic séances with their messages from the realm of the dead, appeared quite promptly at the moment of the invention of the Morse alphabet in 1837. Promptly, photographic plates – even and especially with the camera shutter closed – provided images of ghosts or specters which, in their black and white fuzziness, only emphasized the moments of resemblance. Finally one of the ten uses Edison predicted... for the recently invented phonograph was to preserve the ‘last words of the dying.’”*

In early 20<sup>th</sup>-century Germany – when Schrenck-Notzing performed his experiments with Eva Carrière – the ambiguous relationship between religion and science took the form of a conflict between “spiritism” and “animism” (Wolffram 2012). Spiritists insisted upon the validity of supernatural interpretations – spirit photographs and materializations are messages from the other world – while animists attributed the existence of psychic phenomena to newly-discovered properties of the mind, specifically, the unconscious.

But animism was a decidedly slippery concept. Made famous by anthropologist Edward Tylor (1871) as a form of primitive thought that mixed up spirit and matter (spirit is not the monopoly of humans, but resides also in animals, plants or objects), animism was pejoratively understood as a cultural survival and evolutionary remnant of bygone times<sup>2</sup>. German animists sidestepped this recent semantic baggage and traced the concept back to its original usage by 18<sup>th</sup>-century chemist and vitalist philosopher G. E. Stahl. In this sense, animism came to denote opposition to both spiritualist and scientific materialist camps, and, particularly so, by its association to various neo-vitalist and holistic theories of life popular in German physiology and biology before World War II (Normandin and Wolfe 2013). Schrenck-Notzing was a definite supporter of animism and his work in *PM* provided copious material for the articulation of vitalist biologies. Teleplasm was proof of an “impossible corporeality” (Gomel 2007) that hovered on the edges of visibility and materiality and yet teemed with biological life.

Before it was attached by Schrenck-Notzing to all the other tele-phenomena (telepathy, telekinesis etc.), teleplasm was more popularly known under the moniker “ectoplasm”. “Ectoplasm” was coined in the early 1890s by Charles Richet, physiologist and future Nobel-prize winner for medicine. While observing the materializations produced by an Italian female medium, Richet noticed they resembled “sarcoïdic extensions emanating from the body of a medium, precisely as a pseudopod from an amoeboid cell” (cited in Brain 2013, 115). He wasted no time in identifying this substance as the primordial protoplasm excreted from within the medium’s body. Thus, “ectoplasm” became living cell matter (protoplasm) that mediums emanated and molded into various shapes via psychic energy. This was a fortuitous scientific explanation for the otherwise mysterious

1) This particular argument in no way detracts from the potential of spiritualism as a reservoir of religious experience. On the contrary, despite the Protestant emphasis on meaning and inner belief at the expense of form and performance, religion – then and now – thrives upon mediation. Communication with divinity or the spiritual realm is enhanced by the participation of technology: if photography, audio-cassettes or video-films generate belief, it is not as a state of mind, but as a material practice, relationship and even social interaction with invisible others (Blanes and Santo 2014; Meyer 2009)

2) Interestingly enough, Tylor would have preferred to use the term spiritualism instead of animism, but was rather dismayed by his few experiences with spirit séances in London (Stocking 1971). Modern spiritualism proved too controversial from a social evolutionary point of view to frame a study of primitive religion.



Fig. 2. First flashlight photograph by the autor, 21 August, 1911

(and often suspicious) substance that provided so much of the glamour of materialization séances. Moreover, by establishing a link – however formally tenuous – between ectoplasm and protoplasm, Richet made it possible for the newly-hatched psychic science to

weld itself to (and, thereby, legitimize itself as) contemporary biological discourse. Protoplasm – made famous by Thomas Huxley as “the physical basis of all life” (cited in Brain 2009, 94) – was at the center of vigorous debates about the nature of evolution and heredity, and, more relevantly for psychic research, it provided the vehicle for the teleological vital force that directed the organization of organic matter. The profuse and creative configurations taken by ectoplasm during séances appeared almost as custom made proofs for the claims made by early 20<sup>th</sup> century vitalist biology about the existence of an ineffable vital energy that differentiated between living and non-living entities. Dubbed “entelechy” by German embryologist Hans Driesch, this vital impulse residing in protoplasm approached sentient intelligence and evidenced extraordinary plasticity. Driesch, in particular, was instrumental in bringing psychic materializations into the sphere of vitalist biology; indeed, for him these phenomena were but an externalization of the body’s vital forces, a “supernormal embryology” (cited in Wolfram 2003, 156)<sup>3</sup>. In this sense, psychic materializations were converted into scientific arguments for a vitalist theory of life.

Both Richet and Driesch were frequent guests to the séances organized by Schrenck-Notzing and their influence resonates throughout the constant analogies drawn in *PM* between ectoplasm / teleplasm and

biological processes. The animated matter of teleplasm is capable of independent movement, it responds to touch, light and sound, it organizes itself into forms, images and living organs and leaves behind cellular detritus that can be conveniently analyzed under the microscope. It reproduces itself, “placenta-like”, as it emerges from Eva’s body in the process of “mediumistic labor” (*PM*, 250). Its instability, incredible range of movement and metamorphic nature are an almost insurmountable challenge to scientific recording.

• • • • •

### Seeing and Recording: Photographic Proofs

*“Better even than dynamometers, balances and metronomes is the photographic camera, since it gives positive proofs in the real sense of the word.”* (*PM*, 12)

More than any other scientific instrument, the photographic camera produces “objective registration” (*PM*, 22). In *PM*, psychical science is utterly and sometimes even shamefully dependent on photographic evidence. The human senses (vision especially) are unreliable, memory can be retroactively falsified and the assumption of hallucination (not to mention outright fraud) is a constant and particular danger of the psychical field. Inevitably, scientific registration must be rendered independent of the human actor and “transferred to the physical apparatus” (*PM*, 21). By this account, Schrenck-Notzing subscribed wholeheartedly to a robust notion of “mechanical objectivity”: the role of the camera is not to supply verisimilitude, but to guarantee nonintervention by eliminating human agency (Daston and Galison 1992, 120). By the end of his four years of experiments with the phenomena of materialization, he had seven to nine cameras (including

3) For the continuing relevance of Driesch’s vitalism to the current ontological turn in social science, see Bennett 2010, 62-81.

stereoscopic ones) mounted in different positions of the laboratory and even in the “dark cabinet” where Eva retreated to do her “psycho-dynamic” work. Experimental conditions required photography to provide ubiquitous and simultaneous mechanical visions: “from various points of view, from various distances, from different sides and in different sizes” (*PM*, 120). Moreover, this was a mobile technology that ensured the séance room could be redesigned as an *ad hoc* laboratory wherever Eva and her mentor travelled (be it Paris, Biarritz or Munich). Each new location is graphically mapped in diagrams that show not just the arrangement of the photographic assemblage (cameras and magnesium flash-light apparatus), but also the position of each piece of furniture, human observer, source of light (chandeliers, red light torches), window and door. This was a set-up that emphasized the recent improvements in exposure times and shutter and flash technologies: the camera became a dynamic instrument that could capture the lightning-fast movements of teleplasm, too rapid to be otherwise accessible to human sight.

As others (Schoonover 2003; Harvey 2007) pointed out, ectoplasm photography had very little in common with traditional spirit photography: instead of static *tableaux* where human subjects are just as rigidly posed as their spirit companions, we have the contorted and spasming bodies of mediums in the very process of biological excretion. Moreover, the camera was no longer a supernatural medium that mysteriously produced spirit images, but a mechanical and often clinical eyewitness that recorded the traces of unusual matter in motion. Photography provided positive proof in an indexical rather than iconic sense: “solid materializations stood in the same relation to spirit photography as did the prostitute to pornography – reality replaced representation” (Harvey 2007, 82).

Indexicality underlines the psychical scientist’s fascination with the process of photographic recording itself: photographs

are both acts and objects of observation, both experiments and the evidence of experiments. Indeed, the copious talk of scientific experimentation in *PM* is ultimately reduced to the creation of conditions for the photographic exposure of teleplasm, the fixation and analysis of this fleeting evidence. This is, however, a difficult process constantly beset by failure. Since teleplastic phenomena are highly sensitive to white light<sup>4</sup>, the flash of the camera erases them in the very process of recording. The photographic preservation of evidence is synonymous here with its destruction, emphasizing yet again the fragile, impermanent materiality of the phenomenon (see also Schoonover 2003, 38). The flash acts as a “painful disturbance”, a “sudden blow” on the medium (*PM*, 329), causing the teleplasm to be suddenly reabsorbed into her body. The undeniable violence exercised by the photographic flash – reminiscent of the cataleptic immobilities produced by flash-light in Charcot’s photography of hysterical subjects at Salpêtrière (Baer 1994; Didi-Huberman 2003) – brings again to the forefront the corporeal and implicitly, indexical nature of photographs. In a case of indexical involution, photography acts back, recursively, on the very phenomena which caused it to come into being. Teleplasm (and / or the medium discharging it) seems to react to, cooperate with (*PM*, 130), obstruct (*PM*, 225) and even anticipate the camera: “Even if the cameras are focused on a particular point, the objects, during their short exposure and rapid motion, are often photographed at another place” (*PM*, 262). Unsurprisingly, this agentive behavior creates expectations of sentience: Schrenck-Notzing describes teleplasm in terms of “intention”, “independent movement” and “creative force”. In more ways than one, the scientific object of the teleplasm is an artifact of the photographic encounter.

And yet, the photographic nature of the teleplasm doesn’t ensure visual legibility. Schrenck-Notzing is constantly frustrated

4) Hence the need for red light in the laboratory as well as for the dark cabinet where they, much like photographs, are developed by the body of the female medium.







by “imperfect” and “feeble” photographic results which are too fuzzy to yield judgment by themselves (PM, 71; 85; 90). The nature of the teleplastic phenomenon – whether it is a living form, a white material or an actual organ – “cannot be determined from the photograph” (PM, 71). Indexicality guarantees reality (the photograph is caused by the light reflected from the object it represents), but offers no knowledge by and in itself. “The index asserts nothing” (Peirce 1992, 226); it is a singular and contingent instance of deixis (the word “this” or the finger pointing to “this”) that has meaning only in a context of speech or action. As a “hollowed-out sign” (Doane 2006, 133), void of recognizable content, the index requires further inferential operations. Alternatively, it might be argued, as Didi-Huberman (1984, 68) does for the stain on the shroud of Turin, that it is opaqueness – the very lack of iconicity and figuration – that makes the index such a powerful proof of existence. Figuration would only serve to put into doubt the authenticity of the sign. Of course, this also means indexicality can be deliberately exploited to produce credibility. Harvey (2007, 90) hypothesizes that the obviously fraudulent appearance of spirit photographs was intentional: “in order to make a fake look real, it was made to look really fake.”

In PM, indexicality is given cognitive value by means of the mutual confirmation and corroboration between “optical impressions”, “observations” and photographs. Human perception is constantly checked against observation which is itself brought to the photographic court of appeal: “the photograph is the final link in the chain of observations” (PM, 71). What goes on in the psychical laboratory is not mere seeing or looking: it is “optical induction” (Amann and Knorr Cetina 1990, 100), visual operations carried out through the constant graphic recording of observation. Observation (uninterrupted, exact, detailed, methodical,

unprejudiced, sober and scientific) is allied to measurements, recordings, classifications and forms of visualization other than photography (micrographs, radiographs and even drawings). The visual legibility of photography is produced only as the effect of this exegetical labor: “seeing is work” (Amann and Knorr Cetina 1990, 90). The empty indexicality of the photograph is substantiated by constant graphic consummation, emerging as the climax of the clinical graphic method, the final link in a chain of inscriptions.



### **Touch: The Ontology of the Flesh**

*“During the touch which she herself made with my finger, she gave a strong and painful shudder and trembled violently.”* (PM, 55)

The double nature of the index – scientific trace of the materiality of the teleplasm *and* erotic point of contact with the feminine body that produces it – threatens to collapse the objectivity assembled in the process of recording. “I requested to be touched” (PM, 64), “she asked me to examine her” (PM, 84) – this is the tactile dance performed by scientist and medium. For Schrenck-Notzing, touch is irrefutable confirmation of the materiality of the visible: its shape, texture or plasticity. He emphasizes the detective and not the sensuous dimension of tactility in a series of rich organic analogies: the teleplasm is like touching “the dark skin of a mushroom,” “the skin of a living reptile,” a “spider’s web” or even “the amputated stump of a child’s arm.” “The living substance” is cool, smooth, sticky, moist and, alternatively, firm and soft. The optical and haptical are irremediably entangled in this visceral knowledge. This is not simply a matter of equivalence and mutual reinforcement between the optical and haptical systems of perception (Gibson 1966, 134), but of



actual reversibility between the actions of seeing and touching. More than anyone, Merleau-Ponty (1968, 134) articulated this relationship as a condition of the lived body: “We must habituate ourselves to think that every visible is cut out in the tangible, every tactile being in some manner promised to visibility, and that there is encroachment, infringement, not only between the touched and the touching, but also between the tangible and the visible...”

If vision is an eminently passive sense (Schrenck-Notzing does not see or look, he only receives optical impressions), touch more than makes up by the scientist’s active exploration and hands-on participation in the experiment. Touch is a local sense that requires proximate bodily contact, fingers roaming and sometimes digging deep into the flesh of the medium. Schrenck-Notzing does not hold back from any kind of probing, regardless of how invasive or sexually contaminated it may be. In the interest of establishing accurate experimental controls, he administers emetics, clothes the medium in a special suit and performs oral, vaginal and anal examinations before and sometimes even during or after the séance. His fingers are as familiar with graphic notation as they are with skin indentation: they travel over tongue, breasts, thighs and the vaginal epithelium, touching, gripping and squeezing; just like teleplasm, they are constantly moist and sticky with bodily fluids.

If during the first two years of experiments, Eva seems to shrink away from tactile probing, later she invites it and sometimes even demands it, while posing completely naked despite the wishes of her lady mentor (*PM*, 160; 198). Whether these are forms of “erotic misdirection” (Delgado 2011) initiated by the medium to distract from the fraudulent production of teleplasm<sup>5</sup> or performances of sexual surrender intrinsic to materialization<sup>6</sup> is immaterial to the role they play in establishing inter-subjectivity between scientist and subject by means of an “ontology of the flesh”

(Merleau-Ponty 1968, 139). The relation of tactility is Eva’s most powerful way of guiding and sometimes even controlling the experimental set-up – she asserts herself as a subject by “corporeal intentionality”, touching the experimenter’s hands as they touch her own teleplastic extensions, her body achieving reflexivity by proxy. Tactile reversibility slips into experimental reversibility: the objects of study – “digging their nails into the skin of our hands” (*PM*, 278) – grab hold of the scientist, playfully, but also violently, exploring *his* skin and *his* body.

Schrenck-Notzing ends up converting his body into a recording instrument, registering photographic evidence on his own skin: in the process of mediation, the teleplasm, just as photographic emulsion (Jolly 2002), adheres to his fingers. It is not just his skin that becomes a tactile field open to the exploration of the teleplasm. In a singular and spectacular instance, he himself, as an experimenting subject, turns into a reflective surface for the sentience residing within teleplastic membranes. This happens, very appropriately, on the only occasion that Eva materializes a word rather than a shape or image. The word is “mirror”.



### Le Miroir

*“You are her mirror. She sees herself here.”*  
(*PM*, 214)

On the sitting of 27<sup>th</sup> November 1912, Eva materializes a flat object, coiled around her head. Upon examination of one of the photographs taken that day, Schrenck-Notzing distinguishes the letters “le” and “miro” within the creases of the teleplastic surface. He recognizes the word “le miroir”, but is unable to interpret the “curious result”. The next sitting of 29<sup>th</sup> November, Eva produces just speech, instead of materializing

5) From the skeptic’s point of view, the mysterious substance could be nothing other than muslin, gauze, paper, rolled photographs or even animal organs (liver, lungs, intestines) concealed in the medium’s bodily orifices prior to the séance.

6) Schrenck-Notzing’s background in the treatment of “sexual deviations” (Sommer 2009) ensured his lack of squeamishness about the erotic undercurrents of teleplastic phenomena. Materialization is explicitly portrayed as sexual intercourse: the first stages are associated with excitement, groaning and trembling which culminate in “release”.

matter. Under the usual hypnosis at the beginning of the sitting, she assumes the alter-ego of “Berthe” and talks directly to the baron, pre-empting his own interpretive work by the simple utterance of the word “mirror”. Eva / Berthe elaborates: “She (Berthe) wanted to write to you the other day. She wanted to send you her written thought. You are her mirror. She sees herself here. You have a photograph of the thought of Berthe. She has the joy of creating another image for herself” (*PM*, 214).

This particular photograph spurred an entire controversy upon the publication of *PM* in 1914. French journalists seized it as convincing proof of Eva’s deception and Schrenck-Notzing’s naïve belief: though barely visible in the photograph, the printed word looked very much like the title-page of the French journal *Le Miroir* (presumably hidden inside Eva’s body before the sitting). This, in turn, put into doubt many of the other images materialized by Eva. The teleplastic faces interpreted by Schrenck-Notzing as evidence of “ideoplastics” – a familiar picture language used by the unknown psychic force behind teleplasm in order to make itself intelligible (*PM*, 269) – were revealed as photographs of famous figures from the very same journal (among others, president Woodrow Wilson). (see fig. 3)

Schrenck-Notzing was thoroughly incensed by these accusations and retaliated with a massive evidentiary campaign. His primary object was not to defend his own experimental controls, Eva’s honesty or her mentor’s moral standing; these were all secondary to the integrity of the

photograph itself. Thus, the main thrust of the additions to the English edition of *PM* is a forensic demonstration of the photographic impossibility of fraud. Schrenck-Notzing basically called upon photography to exonerate itself: he reconstructed the photographic conditions of the 1912 sittings using title-pages from that year’s issues of *Le Miroir*, marshalling the expert testimonies of four witnesses – professional photographers and photo-chemists – who independently confirmed the minute, but multiple, differences between the original teleplastic photograph and the simulations based on actual journal pages. He went even further, theorizing (in a work remarkably and apparently deliberately free of hypothesis and explanation) that any resemblances between the teleplastic phenomenon and the *Miroir* graphics and photographs were due to “the cryptomnesic function of memory” under hypnosis (*PM*, 306). Eva’s visual reminiscences could unconsciously contaminate the ideoplastic creations because her abnormal memory was analogous to “the sharp definition of a photographic plate” (*PM*, 305).

If Eva’s memory was akin to a photographic plate, her body was “an exceedingly delicate reagent” (*PM*, 22) producing teleplastic representations via bio-mechanical replication. Developed in the darkroom of the cabinet, the teleplastic images involuntarily shaped from within the body’s protoplasm were often indistinguishable from photographs and just as sensitive to light. As Gunning (1995, 58) perceptively notes, the medium “became a sort of camera, her spiritual negativity bodying forth a positive image, as the human body behaves like an uncanny photomat, dispensing images from its orifices.” This transformation of female physiology into a photographic mechanism is, in many ways, the culmination of the affair between spiritualism and communication technologies (Brain 2013; Schoonover 2003; Warner 2003). But if Eva’s body is a kind

Fig. 3.  
Mme. Bisson's  
flashlight  
photograph of  
19 January, 1913



of camera, Schrenck-Notzing's own visual records are really mechanical photographs of organic photographs – a form of recursive “remediation” (Bolter and Grusin 2000) that begs the question of agency. Who is recording whom?

It's precisely this question that comes to light in the *Le Miroir* photograph. Schrenck-Notzing's impassioned defense of this image cannot be limited to its unique status as evidence of graphic materialization (*PM*, 262); the word becomes flesh, so to speak. Its

legibility is provided by Eva / Berthe's own voice directly interpellating her observer and claiming him as a mirror, a surface to see and inscribe herself upon. For a moment, she reframes the materialization process as an intersubjective relationship of mutual recognition. The medium (photography and Eva) is erased from the process of mediation; we are left with the alterity of the mysterious Berthe. And, of course, the erotic knowledge of two interlocked gazes and two bodies touching each other.



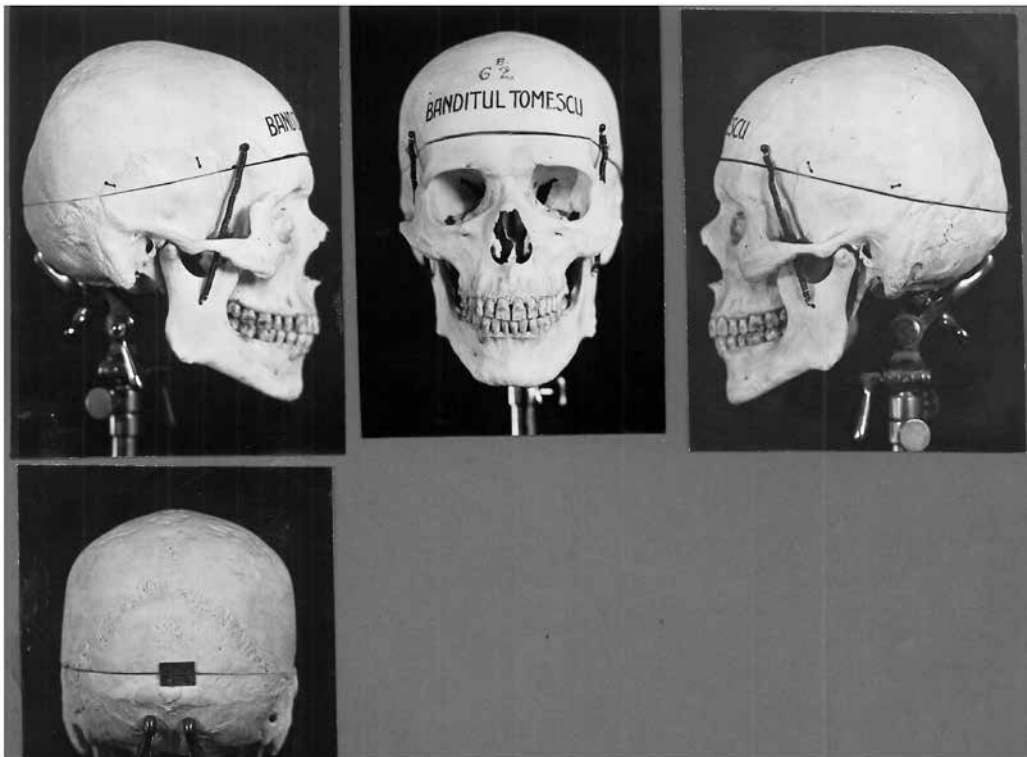
## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Amann, K. and K. Knorr Cetina. 1990. “The fixation of (visual) evidence.” In *Representation in Scientific Practice*, eds. Michael Lynch and Steve Woolgar, 85-121. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Baer, Ulrich. 1994. “Photography and Hysteria: Toward a Poetics of the Flash.” *Yale Journal of Criticism* 7(1): 41-77.
- Bennett, Jane. 2010. *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Blanes, Ruy and Diana E. Santo, eds. 2014. *The Social Life of Spirits*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Bolter, Jay David and Richard Grusin. 2000. *Remediation: Understanding New Media*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Brain, Robert. 2009. “Protoplasmia: Huxley, Haeckel and the Vibratory Organism in Late Nineteenth-Century Science and Art.” In *The Art of Evolution: Darwin, Darwinism, and Visual Culture*, eds. Fae Brauer and Barbara Larson, 92-123. Hanover, NH: Dartmouth College Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2013. “Materialising the Medium: Ectoplasm and the Quest for Supra-Normal Biology in *Fin-de-Siecle* Science and Art.” In *Vibratory Modernism*, ed. Anthony Enns and Shelley Trower, 115-144. London: Palgrave.
- Daston, Lorraine and Peter Galison. 1992. “The image of objectivity.” *Representations* 40: 81-128.
- Delgado, Anne L. 2011. “Bawdy technologies and the birth of ectoplasm.” *Genders Journal* (54).
- Didi-Huberman, Georges. 1984. “The Index of the Absent Wound (Monograph on a Stain).” *October* 29: 63-82.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2003. *Invention of Hysteria: Charcot and the Photographic Iconography of the Salpêtrière*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Doane, Mary Ann. 2006. “The Indexical and the Concept of Medium Specificity.” *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 18 (1): 128-152.
- Enns, Anthony. 2013. “Vibratory Photography.” In *Vibratory Modernism*, eds. Anthony Enns and Shelley Trower, 177-197. London: Palgrave.
- Gibson, James J. 1966. *The Senses Considered as Perceptual Systems*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Gomel, Elana. 2007. “Spirits in the material world: Spiritualism and identity in the fin de siècle.” *Victorian Literature and Culture* 35: 89-113.
- Gunning, Tom. 1995. “Phantom Images and Modern Manifestations.” In *Fugitive Images: From Photography to Video*, ed. Patrice Petro, 42-71. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2007. “To Scan a Ghost: The Ontology of Mediated Vision.” *Grey Room* 26: 94-127.
- Harvey, John. 2007. *Photography and Spirit*. London: Reaktion Books.
- Jolly, Martin. 2002. Faces of the living dead. Paper delivered at Junk Writing Conference, Worcester, UK. <http://martyn-jolly.com/2013/10/03/faces-of-the-living-dead-2/>
- Kittler, Friedrich. 1987. “Gramophone, Film, Typewriter.” *October* 41: 101-118.
- Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. 1968. *The Visible and the Invisible*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.
- Meyer, Birgit, ed. 2009. *Aesthetic Formations: Media, Religion and the Senses*. London: Palgrave.
- Noakes, Richard. 2008. “The ‘World of the Infinitely Little’: Connecting Physical and Psychological Realities circa 1900.” *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science* 39: 323-34.
- Normandin, Sebastian and Charles T. Wolfe, eds. 2013. *Vitalism and the Scientific Image in Post-Enlightenment Life Science, 1800-2010*. Dordrecht: Springer.
- Otis, Laura. 2001. *Networking: Communicating with Bodies and Machines in the Nineteenth Century*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

- Peirce, Charles Sanders. 1992. *The Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings*. Vol. 1. Eds. Nathan Houser and Christian Kloesel. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Raia, Courtenay Grean. 2007. "From Ether Theory to Ether Theology: Oliver Lodge and the Physics of Immortality." *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 43(1): 19-43.
- Schoonover, Karl. 2003. "Ectoplasms, Evanescence, and Photography." *Art Journal* 62(3): 30-43.
- Schrenck-Notzing, Albert von. 1923. *Phenomena of Materialization: A Contribution to the Investigation of Mediumistic Teleplastics*. London: Kegan Paul.
- Smajic, Srdjan. 2010. *Ghost-Seers, Detectives and Spiritualists: Theories of Vision in Victorian Literature and Science*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Stocking, George W. 1971. "Animism in Theory and Practice: E.B. Tylor's Unpublished 'Notes on Spiritualism'." *Man* 6 (1): 88-104.
- Sommer, Andreas. 2009. "Tackling taboos – from *Psychopathia Sexualis* to the materialization of dreams: Albert von Schrenck-Notzing (1862-1929)." *Journal of Scientific Exploration* 23(3): 299-322.
- Thurschwell, Pamela. 2001. "The Society for Psychical Research Experiments in Intimacy." In *Literature, Technology and Magical Thinking, 1880-1920*, 12-36. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Tiffany, Daniel. 2000. *Toy Medium: Materialism and Modern Lyric*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Tylor, Edward. 1871. *Primitive Religion*. London: John Murray.
- Warner, Marina. 2003. "Ethereal body: the quest for ectoplasm." *Cabinet Magazine* (12).
- Wilder, Kelley. 2011. "Visualizing radiation: The photographs of Henri Becquerel." In *Histories of Scientific Observation*, eds. Lorraine Daston and Elizabeth Lunbeck, 349-368. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Wilson, Catherine. 1995. *The Invisible World: Early Modern Philosophy and the Invention of the Microscope*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Wolffram, Heather. 2003. "Supernormal biology: Vitalism, Parapsychology and the German Crisis of Modernity, c. 1890-1933." *European Legacy* 8(2): 149-163.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2009. *The Stepchildren of Science: Psychological Research and Parapsychology in Germany, c. 1870-1939*. Amsterdam; New York: Rodopi.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2012. "Hallucination or Materialization? The Animism versus Spiritism Debate in Late 19<sup>th</sup> Century Germany." *History of the Human Sciences* 25(2): 45-66.







# MARTOR



---

Title: "Breaking Down the Body and Putting It Back: Structuring Knowledge in the 'Francisc I. Rainer' Anthropological Collection"

Author: Alexandra Ion

How to cite this article: Ion, Alexandra. 2015. "Breaking Down the Body and Putting It Back: Structuring Knowledge in the 'Francisc I. Rainer' Anthropological Collection". *Martor* 20: 25-50.

Published by: *Editura MARTOR* (MARTOR Publishing House), *Muzeul Țăranului Român* (The Museum of the Romanian Peasant)

URL: <http://martor.muzeultaranuluiroman.ro/archive/768-2/>

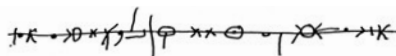
---

*Martor* (The Museum of the Romanian Peasant Anthropology Review) is a peer-reviewed academic journal established in 1996, with a focus on cultural and visual anthropology, ethnology, museum studies and the dialogue among these disciplines. *Martor* review is published by the Museum of the Romanian Peasant. Its aim is to provide, as widely as possible, a rich content at the highest academic and editorial standards for scientific, educational and (in)formational goals. Any use aside from these purposes and without mentioning the source of the article(s) is prohibited and will be considered an infringement of copyright.

*Martor* (Revue d'Anthropologie du Musée du Paysan Roumain) est un journal académique en système *peer-review* fondé en 1996, qui se concentre sur l'anthropologie visuelle et culturelle, l'ethnologie, la muséologie et sur le dialogue entre ces disciplines. La revue *Martor* est publiée par le Musée du Paysan Roumain. Son aspiration est de généraliser l'accès vers un riche contenu au plus haut niveau du point de vue académique et éditorial pour des objectifs scientifiques, éducatifs et informationnels. Toute utilisation au-delà de ces buts et sans mentionner la source des articles est interdite et sera considérée une violation des droits de l'auteur.

*Martor* is indexed by EBSCO and CEEOL.

# Breaking Down the Body and Putting it Back: Displaying Knowledge in the “Francisc I. Rainer” Anthropological Collection



**Alexandra Ion**

*Institute of Anthropology “Francisc I. Rainer” of the Romanian Academy*

## ABSTRACT

Normal bodies, deviant bodies, fragmentary, drawn or photographed bodies: all of these were collected and turned into scientific specimens by the anatomist and physical anthropologist Francisc I. Rainer in Interwar Bucharest (Romania). It is the purpose of this study to explore how this collection came into being, to understand Rainer’s treatment of bodies in a wider disciplinary context and ultimately to prompt reflection on the ethical dimension of such endeavours.

## KEYWORDS

anthropological collection, Francisc I. Rainer, interwar period, Bucharest, body

*”In every physiological dissection we create a mixture of «part elements» and real «whole members»... One overlooks that the organism is, of course, articulated (differentiated into members) but does not consist of members.  
- Kurt Goldstein”*

A shoemaker, Ferdinand Vlădică, aged 38, died in 1935 at the Central Hospital in Bucharest (Romania). The cause of death was diagnosed as general paralysis. His body was dissected and his skeletal remains ended up in the osteological collection gathered by the anatomist and anthropologist Francisc I. Rainer (1874-1944). Thus, he became a specimen in a collection which had been started 30 years previously, and which was to become one of the largest in Europe. From Ferdinand’s identity only his sex, age, profession and cause of death were recorded and remembered. His inner part, the

skeleton, that which supported his former being, was made visible and destined to be classified as an object, upon which scientists were to exercise their control through categorizations, measurements and display.

This article intends to tell the story of how Francisc I. Rainer imagined and gathered this collection of human remains in interwar Bucharest, a collection which is currently housed in the Institute of Anthropology “Francisc I. Rainer” of the Romanian Academy. The goal of this article is to make available for the first time the composition and history of this collection, placed in a local and European context. From “real bodies” to drawings, from tissue samples to casts, this paper is an exploration into the fascinating world created by Rainer starting with the early 1900s – a world of “dividual bodies”, to use the words of Samuel Alberti (2011, 8), a super-body composed of a collage of similar or distinct body parts from different individuals and of different materials, “(body) installations” which addressed

\* The Organism [from the Francisc I. Rainer Archive]



multiple sensory channels. Bodies such as Ferdinand Vlădică's came from the City Morgue or various hospitals in Bucharest, were broken down in the dissection laboratories of the Faculty of Medicine and then turned into collectibles, preserved as a visual encyclopaedia of morphological variation. They were integrated in a wider universe of scientific representations – anthropological photographs taken during field campaigns, casts of extinct human types and samples of human tissue, X-rays and anatomical drawings. It is the purpose of this study to explore these multiple forms taken by the human body when turned into archived specimens as part of this collection and to understand the afterlife of an impressive number of deceased individuals. Studying this unique archive provides an opportunity to understand the ways in which the anthropological body was constructed and taught as part of the scientific paradigm in interwar Bucharest.

This is the story of a man's ambition, of the things that represented the material universe of the anthropological discipline in the interwar years, through which he "carved" his perspective and collection, and the destiny of his legacy. Initially designed to function as a teaching aid for doctors or medical students, it gradually became a base for anthropological studies – a collection meant for "the study of the Romanian people" (Rainer 1939). The history and composition of the collection are intertwined with the anatomical teaching at the Faculty of Medicine in Bucharest, the establishment of the anthropological discipline in Romania, and the foundation of the Institute and Museum of Anthropology in 1940. Through this, Rainer introduced a new type of institution in Bucharest – the anthropological museum. At the same time, his work marked a different treatment of bodies in a scientific context: the idea of a collection seen as an oriented and structured goal subsumed to anthropological methods and questions and linked to specific display strategies.

At present, part of what is left of it occupies a prominent place in the space of the Institute of Anthropology of the Romanian Academy, part is tucked away in the attic, and as a whole it is in a liminal state – a daily encounter for the employees and occasional visitors, not quite forgotten, but not really engaged with either. The paper will start by placing it in a wider culture of displaying bodies, understand its connections with anatomical research and teaching in Bucharest – which marked significantly the way in which anthropology has been viewed at the Institute ever since –, and highlight the way in which this anthropological museum was born as a result of a wider network of disciplinary connections with European research centres. Rainer's collection was created at a time when physical anthropology<sup>1</sup> was undergoing significant changes in Europe and often served political agendas. Thus, an analysis of his case is interesting because it brought together a combination of old and new theories: an old view of anthropology as "natural history", along evolutionary and heredity theories, the refusal of being implicated in politics and eugenics, along a study of the Romanian type, the creation of an institution meant for posterity, but whose collection was soon broken down after his death. Therefore, in this article I am especially interested in understanding the inter-relationship between the materials he collected, in relation to what he deemed as being the ultimate goal of anthropology. Most importantly, a look at its history offers us a good opportunity to reflect on the importance of memory and forgetting for the legacies of scientific endeavours. Thousand of anonymous bodies lost their individuality when turned into scientific specimens, in order to illustrate a bigger scientific concept – phenotypic differences in the Romanian people –, while simultaneously the philosophical perspective that directed the collection's development died with Rainer and with it a scientific ambition.

1) In Rainer's works and documents the term he used was "anthropology", the "science of man" (similar to the German model, where anthropology was opposed to ethnology). Given his medical background, he deemed as the fundamental aspect of humans their biological make-up, hence he developed studies that would be now classified under the headings of physical anthropology and osteo-archaeology. In order to avoid confusions due to the changed meaning of the term, I have chosen to use the term "physical anthropology" in reference to Rainer's activity and research.

## Dissected bodies on display



Fig. 1. Francisc I. Rainer

There is an extensive literature on the history of collecting and displaying bodies in anatomical, medical or anthropological collections, which reveals the material universe of the early anatomists

and physical anthropologists (Alberti 2011; Fabian 2010; Fforde 2004; Hallam forthcoming; Hallam and Alberti 2013; Hendriksen 2015; Knoeff and Zwijnenberg 2015). Through studies focused on the fate of dissected body parts and the inter-relationships between medical teaching and the creation of such displays (Chaplin 2008, 2009; Hendriksen 2013; Huistra 2013; Richardson 2001), researchers have explored the history of collecting and dissecting human bodies, of gazing, commodifying and learning from “naked” bodies and anatomical preparations (Berkowitz 2012; Koppers 2004).

Starting in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and especially during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, such display installations centred on the human body enforced, constructed and made available anatomical knowledge (see also Berkowitz’s 2012 analysis), with the anatomical museum becoming part of the paradigm. At the basis of such collections laid an interest in comparative anatomy, and were thus designed to reveal and document the deviant and the typical human forms. In such contexts, the substance of the body was intervened upon: bodies were dissected, defleshed or preserved in jars, having their contours exposed through representations that took multiple forms: wax casts, drawings, and

later – photographs. The works of John Hunter (collection part of the Hunterian Museum in London), Samuel Morton (University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology), Johann F. Blumenbach (University of Göttingen), Anders Retzius (Museum of the Karolinska Institute), Giustiniano Nicolucci (The Museum of Anthropology at Naples University) and many more throughout Europe and the USA are illustrative models for these scientific universes centred on the (dead) human body.

In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century a number of anatomists and pathologists directed their process of collecting towards the new discipline of anthropology (Kuklick 2007; Stocking 1982; 1996; Zimmerman 2001)<sup>2</sup>. The cellular pathologist Rudolf Virchow (1821-1902), the founding father of German physical anthropology, built a collection of ten thousand skulls and skeletons at the Institute for Pathology of the University of Berlin, and his work on human variability combined prehistoric materials, comparative anatomy, craniology and large-scale anthropometric surveys (Massin 1996; see also Seemann 2013). This was later enlarged by Eugen Fischer at the newly founded Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Anthropology, Human Genetics and Eugenics (Schmuhl 2008, 43). In Austria, the physician Felix von Luschan (1854-1924), who had studied with the French anthropologist Paul Broca (1824–1880), had also gathered thousands of skulls (Massin 1996, 84) and a similar case happened at the Institute of Anatomy of Basel University, through the work of the anatomists Carl Gustav Jung (1794-1864), Wilhelm His-Vischer (1831-1904), Ludwig Rüttimeyer (1825-1895) and Julius Kollmann (1834-1918) (Bay 1986). In Hungary, Aurel Török (1842-1912), chair of the Anthropology Department and Museum at the Humanities Faculty of the University since 1881, built a skull collection “to study the skeletal remains of historic and prehistoric people of Hungary” (Lafferton 2007, 722). All these

2) At the turn of 20<sup>th</sup> century, physical anthropology had established itself in Europe and the USA as a discipline from an institutional point of view: e.g. in 1869, the “German Society for Anthropology, Ethnology and Prehistory” was founded, in 1925, the “German Society for Physical Anthropology”, the “American Journal of Physical Anthropology” in 1918 and the “American Association of Physical Anthropologists” in 1930, the “Société d’Anthropologie de Paris” in 1859, “Laboratoire d’Anthropologie à l’Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes” in 1867 and “Ecole d’Anthropologie” in 1876 (Little and Sussman 2010, 15).

collections were meant to provide evidence and resources for racial studies, the skulls being deemed as the most relevant element regarding race – according to Virchow, the skull was critical because it enclosed “the most important organ of the body, the brain, and developed in a recognizable relationship to this organ” (Virchow 1892, 3 *apud* Massin 1996, 107). Such physical anthropological institutions and collections would have acquired their materials from dissection rooms and archaeology excavations, and placed them alongside casts, drawings and embryos. Knowledge was constructed through an ensemble of dry and wet human specimens, drawings, books, plaster casts, and tissue samples, following a model of fragmenting, opening up of the body and turning it into an object on display. Each of these documented ethnic or pathological bodies, with the invisible links between them being made visible through the way they were grouped and exhibited.

Francisc Rainer’s collecting and displaying practices of the human body followed the scholarly pattern set by his predecessors. Mostly gathered between the early 1920s and his death in 1944, his collection was very similar in structure to endeavours from the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Yet, even before he started gathering his materials, such collections were already falling out of fashion due to a change in the physical anthropological paradigm. After a first generation of scientists such as Paul Broca, Rudolf Virchow and Rudolph Martin, who were usually trained as physicians or anatomists, and gathered their data by anthropometric measurements and empirical morphological observations (Little and Sussman 2010), morphological anthropology used for racial classifications – and with it the role of such collections – lost importance. In the face of new concepts, anthropology turned more towards Darwinism, hereditary studies, eugenics, demography and statistics (see Karl Pearson’s work) in order to diagnose

and interpret human variability.

Even so, on a local level, Rainer’s effort brought something significant. At the turn of the century, there were a limited number of displays of human bodies in Bucharest, most of which had limited public access: doctor Nicolae Minovici (1868-1941) had acquired a small criminological collection comprising criminal skulls, photographs or occasional body parts and a tattoo collection (Minovici 2007), all being on display at the Institute of Legal Medicine (which had restricted access), while the Museum of Natural History had several hominid casts, ethnographic moulds, a mummy and a few heads from Amazonia<sup>3</sup>. At the same time, the Faculty of Medicine, similar to Colțea Hospital, owned an anatomical reference collection for teaching purposes, but this lacked organization (according to Rainer’s own accounts), while professor Dimitrie Gerota (1867-1939) had gathered a collection of anatomical molds for anatomical and artistic teaching.

Rainer’s efforts were innovative due to his systematic approach to the display of bodies, linked to two scientific disciplines – anatomy and anthropology. Basically, he took previous medical reference collections to another level, ordering specimens in a systematic manner and structuring displays in order to address various anthropological aspects. As a result, an anthropological museum and collection were created, based on a synthesis of anatomical, anthropological and museological practices. As the story unfolds, one will observe that this perspective was in line with the collections that had been created a couple of decades before, such as those of Rudolf Virchow and Aurel Török, collections in which the study of race and ethnicity had centred around craniometry – the measurements of skulls. In this respect, the collection might have seemed anachronistic from a historical point of view. However, the paradox is that Rainer’s understanding of race was more in line with the genetic perspective (Schmuhl 2008, 59) of his contemporary,

3) <http://www.antipa.ro/ro/categories/51/pages/50> (Accessed 19th July 2015).



Eugen Fischer (1874-1967). Fischer, the proponent of the “anthropobiology” concept, deemed such collections irrelevant and proposed the abandonment of the study of morphological features in favour of a concept of race grounded in evolutionary biology and genetics (Schmuhl 2008, 59). Rainer intended this collection along specific lines, a combination of old and new theories: evolutionary theory, along craniometric studies, theories such as Kurt Goldstein’s holistic theory of the organism (1934), Lamarckian inheritance, and Mendel’s genetics, and along Goethe’s idea of the unity of the organisation plan (for a detailed analysis of Rainer’s theoretical foundations see Ion 2014b, and of his anatomical ideas, Toma 2010). Therefore, in order to understand the rationale behind the creation of this collection, and how old methods merged with new concepts, one needs to explore Rainer’s biography and activity. It is out of his “*organized network of obsessions*”<sup>4</sup> that an almost teleological plan emerged – as he wrote while visiting the Aquarium in Berlin, on 12th of June 1930 (Rainer 2012, 151)<sup>5</sup>:

*“Again, faced with forms, I had the sensation that they cannot be explained through the functional action of the environment, but through a reaction of another origin of living substance, something related to the crystalline form according with which a specific substance responds, in oversaturated solution, at the stimulation it receives. Living substance has a number of morphological possibilities of reaction... And one needs to observe the link between the fundamental living structure and these patterns (Muster) which is produced.”*

Thus, Rainer’s is a world at the crossroad of philosophy of biology<sup>6</sup>, anatomical practice and anthropological themes, a unique experiment in Romanian anthropology. He took the concept of form as developed by Goethe – “The minted form that lives and living grows” – and focused on its historical development and

transformations into types (Ion 2014b, 237). By comparing various forms, one can construct an idea of how life developed on Earth and explain better why certain features exist as they do. Anatomy and biology were the basis of this endeavour, as they investigated human morphology, but anthropology – the “science of MAN”<sup>7</sup> was to become the over-arching theme, as it was to study variability in a hereditary perspective and create a profile of the Romanian population.

At the same time, in contrast to Fischer and other contemporary physical anthropologists in Europe, Rainer had no predecessors in Romania, no reference materials or base for any physical anthropological studies (see Ion 2014 and Milcu 1954 for a brief history of the Institute and the discipline in Romania).

In order to retrieve this history of the collection, I found myself digging after relevant materials. The early Romanian physical anthropological paradigm has been partially studied in earlier work (Milcu 1954) and more recently (the works of Adrian Majuru devoted to the personality of Francis I. Rainer, 2012, 2013; Geana 1996; Toma 2010) and in studies which reassessed the theoretical premises of some of the anthropological concepts (Bucur 2005; Turda 2006, 2007, 2013). However, the fate of this collection has received limited attention, and very few materials are published (Ion 2011, 2014a, 2014b; Majuru 2015). Going back in time, two mid-century titles covering some of Rainer’s work are in the library of the present Institute of Anthropology Francisc I. Rainer (L’œuvre 1947; Sevastos 1946).

Unlike these studies, this paper builds on documents hitherto unexplored, such as the photographic and documentary archive of the Institute of Anthropology. About a collection which was once the highlight of the 17th International Congress of Pre-history and Anthropology (1937), and had an international reception, a place of attraction for the king of Romania<sup>8</sup> and of other major

4) The words of Roland Barthes describing the historian Jules Michelet. I would thank Dr AG for this brilliant reference, but since he stopped talking to me, I am limited to this footnote.

5) All quotes present in this article from Rainer’s published journal (Rainer 2012), class notes or other Romanian authors have been translated by the author from the original.

6) A good book that evaluates the German biological tradition, which heavily influenced Rainer is Nyhart 1995; for a more in depth analysis of Rainer’s theoretical sources of inspiration see Ion 2014a.

7) Rainer’s original notation in capital letters.

8) King Mihai visited the Institute with Queen Mother on 20th November 1940, part of their wider interest in scientific activities in Romania and Queen Mother’s interest in and admiration for Francisc Rainer (Sevastos 1946, 11).

9) Personal information  
Valentin-Veron Toma.

personalities of the interwar period and was even mentioned in the touristic Michelin Guide<sup>9</sup>, very few memories have survived. Most of the resources I found crammed in a dozen boxes stored in the attic of the Institute, containing unsorted forgotten notes and materials of Rainer. Thus, after 70 years since Rainer died and his collection, as he had imagined it, was broken apart, I have followed the trail of the documents.



**“La mort paraît alors une condition essentielle de la vie” [Death seems then an essential condition of life]<sup>10</sup>**

10) Quote from P.Valery  
(Rainer 1943, 9).

*“His body was macerated until only the nerve fibres were left.” (V. Woolf)*

Francisc Josef Rainer was born in the Austrian-Hungarian Empire in Rohonzna (Bucovina) in 1874, but moved to Romania to pursue high school studies at the Saint Sava College, after which he went to study in 1892 at the Faculty of Medicine in Bucharest. Starting in his second year (1894) he worked as an assistant in the Faculty’s histology laboratory, under the supervision of Prof. Alexandru Obregia. After 3 years he moved to the medical clinic’s laboratory of the Colțea Hospital to perform necropsies and macroscopic examinations. During his stay here he began gathering osteological material: “the executed necropsies were sources of learning, and the interesting pieces were kept and fixed with a special technique, in the Institute’s museum” (Riga and Riga 2008, 28).

11) First female surgeon in Romania. Together they had a daughter, Sofia, with whom they cut contact after she married an English medical student against their will.

Medical doctors soon turned to Rainer to obtain the necessary specimens for pathological anatomy exams. His work took place in a room overlooked by Goethe’s portrait, from two or three in the night until seven or eight in the morning, followed by an examination of the patients and then by necropsies (Riga and Riga 2008). In 1903 Rainer took his doctorate degree researching

12) Highlighted text as present in the original Francisc Rainer’s manuscript.

a form of cirrhosis (Rainer 2012), and in the same year he married Marta Trancu<sup>11</sup>. Ten years later he obtained a teaching position at the Faculty of Medicine in Iași. In 1920 he moved to Bucharest, where he took the position of anatomy professor at the Faculty of Medicine. Here, he started organising the Institute of Anatomy and Embryology by gathering the necessary materials and specimens (Sevastos 1946). By this time, he had already developed an interest in analysing variability of human morphology, an aspect reflected by the specimens he collected.

For Francisc Rainer, as for other anatomists of the time, the human cadaver was the primary means of acquiring knowledge. However, his perspective on the use of cadavers was different from his other Romanian colleagues, and it is this view that he tried to pass on to his medical students. Refuting the perspective of static matter, Rainer advocated a functional understanding of anatomy; thus, the cadaver was seen as the window through which the organisation and structuring of life could be understood, and the cadaver was an intermediary “in the circuit of cosmic matter in which one can find the message of life” (Vitner, 2). Furthermore, under the influence of evolutionary theory, variability of human form was read in a historical key – the result of ever becoming of living matter under the influence of external factors and hereditary laws. In his notes he picked and highlighted a quote from Paul Valery that illustrated this thought:

**“La mort paraît alors une condition essentielle de la vie, et non plus un accident qui chaque fois nous est une affreuse merveille; elle est pour la vie<sup>12</sup>, et non plus contre elle. La vie doit pour vivre appeler à soi, aspirer tant d’êtres par jour, en expirer tant d’autres; et une proportion assez constante doit exister entre ces nombres. La vie n’aime donc pas la survivance. Regards-sur-la-mer-P.Valery”** (Rainer 1943, 9)

Death was seen as a condition essential

to life, and the cadaver provided a window into what otherwise could not be seen in a living being. Even though this was a traditional perspective in anatomy, in contrast to his Romanian colleagues he introduced functional anatomy in Romania (Toma 2010): every investigated structure needed to be deciphered in relation to its past functions and the development of the whole organism. Dissection rooms were the places where Rainer started his study and explorations into human morphology:

*“His activity took place either in the evening, or after classes, when the dissection rooms were available, either during the summer break, when the numerous skeletons’ remains used during school year were macerated and cleaned.”* (Dumitrescu and Stârcea-Crăciun 2001, 34)

His position of anatomy professor and, from 1926, head of the Institute of Anatomy and Embryology of the Faculty of Medicine, alongside the legislation that supported the use of unclaimed bodies for medical studies, put him in the position of having access to a wide range of bodies for his study. The cadavers, mostly unclaimed bodies of poor people, were sourced from various hospitals and morgues in Bucharest (see Ion 2011). They were subjected to investigations to provide clues into human variation. As a contemporary visitor recounted:

*“...to the left and right of his room, which led to a corridor, were the dissection salons of the Faculty. In the clean rooms reigned a heavy disgusting smell of formaldehyde. The cadavers were of course of poor people, most of them of people who died in accidents or hospitals and whose bodies were unclaimed by relatives. All with twisted limbs, and opened chests from which life seemed to have flown. Nearby, in endless cabinets along the walls are a few thousand crania, part of the richest anthropological collection in Europe, aligned as an ossuary of a western monastery. (...) We felt immersed in a medieval world, where the nakedness of the systematically opened up bodies, artificially prevented from*

*decay seemed to sigh... In the middle was the professor, leaned over drawings depicting statue, temples, gems, seals, frescos, reflecting on the Aegean man.”* (Vulcănescu 1944 apud Dumitrescu and Crăciun 2001, 22)



Fig. 2. First page of Rainer's article on the 'raphe median de le levre superior' [median raphe of the superior lip], discovered based on observations on ancient Greek statues, compared with contemporary physiognomies.

After medical students finished their dissections, the bodies were left for Rainer's research and the morphologically or pathologically interesting body parts were collected as archival materials. Some of these were preserved using his own methods, such as organs or fleshed body parts. Others were broken down, macerated and had their skeletons exposed. Heads were separated from bodies and kept for the craniological collection. The rest of the body was broken down into constituent parts and the elements deemed useful for further studies were kept.

For the first two decades of the existence of the collection (early 1920s-late 1930s) we have little information regarding its curation – the specimens were housed in an area of the basement of the Faculty of Medicine, which “communicated through a hatch with the professor's working cabinet, situated at the ground-floor, and after that it moved into a former student's working

room from the basement” (Dumitrescu and Stârcea-Crăciun 2001, 34). The access to it was limited to the doctors of the Faculty and its students for their practice, as it was designed as a medical teaching aid and research collection: illustrative is a doctoral thesis in medicine and surgery from 1928 by Petre N. Georgescu on a couple of specimens from the collection, “Câteva preparate de craniu natiform” [A couple of specimens of natiform skulls].

Skulls lined up in parallel rows in a simple wooden cupboard stare into the camera in a black and white photograph from the 1920s, while others, crammed on several wooden tables look away from it. The room looks dark, lit only by some high windows, under which are lined face casts. It is the only spare wall in the room, as a second photograph reveals: the skulls seem to take up all the space, either in cupboards, on tables, on chairs, or in boxes. It was a modern ossuary, housed in a space where under the dim light bone wood and cement merged together. The insufficient lighting and the limited space made this an unwelcoming place for research or visiting. (See fig. 3-4)

There is little direct information regarding the collection up until it was moved in 1937 in the new building from the Faculty’s backyard, and no explicit mentioning regarding his model for the collection, but diary entries from 1920s and 1930s when Rainer took several trips to England, Germany, Austria and Sweden, are

illuminating for his perspective on collecting and for possible sources of inspiration for his own display strategies. During these trips he visited archaeology museums, anatomy institutes, anthropology laboratories and collections, where he compared and refined his knowledge and gained inspiration for his own collection. Such research visits represented opportunities to learn or improve his methods and display techniques (such as anthropometry, photographing embryos or mounting bones). As a result, the collection changed through these contacts with other European anthropologists and anatomists, enlarged with new specimens and borrowed certain display models, and cannot be understood unless as part of a wider European museological culture. This continued a tradition of close contacts between the Romanian intellectual elite with German speaking countries – e.g. important interwar figures such as sociologist Dimitrie Gusti<sup>13</sup> (1880-1955), historian Nicolae Iorga<sup>14</sup> (1871-1940) and the economist Virgil Madgearu (1887-1940) had obtained their Ph.D. titles from German institutions in the decades around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (for a more in depth overview of the western influences on the Romanian social-scientists in the first decades of 20<sup>th</sup> century see Cotoi 2011; Muller 2013; Momoc 2012).

Reading his diary entries one can also get a glimpse of the materials and methods he deemed necessary as part of his collection or archiving system. For example, on

13) Founder of the Romanian Social Institute with Virgil Madgearu and the Village Museum in Bucharest in 1936.

14) Founder of the International Congress of Byzantine Studies and the Institute for the Study of Universal History in Bucharest (1937).

Fig. 3-4. Images showing the collection stored in the basement of the Faculty of Medicine, 1928.





Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> October 1921, while visiting Rudolf Martin in Munich, he wrote about the importance of craniometric forms that should accompany the collected material:

*“..the skulls that they gave me [R. Martin and his assistant Scheidt] (one with a label: standard skull) are not represented in their archive by craniometric forms. The servant could not find their forms. Scheidt still needs to measure them, but I do not trust him. Ultimately, I haven’t found anything new... Craniometric forms are sold at Gustav’s.”* (Rainer 2012, 128)

For Rainer, recording the materials in his collection was of utmost importance and the skulls he chose to collect were thus carefully inventoried.

On other occasion, he was interested in learning the correct positioning of calipers, of anthropometric landmarks, and the position for goniometry<sup>15</sup>. Thus, he compared his knowledge with that shown by Martin, the author of the standard textbook on the topic at the time (Martin 1914), or mastered by his assistant.

Visits to other collections were also valuable opportunities for gaining insights into different methods for preparing and displaying anatomical and anthropological samples, as well as for acquiring new materials. From the Bruckmann shop in Munich he bought photos of sculptures from the city’s Glyptothek (Rainer 2012, 129), while at Johannes Ruckert’s Institute of Anatomy in Munich he noticed “the importance of living models” and “His’s<sup>16</sup> anatomical and splachnological preparations, a didactic museum with coloured photos on glass slides of the preparations”, but the museum was not “deemed to rise to the expectations – it did not contain lymphatic specimens” (Rainer 2012, 127). Here it is the eye of the anatomist speaking, as Rainer was particularly interested in the lymphatic system, and he was also famous for his anatomical dissections and wet specimens.

In Vienna, on 18<sup>th</sup> of April 1930, he vi-

sited the anatomist Ferdinand Hochstetter and his Institute, where he observed: “...a lot of plastic reconstructions, a lot of wax specimens. Skulls with none of the bones pierced. Paraffin-preserved hearts, intestines, placentae. Collection of the interior ear. Embryos series and splendid embryo photographs” (Rainer 2012, 131). Here, according to his diary, he learnt how to photograph embryos, and later on we can find several boxes of embryos photographs on glass in his collection. (See fig. 5)

Furthermore, Rainer noted his impression of the osteological collection, containing a one of a kind specimen:

*“...the skull collection is pretty nice, beautiful and with numerous skulls from other continents. Beautiful children’s skulls of all ages, children’s and adult skeletons. A couple of giant skeletons... a lot of comparative anatomy, especially osteology. Laocoon group reproduced only with skeletons, with great care. The serpent skeleton must have been hard to handle.”* (Rainer 2012, 131)

Later on, this composition might have translated into his own collection: we find in his collection 200 children’s skulls showing all stages of development, from stillborn to 18 years old (according to his age stages).

While visiting the Anthropological Institute in Vienna, and meeting the director Joseph Weniger (on 25<sup>th</sup> of April 1930) he saw:

*“...heads are mounted with 2 splints over their nose and before the ears. After that he paints them. Moulds are impregnated with wax (dissolved in gas). Collections of casts, of hands and feet, of all shapes. A beautiful skull collection of Africans and Australians. For skull’s curvatures an interesting mounting?”*



Fig. 5. Stereoscopic plaque on glass, showing a positive embryo photograph<sup>17</sup>. Wien, 1910. Bears the description ‘Univ-Institutes in Wien’. Institute of Anthropology Francisc I. Rainer archive.

17) I am grateful to Theodor-Ulieriu Rostas for the information he provided.

15) The measurement of body’s angles.

16) Wilhelm His (1831-1904), embryologist and anatomist.



Fig. 6. Plaster casts from the Francisc I. Rainer collection, depicting various human types.



*On boards thin slices of different crania are mounted in series, cut along the curvatures deemed interesting. Applied also to the frontal sinuses. Large collection of slides. Gypsum of leontiasis ossea<sup>18</sup>”*

18) “Leon face”, medical condition characterised by bone growth in the face and cranium.

In his collection there is one similar example of a skull sliced along its curvatures and mounted on a black wood base, held by a vertical metal rod. At the same time, casts were one thing he collected. We can find 15 brown coloured gypsum casts, showing a range of physiognomies. Such casts were a common feature in anatomical and ethnographic museums and they were the material embodiment of standard racial typologies (see Sysling 2015 for a historical account). (See fig. 6)

In Sweden, during his trip in June 1930, he had the opportunity of meeting anthropologist and eugenicists Wilhelm Wolfgang Krauss<sup>19</sup> (1894-?) and Herman Bernhard Ludborg (1868- 1943) and visited the latter’s Institute for the study of the biology of race in Uppsala – “he will send his future publications on the mixture of races, as Sweden is good at that” wrote Rainer (Rainer 2012, 143). Here he also visited the Exhibition of Nordic countries and in Sweden’s pavilion, he saw images from the Institute for the study of the biology of race (Rainer 2012, 143).

19) Author of *The racial characters of the Swedish nation* (1926).

In composition, the collection he gathered was similar to other anatomical medical collections, but from its early beginnings it was also directed towards anthropological studies. Even though there is limited information, Rainer seems to already have developed an interest in anthropology and mastery of anthropometric techniques by the early 1920s. Illustrative is the course in anthropology for the third year students of the National Institute of Physical Education (on constitutional types) which he started in 1922, and three research studies coordinated by him, a physical anthropology analysis in 1923, a somatological investigation in 1926 (Rainer and Roşca) on 448 pupils from a state boarding school, and a study on blood groups in 1927 (see Ţone 2012).



### **Anthropology and the politics of collecting in interwar Romania**

The improper storage and display conditions for this collection, as well as an interest in placing it at the heart of anthropological research were some of the reasons that determined Rainer to make efforts for moving it in a specially designed building and reorganising it under the newly Institute and Museum of Anthropology in 1940.

This was a time that coincided with several important events on the national arena: the establishment of King Carol II’s dictatorship, the ascension to power of the Iron Guard right-wing party, the organization of the National Legionary state immediately after the king’s abdication and the entrance of the country in WWII as Germany’s ally. From a wider point of view, anthropology in interwar Germany and Austria, the spaces most influential on Rainer’s work, witnessed an explicitly orientation towards national political agendas, which led to a “Nordic racial biology” (Massin 1996, 138) (e.g. see Berner 2010 for anthropology in interwar Austria;

Massin 1996 for interwar Germany). Even though the most important period in the history of this collection (1937-1944) was contemporary with such events, Rainer’s activity and collecting have remained detached from any explicit political agendas.

It is true that the late 1930s meant for Romania as well a time when nationalistic ideals became framed in biological terms and occasionally became intertwined with official state politics. Under the influence of German racial hygiene theories, but also following a local tradition of public hygiene, social medicine and economy theories introduced by anarchists and socialists starting with the last two decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Cotoi 2014), eugenicists such as Iuliu Moldovan and Sabin Manuilă (1894-1964), Iordache Făcăoaru (1897-?) and Gheorghe Banu (1889-1957) (Turda 2008, 2014, 122), obtained political and institutional support. Along the themes of national regeneration and racial policies, these eugenicists proposed theories, projects and were members of committees that supported radical bio-politics measures, such as the cleansing of the national blood, sterilisations campaigns, relocations of populations, premarital checking etc., with the Jews and Gypsies

being the primary targeted groups (see Turda 2014)<sup>20</sup>. In Bucharest, in 1935, the Demography, Anthropology and Eugenic department at the Institute of Statistics was organised the Department of Social Medicine at the University of Bucharest, and in 1943 was founded by the Ministries Council the Commission for the promotion and care of the biologic capital of nation to evaluate the health of nation and to provide concrete eugenic solutions (Turda 2014, 123; see the works of Maria Bucur, 2005 and Marius Turda on the eugenic movement in Romania, e.g. 2006, 2007, 2008). Gheorghe Banu became Minister of Health in the Octavian Goga government between 1937 and 1938, and then Director of the Institute of Hygiene in 1943; Sabin Manuilă directed Romania’s first Statistical Institute, and during World War II, he was an expert adviser on population policies of marshal Ion Antonescu (Achim 2005); while Iordache Făcăoaru promoted the organisation of an Institute of Ethnoracial biology after the model of the Hungarian Institute for the biology of the nation (Turda 2014, 128).

However, placed in the wider context of social and medical sciences in Romania such examples remain a minority. Rainer’s

20) Most of these though remained only at the status of projects and were never implemented.



Fig. 7. Anthropological photograph from the study of Maria Dumitrescu (1927).

activity also remained detached from the above mentioned political tendencies or agendas of his time. Placed in a Central European context, his case is interesting since he delimited his activities from political goals: Rainer explicitly rejected the ideas promoted by the eugenic movement or racial hierarchies. Instead, he focused on a completely different challenge that a relatively young state was facing and which was more common for the Romanian scientists in inter-war Bucharest. In 1918, Romania's territory had almost doubled its size through the addition of new Romanian language speaking provinces, which were previously part of the Habsburg and Russian Empires. Therefore, to resist the internal and external pressures of disintegration that followed the unification, the state needed to better integrate the high percentage of the ethnic minorities, which represented 30% of the population (Anuarul Statistic al României 1929-1930 *apud* Cotoi 2011).

Thus arose the importance to study and understand its ethnic composition, and the special needs of a mostly rural and uneducated population, and then to devise policies to consolidate and modernize the state. In this line, profiling the population needs became a vital element for the well-being of the state and various campaigns to address this issue were devised – see Dimitrie Gusti's sociological fieldwork in Romanian villages, Rainer's anthropometric campaigns etc.

As a consequence, Rainer's effort of founding an anthropological museum and institute took place in a favourable internal context – after the First World War, several institutes had been organised in Bucharest, which were designed to study significant aspects of the Romanian nation, according to the newly introduced disciplines: geopolitics, statistics, sociology, anthropology: the Romanian Social Institute was founded in 1921, Nicolae Iorga's Institute for the Study of Universal History was founded in 1937<sup>21</sup>, in 1936 the Central Institute of Statistics was

reorganised, and the Institute of Geography was established in 1944. Anthropology was seen as one of such disciplines which needed to be introduced in Romania, to contribute to the synchronisation of Romanian science with the rest of Europe and to provide tools for knowing the nation. The 1930s brought with them a growing interest in its institutionalization throughout the country: at the Faculty of Natural Sciences in Iași was founded in 1930 the Anthropology and Palaeontology Department<sup>22</sup>, while in Cluj in 1933 the Anthropological Society was born. What needs to be mentioned is that even though all these institutes seemed to follow a similar agenda, placed in line with a nationalistic ideology, they were mostly the result of independent efforts of certain academics. The Romanian state had little involvement in such endeavours, except for financing them, and one can more accurately interpret them as “civilising” missions supported by certain individuals who, after being trained abroad, saw it as a moral obligation to contribute to the betterment of life in Romania and to continue the independent efforts of some of the Romanian intellectual elite in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Even so, their efforts were not always consistent, and at times they remained implicit and not fully formed research agendas. This particularity of the Romanian case, of the way in which the relationship between scientists, academic institutions and the state were shaped, makes it different from its European counterparts. As a result, the traditional questions which have marked the anthropological historiography for this time period, focused on the relationship between politics, right-wing driven research and anthropology, are not fully applicable.

Thus, as Paul Petrini (1847-1924), the former head of the Department of Anatomy at the Faculty of Medicine had written before him<sup>23</sup>, Rainer thought that the role of anthropology was to fill a void in Romanian research, that of creating a physical anthropological profile of the

21) Most of these though remained only at the status of projects and were never implemented.

22) See Ciobanu et al. 2009.

23) E.g., Paul Petrini was writing in 1919 that he finds it a “moral obligation” to introduce and support anthropology, especially given the historical context: a united Romania where one can thus study the influences of other people on Romanians, the distances between populations (Petrini 1919). In his opinion such studies would have major importance for every country, for population comparative purposes, leading to a racial classification; from this one could observe the influences of one population on the other, the links and differences between various crania (and consequently populations) (Ion 2014a).

Romanian population. Even though the composition of his collection, directed towards collecting “Romanian” ethnics and local minorities had an inherent political structuring, along the lines of a “national body”, he was not a “conscious political ideologue” (in Stephen J. Gould’s words) in practice: wider interests guided his research topics and methods, namely a broader understanding of variability of human form in the history of life on Earth. Thus, the craniological collection is only a part of his anthropological collection, meant to occupy only one floor of the three storied Institute’s building.

Furthermore, revealing for his specific understanding of race are the writings that followed his field campaigns to three Romanian villages. Similar to Török, he thought that a combined study of prehistoric populations and contemporary individuals can shed light on the dynamics of human types. In these villages he had hoped he could capture: “the monographic study of the inhabitants of as many mountain villages as possible, as remote as possible, where we are able to discover the older ethnical aspects of the population” (Rainer 1927 *apud* Majuru 2015, 139).

However, his method of calculating indices based on various measurements taken from peasants led him simply to conclude that his initial goal was unattainable due to a mixture of racial characteristics: the variations of heads and faces shapes suggested that “we cannot speak of an ethnically homogenous population” (*ibidem*). Both the terms “ethnically homogenous” or “race variations” were used by Rainer in the sense of “anthropological types”; his results showed a co-habitation of various types in local populations, a dolicocephalic of Nordic aspect, brachicephalic and intermediate type (Rainer 1937). Apart from anthropometric measurements, eye and hair colour, his serological campaigns had also proven the futility of blood groups analyses for discriminating between human

groups. Therefore, by the late 1920s he had already convinced himself through these field studies in the mountain villages that there was no such thing as pure race, and every individual in a contemporary setting displayed several traits.

What remains unclear though is how he would have actually used the skull collection to further his typological studies. On the one hand, Rainer published very few anthropological studies (Rainer 1945; Rainer and Simionescu 1942; Rainer and Cotaescu 1943; Rainer and Tudor 1945, 1946). Even so, he was not necessarily dissatisfied with anthropometry as a method (as A. Torok had been, for example) for charting human variability: one could still use indices based on body measurements to observe individual variability or constitutional types. This was combined with an interest in genetic explanations in line with what was happening in interwar Vienna or at the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Anthropology, Human Heredity and Eugenics in Berlin – e.g., similar to his Austrian colleagues (Berner 2010), he gathered dactilograms and conducted surveys on body traits interpreted in a genetic key, such as the study on metopism (Rainer and Tudor 1946).

Therefore, as such research shows, what distinguishes Rainer from his contemporaries, is the retention of a view of anthropology as a “natural history” discipline, interested in diagnosing the physical makeup of humankind: constitutional and demographic types. Even though his studies were mostly descriptive in nature, in terms of general outlook, his aim was deeper and linked to wider philosophy of biology questions. As I have detailed elsewhere (Ion 2014b), he sought to achieve through the research into body’s morphology an understanding of the organic forms of life, equating form with the ultimate cause, its drive – *Bildungstrieb*, in Goethe’s terms. In this line, human variability was a key of understanding the laws that govern the generation of life



on Earth, a concern which went beyond national or ethnic themes.



### **The museum as a place for making visible life: bone, flesh, gypsum, glass and paper**

*“Losing the sight of one eye. It seemed so fitting – one of nature’s masterpieces – that old Miss Parry should turn to glass.”* (V. Woolf)

The Anthropological Museum and Institute were officially opened on June 1940, with the support of the council of the Faculty of Medicine (obtained in December 7<sup>th</sup> 1939) and with the approval of the Ministry of Education (December 21<sup>st</sup> 1939)<sup>24</sup>; an autonomous institution part of the University of Bucharest. As Rainer said during the opening ceremony of the Institute, the collection consisted of “skulls – priceless material for the human types in our country”, and the role of the institute was “to study from an anthropological point of view the Romanian people and to educate anthropologists” (Rainer in Sevastos 1946, 22). The pathological collection was designed for researchers – doctors, orthopaedists, radiologists, which could “compare the images obtained on X-ray plaques with real pieces” (20<sup>th</sup> June 1940, Rainer in Sevastos 1946, 22). On this occasion, the inventory of the Institute of Anatomy and Embryology was divided and the pieces deemed relevant for anthropological studies were moved to the new Museum on June 28<sup>th</sup> 1940: the skulls collection (around 5000 specimens), with cupboards, 70 gypsum casts, the collection of specimens of the development of the cranium, the pathological bone collection (around 600 specimens), 30 anthropological instruments, 6 microscopes and 50 books (Ion 2014a, 32).

When the collection was moved, it was reorganised. We also have information regarding the way specimens were

displayed and mounted. When entering the building which housed the institute and museum of anthropology, one would have felt like stepping inside a Beauchene exploded skull, only that in this case it was an installation-collage of all anatomical elements that made up the human body. The new building becomes a collage of several body parts, preserved in various way – skulls and histological specimens, as well as representations like drawings, photographs and casts. It was primarily a research collection, a visual archive intended for anthropologists and doctors alike, who would find here the necessary materials for racial or pathological studies. When it moved in the new Institute, the collection kept its links with medical teaching-through the sourcing of materials, which came from the cadaver department hosted in the basement of the Institute’s building and by providing research materials for doctors and students.

A look at the inventory of the collection can reveal this basic concept which structured it and was the core around which it grew: variability of form. This was integrated to an evolutionary understanding: series were created that would highlight the way human form developed throughout years and millenias, but also to make visible the links between various forms of life, what he called “the identity of the organisational plan.” As he wrote in his anthropology class notes:

*“I tried to integrate man in the history of life on our planet... In this first lesson I looked at it, evolving from anthropus phase to Homo Sapiens. I gave them the notion of the length of this evolution and of the great changes of ambience in which he lived (in the northern hemisphere, in the northern part). The Mauer man around 530 000 years ago – so approximately 17-18000 generations. From Christ until now 64, from Aeschylus 80. So our human antecedents weigh 18.000 generations or maybe even more... I wanted to give the sensation of evolution realised in human form and born in their mind the need*

24) With finance from the House of Schools, the Ministry of National Education, represented by Cancicov, and the National Bank through the governor Mitita Constantinescu and Finance Minister (L'oeuvre 1947).

of stretching evolution further up.” (Rainer 1943, MSS)

“Variability presents degrees of range: we can study it as part of a race or a species, of a genus and to wider degrees, according to systematic taxonomy levels, without reaching the largest, that is the animal kingdom, seen as the realisation in infinite forms of the same fundamental tendencies of life, or even in the whole world of organisms.” (Rainer 1943, MSS) (See fig. 8)

In time, the number of specimens grew and, according to a published inventory (L’oeuvre 1947, 65), in 1946 the collection comprised: around 6000 skulls, 1359 bones, 141 gypsum casts, specimens on lamellae, photographs, adnotated anatomical drawings, 128 archaeological skulls and 55 archaeological skeletons. (Fig. 9-10)

Rainer’s ideas were reflected in the way the unfolding of form was staged in the rooms and hallways of the newly built locale of the Institute. The preeminent place was for dry specimens, bones, which mixed with other materialities – wood, metal rods, and glass cabinets.

According to the description published in 1947 (L’oeuvre 1947, 58), the cranio-logical collection dominated the ground floor, being displayed to the left and right of the entrance. In the left room, the space was filled with four wooden armoires containing approximately 1000 skulls, two more cupboards against the walls and



Fig. 8

tables for work and filing cabinet. The well lit rooms and furniture were designed so that they allow for the optimum conditions for studying the skulls: these were arranged on no more than on two parallel lines in armoires, with glass doors so that one could easily see / retrieve the skulls for study. In the room opposite were brought the old cabinets from the basement of the Faculty of Medicine, filled with skulls in the process of classification, casts and various post-cranial elements.

The only individuals in the collection who retained some of their identity were those whose skulls were preserved and displayed. These skulls were numbered in blue ink for identification, on the left parietal bone<sup>25</sup> and

25) The morphology specimens were numbered on the piece and the diagnosis written on the base.

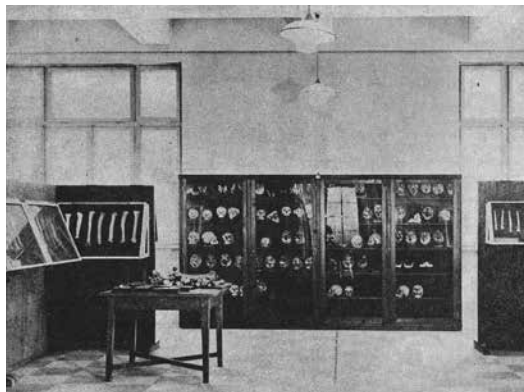


Fig. 9-10 Images from the Institute and Museum of Anthropology. Source: L’oeuvre 1947, p. 62.

then grouped based on age, morphology, and ethnicity. Among the data inscribed were the person's name and surname, sex (marked through the corresponding symbols), age, nationality, profession, date of death, diagnosis and hospital of provenance. Most were Romanians (93%), but one could also find 235 individuals from 23 ethnic minorities (Ion 2011), like the Turkish soldier Narbitoglu Ismael who died in 1917, the Italian Giovanni Zuanelli, a miner who died in 1927 and whose body came from Pantelimon hospital, or the Jewish sculptor Melic Adolf, who died aged 70 of bronchitis at Caritas hospital in 1932. Most of the causes of death were medical conditions and deaths caused by poverty: under number 1388 / 190v we find Gheorghe Ciobanu from Cucuieți-Olt who died in 1927 of "physiological misery" and ended up in the morgue. Others have died violent deaths, like Popa C. Dumitru aged 16, who died through drowning. Among the most disturbing causes of death are suicides with fire arms and executions. 3585 individuals' had their heads thus preserved and displayed, 2123 adult males, 1194 adult females and 214 children (Ion 2011). Most of these individuals had died between the ages of 18 and 60 (Ion 2011). They tell the story of the living conditions for their social background in interwar Bucharest, stories of poverty, death and solitude.

From the photographs of the time, and the surviving specimens in the collection, one can see other marks which these bodies bear. Some of the skulls show marks of autopsies, the skullcaps being fixed in metal hinges. "Special" skulls were individualised through the way they were displayed, e.g. mounted on black wooden boards, like a Turk's head shot at Plevna in the independence war of 1877, given as a gift to Rainer by a colleague, a unique example in the collection of a gunshot wound. Thus, the substance of bodies, bone, merged with ink, metal rods, wooden boards and the wood of the armoires, to create a visual atlas of human ethnicities.

"After the development of face, the development of limbs" (Rainer MSS, class notes 1943).

Right above the two rooms, on the first floor, one could see the collection of bone morphology displayed in transparent showcases: two rows of specimens were lined on the glass shelves of four parallel armoires, placed so that one could easily circulate among them. The pieces were exhibited so that their pathology was exposed, either with the description written on their stands, or by grouping similar exhibits. From a photograph capturing in the collection we can see dozens of sacral bones filling one such armoire, looking almost like they are dancing on their metal rods, while in an armoire to the back, skulls and cranial fragments are twisted and placed in various positions in order to show the pathological deformations. The X-rays of the important pieces covered the walls of the room, with a switch to light them up from behind whenever the visitor felt like getting a deeper understanding of the pieces exhibited. In a separate room were displayed the limb bones, according to size and shape, placed in boxes with a transparent cover, and grouped according to similar deformations or lesions: femora, tibiae and arm bones were mounted in parallel rows and showcased in tilted boxes placed at the viewer's level; other pieces were mounted on metal supports, on cases on the walls or placed along the room. In this room as well the X-rays of the exhibited materials took one wall.

Illustrative of the fate of these bodies deemed pathologically interesting is the story of *Two crooked legs*, found among Rainer's papers. On 16<sup>th</sup> of January 1897, at the surgery of the Saint Spiridon hospital in Bucharest, Ciobanu Iordachi, aged 65, a worker from Lețcani, presented himself with an ulceration where he rested his foot which prevented him from walking (Bothezat 1898). The diagnosis exposed a double congenital club foot. A month





No of pathologies by body part	163 cranial	109 vertebral column	36 Sacral	44 pelvis	42 femur	31 tibiae	23 fibula	17 foot	49 ribs and sternum	9 clavicle	21 scapula	47 humerus	15 radius	24 cubitus	15 hand
Specimens	285	232	320	85	71	54	59	35	168	28	36	71	31	55	15

Table 1. Range of pathologies in the Francisc I. Rainer collection.

later the patient died of pneumonia, but his remains were dissected, his case being deemed interesting by dr. P. Bothezat, who wrote and published a short anatomical description the following year. The article starts by describing the external morphology of Ciobanu’s legs, the aspect of the muscles, articulations and ligaments in the order they were revealed during the clinical examination. The second part of the article, which the author found the most interesting, records the post-mortem faith of the body, trying an “in-depth” description. However, this was limited:

*“From the performed autopsy we could only obtain both thighs with their legs, so we can only present the results of dissecting these pieces. It would of course have been interesting if we could make a study of the spine’s bone marrow lesions, especially today when almost everybody agrees in considering congenital equus varus caused by a nervous system lesion. However, the deformity which affected our sick man, being marked and the anatomical lesions quite advanced, the anatomical description of only the legs is interesting enough, because it can be made extensively.”* (Bothezat 1898)

This text, found in the Institute’s archive is a typical case study of what would have been deemed as a pathologically interesting case study which would be reported and preserved in an anatomical collection. In most cases, such deviant (fragmentary) bodies would be kept for reference purposes, preserved and stored in anatomical archives. A further look at the inventory published

in 1947 shows a wide range of pathologies, with all body parts being represented (Table 1, based on L’oeuvre 1947), from fractures to congenital anomalies, old age, traumas, trepanations, tumors, developmental problems and epigenetic traits.

The large corridor on the first floor was also used as an exhibition space: four wooden armoires were lining the walls, each with a different content; one gathered several skulls with neural lesions, another those with visceral morphology, a third one was dedicated to the archaeological specimens owned by the Institute through the donations of Professor Alexandru Bărăcila, Tzigara Samurçaș, Radu Vulpe and Vasile Pârvan – 54 complete or fragmentary skulls from several medieval cemeteries in Romania<sup>26</sup>; a fourth one held reproductions and casts of fossil skeletons and anthropological types. On the top floor, in the attic, were displayed the cercopithecidae collection, preparations of the central nervous system and histological specimens, such as a microscopic collections of embryologic sections of several species), plus a tattoo collection (L’oeuvre 1947, 61-64).

The importance that the illustrative material played in Rainer’s method can be seen in his own words in a lecture from 1943:

*“The lectures on the historical realisation of the primate type need to be supported by plates as impressive as they can be. I count on drawings which show the development of face in vertebrates, starting from fish and moving up towards humans; after the development of face, the development of hands, here a*

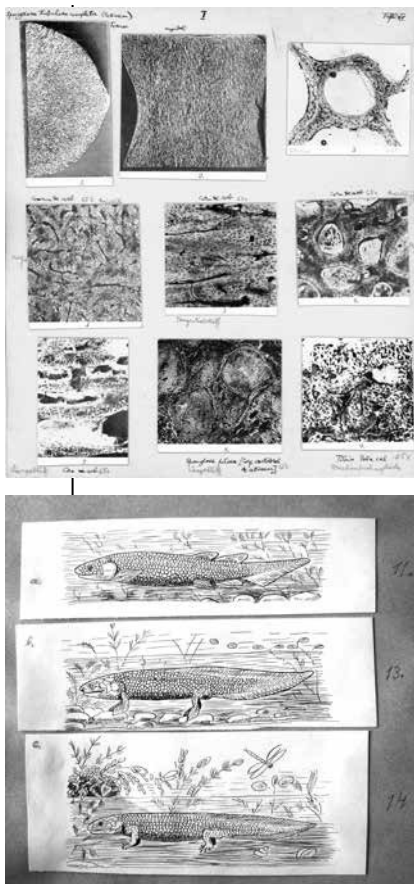
26) From Turnu-Severin, from Drobeta, Cetatea Severinului, Simian Ostrov, Poiana, Cavaclar and Piscul Crasanului; Plus 39 boxes of skeletons.



*good board showing the evolution of hand is needed... all depends on the possibility of illustrating things."*

In another account it was mentioned that the Institute had 200 large plates realised by the Institute's drawing artist, following Rainer's indications. Among them, one could find: "glaciers, the succession of levels of civilisations, the Cioclovina graphics, the median from le Moustier, La chapelle and Homo Sapiens, dolicocephalie and brachicephalie" (Rainer, Lesson 17: "Saturday 22 May 1943"). Most of these were meant to be used as part of anthropological classes given at the University of Bucharest. Some of them, lined the walls of the first floor of the Institute, reproductions of prehistoric men bought from the museums that held the remains (L'oeuvre 1947, 63). (See fig. 11-12)

Fig. 11-12. Plates from the Francisc I. Rainer collection.



Another kind of evidence gathered by Rainer were the anthropological charts and photographs taken during the field campaigns in three mountain villages – Nerejulmare (Moldova, Vrancea), Fundul-Moldovii (Bucovina, Câmpulung) and Drăguș (Transilvania, Făgăraș) – in 1927-1928 and 1932 along the Social Romanian Institute (Rainer 1937). In all 3 campaigns were realised "1.002 anthropological charts which

recorded 12 parameters, 2.372 reactions for determining blood groups, 492 photographic clichés and 633 dactilograms" (Țone 2012; see Majuru 2015; Rainer 1937).

Anthropological photographs were taken at Fundul Moldovei and Drăguș, which marked the first use of anthropological photos in Romania for the study of human types. The living subjects was recorded in three perspectives: face, profile and  $\frac{3}{4}$ . Responsible for these was Rainer's student, dr. Ștefan Milcu. Țone (2012) also mentions that during these campaigns they also drew the profiles and face contours, responsible being Aurora Pavelescu, a former student of Rainer's from the Belle Arte Faculty.

The anthropological photograph was not meant just to capture the subject's individuality, but to reduce it according to a standardized set of rules (see the anatomical landmarks and the distances employed) and place it in comparison with other subject's images. This type of endeavour was designed to capture, analyse and archive human typologies and races. (See fig. 14-15)

From a short excerpt published in 1961 by one of those who took part in these campaigns we can see how what seemed like a straightforward operation, photographing somebody in order to capture their image, was a complex process designed according to certain rules in order to produce a specific form of photography: the anthropological photograph. Gr. Avakian (p. 179) would write in the journal "Probleme de Antropologie" [Anthropological Problems]:

At page 84, P. N. Bașkirov mentions that one can succeed in photographing the human torso or the whole stature only if one respects a correct positioning of the subject, a camera with a certain design and placed in a certain position. [...] the author recommends, for the photographing in frontal norm, that the camera lens is placed at the level of the exterior edges of the eyes, thus being achieved the position of the body in Frankfurt horizontal, and the intersection of the lines which pass through

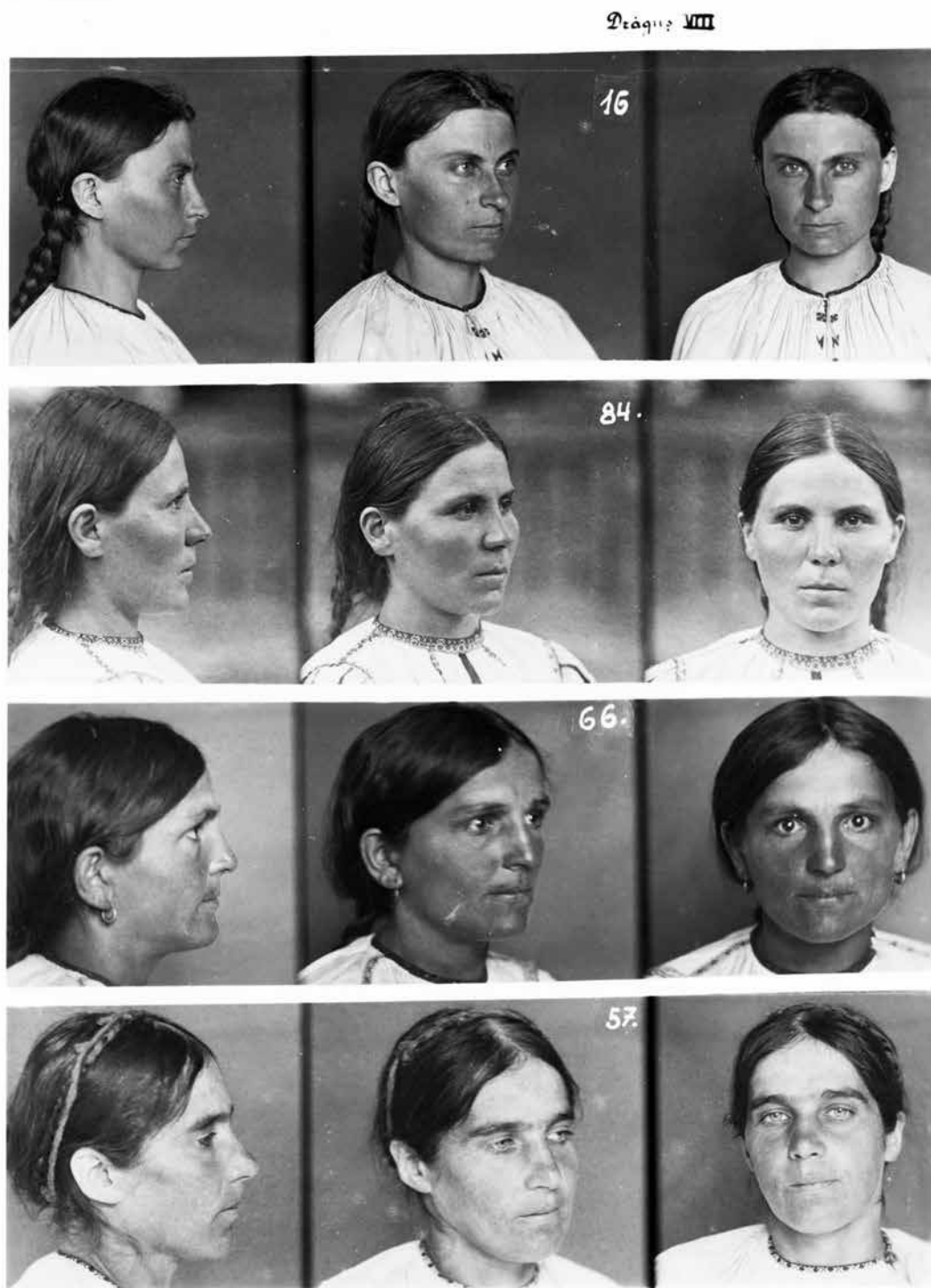


Fig. 13. Anthropological photographs from Draguş. Institute of Anthropology Francisc I. Rainer archive.

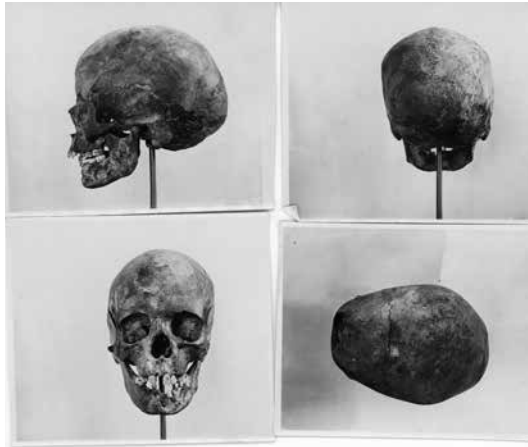
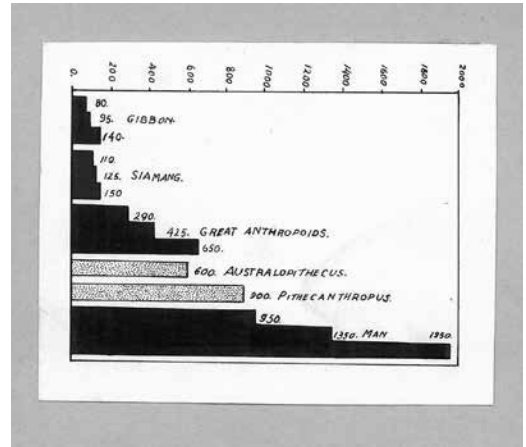


Fig. 14-15. Archaeological specimens in the collection.

Cranial capacity in higher primates.



the external margins of the eyes and through the glabella must coincide with the centre of the lens.

To this, one adds histological lamellae – where human tissue was sliced, coloured and placed on standard sized glass lamellae, grouped in card-board boxes with leather binding.

• • • • •  
**Bodies, series, memories.  
 Legacies of a collection**

“Organismen sind nicht bloss OBJEKTE, SONDERN AUCH Subjekte?” (L. V. Wiese) [Organisms are not merely objects, but also subjects?] [MSS Rainer Archive]

What is after all the relevance of thinking about this collection now, in present times? Was there any valid scientific use of such a collection even at the time of its creation? Could this be an enough reason for justifying its existence? And what should we do when confronted with such legacies? In their introduction to *The Fate of Anatomical Collections*, Rina Knoeff and Robert Zwijnenberg (2015) raise a number of issues for it is relevant to talk about old collections comprising body parts: they embody “rich histories” of inter-disciplinary research, through their fate – use and abandonment

– one can chart changes in paradigms and audiences and ultimately they are places where the power of their keepers is made manifest. Their text is part of a wide debate regarding the place of such collections in contemporaneity, and the ethics and politics of studying and displaying the dead in such settings (e.g. Cassman *et alii* 2008; Fforde *et alii* 2004; Hallam and Alberti 2013; Sayers 2010). In this line, the discussion applied to Rainer’s collection has two aspects: the fate of the collection and the fate of the bodies that compose it.

Rainer’s death in 1944 marked a change in the collection’s existence. Partly, this was due to external events – the Communist regime came to power, the Institute went through several reorganisations and lost its autonomy, researchers moved, and even when it moved back in the building it had to downsize, abandon the lower floor of the institute; hence the display setup as imagined by Rainer was abandoned. In essence, the collection was a man’s obsession and ambition, tied together by a perspective mostly grounded in philosophy of biology and kept in close link with anatomical teaching and research – thus, for any anthropologist who would not have shared his teleological goals, this grouping together of materials would not have been read as Rainer did. In the couple of years immediately after his death, while his students were still working there<sup>27</sup>, his model of collecting was still preserved, though

27) In a memoir from March 28th 1947 of Gr. T. Popa, the director of the Institute of Anthropology at the time, he mentions 4 researchers in the Institute who were developing anthropological studies: Dejica studied “cranial sutures”, Repciuc – “hair and eye colour transmission by genes”, Pleșa – “blood groups distributions by families”, Bălăceanu and Simionescu – “the form and function of cerebellum based on its marks on skulls.”

his (philosophical) agenda was not taken on: the collection was enlarged with 1000 crania, a genetic department was founded, full skeletons were mounted (“and not just skulls”, Popa 1947) and the embryology collection was reorganised. By mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, this vision of anthropology, tied with anatomy and seen as a natural science was already starting to dissappear elsewhere in Europe, and in time also in Romania. In the following decades, more and more anthropological studies at the Center for Archaeological Research focused primarily on ar-chaeological skeletons or living populations. The craniological collection was kept on display, mostly as a piece of heritage, whereas the histological specimens were put in storage, and the rest of the documents, drawings, plates, casts, ended up in the attic, and others have been lost. Seventy years later, only the skulls and some pathological post-cranial specimens are still present, a handful of anatomical drawings and X-rays, none of the large plates, only a dozen casts and the mortuary mask, a couple of boxes with histological lamellae and part of the photographs from the field campaigns.

At the same time, during Rainer’s life the collection and museum remained mostly a closed space, his own research world. There seemed to have been a wider interest in the collection, as the memories of the intellectuals of the time who visited it show, as well as an interest in his weekly anthropological lectures given during the years of 1941-42, 42-43 in the University’s amphitheatre: “In the winter of 1943 a young

doctor arrived at the front in the Caucasus and brought me the news that F. Rainer’s lectures make a big noise in the capital, and are much enjoyed by the Bucharest intelligentsia” (Sevastos 1946).

But Rainer was and remained a solitary man, living by and demanding high standards, constantly trying to perfect his body and mind discipline. His notes on evolution, embryology and race are interspersed with quotes from Paul Valery, Goethe, Henry Delacroix, Blaise Pascal – all his practical endeavours were made having in mind old existential and philosophical questions:

*“Toute l’histoire de l’univers est écrite sur les ailes d’une mouche”* (Alfred Giard, in Rainer MSS).

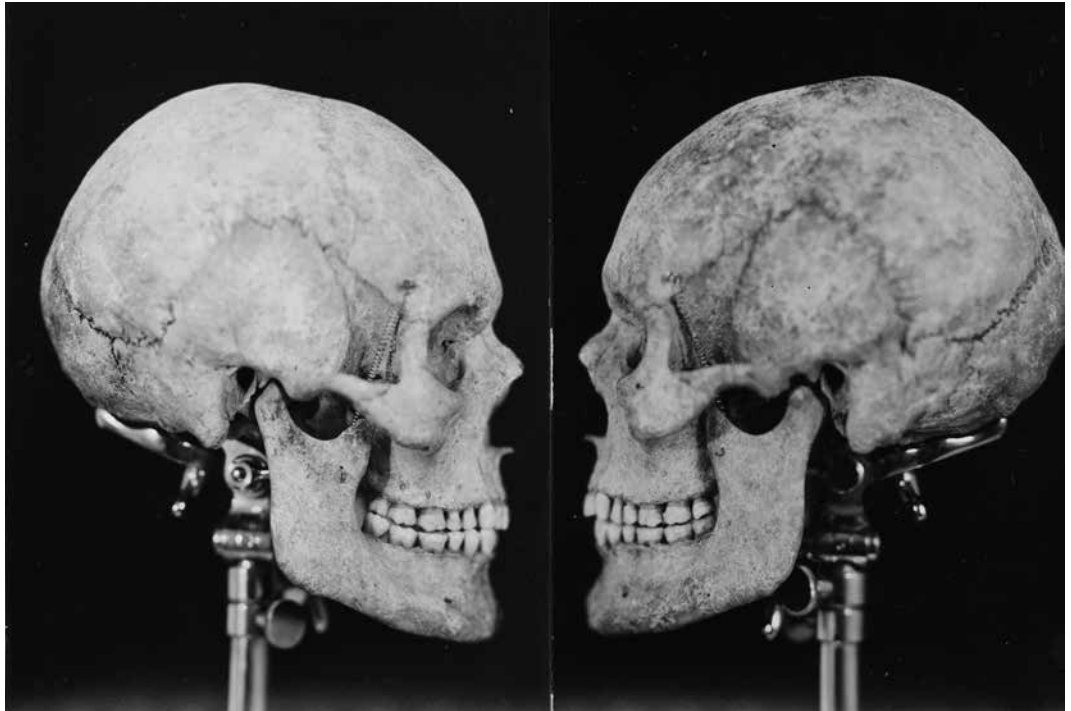
*“The play of colours in dew drops is splendid only when I watch it without my glasses. Glasses make it barren. The sensation... of pure love”* (Rainer 2012, 101).



He was a man who devoted close attention to the annual blooming of trees and flowers in his garden, struggled with insomnia and was forever sunken in observing the spectacle of form and its relationship with time. Even though he had imagined this Institute for posterity and named it a “Museum”, during his lifetime it was mostly his own research laboratory – with very few visitors or researches, most of

which were anatomists. This situation was also kept in the following decades, with the collection being “on display”, but actually just an archive from which necessary





research material could be retrieved.

Since then, the collection has been passed on and viewed as a “methodological tool”, used for a limited number of osteological and medical studies (Ion 2011), as a piece of heritage (see the exhibition in 2001, Dumitrescu and Crăciun 2001), but an open question remains: what should we do with this legacy?

On the other hand, and most importantly, is looking at the issue of ethics in relation to the type of body which Rainer brought into view through his collecting and research practices. In spite of his intention to capture the dynamics of life, Rainer ultimately gathered thousand of bodies who were silenced in the space of the Institute. In the process, individuals became body parts, signified diseases or trauma marks. They were reduced to flesh and bone, which could be moulded and mounted as desired, and from each individual was kept only the part which was deemed necessary to signify a certain aspect. Thus, body parts were mixed and matched, creating a visual spectacle. In practice, through the

methods of interrogation he applied, he reduced the analysed individuals to static contours, mathematical formulas, indexes, and figures, placed in wider comparative narratives about morphological variation (see Ion 2014b for a detailed analysis).

From a different point of view, the story of the collection is relevant to highlight the way in which inter-disciplinary connections are a constitutive aspect of Romanian anthropology. For Rainer, anthropology remained a natural science, linked to prehistory, but also to geography, and biology, and removed from cultural explorations such as the ones opened by Franz Boas and other early 20<sup>th</sup> century anthropologists. Beyond a local relevance of such a historical account, it is my contention that bringing together fragments of Rainer’s biography, of collection’s inventory and stories about the dead one can challenge contemporary understanding of what such collections stood for. Rainer proposed a specific take on human taxonomy; he constructed series<sup>28</sup>, meant to document, to bring forth the underlying structures that made up a human’s identity, namely biology

28) For a great methodological perspective on seriality in science, see Hopwood et alii 2010.

in his case. In his view, he collected life and evidences of generation forces. In a way, the collection could have been viewed as an evolutionary tree made visible, but one encapsulating ontogeny – the development of human organisms from generation to adulthood – and making visible links between past and present human forms, links decoded in an anatomical and biological key. The goal of this gathering of materials, as Rainer had imagined it, was to see the forever generating patterns of life in material form, and a basis of racial studies<sup>29</sup>. His aim was to observe the “plasticity of human form”, various phenotypes, extinct humans and contemporary types in comparative perspective, the Romanian type and its local variations: “Look for example, the type of ‘oltean’ is pretty characteristic and distinguishable from the ‘muntean’ and ‘moldavian’<sup>30</sup>, which can be distinguished at a first look” (Rainer 1934).

The relevance of such concerns for the 21<sup>st</sup> century lies in a still unsettled matter – how is one to define types and construct boundaries inside taxonomic groupings, if variability is

read in an evolutionary key? Rainer aimed at charting human types by using biology and anatomy as investigative tools, and this resulted in certain bodies’ displays and research questions. Therefore, an analysis of such a collection can offer possible new ways for interpreting anthropological practices in order to bridge the gap between anthropology-osteoaerchaeology-heritage and museum displays.



### Acknowledgments

I am indebted to John C. Barrett, Josh Nall, Arda Antonescu, Miruna Vasiliță, Theodor-Emil Ulieriu-Rostàs and to two anonymous reviewers for their valuable comments and suggestions on previous drafts of this text. They have greatly contributed to shaping the final form of this paper. I am also grateful to Director Dr. Cristiana Glavce for granting me permission for studying and publishing archival materials from the Institute of Anthropology Francisc I. Rainer.

29) Anthropology being read in line with E. Fischer’s point of view, that it deals with the hereditary distinctions between men.

30) Oltenia, Muntenia, Moldova: regions in Romania.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

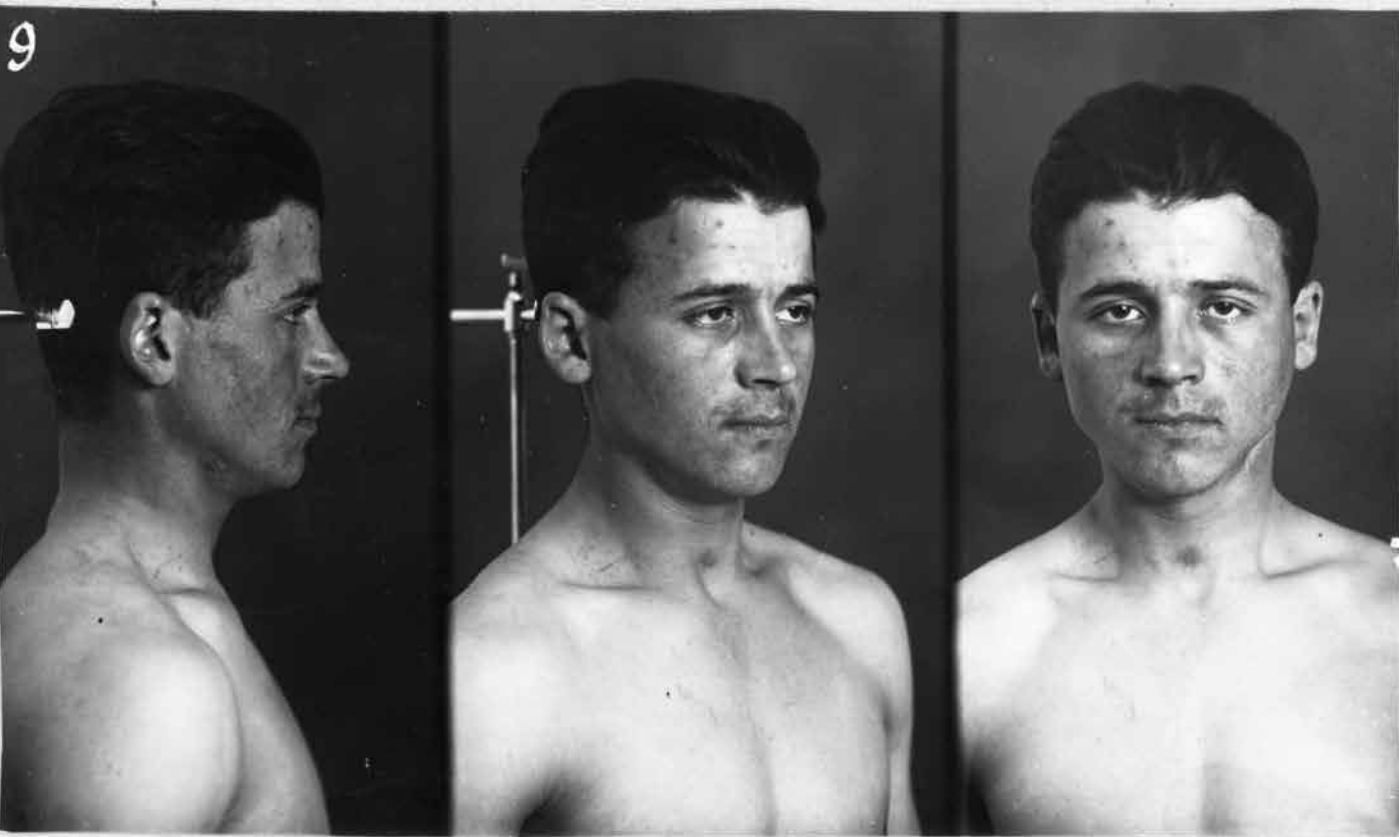
- Achim, Viorel. 2005. “Romanian-German Collaboration in Ethnopolitics: The Case of Sabin Manuilă.” In Ingo Haar, Michael Fahlbusch (eds.), *German Scholars and Ethnic Cleansing 1920-1945*. Providence: Berghahn Books, 139–154.
- Alberti, Samuel. 2011. *Morbid Curiosities: Medical Museums in Nineteenth-Century Britain*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Avakian, Grigore. 1961. “Asupra lucrării lui P. N. Baskirov, despre principiile de bază ale fotografiei antropologice și căile realizării lor la folosirea aparatelor de format mic.” *Probleme de antropologie* 6: 179-180.
- Bay, R. 1986. [Historical development of anthropology in Basel]. *Anthropol Anz.* 44(4): 299-303.
- Berkowitz, Carin. 2013. “Systems of display: the making of anatomical knowledge in Enlightenment Britain.” *The British Journal for the History of Science* 46 (3): 359-387.
- Berner, Margit. 2010. “Race and physical anthropology in interwar Austria”. *Focaal—Journal of Global and Historical Anthropology* (58): 16–31.
- Bothezat, Petre. 1898. *Descriptiune anatomica. Doua picioare strambe la un bătrîn de 65 de ani*. Iași: Tipografia națională.
- Bucur, Maria. 2005. *Eugenie și modernizare în România interbelică*. Iași: Polirom.
- Cassman, Vicky; Odegaard, N.; Powell, J. (eds.). 2007. *Human remains: Guide for museums and academic institutions*. Lanham: Altamira Press.
- Chaplin, Simon. 2008. “Nature dissected, or dissection nat-

- uralized? The case of John Hunter's museum." *Museum and Society* 6(2): 135-151.
- Chaplin, Simon. 2009. *John Hunter and the "Museum Oeconomy", 1750-1800*. Ph.D. thesis, Department of History, King's College London, 2009.
- Ciobanu, Ana Maria; Mirea, Elena Loredana; Năsturel, Petre S.; Pippidi, Andrei; Popa, Bogdan; Roman, Tomi; Nicoleta Raluca; Tudorancea, Radu. 2009. *Institutul de istorie "Nicolae Iorga" (1937-1948)*. Bucharest: Oscar Print.
- Cotoi, Călin. 2011. "Jottings on the history of Romanian Sociology." In *Studia Universitatis Babeş-Bolyai-Sociologia* 56 (1): 135-149.
- Cotoi, Călin. 2014. "Națiune, societate și anarhism în România fin-de-siècle." In *Rev. St. Pol. Rel. Int.* 11 (2): 17-40.
- Dumitrescu, Maria. 1927. *Contributions to the study of blood groups in Romania*.
- Dumitrescu, Sorin and Matei Stîrcea Crăciun. 2001. *Rainer*. Bucharest: Anastasia.
- Fabian, Ann. 2010. *The Skull Collectors: Race, Science, and America's Unburied Dead*. Chicago: University Chicago Press.
- Fforde, Cressida. 2004. *Collecting the Dead: Archaeology and the Reburial Issue*. Bristol: Bristol Classical Press.
- Fforde, Cressida; Hubert, J.; Turnbull, P. 2004. *The Dead and Their Possessions. Repatriation in Principle, Policy and Practice*. London: Routledge.
- Geană G. 1996. "Școala monografică și antropologia. O relație interdisciplinară și devenirea ei." In Larionescu M. 1996 (ed.). *Școala sociologică de la București. Tradiție și actualitate*. București: Metropol.
- Hallam, Elizabeth. (forthcoming). *Anatomy Museum: Death and the Body Displayed*. London: Reaktion Books.
- Hallam, Elizabeth and Alberti, Samuel J.M.M. 2013. *Medical Museums: Past, Present, Future*. London: Royal College of Surgeons of England.
- Hendriksen, M.M.A.; Huistra, H.M. and Knoeff, H.G. 2013. "Recycling Anatomical Preparations". In S. Alberti and E. Hallam (eds.) *Medical Museums, 74-87*. London: Royal College of Surgeons of England.
- Hendriksen, Marieke M. A. 2015. *Elegant Anatomy. The Eighteenth-Century Leiden Anatomical Collections*. Leiden: Brill.
- Hopwood, Nick; Schaffer, Simon and Secord, Jim. 2010. "Seriality and Scientific objects in the Nineteenth Century". *History of Science* 48 (161): 251-285.
- Huistra, Hieke. 2013. *Preparations on the move: the Leiden anatomical collections in the nineteenth century*. Ph.D. thesis, Leiden University.
- Ion, Alexandra. 2011. "A brief overview of 'Francisc J. Rainer' human osteological collection." *Annuaire Roumaine d'Anthropologie* 48: 24-32.
- Ion, Alexandra. 2014a. "Establishing Romanian anthropology: the foundation of the Institute of Anthropology 'Francisc I. Rainer'." *Annuaire Roumain d'Anthropologie* 51: 21-44.
- Ion, Alexandra. 2014b. "The making of historical bodies: sex, race, and type in the beginnings of the Romanian physical anthropology." *Studii de Preistorie* 11: 229-242.
- Knoeff, Rina and Zwijnenberg, Robert. 2015. *The Fate of Anatomical Collections*. Ashgate.
- Kuklick, Henrika. 2007. *New History of Anthropology*. Wiley-Blackwell.
- Kuppers, Petra. 2004. "Visions of Anatomy: Exhibitions and Dense Bodies." *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 15 (3): 123-156.
- Lafferton, Emese. 2007. "The Magyar moustache: the faces of Hungarian state formation, 1867-1918." *Stud. Hist. Phil. Biol. & Biomed. Sci.* 38: 706-732.
- Little M. A., Sussman R. W. 2010. "History of Biological Anthropology". In: C. Larsen (ed.). *A Companion to Biological Anthropology*. Oxford: Blackwell, 13-38.
- Majuru, Adrian. 2013. *Inter-disciplinaritatea ca principiu integrator al universalității la Francisc J. Rainer*. București: Editura Muzeului Național al Literaturii Române.
- Majuru, Adrian. 2015. "Biodiversity in Francisc J. Rainer's Anthropological Research". *Revista de Antropologie urbană* 5: 137-150.
- Martin, Rudolf. 1914. *Lehrbuch der Anthropologie*. Jena: Gustav Fischer.
- Massin, Benoît. 1996. "From Virchow to Fischer. Physical Anthropology and 'Modern Race Theories' in Wilhelmine Germany". In George W. Stocking (ed.), *Volksgeist as Method and Ethic: Essays on Boasian Ethnography and the German Anthropological tradition*. Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press.
- Milcu, Ștefan M. 1954. "Dezvoltarea cercetărilor de antropologie în țara noastră." In *Probleme de Antropologie* 1: 7-29.
- Minovici, Nicolae S. 2007. *Tatuajele în România*. Bucharest: Curtea Veche.
- Momoc, Antonio. 2012. *Capcanele politice ale sociologiei interbelice. Școala gustiană între carlism și legionarism*. Bucharest: Curtea Veche.
- Morris-Reich, Amos. 2012. Science and "Race" In Solomon Yudovin's Photographic Documentation of Russian Jewry, 1912-1914. *Images* 6 (1): 52 - 78.
- Muller, Dietmar. 2013. "Instituționalizarea cunoașterii științelor sociale în perioada interbelică: Institutul Social Român și Asociația de Politică Socială (Verein für Sozialpolitik)." In Lucian Nastasă, Dragoș Sdrobiș (eds.), *Politici culturale și modele intelectuale în România*. Cluj-Napoca: Mega, 19-33.
- Nyhart, Lynn K. 1995. *Biology Takes Form: Animal Morphology and the German Universities, 1800-1900*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Petrini, Paul. 1919. *Letter to the Dean of Medical Faculty of the University of Bucharest*. March 1st 1919, the Institute of Medicine and Pharmacy Record, p. 188, the Municipality of Bucharest Archives, Bucharest.
- Popa, Grigore T. 1947. March 28th 1947. Memoire of Gr. T. Popa (protest against the separation of the Institute of Anthropology from the teaching in the Faculty of Medicine).
- Rainer, Francisc I. 1923. "Recherches anthropologiques sur



- les ossements trouves dans les fouilles (Curtea de Argeş).” *Buletinul Comisiunii monumentelor istorice* V (16): 153.
- Rainer, Francisc I. 1934. *Problema raselor umane. Conferința dlui Profesor Francisc Rainer din 30 aprilie 1934*. Congresul pentru înaintarea științelor. Fundația Carol I.
- Rainer, Francisc. I. 1937. *Enquêtes anthropologiques dans trois villages roumains des Carpathes*. Bucharest.
- Rainer, Francisc I. 1943. *Lecția de deschidere pentru cursul Fenomenul biologic OM*. MSS Institute of Anthropology “Francisc I. Rainer” Archive.
- Rainer, Francisc. I. 1945. *Tipul antropologic*. Bucharest: Institutul de Științe Sociale.
- Rainer, Francisc I. 2012. *Însemnări zilnice. Conferințe. Jurnal de călătorie*. Edited by Adrian Majuru. Bucharest: Oscar Print.
- Rainer, Francisc. I. and Simionescu.” *Analele Academiei Române. Memoriile secțiunii științifice* 3 (17): 489-503.
- Rainer, Francisc. I. and I. Cotaescu. 1943. Comunicare Academia de Medicină, “O nouă entitate morbidă, artrita atlanto-odontoidiană.”
- Rainer, Francisc. I. and Tudor, Alexandru. 1945. “Variabilitate de fisures de foie humain.” *Scientific papers*.
- Rainer, Francisc. I. and Tudor, Alexandru. 1946. Metopisms in Romanians and in general.
- Richardson, Ruth. 2001. *Death, Dissection and the Destitute*. Chicago: University Chicago Press.
- Riga, D. and Riga, S. 2008. *Anatomie și antropologie. Eseuri și sinteze*. Bucharest: Cartea Universitară.
- Roșca, Valentina. 1926. *A somatological investigation in a normal girl’s school Rainer*. Ph.D. thesis supervised by Francisc I. Rainer.
- Sayer, David. 2010. *Ethics and Burial Archaeology (Debates in Archaeology)*. Gerald Duckworth & Co.
- Seemann, Sophie. 2013. *Von der Pathologie zur Anthropologie – Rudolf Virchows Sammlung pathologisch veränderter Schädel am Berliner Medizinhistorischen Museum der Charité (1757-1945)*. Ph.D. thesis, Medizinischen Fakultät der Charité – Universitätsmedizin Berlin.
- Schmuhl, Hans-Walter. 2008. *The Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for anthropology, human heredity, and eugenics, 1927–1945*. New York: Springer.
- Sevastos, M. 1946 (ed.). *În amintirea profesorului Francisc J. Rainer*. Bucharest: Imprimeria Națională.
- Sysling, Fenneke. 2015. “Faces from the Netherlands Indies. Plaster casts and the making of race in the early twentieth century”. *Revue d’histoire des sciences humaines* 27.
- Stocking, George. 1982. *Race, Culture and Evolution: Essays in the History of Anthropology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Stocking, George. 1996. *Volksgeist as Method and Ethic: Essays on Boasian Ethnography and the German Anthropological tradition*. Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press.
- Toma, Valentin. 2010. “From the dissection room to the first anthropological institute in Romania. Francisc I. Rainer and the “bridge” between anatomy and anthropology.” *Proceedings of the Romanian Academy Series B* (2): 157–165.
- Turda, Marius. 2006. “The nation as object: race, blood and biopolitics in interwar Romania.” *Slavic Review* 66 (3): 413-441.
- Turda, Marius. 2007. “From craniology to serology: racial anthropology in interwar Hungary and Romania.” *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 43: 361–377.
- Turda, Marius. 2008. *Eugenism și antropologie rasială în România 1874-1944*. Bucharest: Cuvântul.
- Turda, Marius. 2013. “In search of racial types: soldiers and the anthropological mapping of the Romanian nation, 1914–44.” *Patterns Prejudice* 47(1).
- Turda, Marius. 2014. *Eugenism și modernitate. Națiune, rasă și biopolitică în Europa (1870-1950)*. Bucharest: Polirom.
- Țone, Florentina. 2012. Francisc Rainer, în campaniile monografice de la Nerej, Fundul Moldovei și Drăguș. Secolul 21: 1-6. (<http://www.cooperativag.ro/francisc-rainer-in-campaniile-monografice-de-lanerej-fundul-moldovei-si-dragus/>)
- Vitner, Ion. *Figuri de savanți români. Fr. I. Rainer*. MSS. Archive of the Institute of Anthropology “Francisc I. Rainer.”
- Zimmerman, Andrew. 2001. *Anthropology and Antihumanism in Imperial Germany*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- *L’oeuvre scientifique de Fr. J. Rainer, 4. 1947*. Bucharest: Monitorul Oficial și Imprimeriile statului.
- Document 30<sup>th</sup> November 1939. File no. 64/p, p. 155, The Institute of Medicine and Pharmacy Records, the Municipality of Bucharest Archives, Bucharest.
- Document May 28<sup>th</sup> 1940. File no. 511/p, p. 145, The Institute of Medicine and Pharmacy Records, the Municipality of Bucharest Archives, Bucharest.
- Document June 28<sup>th</sup> 1940. File no. 511/p, p. 139, The Institute of Medicine and Pharmacy Records, the Municipality of Bucharest Archives, Bucharest.





# MARTOR



---

Title: "Hormones, glandes et criminalité: 'l'unité somato - psychique' du délinquant dans la Grande Roumanie"

Author: Corina Doboș

How to cite this article: Doboș, Corina. 2015. "Hormones, glandes et criminalité: 'l'unité somato - psychique' du délinquant dans la Grande Roumanie". *Martor* 20: 51-66.

Published by: *Editura MARTOR* (MARTOR Publishing House), *Muzeul Țăranului Român* (The Museum of the Romanian Peasant)

URL: <http://martor.muzeultaranuluiroman.ro/archive/768-2/>

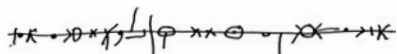
---

*Martor* (The Museum of the Romanian Peasant Anthropology Review) is a peer-reviewed academic journal established in 1996, with a focus on cultural and visual anthropology, ethnology, museum studies and the dialogue among these disciplines. *Martor* review is published by the Museum of the Romanian Peasant. Its aim is to provide, as widely as possible, a rich content at the highest academic and editorial standards for scientific, educational and (in)formational goals. Any use aside from these purposes and without mentioning the source of the article(s) is prohibited and will be considered an infringement of copyright.

*Martor* (Revue d'Anthropologie du Musée du Paysan Roumain) est un journal académique en système *peer-review* fondé en 1996, qui se concentre sur l'anthropologie visuelle et culturelle, l'ethnologie, la muséologie et sur le dialogue entre ces disciplines. La revue *Martor* est publiée par le Musée du Paysan Roumain. Son aspiration est de généraliser l'accès vers un riche contenu au plus haut niveau du point de vue académique et éditorial pour des objectifs scientifiques, éducatifs et informationnels. Toute utilisation au-delà de ces buts et sans mentionner la source des articles est interdite et sera considérée une violation des droits de l'auteur.

*Martor* is indexed by EBSCO and CEEOL.

# Hormones, glandes et criminalité: “l’unité somato-psychique” du délinquant dans la Grande Roumanie



**Corina Dobos**

Researcher at the University of Medicine and Pharmacy “Carol Davila” in Bucharest and University of Bucharest

## ABSTRACT

My research deals with the possibilities of interpretation of the criminal behavior opened up by the constitutional medicine and endocrinology during the interwar era. Starting from two criminological studies of constitutional orientation issued in interwar Romania, I explore the semantic operations involved by the construction of the individual as a ‘psychosomatic unity’, as well as the larger social and political consequences of this process.

## KEYWORDS

endocrinology, criminal behaviour, prevention, Parhon, Pende, interwar Romania

“Si l’on parvenait à établir péremptoirement un rapport constant entre certains caractères corporels et certaines formes de la criminalité, le problème de l’innéité, de la prédisposition organique à ces manifestations criminelles, serait résolu.

- Schreider 1937, 91-92

Les criminels présentent des signes d’hyperfonction de la glande hypophyse, les voleurs et les escrocs présentent souvent des signes d’hypertiroïdie et d’hypofonction hypophysaire et ceux qui attentent aux bonnes moeurs présentent fréquemment les signes d’une hyperfonction des glandes génitales. L’équation hormonale du comportement délinquantiel était bien prenante non seulement pour les biologistes et pour les médecins mais aussi pour les législateurs et les hommes politiques de l’Europe d’entre-deux-guerres. En 1937, Eugène Schreider, le secrétaire de la Société Française de Biotypologie, résumait très bien les motifs et les implications de

certaines explications biologisantes du comportement criminel:

“[...] il reste encore quelque chose de très intéressant de la vieille doctrine de Lombroso, même en ce qui concerne le type criminel somatique. Il y a là matière à réflexion et surtout un terrain qui mérite d’être exploré avec des méthodes plus expérimentales et avec une meilleure élaboration statistique des résultats. Bien entendu, il ne s’agit pas de rechercher la « bosse du crime », mais de voir s’il n’y a pas de corrélation réelle entre la criminalité et certaines structures du corps ou certains caractères physiques isolés. Dès que l’on admet les corrélations somato-psychiques, cette hypothèse cesse de paraître absurde. Elle l’est d’autant moins que nous connaissons à l’heure actuelle l’influence que plusieurs glandes endocrines exercent à la fois sur le corps et sur le psychisme.” (Schreider 1937, 84)

Notre recherche met en évidence les possibilités d’interprétation du comportement délinquantiel crayonnées en criminologie par le fait d’assumer les arguments et les concepts de la médecine



constitutionnaliste. Dans la période d'entre les deux guerres mondiales, les études constitutionnalistes concernant le comportement du délinquant reprennent et développent le paradigme lombrosien de l'homme criminel à l'aide des derniers moyens médicaux offerts par la médecine constitutionnaliste.

En situant dans le paysage politique et scientifique deux études de criminologie d'orientation constitutionnaliste publiées dans la Roumanie d'entre-deux-guerres, cette recherche se propose d'explorer l'univers sémantique de la construction de l'individu en tant qu' "unité somato-psychique." Nous passerons en revue les mutations épistémologiques survenues au début du XXe siècle dans les sciences médicales, ainsi que dans le contexte socio-politique, qui favorisent le développement des doctrines constitutionnalistes dans la période d'entre-deux-guerres et qui permettent la conceptualisation de l'individu comme "unité somato-psychique", comme un tout défini à la fois par les aspects physiques et psychiques, considérés en interaction. Lorsque nous indiquerons les principaux repères historiographiques concernant les concepts et le développement de la médecine constitutionnaliste dans les premières décennies du XXe siècle, nous explorerons l'application de ces principes dans les

recherches roumaines de criminologie d'orientation constitutionnaliste. Ensuite, nous procéderons à intégrer ces recherches criminologiques dans le contexte pénal plus large de l'époque pour pouvoir déchiffrer les conséquences que ces recherches comportent par rapport aux relations instituées entre gouvernants et gouvernés dans la Roumanie d'entre-deux-guerres. De cette manière, nous mettrons en évidence la modalité dont l'imaginaire tissu autour des représentations du corps humain joue un rôle constitutif dans les constructions politico-juridiques du siècle passé.

• • • • •

### La médecine constitutionnaliste dans l'Europe d'entre-deux-guerres

Dans les années '20, l'endocrinologue italien Nicola Pende (1880-1070) définissait la constitution comme

*"la résultante morphologique, physiologique et psychologique (variable d'un individu à l'autre) générée par les propriétés cellulaires et humorales du corps et de la combinaison de celles-ci dans une configuration cellulaire avec des caractéristiques spécifiques concernant l'équilibre, la fonctionnalité, la capacité de s'adapter et les manières de réaction aux stimuli externes. Une telle résultante est déterminée tout d'abord par les lois de l'hérédité et ensuite par l'influence perturbatrice du milieu sur la structure héréditaire individuelle."* (Pende 1928, 25)

Il proposait une définition complexe et dynamique de la constitution humaine en employant des explications humorales et chimiques qui dépassaient les simples descriptions et les corrélations entre les particularités morphologiques des individus et a élaboré un concept nouveau, intégratif, concernant la constitution: "le biotype", qui sera utilisé environ trente ans dans quelques unes des études constitutionnalistes en Europe. Pende définit le biotype comme

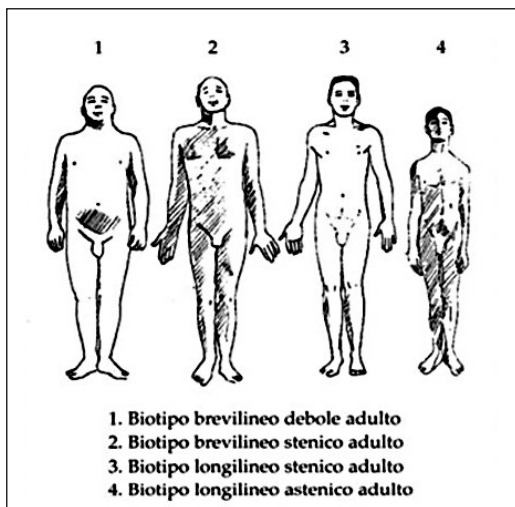


Fig. 1: Les biotypes de Pende. (Turinense 2006, 42)

une "synthèse fonctionnelle et vitale de l'individu", concept qui réunit "les aspects morpho-physiologiques, biochimiques et physiques en l'indivisible concept d'individualité" (Pende 1928, 243). Pende a établi quatre biotypes principaux dont l'équation est définie par les variables neuro-chimiques: le type bréviligne (avec les variantes sthénique et asthénique) et le type longiligne (avec les variantes sthénique et asthénique) (voir fig. 1).

Quelques décennies plus tard, toujours Pende, dans la préface du volume *Traité de médecine biotypologique* (Pende 1955), un tome qui représente une importante synthèse des études de médecine constitutionnaliste européenne de la première moitié du XXe siècle, définissait la médecine constitutionnaliste, son objet et la méthode de recherche:

*"C'est la personne totale, unitaire et différentielle de l'homme qui est l'objet de la médecine que nous appelons constitutionnelle ou biotypologique, et qui pourrait aussi se nommer individuelle. Elle s'oppose à la médecine abstraite, de l'homme-espèce, de l'homme masse et considère le malade comme une individualité, comme une totalité somatopsychique, comme une unité vitale de tissus, d'humeurs, de conscience [...]. Cette unité constitue l'ensemble de la personne humaine qui vit, réagit, souffre, pense à sa manière, obéissant à des lois d'hérédité morpho-physiologique particulières à chaque sujet, à des agents modificateurs et plasmatiques cosmiques et sociaux. [La médecine constitutionnelle] s'affirme de plus en plus comme une reviviscence de l'éternelle pensée hippocratique sur des fondements techniques. Les données modernes de la neuro-endocrinologie et de la physiologie du cerveau viscéral végétatif émotif confirment l'unité de l'ensemble des parties du corps et l'individualité du comportement humain, telle que l'avait déjà proclamée l'École des Asclépiades."* (Pende 1955, 9)

La présentation en directe filiation avec les doctrines hippocratiques que Pende fait de la

médecine constitutionnaliste est destinée à donner plus de légitimité et de prestige à la (nouvelle) science de la biotypologie. Mais l'histoire de la médecine constitutionnaliste, ancienne et sinueuse, montre que cette généalogie n'est pas seulement un simple artifice stylistique (Lawrence et Weisz 1998). Son parcours s'est développé en étroite relation avec les doctrines dualistes concernant les rapports entre le corps et l'âme, la matière et l'esprit, rapports définitoires pour la culture occidentale (Hart 1994, Breton 1992, Garber 2001).

La relation entre le corps et l'âme a été problématisée en médecine depuis l'Antiquité sous l'aspect du rapport entre la constitution humaine et le tempérament. Hippocrate a systématisé les premières théories concernant la constitution et a formulé une vision humorale qui s'est constituée en paradigme de référence dans la médecine occidentale pour plusieurs décennies. Reprise, développée et transmise par Galenus, cette approche est devenue paradigmatique pour la médecine occidentale pour plus de 1500 ans (Ciocco 1936, Ackerknecht 1982). Au début du XIXe siècle, la théorie humorale constituait encore une approche importante en médecine et surtout en pathologie, le tempérament représentant "un ensemble de résistances vitales" face à la maladie. Un tempérament sain était considéré "la meilleure défense contre le mal extérieur", tandis qu'un tempérament malade était considéré "une porte ouverte au parasitisme et à la destruction" (Luton 1972, 138). Dans la seconde moitié du XIXe siècle, peu à peu, le terme de *constitution* a remplacé celui de *tempérament*, terme que la médecine moderne en ascension mettait en doute assez souvent.

Dans la deuxième moitié du XXe siècle, malgré le développement de la microbiologie et de la bactériologie qui ont fait de la théorie de l'agent pathogène extérieur, du germe, la conception dominante en pathologie, la question du "milieu intérieur" (selon l'expression de Claude Bernard), des facteurs



constitutionnels propres à l'individu a continué à être discutée dans les débats médicaux de la fin du XIXe siècle, car "les choses se passent comme si l'organisme avait en lui-même la puissance de concevoir les maladies" (Raynaud 1872, 10). Bien que le paradigme de l'agent pathogène extérieur fût devenu dominant à la fin du XIXe siècle, les preuves empiriques concernant la réaction individuelle différente au même agent pathogène extérieur ont remis en discussion l'importance des facteurs constitutionnels et héréditaires dans le déclenchement et l'évolution de la maladie (Ciocco 1936, 25).

De plus, le succès et le développement de la médecine expérimentale de laboratoire qui, suivant le modèle des sciences naturelles, tâchait d'éclaircir des causalités universelles en pathologie, ont déterminé une nouvelle réponse des cliniciens préoccupés de mettre en évidence l'unicité de la réaction individuelle en pathologie. Cette nouvelle tentative de fondement de la constitution individuelle et de la prédisposition, à défaut de génétique, s'appuyait sur une analyse de genre quantitatif, adressée en tout premier lieu à la morphologie humaine, à l'aide de l'anthropométrie (Albrizio 2007, 114).

C'est ainsi qu'à partir de la fin du XIXe siècle et en continuant avec la période d'entre les deux guerres mondiales, on voit apparaître dans la médecine occidentale de nouvelles orientations qui privilégiaient un genre d'approche individualiste, personnaliste et qui avantageaient "le malade et non pas la maladie". La médecine allopathe holistique, mise en relief par différents courants et orientations (le néo-hippocratismes, la médecine constitutionnaliste, la biotypologie européenne ou la somato-typologie nord-américaine, la médecine psychosomatique) représentait une approche alternative, apparue comme une réaction à une excessive multiplication des spécialisations (professionnelles ainsi que conceptuelles) en médecine (Tracy 1992; Tracy 1998).

Les nouvelles orientations proposent

une approche de type holistique quant au patient et à sa maladie: le patient est perçu comme un tout unitaire – du point de vue somatique mais surtout du point de vue psychosomatique – dont l'individualité s'affirme par la particularité des réactions aux différents stimuli externes, y compris les différents agents pathogènes. Le holisme médical essaie de remettre en discussion la médecine comme art – côté sans importance pour les courants anatomistes, localistes et virologiques qui ont pris naissance tout au long du XIXe siècle – et de rendre au praticien un rôle plus créatif dans tout le processus du diagnostic et de la guérison (Grmek 2000; Peitzman et Maulitz 2000). L'intuition et l'expérience professionnelle deviennent des qualités décisives dans la nouvelle médecine, des qualités qui permettent au médecin, mais surtout au clinicien, à l'interniste et au psychiatre, de comprendre intuitivement le patient, en son unité et en son individualité (Bauer 23, 2).

La médecine constitutionnaliste du XXe siècle s'inscrit dans cette ancienne tradition intellectuelle, représentant une tentative de dépasser l'ancien dualisme entre le corps et l'âme, réalisée avec de nouveaux moyens et des épistémologies médicales modernes, dans un contexte socio-politique favorable.

L'ascension de la médecine de type holistique a été facilitée, au début du XXe siècle, par le développement de l'endocrinologie (Holmes 2000). Cette branche médicale a permis la formulation d'une vision intégrée du corps humain: les hormones, substances chimiques libérées par les différentes glandes, sont 'versées' dans le sang et elles arrivent à agir sur des organes situés à une certaine distance par rapport à la glande génératrice. Le sang et les hormones offraient un nouveau principe causal intégrateur, tant au niveau somatique qu'au niveau psychosomatique, un principe qui pouvait expliquer beaucoup de pathologies restées encore inconnues en physiologie ainsi qu'en psychiatrie (Parhon 1938; Parhon 1940). Jointe aux possibilités offertes par la médecine expérimentale,



l'endocrinologie était en plein essor dans les premières décennies du XXe siècle en offrant à la médecine holistique de nouvelles clés de diagnostiquer et de guérir.

L'approche constitutionnaliste de la médecine allopathe se développe dans une époque où l'imaginaire social était hanté par les fantasmes de l'émergence de la société de masse qui à côté de la technologisation excessive semblaient menacer par aliénation la valeur personnelle de l'individu. L'époque de la civilisation de masse que nous vivons "dépersonnalise l'individu à l'intérieur d'une technocratie envahissante et, quand même, irréversible", avertissait Pende en 1955 (Pende 1955, 10).

Si "l'ennemi commun" contre lequel la médecine holistique réagit est assez bien indiqué par l'historiographie, l'essai d'établir les autres traits de l'univers sémantique commun de la médecine holistique s'est montré assez difficile, étant donné que les contextes nationaux scientifiques, académiques, professionnels, politiques où cette médecine constitutionnaliste se développe sont différents.

Le succès et le développement remarquable de la médecine holistique en Allemagne sont expliqués en historiographie (Hau 2000; Hau et Ash 2000; Prüll 1998; Timmerman 2001; Ash 1995; Harrington 1996; Vacha 1995) dans le contexte de la prévalence d'une attitude générale conservatrice, d'une modernité "antimoderne", d'un "modernisme réactionnaire" spécifique à l'Allemagne (Peukert 1991; Herf 1984). Les recherches d'Ernst Kretschmer (1888-1964) ont été fondamentales pour toute la médecine constitutionnaliste allemande qui a eu aussi une grande influence au niveau européen; par ses recherches, le psychiatre allemand a établi des corrélations entre la forme du corps et les groupes principaux de pathologies mentales (Kretschmer 1921; Kretschmer 1922; Kretschmer 1928; Priwitzer 2004).

La médecine constitutionnaliste connaît un développement important dans l'Italie fasciste aussi. En 1925, l'endocrinologue italien Nicola Pende a fondé l'Institut

Biotypologique de Gênes (\*\*\*) 1934), ce qui a contribué pleinement à l'influence de l'école constitutionnaliste italienne sur le plan européen et mondial (Eraso 2007; Appelbaum, MacPherson et Roseblatt 2003; Stepan 1991; Vimieiro Gomes 2015).

À défaut d'une recherche monographique sur le développement de la médecine constitutionnaliste italienne, qui aurait été extrêmement utile à notre recherche, vu que la médecine constitutionnaliste italienne a inspiré en grande partie le développement de la médecine constitutionnaliste en Europe et en Amérique du Sud, on ne peut faire que des spéculations quant au contexte sociopolitique de cette remarquable évolution dans les conditions de l'avènement du fascisme. Nicola Pende expliquait que

*"dans le climat de l'avènement du fascisme, le but principal de la biotypologie est d'assurer la connaissance et le développement efficient des biotypes de la nation, étant donné que chaque biotype fait preuve d'aptitudes différentes, de pathologies mentales et des prédispositions à la maladie et au crime."*(Stepan 1991, 116)

*"Cette science de la constitution individuelle marquée par les progrès de la biotypologie unitaire apparaît d'une grande actualité, non seulement dans ses applications médicales mais aussi dans celles nécessaires à l'homme normal et social",* montrait Pende en 1955 (Stepan 1991, 116).

Dans cette perspective de large utilité sociale ouverte à la médecine constitutionnaliste, ses applications dans le domaine de la criminologie se sont avérées tout à fait remarquables (Saldana 1929).

Si Lombroso et son école avaient trouvé, dans les dernières décennies du XIXe siècle, une Europe assez prospère et sûre pour préférer les explications sociologiques de la criminalité et les solutions adéquates, la situation a changé sensiblement après 1914. Dans l'Europe d'entre-deux-guerres, dont l'ordre social avait été ébranlé, la criminalité généralisée constituait un problème de plus



en plus aigu. Le taux augmenté de criminalité, enregistré objectivement par les statistiques, est doublé dans le discours public par la construction discursive des nouvelles catégories délinquantielles qui semblent mettre en danger les constructions étatiques fragiles et demandent une action urgente de la part des responsables politiques. Les explications biologisantes de la criminalité, qui expliquaient la genèse de l'acte criminel par l'existence de certaines prédispositions criminelles innées de l'individu, contribuaient à minimiser les responsabilités du corps social vis-à-vis la genèse de l'acte délinquantiel, et, en même temps, offraient la possibilité de trouver une solution plus rapide et "scientifique" de ce problème (Bachhiesl 2005; Becker 2002; Wetzell 2000; Becker et Wetzell 2006; Hahn Rafter 1997; Hahn Rafter 2008; Marques 2013).

D'un autre côté, les évolutions épistémologiques et technologiques de la médecine d'entre-deux-guerres et surtout l'ascension de la criminologie et de la médecine constitutionnaliste permettent de reprendre et de reformuler les arguments scientifiques employés par Lombroso, tellement contestés et combattus à l'époque par les écoles criminologiques rivales.

Les idées et les démarches disciplinaires – qui avaient été véhiculées dans les dernières décennies du XIXe siècle en vue de la conciliation et l'homogénéisation de la société italienne profondément divisée

en plan social, économique et ethnique – reviennent sous une forme beaucoup plus concentrée et simplifiée dans la période d'entre-deux-guerres: le droit pénal et la médecine collaborent extensivement pour prévenir la déviance sociale (Gibbson 2002).

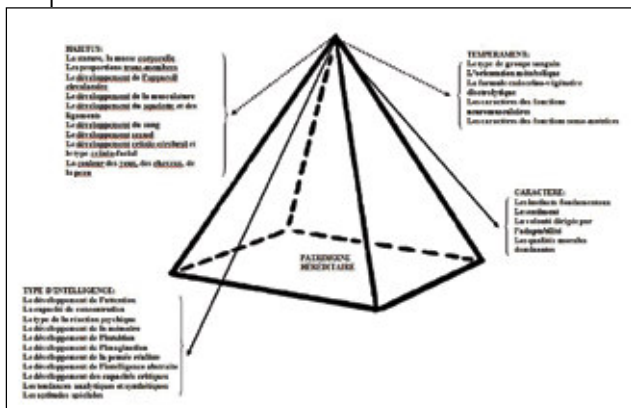
• • • • •

### La criminologie constitutionnaliste dans la Roumanie d'entre-deux-guerres

Nous avons insisté sur les principaux repères de la médecine constitutionnaliste italienne parce que les plus importants auteurs lus et cités par les chercheurs roumains sont ceux qui proviennent de l'école italienne de médecine constitutionnaliste (la biotypologie). Nicola Pende saluait en 1938 l'intérêt que la Roumanie portait à la médecine constitutionnaliste italienne, dans le contexte politique du rapprochement idéologique entre la Roumanie et l'Italie:

*"Aujourd'hui, quand notre grande soeur latine, la Roumanie, s'est rapprochée d'Italie comme idéologie politique, je suis heureux que cette traduction de mon ouvrage [...] donne aux Roumains préoccupés des problèmes d'éducation pour suivre les mêmes chemins que l'Italie Fasciste, les chemins de la formation harmonieuse, selon des principes biotypologiques-orthogénétiques, des futurs citoyens de la grande patrie roumaine, fille, tout comme l'Italie, de l'immortelle Louve de Rome."* (Pende 1938, 4)

Fig. 2: La pyramide du biotype humain (Nicola Pende) repris par Gh. Marinescu. (Marinescu 1931, 32)



En 1931, Gh. Marinescu (1863-1938), médecin et homme de science roumain, a présenté à l'Académie Roumaine un exposé concernant *la Constitution humaine selon les travaux de l'école italienne* (Marinescu 1931). Cet exposé représente un très opportun passage en revue des plus importantes directions suivies par l'école constitutionnaliste italienne, qui, pendant la période d'entre les deux guerres, se trouvait en pleine expansion. Dans son exposé, Marinescu présente et explique

le schéma de la formation du biotype de Pende, celui des corrélations existantes entre les caractéristiques physiques (*habitus*), le tempérament, le caractère, l'intelligence et le patrimoine héréditaire de l'individu (voir fig. 2).

Dans la Roumanie d'entre-deux-guerres, la médecine constitutionnaliste a été invoquée et professée par des praticiens de tout premier ordre – psychiatres, psychologues et endocrinologues – qui se trouvaient dans des positions importantes dans les institutions de recherche roumaines. Ce positionnement central de ses promoteurs fait qu'en Roumanie la médecine constitutionnaliste ne soit pas une alternative à une ligne officielle de la médecine allopathe mais une partie intégrante de celle-ci. Les arguments constitutionnalistes ont été très bien accueillis à l'époque et ils sont devenus éléments constitutifs du discours médical officiel; ils ont été adoptés par la majorité des chercheurs, quelles que fussent leurs options politiques et idéologiques: C.I. Parhon et ses étudiants de Iassy, qui avaient de fortes orientations de gauche, les modérés Gh. Marinescu et Florian Ștefănescu-Goangă (membre marquant du Parti National Libéral), Salvador Cupcea ou Iordache Facăoaru (de Cluj), proches de l'extrême droite de Roumanie.

Cette situation peut être partiellement expliquée comme une stratégie de professionnalisation utilisée par le corps médical de Roumanie dont l'accès aux ressources de l'État était conditionné par la confirmation de l'utilité publique de la profession de médecin. En assumant les motifs constitutionnalistes et les explications de type intégratif – qui avaient des applications immédiates dans l'éducation, dans l'armée, dans le régime pénitentiaire, dans le droit pénal et aussi dans les assurances médicales – les médecins roumains pouvaient prouver leur utilité dans de nombreux domaines du service public. La criminologie a constitué un domaine préféré d'application des doctrines

constitutionnalistes dans la Roumanie d'entre-deux-guerres, vu que le discours public concernant la délinquance et la criminalité était de plus en plus alarmant: les données statistiques (Șerban 1929; Decusară 1929; Ministerul Justiției 1931; Inspectoratul General al Jandarmeriei 1936; Dragu 1929; Georgescu 1923) inquiétantes montraient que "la criminalité a une croissance extraordinaire" (Herovanu 1935, 7) après la Grande Guerre (*Marele Războiu*) parce que

*"la Guerre mondiale a fortement ébranlé l'humanité du point de vue moral, économique et social et a sensiblement aggravé la crise de la répression qui, sous une forme moins perçue, existe chez nous depuis longtemps."*(Șerban 1929, 7)

• • • • •

### **C. I. Parhon et son école: médecine et criminologie constitutionnalistes**

Les principales études de médecine et, ensuite, de criminologie constitutionnaliste sont inséparables du nom de Constantin I. Parhon (1874-1969), personnalité scientifique de tout premier ordre de la recherche médicale européenne de la première moitié du XXe siècle. Spécialisé en psychiatrie et endocrinologie, professeur universitaire à Iassy et à Bucarest, Parhon a contribué fondamentalement au développement des études de médecine constitutionnaliste en Roumanie. Ses recherches ont un puissant caractère appliqué, étant employés dans l'étude des criminels et des malades mentaux.

L'orientation constitutionnaliste de Parhon est, avant tout, liée à sa passion pour l'endocrinologie qu'il considérait la clé de la reformulation des vieilles taxonomies des tempéraments et des humeurs:

*"L'ancienne classification des tempéraments en sanguin, lymphatique, biliaire et nerveux ne peut plus satisfaire aujourd'hui ceux qui possèdent une certaine culture*

*biologique. De même, la séparation du caractère et du tempérament du côté morphologique de l'individu est tout à fait arbitraire. En échange, l'étude de la constitution somato-psychique a beaucoup bénéficié des recherches sur les rapports que cette constitution a avec les fonctions endocrines, rapports sur lesquels nous avons attiré l'attention depuis 1900 déjà.*" (Parhon FD, 3)

En 1900, Parhon avait déjà formulé, avant la lettre, le problème du substrat endocrinologique de la constitution psychosomatique dans l'article *Sur quelques fonctions peu connues des ovaires* (Parhon et Goldstein 1900). À ce temps-là, il eut l'intuition que

*"la relation qui existe entre les différentes glandes à sécrétion interne et particulièrement la fonction de ces glandes nous semblent avoir beaucoup d'importance [...]. Bref, c'est de ces glandes que dépend l'état général d'un organisme donné. Elles jouent un rôle important – quelque curieuse que cette idée puisse être pour quelques uns – dans la formation de la personnalité physiologique et, par conséquent, psychologique aussi de l'individu. On n'a pas encore envisagé la question de ce point de vue. Mais il nous semble qu'elle est quand même assez importante, bien que les différentes interprétations ne puissent encore être qu'hypothétiques."* (Parhon et Goldstein 1900)

Le psychiatre Parhon concevait d'une manière strictement causale la relation entre le côté physiologique et celui psychologique, en ce sens que la dynamique psychique est étroitement déterminée par celle physiologique (qu'elle soit endocrinologique ou neuronale). Il était convaincu que "les moyens par lesquels la nature réalise les différents type constitutionnels, donc les facteurs déterminants de la constitution, sont les fonctions des glandes à sécrétion interne." (Parhon 1930, 411).

Membre de la Direction Générale des Pénitenciers, fondateur du Service pour les

criminels aliénés de l'Hôpital Central de maladies nerveuses, C.I. Parhon a témoigné un vif intérêt à l'étude et à l'explication du comportement délinquantiel à travers le prisme épistémologique de l'endocrinologie constitutionnaliste.

En 1930, dans l'article *Constituția somato-psihică și raporturile ei cu criminologia* [La constitution somato-psychique et ses rapports avec la criminologie] (Parhon 1930), C.I. Parhon, très préoccupé d'établir le fond endocrinologique des constitutions somato-psychiques, faisait une présentation détaillée concernant les possibilités d'appliquer la perspective des constitutions glandulaires dans l'étude des délinquants:

*"Tous les phénomènes de l'Univers reconnaissent un déterminisme stricte et les crimes et les délits ne font pas exception à cette règle générale; les crimes et les délits représentent des réactions sociales des individus à certaines circonstances; l'étude de l'individu délinquant revient au médecin ou au biologiste; il existe une criminologie biologique, bien que son étude ne soit qu'au début; l'étude de la constitution somato-psychique des criminels fait l'objet essentiel de cette branche de la criminologie."* (Parhon 1930, 400 – soulignement dans l'original).

Parhon considère que Lombroso avait anticipé l'approche constitutionnaliste en criminologie et que c'est toujours à Lombroso qu'on doit aussi

*"la conception du criminel inné et cette conception, en dépit de toutes les critiques qu'on lui a apportées, contient une partie de vérité. Lombroso a remarqué que de nombreux criminels, surtout ceux qui commettent des actes de violence, des effractions, des assassinats se présentent comme un type spécial: ce sont des individus de haute taille plutôt, qui ont le thorax volumineux, la circonférence thoracique grande, le visage allongé et grand, le front fuyant en arrière, la pigmentation du visage prononcée; les cheveux sont noirs et épais, surtout chez les voleurs; les violateurs ont souvent les cheveux blonds."* (Parhon 1930, 409)

À la lumière des dernières orientations de la médecine constitutionnaliste, Parhon recommandait des examens pour déterminer la constitution psychosomatique du délinquant. Les pas qu'on devait suivre pour déterminer la constitution somato-psychique étaient: l'étude morphologique de l'individu, l'étude des fonctions nerveuses, l'examen psychologique de l'individu, y compris les rêves, le sommeil, la mimique, le timbre de la voix (Parhon 1930, 402-405). Parhon a examiné la constitution somato-psychique chez les criminels en considérant que "les différents types constitutionnels présentent une disposition différente au crime" (Parhon 1930, 408). C'est ainsi qu'en parlant du rapport entre la constitution des criminels et des délinquants et les fonctions endocrines, Parhon remarque:

- Chez les criminels sanguinaires, chez les assassins, chez les criminels violents on peut constater la présence des caractères d'hyperfonction du lobe antérieur de l'hypophyse; ils ont une ossature massive, des mâchoires proéminentes, des arcades avec des sourcils fournis, la mâchoire inférieure proéminente aussi, les viscères grandes, les extrémités larges et grosses. Ces individus présentent aussi une pilosité excessive, une musculature forte, le tissu adipeux bien développé, ce qui suppose aussi un coefficient d'hyperfonction cortico-surrénale qui pourrait expliquer leur tendance à la violence et leur impulsivité; le lobe postérieur de l'hypophyse peut avoir une activité exagérée chez quelques uns de ces criminels (Parhon 1930, 413-414).

- Les voleurs ordinaires, les escrocs présentent plutôt des signes d'hyperthyroïdie et souvent des signes d'hypo-fonctionnement hypophysaire, combinés éventuellement avec des phénomènes d'insuffisance, d'hyperfonction ou de dysfonction des glandes génitales et, parfois, ils ont des caractères hétérosexuels (Parhon 1930, 414).

- Les individus qui attentent aux bonnes mœurs, les prostituées surtout, présentent souvent les signes d'une hyperfonction

des glandes génitales. L'auteur dit que ses observations personnelles confirment la présence fréquente des caractères d'hyperfonction hypophysaire chez les assassins et d'hyperfonction thyroïdienne chez les escrocs, mais il dit aussi que ces observations ne sont pas assez nombreuses pour lui permettre des conclusions fermes (Parhon 1930, 414).

- En ce qui concerne les actions criminelles sans violence et les crimes d'occasion et impulsifs, Parhon affirme qu'ils sont en rapport avec une constitution hyperthyroïdienne à laquelle peuvent s'ajouter des signes d'hyperfonction du thymus, d'hyposurrénalisme, d'hypogénitalisme, d'hypophysie; chez les criminels sanguinaires et ciniques, qui présentent "l'amoralité congénitale" on observe des signes d'hypothyroïdie associés souvent aux phénomènes d'hyperhypophysie et d'hypercortico-surrénalisme ou d'hypergénitalisme; chez ceux qui ont commis des attentats aux bonnes mœurs on observe des phénomènes d'hyperfonction ou de dysfonction des glandes sexuelles et les mêmes phénomènes on les observe aussi chez les prostituées (Parhon 1930, 415-416).

Parhon conclut qu'en ce qui concerne le rapport entre les variations des fonctions glandulaires et la criminalité ou la délinquance

*"il est évident qu'il ne faut pas les considérer d'une manière simpliste, le crime étant la résultante d'une complexité de facteurs sociaux et organiques, car le facteur glandulaire n'est pas suffisant pour mener au crime, mais souvent il peut être décisif quant au crime, des fois, même des troubles passagers de ce facteur peuvent contribuer à produire des actes inhabituels."* (Parhon 1930, 416)

Parhon admet la possibilité que, dans certains cas, il s'agisse d'une simple coexistence du crime ou du délit avec les troubles glandulaires et finit par dire que tout ce qu'il a montré auparavant suffit pour comprendre que les troubles endocriniens "ne déterminent pas toujours et fatalement



des actes criminels ou des délinquances et pour que ceux-ci apparaissent il faut y avoir d'autres facteurs; parmi eux, des altérations du cerveau peuvent y avoir un rôle important" (Parhon 1930, 417). L'étude de l'encéphalite épidémique montre, par exemple, que si le processus encéphalitique atteint la base du cerveau, il y aura des modifications du caractère chez les enfants, en déterminant la tendance au vagabondage, aux actes impulsifs, à la méchanceté, au manque d'inhibition.

Vu que l'action des glandes endocrines n'est pas "fatale", l'intervention médicale par la gestion glandulaire de la personnalité est possible et même nécessaire et Parhon affirme qu'il y a des moyens pour influencer dans une direction ou dans une autre le fonctionnement des glandes à sécrétion interne et par conséquent influencer la personnalité du criminel.

Les traitements avec différents extraits glandulaires peuvent influencer le fonctionnement de l'organisme en fournissant les substances qui y manquent et en neutralisant l'excès des autres. Ces traitements ont un rôle actif quand ils agissent sur les organismes jeunes et il faut les prendre en considération quand on a affaire à des adolescents ou à des enfants qui ont des tendances antisociales ou qui commettent des faits antisociaux, car si l'on intervient à un âge plus tendre, l'efficacité est beaucoup plus grande.

Parhon conclut que l'étude de la constitution des criminels et des délinquants et les rapports de celle-ci avec les fonctions des glandes à sécrétion interne

*"présentent un intérêt particulier pour tous ceux qui s'occupent des problèmes de criminologie et surtout pour les dirigeants des Instituts pénitentiaires et les médecins de là-bas; dorénavant, il faut que ceux-ci s'habituent à l'étude de la constitution et aux moyens que la science leur offre afin de modeler la constitution somato-psychique."* (Parhon 1930, 418)

Quatre ans plus tard, dans leur étude *Biotiologia criminalilor* [La biotypologie

des criminels], Sandu Lieblich et Gustav Fastlich, deux collaborateurs du professeur Parhon, reprennent le problème du paradigme de la constitution psychosomatique en criminologie (Lieblich et Fastlich 1934). Cette étude, incluse dans le volume qui rendait hommage au professeur Parhon à l'occasion de son 60<sup>e</sup> anniversaire, représente la reconnaissance de l'importance que la biotypologie délinquante détenait dans la structure des intérêts académiques cristallisés autour de la personnalité de Parhon. L'étude fait connaître les conclusions des investigations constitutionnalistes effectuées sur 40 internés dans le Service de Criminels fous de l'Hôpital de maladies nerveuses et mentales (Lieblich et Fastlich 1934, 450).

L'étude débute par un détaillé passage en revue des plus importantes directions de recherche du domaine et les deux auteurs évoquent les recherches de Lombroso comme point de départ de la biotypologie des criminels (Lieblich et Fastlich 1934, 438), mais ils soulignent que ses idées ont été reformulées avec des arguments endocrinologiques dans la période d'entre-deux-guerres (Lieblich et Fastlich 1934, 439).

À la suite des dernières données offertes par la médecine constitutionnaliste, montrent les auteurs, le criminel doit être le sujet d'un examen direct, "physiologique, psychologique et psychique", pour qu'on puisse déterminer si

*"l'individu appartient à une zone intermédiaire, entre l'homme sain, normal et l'homme fou ou bien s'il présente des caractères spéciaux, pathologiques qui font de lui, par l'atavisme et la dégénérescence, un sauvage égaré dans la civilisation actuelle."* (Lieblich et Fastlich 1934, 440 – notre soulignement)

Les auteurs utilisent dans leurs études les types de Kretschmer et ils affirment qu'ils ne sont pas "idéaux, abstraits, choisis arbitrairement selon une idée préconçue" (Lieblich et Fastlich 1934, 442). Ces types, nous assurent les auteurs, se sont constitués après l'observation, à un groupe



important d'individus, d'un grand nombre de signalements identiques, en montrant de la sorte la transformation des éléments disparates du corps réel en une construction imaginaire idéale (Lieblich et Fastlich 1934, 442).

De même, les auteurs soulignent l'importance des glandes endocrines pour définir le type constitutionnel, non seulement au niveau somatique mais aussi psychique, car

*"il y a en même mesure un intérêt de type anatomique en psychiatrie, étant donné que les maladies mentales ne sont pas exclusivement des maladies cérébrales; un complexe de glandes internes et la chimie de l'organisme entier exercent leur influence, par l'intermédiaire du cerveau, sur tous les processus psychiques."* (Lieblich et Fastlich 1934, 449)

Les auteurs confirment qu'aux différents types constitutionnels il y a une disposition différente envers le crime, ainsi que Pende et Parhon, lui aussi, l'ont montré.

C'est ainsi que *la glande thyroïde* a un rôle essentiel et l'altération de sa fonction mène au crétinisme (il y a aussi d'autres glandes dont la fonction altérée y mène). D'autres anomalies peuvent être la conséquence d'un dérangement fonctionnel de la thyroïde; les hyperthyroïdiens sont vifs, intelligents, susceptibles, irascibles, ayant une labilité affective et passant facilement de la dépression à l'enthousiasme.

*Les glandes parathyroïdes*, si elles fonctionnent anormalement, mènent à l'irritabilité, à l'insomnie, à une impressionnabilité exagérée et, parfois, à la confusion mentale et les hypoparathyroïdiens sont extrêmement sensibles, anxieux ou difficiles (Lieblich et Fastlich 1934, 449).

*Le thymus* maintient l'organisme dans un état infantile et donne aux individus une grande beauté physique; en même temps, "ils sont faiblement doués dans la lutte pour la vie" (Lieblich et Fastlich 1934, 450). On peut observer chez eux des penchants à l'homosexualité, au masochisme et une

certaine irresponsabilité morale; ils sont très impulsifs, enclins au crime et, à cause de leur incapacité de s'adapter, de faire face aux difficultés de la vie sociale, ils sont aussi enclins au suicide.

*L'hypophyse* a le rôle le plus important dans la constitution; le gigantisme et l'acromégalie expriment en fait le même processus pathologique; le gigantisme se manifeste pendant la croissance en hauteur et l'acromégalie est un processus général qui ne cesse pas. Les acromégales sont anxieux, ont tendance à la dépression, parfois ils font des psychoses et délires alors que ceux qui ont le gigantisme ont une prédisposition aux affections psychiques et quelques uns présentent un stade de puérilisme, d'infantilisme; de même, ceux qui ont le gigantisme sont émotifs et effrayés (Lieblich et Fastlich 1934, 450).

Si *l'épiphysse* a une altération, il y a une puberté précoce, une croissance rapide de l'organisme et, du point de vue psychique, il y a une préoccupation pour les problèmes philosophiques et métaphysiques. Une hypofonctionnement de *la glande surrénale* est caractéristique pour le type asthénique, longiligne. Les hypocortico-surréaliens sont peu actifs, leur intelligence est bonne, ils se fatiguent vite et ils sont plutôt dépressifs; ils manquent d'impétuosité et d'agressivité. Selon Pende, les hypercortico-surréaliens sont brévilignes, avec des muscles très développés, énergiques, impétueux; ils aiment le travail, ils sont volontaires, agressifs; ils ont une énergie morale et intellectuelle très développées (Lieblich et Fastlich 1934, 450-451).

Par leurs sécrétions, *le testicule et l'ovaire* contribuent d'une manière significative à la réalisation de la constitution. Sous l'influence de la castration testiculaire et de la stérilisation la personnalité se modifie: l'individu devient apathique, paresseux, moins violent; les femmes deviennent anxieuses, susceptibles, très irritables. Ceux qui ont une hyperfonction testiculaire se caractérisent par énergie, courage, esprit d'initiative; ils sont impulsifs,





même agressifs, mais en même temps ils sont généreux, enclins au lyrisme et au pathétisme; l'hyperovarisme accentue les caractères de la féminité dans la psychologie de la femme (Lieblich et Fastlich 1934, 451).

L'étude des auteurs mentionnés ci-dessus est quand même trop peu soutenue par les résultats de leurs propres recherches et représente un passage en revue, cette fois-ci assez mal structuré, des principales directions de recherche visant la biotypologie des criminels. Bien que le matériel présenté manque d'originalité et qu'il ait une structure indigeste, nous pouvons formuler des conclusions partielles à propos des applications de la biotypologie en criminologie.

Comme d'autres études de biotypologie criminelle contemporaines, les études de Parhon et de ses disciples montrent une certaine inhabileté à mettre en évidence une corrélation sûre entre le type somatopsychique et les différents genres de délinquance. Les données, même ramassées et classées objectivement, ne sont pas suffisamment consistantes pour mener à des conclusions significatives du point de vue statistique, surtout quand il n'y a pas d'échantillon de contrôle (Schreider 1937, 92). Les résultats sont partiels et contradictoires, les études trop peu approfondies pour en avoir des conclusions valides et l'impression générale qui s'en dégage est que ces analyses constituent plutôt une sorte d'artifice sémantique pour pouvoir donner plus de légitimité sociale à la science médicale constitutionnaliste. Même si leurs résultats sont plutôt modestes et leur langage répétitif, les deux études sont significatives pour le genre de démarche qu'elles mettent en évidence, c'est-à-dire pour trouver des explications et des preuves biologiques pour les faits constitués et sanctionnés juridiquement.

L'ordre "naturel" des criminels avec lequel Lombroso essayait de doubler le discours juridique est réinterprété à l'aide des arguments constitutionnalistes de type endocrinologique. La démarche initiée par

Lombroso, à savoir celle d'introduire le corps dans l'ordre juridique par des arguments anatomiques, considérée d'ailleurs dépassée en tant que méthode mais non pas comme intention, est reprise pendant la période d'entre les deux guerres mondiales. Par la clé endocrinologique on peut établir la relation entre le somatique et certains comportements déviants et le substrat somatique peut être invoqué une fois de plus, avec de nouveaux arguments médicaux, dans la sphère pénale. La provocation des criminologues pour la constitution de l'ordre juridique sur les fondements de la pensée abstraite réside notamment dans le fondement de celle-ci dans le monde naturel, ordonné par les principes des sciences positivistes. La transgression de la loi cesse d'être "abstraction juridique", créée par les législations pénales, et devient "fait naturel" et, en vertu de ce fait, les violations de la loi ainsi que ceux qui les commettent peuvent être étudiés, compris et, éventuellement, prévenus par le recours aux méthodes des sciences naturelles en général et de la médecine en particulier. Les catégories juridiques sont pleines de "contenu" biologique, social et moral de sorte que le délit et le crime n'appartiennent uniquement à l'ordre juridique mais, par "la personne du criminel", ils arrivent à appartenir aussi à l'ordre de la nature.



## Conclusions

Dans la Roumanie d'entre-deux-guerres, les préoccupations constitutionnalistes en criminologie réalisent une aire d'études importante à laquelle contribuent des médecins aussi bien que des psychologues. L'essai relativement modeste de Parhon et de ses disciples d'étendre la démarche de la médecine constitutionnaliste dans la sphère sociale a été repris dans une perspective théorique différente par les chercheurs du Laboratoire de psychologie expérimentale

de l'Université *Ferdinand I* de Cluj, dirigés par Florian Ștefănescu-Goangă, mais leurs études ne font pas l'objet de notre présente recherche.

Les spécialistes roumains se renseignent sur les problèmes constitutionnalistes et, en fonction de leurs spécialisations, les lectures constitutionnalistes concernant le comportement délinquantiel sont différentes: des ouvrages se rapportant à l'endocrinologie (Parhon et ses disciples) ou des ouvrages concernant la psychologie (les spécialistes de l'Université de Cluj). Quelle que soit leur orientation, leurs études se proposent de contribuer à assembler ce puzzle qu'est le comportement du délinquant.

L'approche constitutionnaliste qu'ils pratiquent offre la possibilité d'arranger des pièces de puzzle apparemment différentes: les évaluations morphologiques peuvent trouver leur place à côté de celles physiologiques mais aussi à côté de celles psychologiques, dans un continuum sémantique qui "produit" l'image idéale du délinquant. Cette projection idéale entretient l'illusion qu'elle peut être connue et anticipée.

L'effervescence de ces approches criminologiques de type constitutionnaliste peut être comprise dans le contexte de l'éthos préventif mis en relief dans les discours pénal et des pénitentiaires roumains qui, dans la démarche symbolique de création et de soutien de la hiérarchie sociale, se légitimaient d'être de plus en plus "scientifiques". Les médecins et les psychologues roumains profitent des possibilités de professionnalisation ouvertes par les domaines pénal et pénitentiaire et, par leurs arguments, ils offrent, à leur tour, les fondements scientifiques nécessaires à la nouvelle philosophie préventive-répressive de l'État roumain (Cercel 2015, Doboș 2013). "Le malade mental" et "le délinquant" deviennent les lieux communs d'application des doctrines constitutionnalistes et leurs images idéales, essentialisées et cohérentes, sont structurées par les interdictions de l'ordre culturel et social. Si "le malade mental" a été thématiqué dans les études

de médecine constitutionnaliste, "le délinquant" jouera le rôle similaire en criminologie.

Cette situation peut être expliquée dans le contexte existant: la plupart des études constitutionnalistes se déroulent sur des sujets qui se trouvent dans différentes institutions disciplinaires (hôpitaux de maladies mentales, pénitenciers, maisons de correction), parce que les examens imposés par l'exploration morphologique, physiologique et psychologique de l'individu violent souvent l'intimité du patient. Le plus souvent ils sont l'expression des relations de pouvoir existantes dans ces institutions disciplinaires où l'accord du patient pour différentes explorations somatiques et physiques n'était pas nécessaire. De plus, la possibilité d'appliquer les démarches constitutionnalistes dans des domaines si sensibles quant au maintien de l'ordre interne et quant à la sécurité de la société offre aux médecins et aux psychologues une chance supplémentaire de prouver l'utilité sociale de leurs propres spécialisations en vue de l'augmentation de leur capital symbolique et de la possibilité d'améliorer leur statut professionnel et matériel.

Les corrélations causales, statistiques et explicatives entre les états physique, mental et comportemental dans les principales recherches effectuées sur les délinquants et les recommandations faites ensuite sont partiellement incluses dans les lois pénales et pénitentiaires de l'époque (Pălășan 2009). Ce fait ne représente pas un procès neutre du point de vue politique et cela a des conséquences importantes pour les rapports entre gouvernants et gouvernés. Les implications politiques de la criminologie constitutionnaliste sont d'autant plus significatives qu'elles transcendent des orientations idéologiques opposées: les arguments de la criminologie constitutionnaliste sont formulés et développés, au nom de la "science" (biologique), par des hommes de science ayant des affinités et des options politiques différentes. Si, dans l'Italie d'entre-deux-



guerres, les doctrines constitutionnalistes se développent en étroit rapport avec l'ascension du fascisme, en Roumanie elles sont accueillies avec le même intérêt aussi bien par les chercheurs ayant des options politiques et idéologiques de gauche que par ceux du centre droit.

L'émergence du délinquant en tant qu' "unité psychosomatique", un alter ego négatif, dans le reflet duquel la société peut se reconnaître et duquel elle peut se distancier, répond à des fantasmes qui peuplaient l'imaginaire élitair. La formation de cette "image dans le miroir" du projet social général "la Grande Roumanie" correspond à des aspirations plus profondes d'unité, d'ordre, de contrôle et de sûreté. Dans l'horizon d'attente créé par ces fantasmes, la convergence des deux plans, celui législatif et celui scientifique, peut avoir lieu (Bucur 2002, Turda 2010).

"Le délinquant" peut être opérationnalisé grâce à la laxité de la construction imaginaire qui peut articuler des contes de vie avec des caractéristiques anatomiques, physiologiques et psychologiques qui diffèrent "comme degré mais non pas comme nature" de leurs correspondances normales (Rădulescu-Motru 1940, 96). "La monstruosité" a été apprivoisée et les explications scientifiques l'ont rendue plus familière. Paradoxalement, cet apprivoisement de la monstruosité ne fait que multiplier l'espace et les prérogatives de l'intervention de l'État. Maintenant, qu'elle n'est plus évidente, "la monstruosité" diluée, il faut l'observer, détecter, noter à l'avance car, n'importe quand, elle peut se transformer en danger. La surveillance est d'autant plus nécessaire que les caractéristiques monstrueuses sont devenues plus dissimulées et les caractéristiques anatomiques ont été intériorisées en mouvements physiologiques, processus psychologiques et narrations biographiques.

Le succès de la double articulation du "délinquant" en tant qu'altérité peut être expliqué justement par sa transformation du "monstre" en "anormal" (Ernst 2006), de

"l'altérité radicale" en "altérité commune" (Boia 2004, 8) qui peut être inscrite dans l'ordre juridique. Le corps "anatomique" monstrueux (lombrosien) qui s'échappe et provoque l'angoisse s'est dilué, étant projeté avec succès dans l'ordre symbolique de la loi. Cette translation et cette réinvention symbolique du "corps du délinquant", qui devient une altérité sociale sanctionnée par la loi, ont pu avoir lieu dans le contexte historique et politique ouvert par le projet "La Grande Roumanie" dans la période de l'ascension de l'idéologie fasciste en Europe. "Le corps" qui participe à la construction du délinquant comme "unité somato-psychique" dans la Roumanie d'entre-deux-guerres n'est plus son corps anatomique, mais une matrice sémantique pleine d'un contenu scientifique. Dans la période d'entre-deux-guerres, "les criminels" ne sont plus "nés", ils ne forment plus une race spéciale car les caractères ataviques, physiologiques et anatomiques extérieurs ont été peu à peu modérés et intériorisés – c'est-à-dire insérés dans "l'intérieur" du corps, dans les organes, les hormones, les capacités intellectuelles et affectives. Et ces "anormalités" physiologiques, anatomiques et psychologiques s'expriment en comportements antisociaux qu'on peut arrêter de s'aggraver et de léser la société, si on les connaît d'avance. Détecté d'avance, le potentiel criminel qui, plus il est dissimulé plus il est difficile à détecter, peut être empêché de devenir acte criminel.



### Remerciements:

Cette recherche a été financée par une subvention du Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale, CNCS-UEFISCDI, projet numéro PN-II-RU-TE-2012-3.

\*La traduction de cet article a été réalisée par Rodica Pălășan.



## BIBLIOGRAPHIE

- \*\*\*. 1934. "Physicians made Senators." *Foreign Letters*, 102: 2037.
- Ackerknecht, E. H. 1982. "Diathesis: the word and the concept in medical history." *Bulletin for the History of Medicine*, 56: 317-325.
- Albrizio, Angelo. 2007. "Biometry and Anthropometry: from Galton to Constitutional Medicine." *Journal of Anthropological Sciences*, 85: 101-123.
- Appelbaum, Nancy P., Anne S. MacPherson et Karin Alejandra Roseblatt, eds. 2003. *Race and Nation in Modern Latin America*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Ash, Mitchell G. 1995. *Gestalt Psychology in German Culture, 1890-1967: Holism and the Quest for Objectivity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bachhiesl, Christian. 2005. *Zur Konstruktion der kriminellen Persönlichkeit: die Kriminalbiologie an der Karl-Franzens-Universität Graz*. <http://stabikat.de/DB=1/SET=6/TTL=2/MAT=/NOMAT=T/CLK?IKT=1008&TRM=%3C&cvtour=1%3E> Hamburg: Kovac.
- Bauer, Julius. 1923. *Vorlesungen über allgemeine Konstitutions- und Vererbungslehre für Studierende und Ärzte*. Berlin: Julius Springer.
- Becker, Peter. 2002. *Verderbnis und Entartung: eine Geschichte der Kriminologie des 19. Jahrhunderts als Diskurs und Praxis*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- Becker, Peter et Richard F. Wetzell, eds. 2006. *Criminals and Their Scientists: The History of Criminology in International Perspective*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Boia, Lucian. 2004. *Între înger și fiară: mitul omului diferit din Antichitate până astăzi*. București: Humanitas.
- Breton, David Le. 1992. *La sociologie du corps*. Paris: PUF.
- Bucur, Maria. 2002. *Eugenics and Modernization in Interwar Romania*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Cercel, Cosmin S. 2015. "The Enemy Within: Criminal Law and Ideology in Interwar Romania." In *Fascism and Criminal Law: History, Theory, Continuity*, ed. Stephen Skinner, 101-126. Oxford and Portland, Oregon: Hart Publishing.
- Ciocco, A. 1936. "The historical background of the modern study of constitution." *Institute for History of Medicine Bulletin* 4: 23-38.
- Decusară, E. C. 1929. *Dare de seamă asupra statisticej judiciare din Vechiul Regat și Basarabia pe anii 1919-1924*. București.
- Decusară, E. C. 1923. *Reformarea legislațiunii noastre penale*. Craiova.
- Doboș, Corina. 2013. "Între a preveni și a pedepsi. Un nou tip de acțiune penală în România interbelică." *Studia Politica. Romanian Political Science Review*, 13(3): 477-497.
- Dragu, Toma. 1929. *Reformele penale. Scrisoare deschisă Ministrului Justiției*. București.
- Eraso, Yolanda. 2007. "Biotypology, Endocrinology and Sterilization: The Practice of Eugenics in the Treatment of Argentinian Women during the 1930s." In *Bulletin for the History of Medicine*, 81: 793-822.
- Ernst, Waltraud. 2006. *Histories of the Normal and the Abnormal: Social and Cultural Histories of Norms and Normativity*. London: Routledge.
- Garber, Daniel. 2001. *Descartes Embodied: Reading Cartesian Philosophy through Cartesian Science*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Georgescu, I.B. 1920. *Contribuțiuni la o reformă a Codului Penal*. Craiova.
- Gibson, Mary. 2002. *Born to crime. Cesare Lombroso and the Origins of Biological Criminology*. Westport: Praeger.
- Grmek, Mirko D. 2000. "Le concept de maladie." In *Histoire de la pensée médicale en Occident*, vol. 3, ed. Mirko D. Grmek, 146-166. Paris: Le Seuil.
- Hahn Rafter, Nicole. 2008. *The Criminal Brain: Understanding Biological Theories of Crime*. New York: New York University Press.
- Hahn Rafter, Nicole. 1997. *Creating born criminals*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Harrington, Anne. 1996. *Reenchanted Science: Holism in German Culture from Wilhelm II to Hitler*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Hart, William D. 1994. "Dualism." In *A Companion to the Philosophy of Mind*, ed. Samuel Guttenplan, 265-269. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Hau, Michael. 2000. "The Holistic Gaze in German Medicine, 1890-1930." In *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 74: 495-524.
- Hau, Michael et Mitchell G. Ash. 2000. "Der normale Körper, seelisch erblickt." In *Gesichter der Weimarer Republik: Eine physiognomische Kulturgeschichte*, ed. Claudia Schmolders et Sander L. Gilman, 12-31. Cologne: Dumont.
- Herf, Jeffrey. 1984. *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Herovanu, Alfons. 1935. *Discuțiuni pe marginea Codului Penal, discurs rostit în ședința Senatului de la 8 februarie 1935*. București: Imprimeria centrală.
- Inspectoratul General al Jandarmeriei. Biroul IV Statistică. 1936. *Studiu Statistic al Infracțiunilor de toate categoriile comise pe teritoriul rural al țării, în anii 1923-1935, iar al infracțiilor pe anii 1932-1935*. București.
- Kretschmer, Ernest. 1921. *Körperbau und Charakter: Untersuchungen zum Konstitutionsproblem und zur Lehre von den Temperamenten*. Berlin: Julius Springer Verlag.
- Kretschmer, Ernest. 1922. *Medizinische Psychologie*. Leipzig: Thieme.
- Kretschmer, Ernest. 1928. *Störungen des Gefühlslebens, Temperamente. Handbuch der Geisteskrankheiten*. Berlin: Julius Springer Verlag.
- Lawrence, Christopher and George Weisz, eds. 1998. *Greater than the Parts: Holism in Biomedicine, 1920-1950*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Leys Stepan, Nancy. 1991. *The Hour of Eugenics: Race, Gender, and Nation in Latin America*. New York: Cornell

University Press.

Liebllich, Sandu and Gustav Fastlich. 1934. "Biotipologia criminalilor." In *Volum jubiliar în onoarea Profesorului Dr. I. Parhon*, 286-301. In *Criminalitatea. O istorie medico-legală românească*, Octavian Buda (ed.), 438-453. Pitești: Ed. Paralela 45, 2006.

Luton, A. 1872. "Tempérament." *Nouveau Dictionnaire de Médecine et de Chirurgie pratiques*. Vol. 11: 137-149. Paris: J.B. Baillière.

Marinescu, Gh. 1931. *Constituția umană după lucrările școlii italiene*. București: Academia Română, 1931.

Marques, Tiago Pires. 2013. *Crime and the Fascist State, 1850-1940*. London: Pickering & Chatto.

Ministerul Justiției. Serviciul Statisticii Judiciare. 1931. *Statistica judiciară a României pe anii 1925-1928: însoțită de o Dare de seamă de E.C. Decusară*. București.

Parhon, C.I. FD. *Psihologia constituției* [manuscris]. Arhivele Naționale Istorice Centrale (ANIC), Fond Personal C. I. Parhon, Dosar III/44, ff.3-4.

Parhon, C.I. and M. Goldstein, 1900. "Asupra unor funcții puțin cunoscute ale ovarelor." *România medicală*.

Parhon, C.I. 1930. "Constituția somato-psihică și raporturile ei cu criminologia." *Revista de Drept Penal și Știință Penitenciară*, 9 (3): 1-4, 14-16, 20-26, (4): 63-69. In *Criminalitatea. O istorie medico-legală românească*, Octavian Buda (ed.), 400-418. Pitești: Ed. Paralela 45, 2006.

Parhon, C.I. 1938. "Câteva noțiuni de endocrinologie." In *Manual de endocrinologie*, vol.1, C.I. Parhon, M. Goldstein, St. Milcu, 7-15. București: Institutul de Arte Grafice "Slova".

Parhon, C. I. 1940. *Însemnătatea teoretică și practică a endocrinologiei, necesitatea de a se organiza mișcarea științifică endocrinologică la noi în țară*. Academia Română – Discursuri de recepțiune LXXV: Discurs rostit la 20 mai 1940 de Prof. Dr. C.I. Parhon cu răspunsul d-lui prof. N. Vasilescu Karpen. București.

Pălășan, Corina. 2009. "'Domesticating' Violence in Interwar Romania." In *Understanding Violence: Contexts and Portrayals*, ed. Marika Guggisberg & David Weir, 173-187. Oxford: Inter Disciplinary Press.

Pende, Nicola. 1928. *Constitutional inadequacies*. Philadelphia: Lea & Febiger.

Pende, Nicola. 1938. *Creștere și Ortogeneză*. București: Editura Academia Națională de Educație Fizică "Regele Carol II."

Pende, Nicola, ed. 1955. *Traité de médecine biotypologique*. Paris: Éd. G.Doin.

Peitzman, Steven J. et Russell C. Maulitz. 2000. *L'Histoire de la pensée médicale en Occident*, vol. 3, ed. Mirko D.Grmek, 169-194. Paris: Le Seuil.

Holmes, Frederic L. 2000. "La physiologie et la médecine expérimentale." In *Histoire de la pensée médicale en Occident*, vol. 3, ed. Mirko D.Grmek, 86-96. Paris: Le Seuil.

Peukert, Detlev J. K. 1991. *The Weimar Republic: The Crisis of Classical Modernity*. London: Penguin Press.

Priwitzer, Martin. 2004. *Ernst Kretschmer und das Wahnproblem*. Medizinischen Fakultät der Eberhard-Karls-Universität zu Tübingen.

Prüll, Cay-Rüdiger. 1998. "Holism and German Pathology (1914-1933)." In *Greater than the Parts: Holism in Biomedicine, 1920-1950*, eds. Christopher Lawrence et George Weisz, 46-67. New York: Oxford University Press.

Raynaud, M. 1872. "Diathèse." *Nouveau Dictionnaire de Médecine et de Chirurgie pratiques*. Vol. 11: 410-462. Paris: J.B. Baillière.

Rădulescu-Motru, Constantin. 1940. "Responsabilitatea penală." *Revista de Drept Penal și Știință Penitenciară*, 19: 88-97.

Saldaña, Quintiliano. 1929. *La criminologie nouvelle*. Paris: PUF.

Wetzell, Richard F. 2000. *Inventing the Criminal: A History of German Criminology, 1880-1945*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

Schreider, Eugène. 1937. *Les types humaines*. Vol. 3. Paris: Hermann.

Șerban, Vasile C. 1929. "Criminalitatea în lumina noilor date statistice." *Dreptul*, 57(39), December 1st.

Timmermann, Carsten. 2001. "Constitutional Medicine, Neoromanticism, and the Politics of Antimechanism in Interwar Germany." *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 75: 717-739.

Tracy, Sarah W. 1992. "George Draper and American Constitutional Medicine, 1916-1946: Reinventing the Sick Man." *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 66: 53-89.

Tracy, Sarah W. 1998. "An Evolving Science of Man: The Transformation and Demise of American Constitutional Medicine, 1920-1950." In *Greater than the Parts: Holism in Biomedicine, 1920-1950*, eds. Christopher Lawrence et George Weisz, 161-188. New York: Oxford University Press.

Turinese, Luigi. 2006. *Biotipologia. Lanalisi del tipo nella pratica medica*. Milano: Tecniche Nuove.

Turda, Marius. 2010. *Modernism and Eugenics*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Vacha, Jiri. 1995. "German constitutional doctrine in the 1920s and 1930s and pitfalls of the contemporary conception of normality in biology and medicine." *Journal of Medicine and Philosophy*, 10: 339-367.

Vimieiro Gomes, Ana Carolina. 2015. "The Emergence of Biotypology in Brazilian Medicine: The Italian Model, Textbooks, and Discipline Building, 1930-1940." In *Sciences in the Universities of Europe, Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, eds. Ana Simões, Maria Paula Diogo, Kostas Gavroglu, 361-380. Dordrecht-Heidelberg: New York: London: Springer.



# MARTOR



---

Title: “‘Some Weak and Ill Beings.’ The Topic of Race Degeneration and the Representations of the Corporality of the Rural Population in the Medical Discourse in Romania (1860 - 1910)”

Author: Constantin Bărbulescu

How to cite this article: Bărbulescu, Constantin. 2015. “‘Some Weak and Ill Beings.’ The Topic of Race Degeneration and the Representations of the Corporality of the Rural Population in the Medical Discourse in Romania (1860 - 1910)” . *Martor* 20: 69-80.

Published by: *Editura MARTOR* (MARTOR Publishing House), *Muzeul Țăranului Român* (The Museum of the Romanian Peasant)

URL: <http://martor.muzeultaranuluiroman.ro/archive/768-2/>

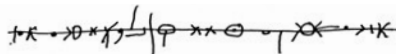
---

*Martor* (The Museum of the Romanian Peasant Anthropology Review) is a peer-reviewed academic journal established in 1996, with a focus on cultural and visual anthropology, ethnology, museum studies and the dialogue among these disciplines. *Martor* review is published by the Museum of the Romanian Peasant. Its aim is to provide, as widely as possible, a rich content at the highest academic and editorial standards for scientific, educational and (in)formational goals. Any use aside from these purposes and without mentioning the source of the article(s) is prohibited and will be considered an infringement of copyright.

*Martor* (Revue d'Anthropologie du Musée du Paysan Roumain) est un journal académique en système *peer-review* fondé en 1996, qui se concentre sur l'anthropologie visuelle et culturelle, l'ethnologie, la muséologie et sur le dialogue entre ces disciplines. La revue *Martor* est publiée par le Musée du Paysan Roumain. Son aspiration est de généraliser l'accès vers un riche contenu au plus haut niveau du point de vue académique et éditorial pour des objectifs scientifiques, éducatifs et informationnels. Toute utilisation au-delà de ces buts et sans mentionner la source des articles est interdite et sera considérée une violation des droits de l'auteur.

*Martor* is indexed by EBSCO and CEEOL.

# “Some Weak and Ill Beings.” The Topic of Race Degeneration and the Representations of the Corporality of the Rural Population in the Medical Discourse in Romania (1860-1910)



**Constantin Bărbulescu**

*Lecturer at the Department of Modern History, Archivist and Ethnology Studies, Faculty of History and Philosophy, “Babeş-Bolyai” University, Cluj-Napoca*

## ABSTRACT

The article aims at studying a particular aspect of the image upon the corporality of Romanian peasants in the last decades of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th. The physicians are the creators of this discourse and image. They place an important topic on the public agenda: native race degeneration. In this particular context the image they portray upon the peasant, including his corporality, is an extremely dark one. The physicians' peasant is an undernourished, alcoholised, sick being and, thus, on the verge of physical decadence.

## KEYWORDS

body, peasantry, 19th century, physicians, race degeneration

For Romanian historiography, the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century represent a fortunate, almost triumphal, period in the evolution of modern Romania. In seven decades, Romanians achieved in turn all the national ideals of 19<sup>th</sup> century: in 1859 the first Union – Moldavia with the Romanian Principality; in 1866 the constitutional monarchy; in 1877 Romania obtained its Independence on the battlefield; in 1881 it was proclaimed a Kingdom and, finally, in 1918 – The Great Union. One would have expected these progresses to be perceived accordingly in the era, and so they were; nobody could have ignored them. Nevertheless, to the extent the contemporary researcher has become familiarized with this era, he / she could not help noticing that in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Romania had not been exempt from the negative phantasms of the progress. At the time, the evolution of Romania was seen a little bit different by

its contemporaries, with lights and shadows where the fears and phantasms of a society in forced march on modernization path were hiding. But the catastrophic visions and the national apocalypses sometimes put their imprint upon contemporaries who acted on the strength of them offering them a reality. The phantasms are as real as any social fact and must be treated as such. The evolution of modern Romania could not be understood by disregarding them.

The foundation of the Romanian national state at the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century is in keeping with the broader process of edification of nation states in South Eastern Europe. One by one, Greece, Bulgaria, Romania turned from provinces or states vassal to the Ottoman Empire into independent entities. They all continued the process of Europeanization and, implicitly, of modernization after having gained its independence, but at a different level and with different means. That process was more







or less successful due to the fact that they all started with an enormous handicap: the lack of a consolidated *bourgeoisie* and in the territories south of the Danube even the lack of an agrarian elite, complementary with a huge peasantry mass that made the national social body. So, the stake of modernization in this area of Europe was not only the implementation of the European liberal political model, but also the transformation of this huge rural mass into modern citizens of the nation state. Hence the interest of the elites in this space for what was called in Romania “the rural issue”.

In Romania, “the rural issue” was in the middle of ideological debates of the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and did not take only the shape of the “agrarian matter”, as we would expect; the latter was only one of the facets of “the rural issue”, the most debated and, thus, the most important one.

The interest of the intellectual elite in the matter of the peasantry was multi-shaped: let us remember that the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century meant the discovery of folk literature and the decades that followed, the feminine elite mostly adopted the holiday peasant costume that they significantly called “national”. The peasant thus became the “national element” by excellence; the peasant is identified with the Romanian citizen. Under such circumstances, it was easy to understand the interest of the medical body in the native peasants’ living conditions (“hygienic” ones as they named them). The peasant was a leading figure of the medical discourse in Romania, especially towards the end of the century when the medical body became “Romanianized”. Until 1875, when the first cohort of physicians formed at the Faculty of Medicine of Bucharest University graduated, higher medical studies could be attended only at foreign universities. Most of the physicians practicing in the United Principalities until 1870 had been foreigners. In the past decades of the century the ratio changed dramatically; on October 1, 1898, there were no less than 966 Ph.Ds

in medicine practicing their “art”. What is important is that more than two thirds were Romanians. (Felix 1899, 340). In 1898, as I was saying, the medical body had already been Romanianized, a fact that would have a huge influence upon the medical discourse we are about to analyze.

I have mentioned that 1859 does not represent only the beginning of the national fulfillment of Romanians but, in a few decades, it started to have a different significance. For doctor Codreanu, physician in Tutova County this happened only in 1880: “The year 1859! This is the year since most of people here started to count the era of a regenerated Romania, of happiness and consolidation of the Romanian state, in one word the era of «reorganization» and this year, too, *this year, 1859*, is the year when the great mortality, the death from the face of earth, the decrease and physical degradation of Romanians started!” (Manicea 1880, 35-36) It is the beginning of the end. But even earlier, in the previous decade, physicians started to draw a physical portrait of Romanian peasant in darker and darker touches. Doctor G. Obedenaru, the Romanian specialist in what will later become malaria, was the first to tackle the subject. His peasants, ill of “miasmatic debility” were not in a very good shape: “Women, children and a great deal of men’s faces are of a particular and characteristic yellow color. They have little muscular force (little strength); they are very lazy, but this is a laziness that nobody will have the right to impute, because this laziness is the result of the illness, the result of true poisoning, because the miasmas that got into the body from the air are a true poison. Feeble people have such little strength that even when they sit in one place they try to sit so as not to get tired. They do not sit but lay, *as if they were lazy*. Look in the countryside where many women are gathered together and you will see that they do not sit right, but leaned forward and on their knees, or with their back against something; they do not keep their head up right, but leaned to one side;

they do not move their eyes rapidly from one spot to another, but they stare much time at the same spot, they watch it for a long time and only slowly move their heads and eyes to see other things; finally, they keep their arms down; fallen as if they were made of cloth. We do not talk here of the peasant women from the mountains, that are red, tough, healthy but we talk of the women from the plains, the yellow-faced ones" (Obedenaru 1873, 8-9). The severe look of our physician, born in Bucharest, having done medical studies in Paris, a person who had seen it all, did not comprehend anything: a simple women's get-together by the side of the road as you can find today all over rural Romania, was turned into a clinical case. It was clear that doctor Obedenaru's peasants had not assimilated the new corporal codes of the contemporary bourgeoisie. The text was written at the beginning of 1871 and would enjoy exceptional success: it was part of the small treaty upon fevers that had a first edition in French in 1871 (Obédénare 1871), followed by a Romanian edition in a renown scientific journal – P.S. Aurelian's *Revista Științifică* – immediately taken up by the newspaper *Românul* (July-August 1872) and finally republished in 1873 as a volume in 5000 copies distributed for free "to all authorities in the country" (Obedenaru 1873, 2). In 1883 a new edition of 5000 complimentary copies for the same authorities came out (Obedenaru 1883, 2). We deem it to be the most popularized Romanian medical writing at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Towards the end of the eight decade, young physician Nicolae Manolescu got the position of district physician in Buzău County for a brief period. When he settled in Pătărlagile, he came into contact with the rural world that he was called to manage from medical point of view. He was invited to a... "wedding, important enough to gather many people. I could see an important number of people from all walks of life and I have seen the unexpected at a wedding: on half of 58

lads, I saw dwarfing, discoloration and wrinkling, malnutrition giving teguments the expression of premature ageing and their movements that of a languid juvenile stimulus. These were more apparent as at the dance a shepherd of the son of an inn keeper or mayor was bouncing, making the ground tremble. In this wedding picture, the female sex generally lacks juvenile and development expression to a greater extent, and all children are feeble. I have hardly seen any old people" (Manolescu 1879, 553). The wedding picture revealed to doctor Manolescu the same anemic, underfed, ill peasants... with few exceptions.

Even Jewish physicians, like doctor M. Roth, described Romanian peasants in the same way: "If we look at our peasants, they give the impression of people who carry the germs of hidden cachexia; the color of their face is not brown as that of a sunburnt person, but it is earthy (dark earth), an icteric shade; the mucus skin's anemic; the eyes lack any brightness or sharpness; the overall look is indifferent and tired; all the movements of his body are faint. (...) His peasant woman is an old young woman from early age; work, malnutrition, chronic maladies have already imprinted the stigma of premature ageing; at 30, she is humpbacked, livid-faced, withered and neither she, nor her husband reach old age" (Roth, 1880, 133-134). If for doctor G. Obedenaru the peasant's physical decline was due to a precise pathology, doctors Nicolae Manolescu and M. Roth made a step forward and the same description became the typical image of the Romanian peasant. During the War of Independence, nobody in the medical body described them anymore as robust and healthy beings. From then on, the peasant world was a world of poverty, of physical and moral suffering, of illness and, thus, of death. All the positive physical characteristic of the peasant were pushed somewhere in the past, anyway, before 1859.

This image of rural corporality in the medical discourse could not be



understood outside the ideological context that simultaneously conditions and generates it. More precisely, the image of the peasants' physical decrepitude was in direct connection to one of the fears and phantasms that would haunt Romanian society, but also after that: the degeneration of the Romanian race. Initially, when I was not fully familiarized with the medical discourse of the era, I had the impression that the topic of race degeneration was one of the themes of this discourse; that physicians talked about race degeneration as they talked about peasants' bodily and clothing hygiene, about their dwelling and food hygiene, as they treated the matter of alcoholism, but I was wrong. The theme of race degeneration was a generator of medical discourse; if, in the past three decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there was an explosion of hygienist literature in Romania, this was due first of all to the physicians' belief that the race degenerated and something had to be done for its regeneration. In order to counter it, the evil needed to be defined – in our case, “the hygienic evils” of the peasantry – and to be studied.

But let us go back. We have seen that after 1870 physicians drew attention to the process of race degeneration that was firstly perceived in the physical decay of the Romanian peasant. But degeneration was never individual; it was a disease of the social body with symptoms and specific causes that physicians tried to identify and circumscribe. On a different occasion, together and with the help of physicians from the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, we have followed the birth and evolution of this phantasm. We have started naturally with the symptoms or the manifestations. In other words, we were interested in the elements physicians took into account when they asserted bluntly that the Romanian race had degenerated. First of all, a population degenerated or was in state of degeneracy when it suffered from a demographic standpoint. Romanian physicians acted as occasional demographers and, using

statistical data, competed during the eighth decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to “prove” that the population of Romania had decreased or, in the most fortunate case, was stable. All of this, obviously, corroborated with the reproduction of “foreigners”, especially of Jews. The catastrophic demographic scenario of the era could be briefed as follows: the Romanian population decreased while the Jewish population increased. For this research, we were less interested in the physicians' demographic analyses.

Much more relevant for our case was a different form of manifestation of race degeneration which was not of a demographic nature. As everywhere in Europe, the statistics of conscription were used to prove the state of degeneration of native races. Romania was not an exception. The data offered by recruitments, or the statistics of conscription, offered information pertaining to physical anthropology (waist, thoracic perimeter, weight etc.) or to pathology (less on causes of illnesses) focused on an age group of the male population. This data was interpreted as a very good index of what military physician Z. Petrescu called “the military aptitude of the population of the country” (Petrescu 1880, 3) and doctor Iacob Felix named “the physical qualities of the population” (Felix 1897, 15). Of course that the military aptitude of the physical characteristics of the population was inversely proportional to the state of race degeneration. In Romania, conscription started in 1864, though it wasn't carried out by military, but civilian physicians; only in 1869 were military physicians used for the first time in the process of conscription. One of these doctors, Z. Petrescu, was the father of the statistics of conscription in Romania. In 1869 he was appointed recruiting physician in Vâlcea County; he noticed with surprise the complete lack of any work on statistics, any memo related to the recruitment process “not only in the district where I was, but in all districts of the country; because, after having finished



the operation of recruitment, while trying to present the results of the mission I was assigned to, I could not find in the archive of the civilian sanitary service any work that would serve as comparison" (Petrescu 1880, 4). After 1869, the medical commissions of recruitment were composed of civilian physicians and only in 1874 were they entrusted to military physicians. This time doctor Z. Petrescu would succeed in obtaining statistical data from all recruiting physicians in order to provide the statistics of recruitment for 1874 for the entire country. The work published in 1880 put together the statistical successes of Doctor Z. Petrescu, who didn't seem too alarmed. In Vâlcea County, in 1869, he found "very aged people, though still very healthy, robust and full of life (...) the mountain man is brave and cheerful, and the mountain woman vigorous and cheerful. The reader may object that I am in contradiction with the statistical result of my tables and may say he sees too many youngsters exempted on the grounds of feeble constitution. It is true, but this contradiction is nothing but apparent; because, if we consider the 382 young men with so-called «legal» exemptions, we will notice that these lads were the most elitist, the most robust, as they were in reality, we will see that for the medical selection, only the greenest, weakest lads remain, in comparison to those exempted. Of the remaining lads, I could still find 359 young, very healthy and robust recruits. Of the 686 young men who presented themselves, 205 had a *feeble constitution* exemption are not lost people, as some may imagine" (Petrescu 1880, 8-9). We can, thus, see the pitfalls of such evaluations and get an idea regarding the manipulations it could bring about. When he was appointed recruiting physician in Prahova County in 1874, when the demographic waters had been "fully troubled", doctor Z. Petrescu saw a population that seemed "to be in satisfactory hygienic conditions as may be seen from tables of exemptees for illness and infirmities; because there are but very few cases of this

exemption (190) compared to the enormous number of examined youth (3,048) and even those had only minor infirmities" (Petrescu 1880, 21). Regarding the analysis of recruiting statistics, in 1874, at the level of the entire country, the general picture was less loaded with negative nuances because it seemed that, during their fieldwork, not all recruiting physicians had seen a hygienic situation as happy as the one presented by doctor Petrescu: "these tables easily show that diathesis, constitutional or hereditary morbus were very rare in the mountain locales: on slopes and very frequent in plain locales: in *plăși*" (Petrescu 1880, 39) that confirmed the stereotype of the mountain peasant's superior physique compared to that of the plain peasant. Let us remember the descriptions of the rural population of the plains made by Doctor G. Obedenaru. In 1880 Doctor Zaharia Petrescu's writings did not contain the word "degeneration". In the same year though, Doctor C.I. Istrati fully used the recruiting statistics to demonstrate the state of degeneration of the Romanian population. He was not as optimistic and serene as doctor Petrescu, whose statistical data he would interpret in a reversed sense. Furthermore, Doctor C. I. Istrati benefits from recruitment data statistics for 1879 "due to General Inspector Davila's benevolence" (Istrati 1880, 115). This way he could compare the statistical data for Vâlcea County for three years – 1869, 1874 and 1879 – and for the whole country for two – 1874 and 1879. And the different personal remarks of the recruiting physicians in 1879 proved to be an extensively used resource. Doctor I. Nicolescu, recruiting physician in Muscel County, describes the physical aspect of the few tens of cases of height exemption: "For the lower height of 1.54 meters, 37 young men were exempted, 5 looked like they were 7-10 years old!"; doctor Spiroiu would tell doctor Istrati that in the same county "in the townships of Nucșoara and Corbii several recruits in their twenties were brought in their mother's *arms*, so small, ill and degenerate were they!" (Istrati

1880, 138-139). Faced with such testimonies and images, there was no need for further evidence: the population of Romania was in “a state of malady, sufferance, decay, degeneration, death” (Istrati 1880, 139). Nevertheless, Doctor C. I. Istrati was fiercely trying to prove scientifically that the image he suspected and he was convinced to be true was also real. The recruiting statistics fully helped him. In 1879, Vâlcea County was no longer what it had been in 1869: all the indices for the recruits’ health state were low – exemptions for infirmities went from 105.6‰ to 168‰; the exemptions for disability and incomplete development were on the same rising trend: 245.5‰ (1879) compared to 177.4‰ (1869) (Istrati 1880, 118). The situation was alarming. But maybe Vâlcea was an unhappy particular case, maybe at the level of the whole country the recruiting statistics offered positive signs. The hope was in vain – the whole country followed Vâlcea County to doctor Istrati’s great despair: “what is enormous, what is nowhere but here to be seen, is the huge number of feeble constitutions; 185.2 in 1874 and 177.9 in 1879. The difference is small and all the more insignificant as the numbers for incomplete development went in two years from only 74.1 to 214. That is three times more!... (...) Thus, the total number of weak and badly developed recruits was of 259.3 in 1874; six years later, this figure went to 392.3 more with one half. What does this prove if not the sickly state, if not the physical degradation, our race degeneration!” (Istrati 1880, 123-124). There was no point in continuing on this path as the demonstration had been made and the conclusion drawn. Doctor C.I. Istrati had no doubts; for him the statistics of recruiting was perfectly uniform at the level of the whole country; for him, between 1869 and 1879, all recruiting physicians had evaluated uniformly the cases of disability or incomplete development; this was his main argument; the exigency of the recruiting physicians did not increase in the interval mentioned, just the physical reality

of recruits in front of them was degrading.

In the ninth decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, other military physicians would take the path drawn by doctor Istrati. One of them was battalion physician Ioan Dănescu who in 1886 defended a Ph.D. thesis in medicine dedicated to medical demography and geography. His sources were the recruiting statistics which after 1879 were complete and covered the whole country. His analysis focused on five years’ time: 1879-1883. What did the recruiting statistics reveal to doctor Ioan Dănescu? Apparently, a normal physical situation of the recruits if their height was taken into account – 1.65 meters and a thoracic perimeter of 85 centimeters: “the vigor of our population is still strong enough (...) *the race endures*” (Dănescu 1886, I). “Looking at the height of the statistical average, the general image proved to be a positive one; but when delving into details, the image lost its shine, it was troubled by the slough of the pathological image of the rejected. Ricketty constitution and incomplete development alone were the causes for 10,000 young to be rejected; and all of a sudden, the excellent qualities of our race started to weaken” (Dănescu 1886, II). When compared to the statistics for 1874, the image of the physical qualities of the population got even darker: if in 1874 the number of rejected youth was 6,317, by keeping the proportions in the five year’ analysis, the number of rejects should have been 31,585 recruits; nevertheless, it was 1,383 units higher. In conclusion: “medically speaking, the country’s military aptitude is on a downwards slope” (Dănescu 1886, V). There was only one step to the complete disaster that our physicians would do when he would see that, for example, the township of Iugurul in Muscel could offer only two recruits in five years (Dănescu 1886, unpagged). In conclusion, after six years, doctor Ioan Dănescu answered doctor C.I. Istrati’s rhetorical question (if the Romanian race degenerated or not) with “Yes! With great sorrow, we must be convinced that the Romanian race in

our country is undergoing a process of degeneration and at quite an alarming speed" (Dănescu 1886, VII).

In two years another military physician urged by "the success of my comrade's thesis (...) dr. Dănescu" (Gugea 1888, 11) chose to focus his Ph.D. thesis on the impact of height upon the statistics of recruitment. The time interval of the analysis was the same as that of his mentor: 1879-1883. As you may suspect, the results were similar. The thesis doctor Th. Gugea started from was that there was a connection between the proportion of those exempted from military service on the grounds of minimum height, the sanitary status of the population they came from and race degeneration: "In the counties where short height is frequent, dirt is greater. In our country, all these faults in the physical constitution of the population cannot be justified through racial differences, because even if there are parts of the country inhabited with heterogeneous elements, our personal observations lead us to assert that all these elements are in good state of development and that physical degeneration by causes of local insalubrity does not touch but the native population" (Gugea 1888, 18). And doctor Th. Gugea came across the same problem as doctor Ioan Dănescu: the average height in the five year' period invalidated the thesis that the authors fiercely proved: "the figures of my statistical table give the average of 1m65cm. To a number of 224,972 young, as have been medically examined, from 1879 until 1883 and even further on, higher statures are figured with tenths of thousands until 1m 70cm. We could say that our material of selection is in excellent condition and that we just have to cultivate it, favoring its conditions of development" (Gugea 1888, 28). Nevertheless, our physician could only be worried because he knew, no matter what the statistical tables showed, that the Romanian population was degenerating; and then he placed this degeneration wherever he could, that is, in the mountain counties where the exemptions for stature

were more numerous: "the population of our mountain natives has started to degenerate a long time ago, because the inferior heights of 1m54 cm have already reached the maximum proportion of 70 to 1000 and, together with some plain counties, a minimum of 30 to 1000" (Gugea 1888, 39). I personally did not understand if the minimum proportion of 30‰ exempted from military service on stature grounds represented a reason of concern for doctor Th. Gugea and, thus, a positive parameter of race degeneration. One year after dr. Gugea's dissertation, in 1889, his younger colleague, Nicolae Soiu dedicated his Ph.D. to a question of medical demography. Even if the coordinator of both theses was dr. Zaharia Petrescu, the works were in fact, as conclusions, quite different. Doctor Nicolae Soiu was, like his coordinator, an optimist; nothing could convince him that the race had degenerated: neither the great number of rejects on the grounds of stature insufficiency, because reduced stature was wrongly associated with precarious hygienic conditions of the population that offered such recruits: "if tall height would be rightfully considered as representing vigor and health it would naturally follow that short stature be a criterion for feeble constitution and physiological misery; in this case, it is obvious that the proportion of small heights and that of infirmities should go hand in hand" (Soiu 1889, 42), nor statistical data that he presented infirmed this theory. Doctor N. Soiu was in fact the adept of Broca's theory that showed that height was more a characteristic of the "race" than an index of the recruit's physical development. The great number of recruits rejected by the recruiting commissions could not prove anything either since at 21<sup>st</sup> years old "the development of the body is not finished" (Soiu 1889, 61); nothing could soften doctor Soiu.

And in this field the surprises came from where you least expected it: in 1893 nobody other than Doctor Iacob Felix was forced to admit "the weak constitution"



of the average Romanian recruit. Doctor Felix used a composite index: the ratio between height and thoracic perimeter; “a fact admitted in science” showed that if the thoracic perimeter represented half of the height plus two-three centimeters, this ratio was exactly the border between weak and normal constitutions; or, the average recruit in Romania was situated exactly at this limit: “more than 70% of the recruits examined had a thoracic circumference of 80 to 90 centimeters and the body height of 158 to 173 centimeters” (Felix 1894, 42). Moreover, Doctor Iacob Felix found in the recruitment statistics from 1891-1894 the conditions that allowed doctor Donath in 1894 to declare the degeneration of the population in modern states: “while the number of those recorded decreases, the number of those exempted for infirmities increases” (Felix 1894, 42). Did Doctor Felix reach in 1894 the conclusion drawn by Doctor Istrati in 1880? Hard to believe. After this avalanche of bad news, the general director of the Sanitary Service wanted to remind us the fact that “the statistics of recruits do not give an absolute image, but only a relative one of the bodily development and the physical force of the population, because at 21<sup>st</sup> years old the body is not yet fully formed, the growth of some organs does not stop at that age, and not only in Romania, but also in other countries for a great number of people the skeleton develops until 25 years old and sometimes even later” (Felix 1894, 44). Doctor Felix had more confidence in his own intuition than in the facts “admitted in science”. Over just two years in his report on sanitary status of the Kingdom in 1895 (published in 1897), even if the statistics of recruitment didn't seem to indicate an improvement of the recruits' “physical qualities”, Doctor Iacob Felix's vision was more serene: even if in Romania the number of those capable of military service decreased annually, what “civilian and military hygienists in almost all European countries” interpreted as a sure sign of race degeneration, Doctor Felix did not hurry to draw the same conclusions

by distrusting the organization of recruiting lists and medical check-ups. And even though the ratio between the height and thoracic perimeter of the native recruit remained the same as two years before, the doctor's conclusion was: “here, the statistics of recruitment have yet to confirm the fear that the physical force of population is diminishing, that the population is degenerating” (Felix 1897, 16), a conclusion he kept identical in his last report (on 1896-1897) published in 1899 (Felix 1899, 26). At the end of his career, a few years before death, Doctor Iacob Felix was fully confident in the physical qualities of the native population and he was convinced that Romania was on the right track. This was not the case of Doctor Victor Babeş who, in a conference dedicated to the regeneration of the Romanian people (November 1900), was convinced that the sanitary situation of Romania generally and of the peasant population in particular was critical. He was clearly a supporter of the thesis of race degeneration and could not forget, without giving too much importance, “a clue that Romanians' vitality is low” which was exactly the result of recruitments: between 1890-92 and 1897 the proportion of “rejects” by the commissions of recruitment went from 5.6% to 8.3 % (Babeş 1901, 14-15). In the past decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century we saw how the medical body gradually accepted the theory of race degeneration, a degeneration that could be seen better in the statistics of recruitment. We have also seen that not all physicians, some right from the top of medical hierarchy of the Kingdom, believed in this theory. Doctor Iacob Felix was one of them, but he was a special case. Doctor Zaharia Petrescu adhered to it only partially and unconvincingly. Nevertheless, many others, most of them I might say, were fervent supporters of the degeneration of the Romanian race that passed as axiom in the medical discourse of the era.

Apart from the statistics of recruitment we have seen and which didn't offer positive numbers regarding the “physical features





of the population", data on peasants' corporality in the medical discourse appeared when the topics of food and alcoholism came into discussion. The food which was poor in products of animal origin, a real undernourishment, together with a frightening rate of alcoholism, could not but bring disastrous consequences upon the peasant's flesh and blood. And the medical discourse spread to the entire social body. Physicians, landowners, politicians, professors, all asserted the peasant's physical downfall. A.V. Millo, the great landowner in Moldavia, a good connoisseur of the peasant and his needs, as one "that has lived for 30 years, winter and summer, together with him" (Millo 1881, 8), could not but assert the full decrepitude of the rural population due to – so specific to Moldavia – alcoholism: "in order for somebody to have an idea of what awful marks brandy drunkenness leaves upon the peasant, one should attend a recruit's examination. In mountain villages, where 20-30 years ago the most handsome, the tallest and the most vigorous men existed, today you can only find midgets. Of 100 lads, 50 are not good for the military service, some are ill, some are skinny, and even those that are recruited no longer represent that beautiful race of the mountain people" (Millo 1881, 156). The old good times for the Moldavian peasant disappeared long, long ago.

But at some point we would wonder if the whole medical discourse upon the peasant and the rural world presented this image of the fallen peasant corporality globally. In other words: for the entire medical body, was the peasant a physically weak being, as a sick person about to die? As we have already seen the statistics of recruitment, the entire medical body wasn't won over by the topic of native race degeneration, but only most of them.

We must wait for 1905 and Doctor Radu Chernbach's incisive pen, a physician from Huși, to have a real opinion against this trend.

He simply dismissed the entire medical

discourse upon the peasant food from doctor Constantin Caracas until the moment he wrote: "It is a wrong idea that the food of our peasant, understanding that of the diligent peasant – not quite the front-ranks – would be indigestible, bad and tasteless (...). Villagers have different kinds of very nutritional meals and, if they weren't so, how could we account for their exuberant physical health, the power of endurance to work united along with that solid power of the mind?" (Chernbach 1905, 433). A common sense assertion of just a particular situation of our physician? Hard to say; I would choose the first variant, but this was maybe my particular situation. Our physician continued his crusade and agreed, *horribile dictu*, even with the Lent! "A wrong trend in the public opinion has led many to condemn fasting; many who have written and talked about food, «gently» deploring the peasant who fasts, by saying that he degenerated because of fasting. A regrettable confusion has occurred because most of those who deplore the peasant's health have not studied the matter thoroughly" (Chernbach 1905, 434).

But whatever Doctor Chernbach would say in the first years after 1900, in the entire second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the peasant's corporality was seen in extremely negative tones by the medical discourse. The generic peasant of the medical discourse was not a vigorous being forged in the sun and wind while working the land, but, on the contrary, an undernourished being, touched by the plague of alcoholism, tormented by multiple illnesses coming up from the most degrading living conditions possible. The physicians' peasant was a continuously ill person that medical commissions for recruitment more and more often rejected. As mentioned above, this image of rural corporality could not be understood other than as a facet of a more general social fear propagated by the medical discourse: race degeneration. And we must admit: the rural world of physicians did not look like the one of the other categories of intellectuals



of the era. For the latter, the peasant world created a separate discourse that composed an image so different from the one sketched by our physicians. In this discourse, the calendar customs and the one called “the life cycle” were testimonies of our Latin origin, the dirty coat of the peasant transformed into gorgeous holiday clothes that the elite ladies were not shy to wear, and the peasant’s home, the dirty one, became itself a true museum where the aesthetics of the carved pillars of the verandah added up to the even more aesthetic tissues on the *ruda*. The primitive peasant had turned into a native peasant. The paradigm of appearance

changed and together with it the image of the peasant (Mihăilescu 2007, 263-330).

At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, according to the public spirit in Romania, both images had co-existed and competed. For today’s reader it might seem strange to see such contrasting images of the same topic in the same era. The dominant culture passionately manipulated the image of the peasant, and this state of facts was just another facet of the “rural issue” that haunted (in the proper sense of the word) Romanian society in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Babeș, V. 1901. *Regenerarea poporului român* [Regeneration of Romanian People]. București.

Chernbah, Radu. 1905. “Alimentația bolnavilor în spitale” [Food for Patients in Hospitals]. *Spitalul*, XXV: 431-35.

Dănescu, Ioan. 1886. *Încercări de demografie și geografie medicală* [Essays on Demography and Medical Geography]. București.

Felix, I. 1894. *Raport general asupra igienei publice și asupra serviciului sanitar ale Regatului României pe anul 1893* [General Report upon Public Hygiene and the Sanitary Service of Romanian Kingdom in 1893]. București.

Felix, I. 1897. *Raport general asupra igienei publice și asupra serviciului sanitar al Regatului României pe anul 1895* [General Report upon Public Hygiene and the Sanitary Service of Romanian Kingdom in 1895]. București.

Felix, I. 1899. *Raport general asupra igienei publice și asupra serviciului sanitar al Regatului României pe anii 1896 și 1897* [General Report upon Public Hygiene and the Sanitary Service of Romanian Kingdom in 1896 and 1897]. București.

Gugea, Th. 1888. *Contribuțiune la studiul taliei soldatului român* [Contributions to the Study of the Waist of Romanian Soldier]. București.

Istrati, C. I. 1880. *O pagină din istoria contimporană a României din punctul de vedere medical, economic și național* [One Page of Contemporary History of Romania from Medical, Economical, and National Points of View]. București.

Manicea, G.V. 1880. *Considerațiuni asupra mortalității generale în România* [Considerations upon General Mortality in Romania]. București.

Manolescu, N. 1879. “Aparatul de încălzit camerele țărănești în plaiul Buzău (distr. Buzău); cauze de boală” [The Ap-

paratus for Heating the Peasant Rooms in Buzău County]. *Românul*, iunie 12.

Mihăilescu, Vintilă. 2007. *Antropologie. Cinci introduceri* [Anthropology. Five Introductions]. Iași: Polirom.

Millo, A.V. 1881. *Țăranul* [The Peasant]. Fălțiceni.

Obédénare, Georgiade. 1871. *Fièvres des marais (fièvres intermittentes). Petit guide a l’usage des gens du monde pour les localités où il n’y a pas de medecin*. Bucarest: Imprimerie de la Cour (Ouvriers Associés).

Obedenaru, Georgiade. 1873. *Despre friguri. Mic tractat potrivit pe înțelegerea poporului român pentru a servi în localitățile unde nu sunt medici* [Upon Fever. A Small Treaty Fit for Understanding of Romanian People to Serve in Locales Without Physicians]. București.

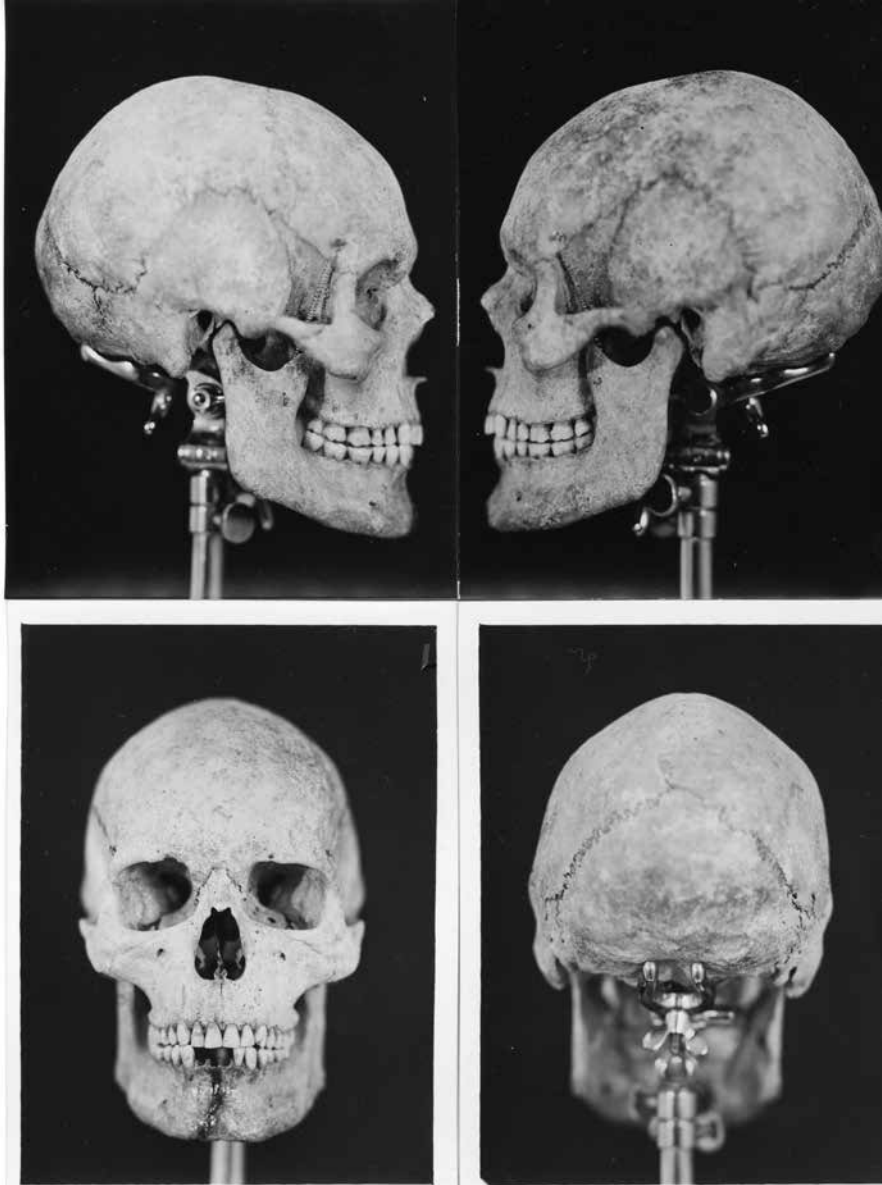
Obedenaru, Georgiade. 1883. *Despre friguri. Mic tractat potrivit pe înțelegerea poporului român pentru a servi în localitățile unde nu sunt medici* [Upon Fever. A Small Treaty Fit for Understanding of Romanian People to Serve in Locales Without Physicians]. București.

Petrescu, Z. 1880. *O încercare de statistica medico-militară a României* [An Essay on Medical-Military Statistics of Romania]. București.

Roth, M. 1880. *Memoriu asupra cauzelor mortalității populației româno-creștine în raport cu cea de rit mosaic cu un proiect pentru ameliorarea relelor existente. Un studiu de igienă comparată* [Report upon the Causes of Mortality of Romanian-Christian Population in Relation to the One of Mosaic Rite with a Project for the Amelioration of the Existent Evils. A Study of Comparative Hygiene]. București.

Soiu, Nicolae. 1889. *Valoarea perimetriei toracice în examenul recrutării* [The Value of Thoracic Perimetry in the Exam for Recruiting]. București.







# MARTOR



---

Title: "Enemy of the World in City and Village. Anti - Venereal Disease Campaigns of Cluj Physicians in Inter - War Provincial Transylvania"

Author: Zsuzsa Bokor

How to cite this article: Bokor, Zsuzsa. 2015. "Enemy of the World in City and Village. Anti - Venereal Disease Campaigns of Cluj Physicians in Inter - War Provincial Transylvania" . *Martor* 20: 81-91.

Published by: *Editura MARTOR* (MARTOR Publishing House), *Muzeul Țăranului Român* (The Museum of the Romanian Peasant)

URL: <http://martor.muzeultaranuluiroman.ro/archive/768-2/>

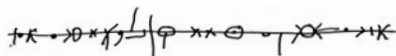
---

*Martor* (The Museum of the Romanian Peasant Anthropology Review) is a peer-reviewed academic journal established in 1996, with a focus on cultural and visual anthropology, ethnology, museum studies and the dialogue among these disciplines. *Martor* review is published by the Museum of the Romanian Peasant. Its aim is to provide, as widely as possible, a rich content at the highest academic and editorial standards for scientific, educational and (in)formational goals. Any use aside from these purposes and without mentioning the source of the article(s) is prohibited and will be considered an infringement of copyright.

*Martor* (Revue d'Anthropologie du Musée du Paysan Roumain) est un journal académique en système *peer-review* fondé en 1996, qui se concentre sur l'anthropologie visuelle et culturelle, l'ethnologie, la muséologie et sur le dialogue entre ces disciplines. La revue *Martor* est publiée par le Musée du Paysan Roumain. Son aspiration est de généraliser l'accès vers un riche contenu au plus haut niveau du point de vue académique et éditorial pour des objectifs scientifiques, éducatifs et informationnels. Toute utilisation au-delà de ces buts et sans mentionner la source des articles est interdite et sera considérée une violation des droits de l'auteur.

*Martor* is indexed by EBSCO and CEEOL.

# Enemy of the World in City and Village. Anti-Venereal Disease Campaigns of Cluj Physicians in Inter-War Provincial Transylvania



**Zsuzsa Bokor**

Researcher at the Romanian Institute for Research on National Minorities, Cluj-Napoca, Romania

## ABSTRACT

The paper investigates how sexuality becomes outstanding and a medical object in inter-war Transylvania. This issue can be discussed via one of the most typical ailments of the age: venereal diseases. This process is presented on the basis of a series of major medical actions of village surveys and rescues, and also by reviewing the film *A világrém / Grozăviile lumii* (*Enemy of the World*), screened all over Transylvania in the 1920s.

## KEYWORDS

venereal diseases, medical campaign



## Anti-Venereal Institutions in the Interwar Period

After World War I, a newly formed bio-power provided security over the nation's health in Greater Romania. During this period, the population and its collective body became the subject of a whole range of reforms. The body and human sexuality were directly attached to fertility in an attempt to control women's sexuality, to mobilize it for the sake of the eugenic ideal, and "to increase the rate of healthy births" (Bucur 2007, 338). The change of institutional ownership after 1919 was, on the one hand, an opposition to the old Austro-Hungarian regime; on the other hand, it was a self-legitimizing action of the growing Romanian medical community. Physicians had to legitimate their existence toward the central authority in Bucharest through ambitious health-assessment programmes, e.g. anti-venereal campaigns.

The leader of the institutionalisation

of health and the promoter of eugenics in Transylvania after WWI was Iuliu Moldovan (1882–1966), a medical professor in Cluj (on eugenics in interwar Romania, see Turda 2007, Bucur 2005). According to Moldovan, Romanian eugenics was more focused on the genetic factors that descended from parents rather than on qualities influenced by the physical or social environment. In the galtonian eugenics vision, the objective was the protection of the nation from venereal diseases "and other intoxications" (Moldovan 1927, 3-4).

In February 1919, the Department of Social Work of the Governing Council of Transylvania established a clinical outpatient network (*Ambulator policlinic*) in Transylvania to deal with diseases that threatened the health of the population (sexually transmitted diseases, tuberculosis etc.) and social problems (such as infant mortality and alcoholism)<sup>1</sup>. Hospitalization became compulsory in order to control patients with venereal diseases (VD); the term used was *tratament forțat* – forced treatment. That's why the other important institution of the era was the Women's

1) *Instrucțiuni pentru ambulatoriile policlinice. Ordinul nr. 10992/1922 Inspectoratul General Sanitar (Instructions for clinical outpatient units. Order no. 10992/1922, General Sanitary Inspectorate).*

Hospital of Cluj, established in April 1919, and specializing in the treatment of VD. While the Hospital's Outpatient Unit offered temporary and transitional treatments, the more serious cases were treated in the Hospital itself (on the history of medical institutionalization, see Bokor 2015).

From 1923, household servants began to be regularly examined. The aim was to obtain a real indication of the level of infections among this social group – said to be practicing “prostitution in secret” – and to prevent “infectious outbreaks” by compulsory treatment (Stanca 1925, 62). The introduction of this procedure resulted in an increasing number of treatments and examinations of female patients: 4200 in 1920, 9862 in 1921, 12760 in 1922 and 9720 in 1923.

According to the data of the Women's Hospital from the first post-war years, the spread of venereal disease did not have the same ratio in the Apuseni mountain villages and in the rural area of Cluj (see Stanca 1925); the percentage of people infected with syphilis was higher in mountain villages, like Poiana Ampoiului and Trâmpoiele, than in Aiton, Stolna etc.

Other Romanian data shows that the number of investigations and the number of investigated patients was greater in the largest cities of the country (for instance, in Iași, in 1926, the number of investigations was 22 228; in 1928 it increased almost to 40

000) or in towns where Moldovan's complex outpatient unit system worked (see Voina 1930). The proportions of patients varied; a large number of venereal diseases was found in the mountain villages, in places often visited by strangers (in ports or resort towns) and on war fronts, but the ratio was usually around 1-10%.



### Venereal Diseases in Villages. Rural Research and Education

There were various measures to question the legitimacy of peasant healing and replace it with a powerful – evidently more efficient and forceful – medical practice, and a discourse that produced legitimate *knowledge* in this context. Physicians tried to approach individuals with their health care programmes and individual treatments and interrogations. At the turn of the century, improving the economic, social and, in addition to this, the health conditions of the peasantry was a priority: “Let us announce to the people all the time, in church and at school, that they can only keep and recover their endangered health condition by way of hygiene and this is the only way we can have healthy generations and be satisfied that, to no matter to how little extent, we have contributed to the improvement of the situation...” (Dr. I. Bădianu: *Traiul lung*. (*The long life*) Familia nr. 20. 1894, quoted in: Ábrahám 2004, 200–201).

In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as Constantin Bărbulescu argues, the Romanian elite built a double image of the rural world. On the one hand, the peasant was “the foundation of nationality”, incorporating all national and moral virtues, which gave him a primordial national identity role. But, on the other hand, the pressure for modernization was increasing with the birth of the modern national state, thus transforming the peasant into the “other”: he was the savage who, obviously,

Locality	Percentage of venereal diseases
Poiana Ampoiului	15%
Trâmpoiele	14%
Baica	11,8%
Apahida	6,8%
Feleacu	8%
Lona de Sus	6,7%
Borsa	6%
Tăuți	3,5%
Stolna	3,2%
Aiton	3,8%



needed to be civilized (Bărbulescu 2005, 211).

Among the main topics in this era we find questions on hygiene (hygiene of clothing and personal hygiene); household hygiene; food and alcoholism; epidemic diseases specific to the rural population (Bărbulescu 2015, 77). The negative image, argues Bărbulescu, can be read as the voice of the political elite who want to draw attention to the urgency of social reforms. The *bonnes moeurs* Ionela Băluță speaks about reflect a huge cultural difference between the peasants' culture and that of the physicians. Since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the desire to control entire aspects of the peasants' life was the most important factor in the medical hygiene discourse and this discourse became more and more legitimized (Băluță 2002, 2005).



### The Physician as the Nation's Warrior

After WWI, unlike at the turn of the century, the insistence on hygiene and health targeted much less the *embourgeoisement* of the peasantry: the image of the healthy peasant, the villager who had to be lifted from his problematic situation caused by the previous system, yet also kept in his peasant (ancestral) nature, was operated as a sort of acceptable pattern contrasted to that of the middle-class and the townspeople; the representatives of medicine themselves undertook a pioneering role in this process.

With the help of their own healers (called "charlatans" in medical discourse) and using healing techniques (called "superstitions" and "beliefs"), peasants dealt in their own way with venereal diseases. The most widespread method in provincial Transylvania of curing venereal diseases was mercury steam bath treatments; it had been part of an earlier, "official" medical praxis in the cure of syphilis that later proved inefficient, and,

according to the latest results, was even thought to be seriously harmful to one's health – a piece of information that failed to make its way to the population. The use of mercury ointment was less dangerous than the inhaled variant, and it even generated some results, but it was "dangerous to leave it to empirical popular healers" (Voina 1930, 33). In other words, any kind of peasant's healing technique "was an attack to both individual and community health"; therefore, these attempts were proclaimed as "one of the main means of disseminating sexually transmitted diseases" (Voina 1930, 28). Whoever still tried to heal their illness with these practices was, thus, considered to be in violation of the ambitions of legitimate medicine and pharmaceuticals. The midwife, the main figure of peasant medicine, was also a subject of mockery. Not accidentally, of course, since the midwife, standing at the crossline of legitimate and illegitimate medicine, stood above the world of women and men; nothing of sexual nature could be kept secret from her, as her field of activity coincided with that of physicians and priests: she cured women, and was well aware of the family's sexual problems.

Not long after WWI, in 1921, equipped with microscopes, medical equipment and medicines, Dominic Stanca, the head of the Women's Hospital and Clinical Outpatient's Unit of Cluj and two employees of the hospital, psychologist Zoltán Bálint and laboratory technician Antal George, started out towards the Apuseni Mountains, around the settlement of Zlatna in Alba County, to survey the health condition of the Romanian peasant population of the area<sup>2</sup>. As far back as 1808, the Gubernium of Transylvania placed temporary hospitals (barracks) around Zlatna to isolate the infected. After WWI, similar measures seemed justified again, and the territory was increasingly taken into consideration.

In subsequent year, physicians from Cluj repeatedly visited the Romanian villages (Petru Vlad, Virgil Cioban and Dominic



2) Organizarea primei anchete sanitare rurale în Ardeal. (The organization of the first rural sanitary survey in Transylvania), Cluj State Archives, Dominic Stanca Funds (667), inv. no. 248, folder 9.

Stanca). The following is known about their methods: they created family files which included the health data and medical reports of the examinees. They filled out 123 family files and examined 493 persons, trying to accurately list all their illnesses or predispositions to illnesses. The appendix completing the family files (a questionnaire) was meant to depict a detailed image of the village from its geographical location to the description of the inhabitants' dances and customs. The questionnaire, consisting of over 50 questions, placed the physician almost in the position of an ethnographer; mere data recording could not have been enough to complete it, so short interviews must have also been taken. Unfortunately, the answers have not been preserved, but the questionnaire in itself stands as clear indication of the intent of the research: to map the rural society in its entirety. The creators of the questionnaire were equally interested in the geographical position of the village, the condition of wells, springs and rivers, the condition of the houses, migration tendencies, the villagers' intellectual level and sexual habits and the number of people suffering from venereal diseases.

As required by the instructions of the Sanitary Directorate of Cluj County, between 1921 and 1926, Dominic Stanca and the Women's Hospital had to organize regular informative campaigns regarding "social diseases." These campaigns were usually connected with various kinds of surveys. Due to the nature of the hospital, these surveys focused mainly on the problem of sexually transmitted diseases, especially syphilis, but they also tried to isolate and cure other kinds of social diseases deemed untreated or uncured. The informative campaigns contained lectures, film screenings (for example, the film *Világrém / Grozâviile lumii / Enemy of the World* was also screened at this time throughout the country), counselling for hygiene and sexual life, regular examinations and other actions like



Fig. 1

vaccination, haircutting, or deparasitation. On a contemporary photograph (see fig. 1), the team of physicians can be seen cutting the hair of a peasant. The photograph shows the physician in a white gown and some townspeople dressed in urban wear, standing near the police too, surrounding the kneeling victim as if he were a trophy<sup>3</sup>.

In 1928<sup>4</sup>, 51 similar reports were drafted on villages in Cluj County but these were much more detailed (for instance, these also contained details such as the quantity of alcohol consumed at the pub and the type of alcoholic beverage), the questions were even more systematic and the questionnaire was clearer. The questionnaires were probably filled out by local or district physicians, and were processed in Cluj. A few years later, another physician from Cluj, Aurel Voina, assessed this movement – of course, as a gynaecologist and venereologist, referring to the syphilis, the social disease he considered most important – as follows: "the surveys had very many interesting results, the detection of syphilis-infected regions resulted in measures to eliminate the sources of syphilis" (Voina 1931, 68).

This process of informing, controlling, and, at the same time, treating medical movement became regular in the 1930s. The propaganda seemed very successful, as "patients walked even tens of kilometres to receive the vaccine, even if they suffered from other illnesses, because they believed in Neosalvarsan as in some supernatural force" (Bălaşiu 1933, 5).

Information on the actions of the medical

3) Ministerul Sănătății și Asistenței Sociale: *Probleme și realizări*. Vol. II. Monitorul Oficial și Imprimeriile Statului. Imprimeria Națională, București, 1939 (Ministry of Health and Social Security: *Issues and Achievements*. Vol. II. Official Gazette and State Printing Plant, Bucharest, 1939).

4) Rapoarte sanitare anuale. (Annual Sanitary Reports), Cluj State Archives, Sanitary Service Funds (3), inv. 192, folder 1/1928.

propaganda between 1931 and 1935 can be obtained from the protocols of the Anti-Syphilis and Venereal Diseases Council (April 1935)<sup>5</sup>. In addition to thoroughly recording all the patients and making these records centrally accessible, the physicians also made regular informative presentations, and, on occasion, they also used the possibilities offered by church services.

Iuliu Moldovan and his colleague, Petre Râmneanțu, wrote about the national health campaign started by the Ministry of Health, which took place between August and September 1938:

“One of the main objectives of the health offensive was the creation of an accurate and comprehensive registration of the population’s health condition. The main tendency was, therefore, the medical examination of the entire population, from the youngest to the oldest” (Moldovan–Râmneanțu 1939, 93).

During these two months, 556 206 individuals were examined, 17 842 sent to laboratory tests, and 688 to X-rays in the territory under the authority of the Public Health Office of Cluj County (in Cluj, Sibiu and Timiș Counties). Thus, 30.6% of the entire population of the abovementioned area was examined<sup>6</sup>. The aim of these surveys was not only to examine and improve the health of the individual, but also to map out the complete social network of the community: it was not only the medical image of the individual or the family that needed to be drawn, but, ideally, the entire network of connections.

The Medical and Bio-Political Department of ASTRA (a Romanian right-wing cultural organization from Transylvania) also played an important role in informing the masses and in popularizing the principles of eugenics and national biology. Its physicians lectured in Transylvanian settlements, and kept contact with local intellectuals such as priests and school teachers, to whom they made available the medical brochures of the

ASTRA physicians.

Although medical problems had probably been real issues among the Hungarian population as well, Hungarian physicians never paid as much attention to them as the Romanian ones. Despite the fact that this research was considered from its very beginning a national enterprise, interestingly enough, the Hungarian press repeatedly praised the initiative of Moldovan and his colleague:

“We have repeatedly mentioned the major action of the People’s Welfare State Secretariat to stop harmful popular diseases. It is the merit of university professor Moldovan, First Secretary of State of the People’s Welfare Department, that he offered cheap and fast medical assistance by founding clinical outpatients units and hospitals in the almost extinct area in several neglected parts of Transylvania where syphilis and tuberculosis have decimated the poor and unschooled population.” (Ellenzék 1922, 14<sup>th</sup> of July, No. 131)

The newspaper article entitled *Vérbaj öli meg a mőcok falvainak népét* [Syphilis Kills the Population of Romanian Villages] published on 30<sup>th</sup> of July 1929 in the local newspaper, *Kolozsvári friss újság*, also translates the official, Romanian point of view to the Hungarian readers: “According to statistical data, these mountain villages are infected all over with the poison of syphilis.”

As we can see, many social strata were taken under medical supervision in the interwar period. In the 1920s, all prostitutes were forced to attend medical examinations, and, in case of illness, they spent weeks in hospital. Physicians examined servants once a week, they introduced the regular medical examination of factory workers, school children and students, peasants living in the countryside; the new cases of illness were communicated to the authorities by village physicians and midwives; in one word, everything and everybody was mobilized.

The medicalization of village peasants

5) Comisia de Studii pentru Sifilis (Commission for Syphilis Studies), Central Historical State Archives of Bucharest, Ministry of Labor Funds, Folder no. 500/1935.

6) In Cluj County 36 such rescue teams were at work in this period (Moldovan–Râmneanțu 1939, 93).



was just as intense as that of townspeople – of course, with the use of other methods and means. The controlled body, the attempt to keep away venereal diseases and the discourse around it defined the nature of sexuality and placed the control of marital relations on a different level, that of medical knowledge, which also explained extra-marital relations. The *knowledge* produced by this discourse created new shapes of social inequities: the superior individual was clean, healthy, Romanian by nationality, and last, but not least: a man.



## Enemy of the World – a Film on Family, Sexuality, Syphilis

### *Circumstances of Creation*

At the initiative of the Outpatients Unit and the Women's Hospital, the film *Enemy of the World* was screened all over Transylvania between November 1921 and May 1922. This silent film was commissioned by the Sanitary Chief Inspectorate with the purpose of educating the population on certain health issues. The film was shot in November-December 1920 and was directed by Jenő Janovics, a pioneer of Transylvanian cinema, in his own film studio, called "Transylvania." The cast included professional actors (Baróti Erzsi, Poór Lili, Fekete Mihály, Szakács Andor), but general practitioners, peasants, and even patients of the hospital played in it. The scientific advisor was the world-renowned medical professor Constantin Levaditi, who returned to Cluj after WWI. The script was written by Levaditi together with Jenő Gyulai, a contemporary script writer from Cluj. Dominic Stanca also helped during the shooting; some of the "medical" locations were the Women's Hospital, the dissection room of the city clinic, and the cells of the psychiatric hospital. The film was truly unique in the history of Transylvanian

film production. Levaditi, who had gained fame in Paris as well, was one of the most important Romanian physicians of his age as one of the founders of virology, but, even more importantly, he introduced bismuth in the treatment of syphilis, which made Wassermann tests easier. It may not have been accidental that the commissioner of the film entrusted such people to write the script.

Projections of the film took place in every county and settlement of Transylvania, in a temporal sequence established by the authorities. It was the local physicians' task to rent the cinemas and locations. Marketing was considered very important for the projections: the middle-class of the settlements was invited to the first projection; they had to pay an entrance fee, but they could sit in the first rows. The masses – soldiers, peasants, school children – could watch the film for free. The reaction of the press also had to be arranged in order to ensure widespread publicity. The audience could listen to a short medical presentation on the transmission of sexual diseases before the projections (in the language of the community, but usually in Romanian and Hungarian). Depending on the ethnic composition of the audience, the films were subtitled in Romanian, Hungarian and German<sup>7</sup>.

Not much is known about the response of the audience to the film; there was probably no survey made on it, but, according to the contemporary press and medical literature, there were full house projections and the physicians claimed that this method of popular education seemed to be the most efficient of all<sup>8</sup>. The reaction of the press to the film came soon. According to the weekly newspaper *Tükör* (*Mirror*), the opening lecture at the Cluj projection was held by Levaditi himself. In his speech – among other things – he cautioned the audience for temperance. The article and the narrations indicate that the discourse emphasized the dire consequences of prostitution, while medical information on venereal diseases was pushed to the background. The objective

7) Instructions for the doctors regarding the film projection, the organization and the presentations are found in circular letters of the Propaganda Service, No. 22044/22 Sept. 1921 and 22653/23 Sept. 1921. Copies of these are published in *Sănătatea publică* (*Public Health*) 1921. 9. The circular letters were signed by Lucian Bolcaș, Head of the Service, and Iuliu Moldovan, then General Inspector.

8) Dr. Cucu's brief report on Arad projection in *Sănătatea publică* 1922. 3. p. 13.

was thus “to stop, as fast and as radically as possible, prostitution and the syphilis which, as a frightening ‘Enemy of the world’, wants to penetrate the flesh and blood of mankind with its murderous tentacles”, said Levaditi at the premiere. The newspaper (probably rendering the thoughts of the scriptwriter himself) expands on the metaphor in the title, illustrating how the dimensions of venereal diseases and prostitution are joined together in the discourse of the age.

### **The Story**

The structure of the almost 45 minute-long film is made up of a frame narrative and a dream story inserted therein. The frame narrative presents the family of Pierre Sylvain, the protagonist. His wife, Doria, the world famous singer of the theatre, is a modern woman, who is an exemplary mother of two, and also has a brilliant career. She is practically the supporter of the family, because her husband is unemployed. She is the perfect image of a respectable, modern, money-earning woman. Because of her artistic talent, she is greatly admired in the city. However, the second scene of the film already reveals that the husband has an affair with Shiva, the actress, who also works in the theatre<sup>9</sup>. In this same scene we are also introduced to Georges Pradel, the physician, a friend of the family, and also Shiva’s doctor, because she has been infected with syphilis. The physician’s reproving speech informs the audience that Shiva has been leading a promiscuous sexual life. That Shiva is a prostitute is only apparent from the context, and the elements that are traditionally attached to a prostitute: her strong makeup and deep cleavage suggest that she is not a “respectable woman.” The doctor asks the woman to stop her affair with Sylvain and get treatment: “I have told you, syphilis is no shame... and it can be cured.”<sup>10</sup> Shiva represents the secret prostitute, the “Enemy” of the authorities, who was treated also in secret in case she was willing to cooperate with the doctor (this is

what Pradel’s sentence referred to, when he threatened Shiva to reveal her secret unless she accepted medical treatment and broke up with the man).

The doctor’s office is a key location in the film. This is where the doctor shows Shiva the result of the Wassermann test and the difference between her blood and pure, non-infected blood: hers is lighter in colour than that of a healthy person (see fig 2).

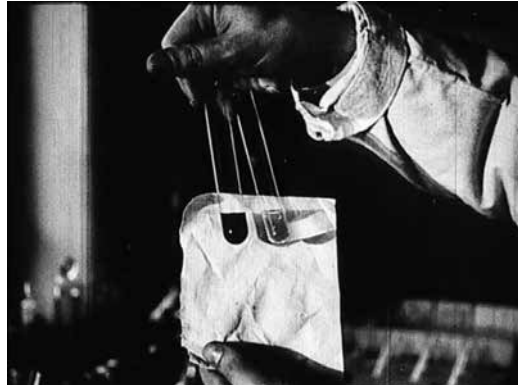


Fig. 2

This image – as the doctor points to the infected blood and the difference between the infected and healthy blood – could be the metaphor of the film, but also an emblematic message of the entire anti-venereal action. This image is accompanied by another, also emblematic, message: “Syphilis never cures itself, even if you feel very well... There is only one effective medication: regular and accurate medical treatment... Come tomorrow to continue the injections”, the doctor tells Shiva.

Also here, in the doctor’s office, on the table covered with medical instruments, rests the microscope which, in the next scene, displays the physician’s new role: the investigation, the exploration of unflinching, revealed facts. Sylvain shows the doctor the lesions in his mouth. The symptom itself (the lesion) raises the doctor’s suspicion, the sign of shock shows on his face as he turns towards the camera: he predicted this was going to happen – this is the core message he wants to give the audience. Then he draws blood from the man and places it under the microscope (see fig. 3).

9) The Romanian casting referred to her as dancer, but the Hungarian cast listed Erzsébet Baróti as an actress.

10) The messages of key importance for medical propaganda were entrusted neither to the actor’s interpretation, nor to the audience’s ability to make associations. They were conveyed as captions.



Fig. 3

11) Similar images of the *spirochaeta pallida*, the bacterium of the syphilis, were projected in France as well in 1909 with the title *Spirochaeta pallida* (a film of Dr. Jean Comandon, see Lefebvre 1995) and this is also the subject of the Brazilian director Paulino Botelho's film as well, entitled *606 contra o Espirocheta Palido* (1910).

The test confirms Pradel's suspicion. The documentary-like, real image of the *spirochaeta pallida* is shown not only to

Sylvain, but to the viewer as well, in a "thousandfold magnification" and even twice: once through the doctor's eyes and once through the patient's<sup>11</sup>. The image always shows the same thing: the presence of small animals moving in the blood (see fig. 4). The diagnosis is, therefore, not a supposition, but a fact through representation: the reality of the body, invisible for the open eye or everyday methods, but visible solely by medical means. However, the cause of reality, of the illness can not only be displayed, but also cured. Sylvain mustn't maintain contact with his family unless he has a wish for fatality, and he must consult with his doctor on a regular basis.

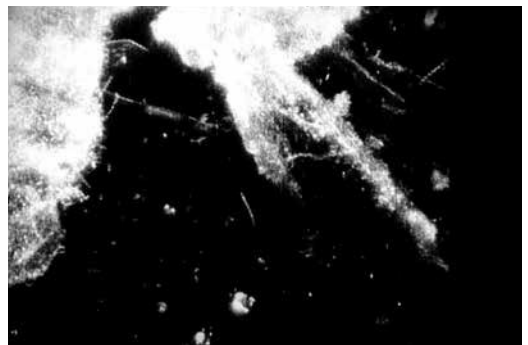
"You must do it!... Look what awaits you if you do not. Come ... Let me introduce you to the syphilis." This sentence is not only meant for Sylvain, but for all viewers, as the tension is further increased by the documentary-like images. Sequences of real images were cut into the film to make the damage caused by syphilis even more illustrative. Patients appear in front of the camera (interestingly, members of a different social class: peasants, as if it would suggest a secondary, hidden meaning that syphilis stems from the city, but it can also infect unfortunate, uneducated village people as well). We are shown an old man with lesions on his face, a little boy without a nose, a child with a certain disability. We return to the story, but another digression appears, a story within the story: a blind soldier remembers how he got infected and how he wanted to be cured without medical

help. The story is important on various levels because the man was infected by a prostitute in a brothel. The film shows an episode of this story: we see a scantily dressed woman drinking alcohol, smoking cigarettes and laughing uproariously, who throws herself on the new victim (at the time, popular and often used stereotypes to represent the prostitute). This is a new figure of the syphilis-infected woman. The ill man turns for help to a "female healer", which also proves fatal as the medicine received from the woman blinds the man. "I should have gone to the hospital", he says. The message for the viewer is that nothing can compete with medical knowledge and, what is more, that is the only legitimate kind of knowledge about the body.

The tension increases with the – this time not so detailed – presentation of the dissection room and the cells of the insane.

As Sylvain sees all this, he becomes desperate and feels remorse. Having arrived home and being tormented by fatigue and what he had seen, he falls asleep. Then we see his dream, but it is only revealed at the very end that it is a dream. The story continues without any apparent disruption: Sylvain disobeys the doctor and, thus, a whole series of tragedies starts. Doria, the wife, goes blind, then crazy, and dies; the family grows very poor, Sylvain starts drinking, and, when the viewers have experienced even the tragedy of his own death, the doctor appears and wakes Sylvain up to inform him: Shiva is dead, she has committed suicide. The viewer is relieved

Fig. 4



as this awakening suggests that there is still hope for a different ending to the story. Nobody is scandalized by Shiva's death since the daily press often wrote about prostitutes' suicide attempts. But there is more to it: the death of the woman represents the symbolic victory over prostitution – or over a deviant woman –, the victory of the family, work and health. The frame story follows the medical script: the ill protagonist confesses to his wife and goes to work in America. "To become a better person", he says. His wife says goodbye with forgiveness and affection. The story ends, however, in an interesting manner: it presents Sylvain as a worker and the viewers can understand that he found himself, he found what he was looking for: a good job.

### **A Medical Film**

The scientific film was already an important means of medical knowledge in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and this passion for research, especially on the movement and the functions of the human body, was one of the primary roles of the film and the beginning of film production. In Romania, Gheorghe Marinescu, who studied under Charcot in the Salpêtrière, produced medical research films since 1898, in which he filmed patients with coordination and limb problems (his first and most famous film is *Tulburările mersului în hemiplegiile organice / Walking Disorders in Organic Hemiplegia*, made in 1898).

The filmic representation of illnesses and the problem of venereal diseases within it was not a new idea in the medical sphere, although the film was not a means of medical knowledge in the first place, but an instrument of influence, a more or less realistic representation. Medical organizations were aware of the influential effect of the film ever since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; therefore, this means was often applied for various reasons (educational, fundraising etc.). In the first two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in

America, over 1300 films were produced about physicians, health and medicine in general (Reagan *et alii* 2007, 5). There were such initiatives in Europe as well. In France – where Levaditi had returned from not long before and had probably brought along medical popularizing practices – the anti-venereal-diseases propaganda film entitled *On doit le dire* [It must be said] was created in 1918, in the Pathé studios (Lefebvre 1995). It was a short animation film, which grasped the subject in motifs similar to those applied by Janovics and his colleagues.

The repetition of images, the insertion of documentary into melodrama or the melodramatic element into the documentary was characteristic of medical instruction films (*cf.* Aubert *et alii* 2004, 32). The aim was to raise awareness by repeated and astounding formulas. They referred to propagandistic intentions and economic and political implications, while maintaining a logical, explicit and clear discourse (Aubert *et alii* 2004, 35).

Except for the few European and American films produced during the war, the *Enemy of the World* had few preliminaries in similar feature films in film history. This can probably be accounted for by the fact that Janovics's ambition and professionalism as a director and his realistic conception of film met at this very point with the physicians' well-organized propaganda.

This film represents an icon in this context, as it shows the process by which the physician became the principal and, apparently, the most legitimate public speaker of the age. This was a complex legitimating process – after the war – when physicians, now in the position of decision-makers, appeared as guards, saviours, healers of the nation and began a major process of institutionalization, complex research, and information and treatment of huge masses.



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ábrahám Barna. 2004. *Az erdélyi románság polgárosodása a 19. század második felében*. Csíkszereda: Pro-Print.
- Aubert, Michelle; Partice Delavie; Pierrette Lemoigne; Robert Poupard. 2004. "Les collections des films pédagogiques et scientifiques des premiers temps (1910–1955)." In *Cinéma pédagogique et scientifique: à la redécouverte des archives*, eds. Béatrice de Pastre-Robert; Monique Dubost; Françoise Massit-Folléa; Michelle Aubert, 23–38. Lyon: ENS Editions.
- Bălașiu, Teodor. 1933. *Studiu statistic asupra infecțiunii sifilitice în județul Maramureș pe anul 1931–1932. Teză pentru doctorat în medicină și chirurgie prezentată și susținută în ziua de 30 iunie 1933*. Cluj: Tipografia Cartea Românească.
- Băluță, Ionela. 2002. "The Construction of the Feminine Sexual Identity through. The Hygiene Treatises: The Second Half of the 19th Century Romania." In *Romanian Philosophical Studies IV*. 267–282.
- Băluță, Ionela. 2005. "Surveiller et punir: les médecins et la réglementation de la prostitution dans la seconde moitié du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle roumain." In *Bonnes et mauvaises mœurs dans la société roumaine d'hier et d'aujourd'hui*, coord. Ionela Băluță; Constanța Vintilă-Ghițulescu, 173–211. Bucarest: New European College.
- Bărbulescu, Constantin. 2005. *Imaginarul corpului uman. Între cultura țărănească și cultura savantă (secolele XIX-XX)*. București: Editura Paideia.
- Bărbulescu, Constantin. 2015. *România medicilor. Medici, țărani și igiena rurală în România de la 1860 la 1910*. București: Humanitas.
- Bokor Zsuzsa. 2013. *Testtörténetek. A nemzet és a nemi betegségek medikalizálása a két világháború közötti Kolozsváron*. Cluj: Editura Institutului pentru Studiarea Problemelor Minorităților Naționale.
- Bokor Zsuzsa. 2015. "Girls, Doctors and Institutions. Eugenics and Medical Institutionalisation in Interwar Cluj." *Revisita de Antropologie Urbană* (Eugenic Sub-Cultures and the City, Guest Editor: Marius Turda) 3, 5. 21–26.
- Bucur, Maria. 2005. *Eugenie și modernizare în România interbelică*. Iași: Polirom.
- Lefebvre, Thierry. 1995. "Représentations cinématographiques de la syphilis entre les deux guerres: séropositivité, traitement et charlatanisme." In *Revue d'histoire de la pharmacie* (XLII) 306. 267–278.
- Ministerul Sănătății și Asistenței Sociale. 1939. *Probleme și realizări*. Vol. II. București: Monitorul Oficial și Imprimeriile Statului. Imprimeria Națională.
- Moldovan, Iuliu. 1927. "Eugenia – Igiena națiunii." In *Buletin eugenic și biopolitic*. (I) 1. 3–4.
- Moldovan, Iuliu and Petre Râmneanțu. 1939. "Dare de seamă asupra activității Institutului de Igienă și Sănătate Publică din Cluj în Campania Sanitară din August–Septembrie 1938 și asupra rezultatelor obținute în raza sa de acțiune." In *Probleme și realizări*, 91–109. București: Ministerul Sănătății și Asistenței Sociale: Monitorul Oficial și Imprimeriile Statului. Imprimeria Națională.
- Reagan, Leslie J.; Nancy Tomes; Paula A. Treichler. 2007. "Introduction: Medicine, Health, and Bodies in American Film and Television." In *Medicine's moving pictures: medicine, health, and bodies in American film and television*, ed. Leslie J. Reagan et alii, 1–16. Rochester: University of Rochester Press.
- Stanca, Dominic. 1925. "Spitalul de femei și ambulatorul policlinic din Cluj în cei cinci ani de funcțiune (1919–1923)." *Clujul Medical* (V) 3–4. 60–65.
- Turda, Marius. 2007. "The Nation as Object. Race, Blood and Biopolitics in interwar Romania." *Slavic Review* 66. n. 3. 413–441.
- Voina, Aurel. 1930. *Prostituția și boalele venerice în România*. București.
- Voina, Aurel. 1931. *Combaterea boalelor venerice*. București.



157



92.



92.



146.



# MARTOR



---

Title: "Chronic Isolation: Experiencing a Cured Disease at the Leprosarium of Tichilești"

Author: Andrei Mihail

How to cite this article: Mihail, Andrei. 2015. "Chronic Isolation: Experiencing a Cured Disease at the Leprosarium of Tichilești". *Martor* 20: 93-106.

Published by: *Editura MARTOR* (MARTOR Publishing House), *Muzeul Țăranului Român* (The Museum of the Romanian Peasant)

URL: <http://martor.muzeultaranuluiroman.ro/archive/768-2/>

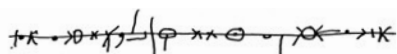
---

*Martor* (The Museum of the Romanian Peasant Anthropology Review) is a peer-reviewed academic journal established in 1996, with a focus on cultural and visual anthropology, ethnology, museum studies and the dialogue among these disciplines. *Martor* review is published by the Museum of the Romanian Peasant. Its aim is to provide, as widely as possible, a rich content at the highest academic and editorial standards for scientific, educational and (in)formational goals. Any use aside from these purposes and without mentioning the source of the article(s) is prohibited and will be considered an infringement of copyright.

*Martor* (Revue d'Anthropologie du Musée du Paysan Roumain) est un journal académique en système *peer-review* fondé en 1996, qui se concentre sur l'anthropologie visuelle et culturelle, l'ethnologie, la muséologie et sur le dialogue entre ces disciplines. La revue *Martor* est publiée par le Musée du Paysan Roumain. Son aspiration est de généraliser l'accès vers un riche contenu au plus haut niveau du point de vue académique et éditorial pour des objectifs scientifiques, éducatifs et informationnels. Toute utilisation au-delà de ces buts et sans mentionner la source des articles est interdite et sera considérée une violation des droits de l'auteur.

*Martor* is indexed by EBSCO and CEEOL.

# Chronic Isolation: Experiencing a Cured Disease at the Leprosarium of Tichilești



**Andrei Mihail**

*Ph.D. candidate in Anthropology at the National School of Political Studies and Public Administration*

## ABSTRACT

The inhabitants of the Tichilești leprosarium experienced medical isolation caused by a medically cured body; once an individual was diagnosed with leprosy, he would be confined for his whole life inside this institution. Thus, former leprosy sufferers had to cope with the medicalization of their daily life while making sense of a socially incurable illness that disrupted their regular life-trajectories.

## KEYWORDS

leprosy, experience, institutionalization

The leprosarium of Tichilești is located one kilometer away from the road connecting Tulcea to Brăila and Galați. The institution belongs to the administrative area of the city of Isaccea, although it is closer to Revărsarea village. To access Tichilești, you must follow a narrow road full of potholes which, according to those who live<sup>1</sup> there, has not been repaired for nearly 30 years. This road leads to the gate of the leprosarium, a place that does not look like a hospital, but rather more like a sanatorium. The institution is located at the bottom of a horseshoe-shaped valley. The most impressive buildings are located near the gate of the institution. On the left, beyond the fence, opposite a cultivated ground area, you can see a three-floor building comprising a church. On the right, there is a small house which accommodates the manager of the hospital, Răsvan Vasiliu MD, who spends most of the week here. With his help I gained access to the leprosarium, as he is trying to *open the institution a little bit, to let the world see that leprosy is not that frightful and fight the isolation a little bit*, as he puts it. The manager is one of the last European dermatologists specialized in leprosy. He is a

very active man in his mid-50s, interested in popularizing the story of Romania's lepers, in order to make others aware of the realities of this disease. Journalists, photographers or documentarists who exposed frames of the daily life of this institution preceded my visit. This is how I managed to visit the leprosarium twice, during the spring of 2013, in order to observe the daily activities of staff, inhabitants or visitors and discuss with all of them without any formal restrictions. In front of the manager's house the path splits into two, one ramp allowing access to a small building hosting the main-

1) As I will show, individuals living in the leprosarium were cured of leprosy. This is why I call them "inhabitants" of the institution.

Fig. 1. The access road for the Tichilești hospital



tenance personnel, and another one to the administrative offices. From this angle, the entire hospital resembles a *panopticon*, as the administrative staff have a good view of all the sectors. This is also the only area where you can get a cell-phone signal.

2) Due to anonymity reasons, all the names presented in this paper are fictitious. As leprosy is a highly stigmatizing disease, I preferred to change all of my informants' names in order to keep them safe from being recognized by anybody outside the leprosarium. For the same reason, photographs shown here will not show individual traits of the inhabitants of Tichilești.

The second path leads down to the area with the highest density of buildings. On the right side, there is a popular place with some benches and a gazebo where, during summer, the inhabitants can have conversations, play chess and backgammon. Towards the right side of the valley, the visitor can find some living quarters, merely wagon-shaped pavilions, where every resident inhabits two small rooms. There are two buildings located one after the other, extending to the point where the slope starts. Not all the rooms are currently occupied.

On the opposite side of these pavilions, over an area looking like a plaza, one notices medical offices and other social spaces. They include the offices of the



Fig. 2. The garden of a family house

medical staff, bathrooms and toilets, the kitchen and a club where people gather to watch TV, play games, or read books from a small library. The whole area is surrounded by wooden hills where, at different heights, some small two-room houses surrounded by gardens are located; they accommodate families created between institutionalized individuals.<sup>2</sup> On one of these hills, there is also a cemetery for the inhabitants of the leprosarium.



Fig. 3. Pavilions accommodating individuals



Today, the hospital of Tichilești hosts 18 residents and an almost equal number of employees, medical, administrative and support staff, including doctors, nurses, accountants, the manager, a fireman and a painter. Most of the former patients live there permanently; some of them moved away with their families, but are constantly returning to the hospital. The inhabitants' average age is quite advanced, the youngest one being 45 years old. In terms of contracting the disease, there are two categories: on the one hand, there are those who were born of families formed inside, on the other, those who were brought in after having been diagnosed. The last Romanian citizen diagnosed with this disease moved to Tichilești in 1977.

None of the current inhabitants of the leprosarium carry the disease anymore. Hansen's Disease, as it has been called since Armauer Hansen discovered *Mycobacterium leprae*, the bacteria causing the disease, is curable today. A cocktail of antibiotics and other drugs (Multi-Drug Therapy – MDT) can cure its two types, paucibacillary and multibacillary, in 6 to 24 months, depending on its severity. Three days after beginning the treatment one stops being contagious. The severity of leprosy varies depending on the number of bacteria that developed inside the organism, but also on the time the diseased waited until being administered MDT according to certain strict medical rules. If not properly treated, leprosy can cause severe granulomas on the nerves, skin and eyes. This can lead to a loss of sensory senses, triggering limb amputations due to unnoticed lesions, burns or frostbites causing fierce infections. Thus, leprosy is a disease that, even if cured, can leave marks on the body of the former patient.

The treatment administered from an early stage, even if not strictly followed, made the loss of feeling in certain parts of the limbs the main side effect of the illness for those living in Tichilești. Severe skin lesions are not a common effect among the

current inhabitants. From the individual's perception, this made leprosy easy to conceal. From society's point of view, the state also had its share in making leprosy invisible, as it created a single alternative for those who got a strong socially disabling disease that could have otherwise meant homelessness. I consider Arthur Frank's concept of "remission society" (1997) suitable for understanding the processes and phenomena occurring in the case of former leper victims. Frank talks about all those who are doing well after having been diagnosed with a disease, even though they are not considered cured (*ibidem*). For the inhabitants of the hospital of Tichilești, physical recovery should not be considered from strictly from a medical point of view. Skin lesions are responsible for entrenching leprosy during the individual's entire life-span and creating a permanent presence of the disease in the body. Meanwhile, the body is not affected by pathologies anymore, but by social responses to the disease.

These imprints of a medically cured disease are responsible for isolating the inhabitants of the leprosarium even after the 70s, when the MDT treatment became available in Romania. Hence, it is an isolation based on a socially constructed image of the disease that is legitimized by medical knowledge, filtered through the individuals' personal subjectivity and that

Fig. 4. The cemetery



of those composing the patient's social network. Leprosy becomes what Claire Marin calls a "non-disease", a pathology that must be hidden by sufferers, due to medical categories which worsen the patient's personal experiences (2013). Confining former lepers in a medical institution provides the background for pathologizing a current non-medical state that carries representations of the former medical condition. This fact can be responsible for perpetuating isolation, due to a medical procedure responsible for maintaining a healthy social body (Wokaunn *et alii* 2006). This policy created an enclosed space that needed to be domesticated by those inhabiting it. According to one of the former managers of the hospital, Nicolae Romanescu (2002), the institution acquired a village-type social shape as it developed its own economic activities, feasts, relationships, politics, classes or informal property rights. Agriculture and crafts were the main activities of the leprosarium inhabitants, as they provided both food and income through the commodities produced locally that were smuggled outside by the non-medical staff. Of course, these activities were violating the institution's regulations, which powered a continuous conflict between inhabitants and management. However, the years passed and the number of inhabitants constantly decreased, leading to the small, aged population accommodated today at the institution. As the number of residents dropped, the relationship between them and the management improved. None of the conflicts described above were mentioned by my interlocutors during my visit there. I would also emphasize that in the mid 90s, doctor Vasiliu removed one of the most oppressive regulations, authorizing inhabitants to leave the institution on a temporary or permanent basis. Thus, the leprosarium became a less enclosed space that improved its inhabitants' experiences.

"This is heaven, this is not just a living", Leonard asked me to send his message to those who will be interested in my work.

I was asked to describe the good living conditions and the exemplary way that people are treated by the institution for the world to know that Tichilești is not a bad place. Lepers are people like everybody else and the Wailing Valley, a place "avoided even by the birds" as it was once said, is only a senseless myth. Furthermore, Miruna tells me that "my father had a saying: lepers were cared for by the state." For Margareta the place "is great, God has placed us in a forest where it's nice. The trees bloom, we have visitors, we have bread and God cares for us through those who work here."



### The daily medicalization of the body

Being cared for means a permanent institutional control of bodies, which shapes daily experiences. It starts as the disease occurs and continues throughout hospitalization (formal status of the Tichilești residents, as in any other hospital in Romania). The treatment starts just after the admission to the hospital. It is a process of medical colonization (Frank 1997), as the institution claims control of the patient's body; it is a life-long process, as those suffering from leprosy are hardly able to leave the institution and regain full autonomy. As long as (s)he is in, the patient's health is monitored regularly. It is a strongly medicalized life with daily interactions between the individual body and that of the institution. This medicalization is responsible for an increased longevity. Eva, a nurse who has been working there since the early 90s, says that the vast majority of former lepers lived to be over 80. She attributed that to the enhanced care received by residents. A family doctor cares for them, monitors them, nurses administer treatments for different diseases, change bandages and give injections, and the ambulance of the hospital carries individuals to a bigger hospital in case of complications.





Residents also receive three daily meals in the cafeteria, clothes and other items such as towels, soap or detergent. Moreover, they earn a small allowance of 30 lei (around 7€) of which they ought to be able to cover other necessities. The medical staff controls all other processes in order to keep people as healthy as possible. Rodica, another nurse, provides a rich description of the interplay between the medical and the daily life in Tichilești:

*“They have many files here at the office. They have forms and each patient has his own chart and with those they do not even need a referral from Tulcea because he has all the records here, since the admission date. On these files you can find everything the patient has had. And when they go to Tulcea... like Camil now, his head hurts. This evening he leaves at 4 for Tulcea. At 6 he is scheduled to go. They take the files with them. They take him to the exam room, the institution pays and he’s healed. For everything. This is how it works. He goes during the night because doctors work for private clinics in the afternoon. Every year they have tests. Yes, they come from Tulcea every year... both for them and for us.*

*– Special tests for leprosy?*

*– Yes, exactly, but they also check the glucose, cholesterol and blood pressure levels. I actually don’t know if they do tests for leprosy anymore. They did a long time ago, but now, I don’t know. And if the results are not ok, than we can enforce a diet of, let’s say, polenta. No more bread. Just polenta, to get the charts back. He goes on a diet. The nurse goes to the cafeteria office when the menu is decided and says: someone is on a diet, stop giving him bread; so they receive polenta. If the following tests come out OK, the diet ends. All of this for a limited time, a week, two or three... as long as the doctor believes the diet should last.”*

Former lepers confirm Rodica’s stories. Romulus mentioned that he has “other health problems; the nurse, the head physician takes you to medical check-

ups, gives you your treatment and you are bound to obey the doctor; if the doctor says that you cannot do an exercise, you can’t do it.” Medicalization, in its various forms, is a common topic of discussions at the former leper colony. Individuals living in Tichilești become what David Le Breton names “permanent inhabitants of the medical planet” (2008: 317), living in the grey area of lasting indetermination which places the individual in a liminal place, between a capable and incapable human being (Ancet 2013). However, residents of Tichilești adjust this medicalization to their own needs, creating forms of resistance to the yielding of individual autonomy by the institution’s biomedical power (Le Breton 2008). The most common form of resistance is constructed through knowledge, which is shaped around influences from eclectic sources. Biomedicine offers an important model of understanding disease, which is shaped by influences from non-medical descriptions of the disease, daily interactions with others suffering from the same condition or personal symbolic meanings of daily activities limited by hospital regulations.

For many inhabitants of the leprosarium, one form of resistance is adapting the medical treatment plan according to a personalized scheme. It is also a form of individualization of the disease, which is treated according to one’s own needs, symptoms and limitations imposed on the body. Personalizing one’s disease is a recurrent topic, as I will show throughout this text. Personal treatment plans are shaped around biomedical knowledge that is updated through personal representations of the illness. If, in medical terms, after the prescribed period (which can be followed in some cases by other external physical reactions of the body caused by the removal of the dead virus), the treatment should cease, many discussions have revealed that the inhabitants of the leprosarium are still taking the medication frequently. They receive the pills from the hospital,

which orders them from the Ministry of Health. Eva, as a nurse, has also noticed this behavior. She explained it as a need of the former diseased to manage the effects of an illness, whose lifestyle changes required by the treatment are not strictly followed:

*“Yeah, they still take it occasionally, just outside the scheme, but this Dapsone has contraindications, and they have a scheme for a month or for six months; normally it is for six months, but some of the them abuse it; you know how it is, having a good time or maybe somebody brings them something, brings them a drink, and they abuse it and then they feel that they are not well, so they have their symptoms that they have kept in mind and then they ask for the pills; they also ask the doctor for it and they are given a box and they have their stashes. Theoretically, they are not allowed this... you know... that is the placebo effect.”*

Leonard showed me his Dapsone supply; whenever he feels that the disease could reappear, he takes a pill. The pills are collected in the same metal can in which he received the treatment for the first time. When requested, he shares the treatment with others. Leonard believes that the disease, although no longer present in the body, can always reoccur; therefore, he keeps taking the pills. “If, after all these years, you ingest this Promina (the name of the former treatment, before the introduction of MDT), the disease is out and you no longer need to take it, but because the body gets used to it, it is no longer effective and then you have to take a break and then you can take it again.” Anghel did the same thing; he admits taking the pill preventively, although he did not feel ill. Mrs. Miruna, who was born here from diseased parents, also took various forms of treatment during her lifetime, although she was never officially diagnosed with the disease. She was treated for the first time when she was young, at Professor Vulcan’s recommendation, the leprosy specialist from Bucharest who checked all the suspected cases. Although the tests did not

show that Mrs. Miruna was a virus carrier (or perhaps Doctor Vulcan did not want to communicate the news), she has been taking the treatment her whole life, with some discontinuities. Cornel also continues his treatment, even if he does it at a much lower rate than during the period when he was sick: “I take a maintenance treatment. For example, I take 2-3 tablets per week. Because, like I said, it is unpredictable and we should not enable it; especially at an old age, you should not help it. And I’ll soon be 70 years old.”



### **Experiencing Leprosy as Biographical Construction of the Patient**

The struggle over the body is essential in order to understand the behavior of patients who don’t comply with medical regulations. It is a struggle over individual autonomy, in which the patient seeks to regain control over decisions regarding his or her own body. The body is not an object which can be delivered to the institution, but a piece of the self which needs to be re-appropriated. It is through the body that we live, that we experience illness, so it is the body we must control in order to live it. The topic of the lived body appeared in all the discussions I had with the inhabitants of the hospital of Tichilești. The body is the place where disease occurs, but also where its meanings, values and symbols are created. Disease is different from illness. Its perceptions are constructed by means of comparisons with the experiences of the body prior to the illness (Simmel 1967). This bodily subjectivity turns disease into illness, as mentioned by David Le Breton (2010). The disease starts as the first symptoms of body changes appear “and continues with labelling the sufferer by the family or by himself” (Kleinman *et alii* 2006). For him, illness is shaped by cultural factors, assessing discomfort or processes embedded in family, social



and cultural influences through which the disease is perceived, experienced and managed (*ibidem* 141). For Radley, disease imposes important limitations on the body considered to be the place where we live our lives and where we build social relations (1989). Le Breton opposes, in turn, medical symptoms to a subjective perception of the disease. In order to understand the condition of the patient, he proposes giving-up *pain* and replacing it with *suffering* (2010). The French anthropologist argues that the biomedical term lacks relevance. Suffering is the experience of pain; it's not medical, it's social. Concerning leprosy, this distinction is particularly interesting as suffering, as I mentioned above, is related to a body that, to some extent, does not feel pain.

Disease also generates a biographical rupture that occurs as the diagnosis is made (Bury 1982). It restructures daily life and forms of knowledge on which the patient bases his or her values and actions, while also affecting the family and social network (*ibidem*). For those suffering from chronic diseases, biographical rupture is not an instant's product, but a continuous process (Bury 1991). The author says that the experience of disease should be understood within the context of a time interval that provides an overview of each step that builds it. Therefore, disease acquires two kinds of meanings from the patient's perspective: the impact and consequences of transformations embodied in daily life, and the social meanings incorporating all medical conditions (*ibidem* 453). Kleinman also suggests that, considering the diseased individuals, biographies are spaces of the embodiment of the illness, shaping experiences of the concrete life-world (1992). These life-world experiences can shed light on "immediate social existence and practical activity, (...) biographical particularities, decisive events and indecisive strategies" (Jackson 1996). However, Pandora Pound believes that this biographical rupture should be nuanced depending on the

context in which it was produced (Pound *et alii* 1998). Age, social status, gender or any other factor can decrease the impact of the disease on the individual's life (*ibidem*). Differences in perceptions of the disease for the residents of Tichilești are given by the amount of time they were able to spend outside the leprosarium. For people like Cornel, who managed to leave the institution and start a family, to make new relationships or find a suitable job no matter his physical conditions, disease had a smaller impact than for those who, after several years of work, had to return to the hospital permanently. Moreover, in the case of those born in Tichilești, who were diagnosed early on in their lives, a break in the biography caused by disease cannot be accounted for.

Regardless of the moment when the disease was felt for the first time, those affected by it must develop strategies to adapt to the new situation. These strategies are necessary for using the body in the new context, but also in order to manage social interactions through the new ill identity. They arise due to the need to maintain a sense of life stronger than the symptoms or effects of the disease (Williams 2000). These meanings are built on previous experiences through which the patient reconstructs his or her identity. Understanding these identities and behaviors "must take into account the way in which one uses the disease situation as an arena where there are always transactions with others" (Radley 1989). The effects of leprosy are not the result of the disease, but of the social context in which the patient lives and interacts with others. The disease is the way in which sick family members or the extended social network perceive, live with or respond to symptoms and disability (Kleinman 1988), or, as Jean-Luc Nancy has experienced it, is "inscribed in a complex process tied with strangers and strange things" (2000, 21). Doctors, nurses and medical devices or treatments are one of the important *strangers* that become a permanent presence



for the former diseased living in Tichilești. Of course, the biomedical matrix is not the only one shaping the subjective experience of institutionalization. Information exchange with others who share the same experience, inhabitants of neighboring villages, visitors or acquaintances are sources of adaptation of the medical discourse to a more subjective personal background.



### The Sick Body – Subject to the Traces of Leprosy

The individual, subjective disease is constructed in a field of complex interactions between types of knowledge (Martin 1994), but also of perceptions, images and relationships it develops within the body (Janzen 2002). “Knowledge is built on experience and its contextual contingencies” (Adams *et alii* 2014:191), shaping subjective medical constructions of those who have to adopt a new sick identity. Leprosy is a disease with complex effects that requires constant care of the body. “Leprosy is a pretentious dame. This is what I call it. Those who cared, who listened, for example me. An old man said: *“o you see that guy? This is how you’ll end up, unless you listen to what I say, how to act, how to dress when it’s cold or something else, as leprosy loses the senses.* This is the beginning of Margareta’s disease story, a woman of over 80 years old, who moved to Tichilești in 1946. Other people, when asked to describe the disease, quote her. The pretentious dame must be taken care of and continuously monitored. Life orbits around the disease which, in the absence of proper treatment and lifestyle, can take control of the body. *It is very difficult. It is very demanding. So, firstly, you cannot drink, you must eat heartily... so my parents, my aunt, you can see her, when admitted for the first time in the hospital, they followed the treatment and said it was very strong. And they complied,*

*so they followed the treatment and did not have any problems.* Margareta, who went through the same difficulties of managing the disease, reinforces Marița’s perception. Actually, this is common amongst most of my interlocutors. When asked to describe the disease, very few mentioned direct, medical symptoms. They rather focused on telling stories about limitations the treatment imposed on them. It is a different description than the biomedical one, where leprosy is considered just an infectious disease that causes severe skin lesions and breakdown of the nervous system of the arms and legs.

The body should be seen as an agent of subjectivities in order to understand variations of experiences of individuals with a deformed exterior (Staples cited. Csordas 2003:297). The body is experienced from within, not from the outside, as the biomedical paradigm considers (Slatman & Widdershoven 2010, 5). It is a body whose self is connected to its incorporation (Leder 2002) and which *embodies a symbolic value before figuring biology* (Le Breton 2006, 45). For the former leprosy sufferers living in Tichilești, this model of the body provides a framework for understanding the experience of illness. Drew Leder says that, usually, the body disappears on a daily basis, reappearing only when pain or illness is felt (1990). For healthy individuals, *the body is rarely the thematic object of experience* (*ibidem* 3). For my interlocutors, the effects of the illness produced a permanent presence in the body. It is a strange disease that leaves its marks on the body even after it has been cured. Side effects of leprosy are not necessarily experienced from a medical perspective, but from the ways they influence the patient’s life.

Hope ceases to be part of former leprosy sufferer’s future and I have noticed that it is one of the key issues in understanding the social effects of this disease. Loss of hope kills any strategies or any plans for the future. Hope vanishes, leaving behind individuals without any potential future



(Novas 2006). Leprosy-related confinement adds a sense of failure to the general experience of this disease. It is a failure seen through the eyes of others, creating a loss of confidence resulting in marginalization (Le Breton 2013). Furthermore, being ejected from one's group leads to what Collaud calls "a shame of being" (Collaud *apud* Le Breton 2013), a "loss of dignity disconnected from circumstantial reference, a social relation that doesn't tolerate any hesitation between confidence and the confidence conferred by others" (Le Breton 2013). This loss of hope is influenced by restrictions such as being unable to work or to experience a disappeared body which provides individuals with the full autonomy needed for performing regular social roles.

Leonard, the last person admitted to Tichilești, arrived here in 1977 at the age of 13. At 18 years old, as the treatment was effective, and as the disease was not contagious, he managed to leave the leprosarium due to a policy of the communist regime that aimed to reintegrate former leprosy sufferers; their independence would cost the state less money. Thus, after four years of confinement, Leonard was employed at the Sulina shipyard where he trained as a carpenter. This qualification, he says, was the result of chance rather than of will, as he spent time with a worker who taught him how to work the wood. After five years, he got a job in Tulcea, at a lumber mill, which he also left after several years when he returned to Sulina as a carpenter in the construction field. As he mentions, "where and if there was hard work to do, I was there." However, the hard work accelerated the spreading of the disease; *as I felt it reappear, winter was the most dangerous for us. I had to carry lime or cement and I could not do it anymore.* His fingers curled at 67 years old. Gradually, he also lost his senses. *I have told you, you get used to it. Working with logs was something I could handle; you didn't need a fine touch. But when it's about a small nail or something, I could not do it. Something raw, rough work,*

*was OK.* The loss of his senses triggered the impossibility of performing tasks and forced Leonard to return on a full-time basis to the leprosarium where he operated a small workshop for repairing objects belonging to the employees or to other tenants; *I'm not an employee or anything, I do it for myself in order not to forget what I have learned.*

Leonard's story is not unique. Nea Nelu is 69 years old and he first came to Tichilești in 1964; he left after a few years of treatment, only to return in 1986 as his disease reappeared. He left the leprosarium again in 1988, but he returned for good in 1995. Outside, Nea Nelu worked as a tractor operator for several farms in Dobrogea. Same as with Leonard, the discussion quickly turns to the social effects of the disease that leprosy sufferers have to overcome. *There were great heats waves in Constanța and it was even hotter inside the tractor cabin. (...) I was harvesting in July. That literally boiled me. It did not hurt, but I saw something here. I had a blister.* The stubbornness to work in a harmful environment eventually forced Nea Nelu to give up his full-time job. Today, altered senses force him to keep a constant watch over his body. *I have a strong cold in winter, I have a syndrome with the stove: if I touch it, I get a blister full of water that can break, and it takes a month or so to heal, and I need to change my bandage, again and again. That's my illness,* he says, stressing that daily care is imperative. He must be aware of the sun, of cold or touching hot stoves or pots that might cause injuries that, without the senses, could easily infect and cause even greater problems. Cold in itself is a reason for caution. Disease leaves the body less sensitive to cold, which can cause frostbitten limbs, followed by finger amputation.

The story of Mrs. Miruna's mother clearly shows the importance of an increased attention when it comes to a body affected by leprosy. One day, while working in her small garden, the woman stepped on a nail that had been forgotten on the ground. She did not feel it. The nail, found



in the evening, had deepened the wound and caused a strong infection that could not be treated and led to the amputation of her foot. Regarding her parents, Mrs. Miruna says that *they burned, they froze while clearing snow, they worked and stepped on nails or thorns, that's why they got it.*

The lack of senses has also affected Marița, who was born from two diseased parents that got married at the leprosarium. She also developed a social symptomatology; the disease is not only a sum of pains and injuries, but also their effects on the patient's daily life. Right from the first discussion, when I asked her how the disease manifests itself and what its symptoms were, Marița replied that *it's the hand that leaves me first. The left hand... I cannot catch, it doesn't feel safe, I drop plates, glasses, so I don't feel safe with it. So, the nervous system is... the nervous system is attacked and abandons you.* The destruction of the nervous system is especially problematic for those who managed to leave Tichilești. Cornel lived there until he got married. His parents' disease tied his whole childhood to the hospital. At 33, Cornel went to Brăila to live with his wife. Like others, he was able to work in Constanța while young. Thus, he says, he discontinued the treatment earlier than needed. In addition, because of the people he befriended, for several years he led an unhealthy lifestyle that resulted in a paralyzed left leg and problems with his right eye that he can hardly close. He believes that because of this partial paralysis he could not work properly, even if his body was not carrying the disease anymore:

*"This disease socially affected me from an inactivity point of view. I couldn't get a job, find a place to work, make sustained physical effort; for example, the paralysis was very easy to detect from the beginning, even at first glance. As you can see, this is quite striking. And people have questions and confusions, what you were doing, what happened. I answered to some, I haven't to others, but in terms of integration into society, I have never suffered and I haven't considered this*

*disability as a great defeat. I helped my family as much as I could, I worked in places where I could do something. God gave me cars instead of legs, at the time when I needed them, and I was able to use them instead of walking."*

He also personifies the disease as a pretentious lady that requires one's attention in order to take permanent care of her. *Cold and heat give... these temperature differences create, due to the lack of a normal immunity... a leprosy patient has no immunity to the outside world... you know that Romanian saying: neither hot, nor cold. Proper temperature. But leprosy patients know this fact and they pay attention to it. It's uncomfortable.*

Last, but not least, the restrictions leprosy imposes on the diseased body can be observed in the hospital furniture. Daily spaces like toilets or showers require adaptations to make them usable by patients with mobility problems. Eva, a nurse, recounts the case of a patient with an amputated foot who was sent to bathe, even though he experienced problems with balance and stability. *One of them took a bath on the Saturday before Easter; I sent him to the bathroom and he couldn't find another way to get into the tub than to kneel. And by standing on his knees he got a wound. They have special seats that attach to the tub, but he didn't think about them, so he used his knees.*

Fig. 5. The bathing chair





### Subjective Categories of Disease: Individualization of Leprosy

Interactions between the personal explanatory model of former lepers and information received from the medical staff in Tichilești are responsible for filling a void of meaning produced by the failure of success outside the leprosarium. Coming back to an institution that claims control of the body through medical practices and objects also translates into decreased individual autonomy. The body, unable to maintain personal autonomy due to the marks of the disease it exposes, forces former leprosy sufferers into institutionalization. The healthy body, the founding base of individualization according to Le Breton (2004) is opposed to the one carrying the signs of a socially disabling disease, which imposes a confined life on its owner. Thus, the individual seeks to understand the meanings of his body and disease through the medical model of the institution, but also with the help of the social networks developing among the other inhabitants. The way patients conceptualize illness may change deeply within the clinic through interactions with the medical staff and other patients (White 2005). The clinic is the place where the biomedical model meets the strict, subjective patient with no previous access to scientific knowledge (Le Breton 2002). Michel de Certeau talks of the locus within each individual hosting “an incoherent (and often contradictory) plurality of interaction between relational determinations”, defined by the terms constructing them (1988). Such knowledge of the patient is formed in an area of intersection of complex systems, a place where knowledge is created and simultaneously internalized (Martin 1994). These forms of knowledge are reinforced by interactions creating social groupings developed around private and intimate experiences, around what Judith Allsop and her colleagues, referring to Habermas, named “the life-world of ordinary people”

(2004).

Leprosy acquires the individual features of an enemy whom one must fear for life in order to prevent his return which could cause damage. The disease is personified and integrated into a symbolic universe managed by the individual which he is able to handle. I see this as a strategy by which the patient gives meaning to the gap appearing after the diagnosis. Verbs associated with leprosy are eloquent. For Romulus disease “responds” and “attacks”, but can also “stand” when the treatment is effective. For Cornel, leprosy *is the disease that is not a friend, neither cold, nor hot, so it's like some sort of a lady who must be cared for and protected*. For Marița, the disease *is very difficult, very demanding and does not work at once, you know, it works in time*, and for Margareta the *pretentious dame* should be permanently cared for.

The disease is personalized from one individual to another. Discussions revealed an often highly individualized disease, without highly internalized medical categories of disease. Margareta describes her illness: *I had my leprosy. I was not hurt. Do you know how I was aware of it? The senses*. None of the people I talked to provided a thorough medical description of the disease when we discussed its manifestations. Unlike medical categories based on strict, scientific, precise indicators such as the number of bacteria found inside the body, the number of granulomas appearing on the skin of the patient or their size and color, personal experiences are relevant as they include a strong personal side. This is the way the disease was experienced by the patient and the consequences its effects produced on him; as we have seen, experiences are not universal as the disease is strongly anchored in the patient's social world.

To illustrate, I will give the floor to my interviewees, their descriptions being the best tool to evoke this process. For Romulus, the disease is different *for each person as there are several categories. It reacts in many*





ways, not only in one specific way. It's a disease which attacks. It's a disease you don't feel. It's a disease that attacks you and deforms your body. Head, skin, hands, feet, nose, mouth, eyes... all that stuff. Leonard talks about the ways in which the disease affects others. Cornel is, if you look at him better... there are many kinds of leprosy. We close our eyes with our eyelids, but he must roll his eyes. Yes, the nervous system damaged his eyes. He sleeps with his eyes open. Margareta has wrinkles on her face. Tuberculoid leprosy and lepromatous leprosy... leprosy dries you, as people say. It doesn't attack the hands and feet, it attacks the hair, that's another one... there are many... with other wounds that won't heal. Also, Uncle Igor who just died... he had wounds for more than 30 years. He had no tissue left, and he had such strong hands. His eyebrows were gone, his hair fell off, all of that in 30 years. I don't know why he didn't heal. You could see his bones with all those plagues. Knowledge is not medically accurate even when describing their own disease: neither I... I cannot figure out what I have or have not.

However, the side effects are clear: this disease, this leprosy, appears as a sort of gloss. Healthy parts of the body sweat, but where it affects you, you have no sense, you have like a luster and you don't sweat... Here and there it's the same. I sweat, when I work, when I do all kinds of things. I sweated like a pig, but in those areas there was nothing. You must be very careful with the cold; otherwise you don't have a thing. On others' disease? Stan... his mother was sick, he has nothing, he doesn't have leprosy. He has... maybe he's a little gone off his rocker, but as his mother was sick... they hospitalized him too. Romulus, over there, the same. His mother was ill, leprosy, but he's healthy, that's not leprosy. That's nothing. His finger... that was an accident. It's not the disease, it's just an accident.

For Nea Nelu, there are nine kinds of leprosy, some more important than others. For him, Camil doesn't suffer from the disease. He has children's disease... I don't

know if you've heard about it. He starts seizing, and if there's nobody next to him, he could swallow his tongue and die. His mother had leprosy. His mother brought him there. He was not ill, he was just a bus driver. His opinions are even more interesting as Camil is, according to his medical file, the individual with the most visible signs of the disease on his body; he is also being treated for a wound that will not cure as he has also experienced problems due to the lack of senses.

For Miruna, here in Tichilești we had just two types of the disease, unlike Asia, India or China where it could be a lot worst. I know this from Professor Vulcan. So, with this type of disease, the feet, hands, eyes and so on could develop granulomas and you could suffocate. Many have suffocated around here. Cornel also perceives several types of the disease: One has a milder form, another one has a more delicate one, and another has one that leaves most severe sequelae due to lack of treatment. So the problem is the following: it has at least six, seven forms. Some with pain, some without pain, others with malformations caused by the fact that the patient was not treated. However, his disease is also personified, as it can be "mastered" through treatment. The types of disease are constructed through the ways in which they manifest themselves. In a small space, such as the one of Tichilești, those who suffer from leprosy have the opportunity to build their vision of this disease through personal experiences and that of other patients with whom they interact. Moreover, since this is a hospital setting, medicine also has some influence from one case to another.

• • • • •

## Conclusions

Leprosy is an atypical disease. Although, nowadays, it is treatable, and the patient can heal from a medical point of view, leprosy can mark the body for his or her whole life.



Currently, institutions such as Tichilești are no longer used to treat a disease that is not contagious after the first days of treatment. The current treatment plan is administered at home, so the patient can continue to live as she or he did before being diagnosed. However, since this is a long-term treatment (depending on the type of disease, the duration can vary between one to four years) which imposes strict rules on patients' daily activities and practices, many find it difficult to follow it properly; this was true both for those who were treated inside the institution and for those who were treated at home. For these reasons, many of those who have been diagnosed with leprosy bear the effects of the disease on their body, even if they are completely healed. Thus, leprosy ceases to be a medical illness, turning into one that exists at the social level. Signs of the disease continue to oversee the patient's life, which is why many of those who have reached Tichilești had to settle there permanently. Tichilești is a very interesting case of a medical institution caring for medically healthy individuals. It is a medical institution which, in order to hide the bodies of those carrying a burdening disease, tries to control them. In this setting, the leprosarium has also become the only housing option for the diseased as society doesn't provide any other alternative, the hospital accommodating all those for whom regular life is forbidden.

Thus, the hospital becomes a place institutionalizing the loss of hope, as the patients know that once they are confined here, they will not be able to perform current or future social roles. The institution regulates the individual's life and world through medicalization, access to food, clothing or money; it is an institutionally created life-world, which is not entirely adopted by the inhabitants of the hospital. Yet, this institutional, general, life-world is shaped by individuals according to personal backgrounds, constructing a series of local, personalized contexts adapted to big ones. The personalized life-world forms of

resistance to medical models through the domestication of both disease and space have evolved. Leprosy is personalized as it causes subjective experiences. Each individual disease is defined according to unique experiences. It is not a single disease experienced through its objective symptoms, but several illnesses constructed by individual biographies. The *personal* disease, thus, needs to be dealt with in a personal way, via personal treatment plans adapted to individual side-effects of leprosy or knowledge questioning the universal character of medical explanations.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adams, Vincanne, Nancy Burke and Ian Whitmarsh. 2014. "Medical Anthropology: Cross-Cultural Studies in Health and Illness." *Medical Anthropology* 179-197.
- Allsop, Judith, Kathryn Jones and Rob Baggott. 2004. "Health consumer groups in the UK: a new social movement?" *Sociology of Health & Illness* 737-756.
- Ancet, Pierre. 2013. "Après l'accident: renaître à un autre corps." In *Corps abîmés*, by David Le Breton and Denisa Butnaru, 109-118. Québec: Presses de l'Université Laval.
- Bury, Michael. 1982. "Chronic illness as biographical disruption." *Sociology of Health and Illness* 167-182.
- . 1991. "The sociology of chronic illness: a review of research and prospects." *Sociology of Health & Illness* 451-468.
- de Certeau, Michel and Pierre Mayol. 1988. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Frank, Arthur. 1997. *The Wounded Storyteller. Body, Illness, and Ethics*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Jackson, Michael. 1996. *Things As They Are: New Directions*

- in *Phenomenological Anthropology*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Janzen, John. 2002. *The Social Fabric of Health: An Introduction to Medical Anthropology*. New-York: McGraw-Hill.
- Kleinman, Arthur. 1992. "Local Worlds of Suffering: An Interpersonal Focus for Ethnographies of Illness Experience." *Qual Health Res* 127-134.
- . 1988. *The Illness Narratives. Suffering, Healing and the Human Condition*. New York: Basic Books.
- Kleinman, Arthur, Leon Eisenberg and Byron Good. 2006. "Culture, Illness and Care: Clinical Lessons from Anthropologic and Cross-Cultural Research." *FOCUS, The Journal of Lifelong Learning in Psychiatry* 140-149.
- Le Breton, David. 2006. *Anthropologie de la Douleur*. Paris: Editions Métailié.
- . 2002. *Antropologia Corpului și Modernitatea*. Timișoara: Amarcord.
- . 2010. *Expériences de la douleur: Entre destruction et renaissance*. Paris:Éditions Métailié.
- . 2008. *La chair à vif : De la leçon d'anatomie aux greffes d'organes*. Paris: Editions Métailié.
- . 2004. *Les passions ordinaires: Anthropologie des émotions*. Paris: Payot.
- . 2013. "Mûrir sa mort: ambivalence et soins palliatifs." *Jalmalv* 43-58.
- Leder, Drew. 1990. *The Absent Body*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- . 2002. "Whose Body? What Body? The Metaphysics of Organ Transplantation." *Philosophy and Medicine: Persons and Their Bodies: Rights, Responsibilities, Relationships* 233-264.
- Marin, Claire. 2013. *L'homme sans fièvre*. Paris: Armand Colin.
- Martin, Emily. 1994. *Flexible Bodies: Tracking Immunity in American Culture from the Days of POLIO to the Age of AIDS*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Nancy, Jean-Luc. 2000. *L'intrus*. Paris: Editions Galilée.
- Novas, Carlos. 2006. "The Political Economy of Hope: Patients' Organizations, Science and Biovalue." *Biosocieties* 289-305.
- Pound, Pandora, Patrick Gompertz and Shah Ebrahim. 1998. "Illness in the context of older age: the case of stroke." *Sociology of Health & Illness* 489-506.
- Radley, Alan. 1989. "Style, discourse and constraint in adjustment to chronic illness." *Sociology of Health & Illness* 231-252.
- Romanescu, Nicolae. 2002. *Ultima leprozerie: din amintirile unui medic*. București: Universal Dalsi.
- Simmel, Marianne. 1967. "The Body Percept in Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 60-64.
- Slatman, Jenny and Guy Widdershoven. 2010. "Hand Transplant and Bodily Integrity." *Body and Society* 16 (3): 69-92.
- Staples, James. 2003. "Disguise, Revelation and Copyright: Disassembling the South Indian Leper." *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 9 (2): 295-315.
- White, Cassandra. 2005. "Explaining a Complex Disease Process: Talking to Patients about Hansen's Disease (Leprosy) in Brazil." *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*, 19 (3): 310-330.
- Williams, Simon. 2000. "Chronic illness as biographical disruption or biographical disruption as chronic illness? Reflections on a core concept." *Sociology of Health & Illness* 40-67.
- Wokaunn, Mario, Ivan Jurić and Žarko Vrbica. 2006. "Between Stigma and Dawn of Medicine: the Last Leprosarium in Croatia." *Croat Med Journal* 759-766.



# MARTOR



---

Title: "Children Addressing the Camera. Performing Childhood in Transylvanian Home Movies from the 1930s"

Author: Melinda Blos-Jáni

How to cite this article: Blos-Jáni, Melinda. 2015. "Children Addressing the Camera. Performing Childhood in Transylvanian Home Movies from the 1930s". *Martor* 20: 109-121.

Published by: *Editura MARTOR* (MARTOR Publishing House), *Muzeul Țăranului Român* (The Museum of the Romanian Peasant)

URL: <http://martor.muzeultaranuluiroman.ro/archive/768-2/>

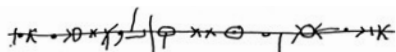
---

*Martor* (The Museum of the Romanian Peasant Anthropology Review) is a peer-reviewed academic journal established in 1996, with a focus on cultural and visual anthropology, ethnology, museum studies and the dialogue among these disciplines. *Martor* review is published by the Museum of the Romanian Peasant. Its aim is to provide, as widely as possible, a rich content at the highest academic and editorial standards for scientific, educational and (in)formational goals. Any use aside from these purposes and without mentioning the source of the article(s) is prohibited and will be considered an infringement of copyright.

*Martor* (Revue d'Anthropologie du Musée du Paysan Roumain) est un journal académique en système *peer-review* fondé en 1996, qui se concentre sur l'anthropologie visuelle et culturelle, l'ethnologie, la muséologie et sur le dialogue entre ces disciplines. La revue *Martor* est publiée par le Musée du Paysan Roumain. Son aspiration est de généraliser l'accès vers un riche contenu au plus haut niveau du point de vue académique et éditorial pour des objectifs scientifiques, éducatifs et informationnels. Toute utilisation au-delà de ces buts et sans mentionner la source des articles est interdite et sera considérée une violation des droits de l'auteur.

*Martor* is indexed by EBSCO and CEEOL.

# Children Addressing the Camera. Performing Childhood in Transylvanian Home Movies from the 1930s



Melinda Blos-Jáni

Lecturer at the Department of Film, Photography and Media, Sapientia University, Cluj-Napoca

## ABSTRACT

Ever since the emergence of the first technologies destined for amateur filmmakers, the most frequently recorded portraits in home movies have been children's. This article analyses the characteristics of children's portraiture in home movies, with special attention to their on-camera performance. Home movies can be seen as records of children's bodily interaction with the filmic apparatus and, at the same time, with the media literacy of their filmmaker-parents. The everyday scenes of children performing awareness or non-awareness in front of the camera are dissected in this paper from a media-historical point of view: the analysis of a Transylvanian home movie collection is embedded in a discourse on media practices, on mediality and on processes that transform everyday reality into a corporeal image. The idiosyncrasies of the first Transylvanian home movies are incorporated in a discussion about early 20th century visual culture, in the context of which childhood gets to be constructed as an amateur moving image.

## KEYWORDS

home movie, childhood, direct address, corporeality, immediacy, performance, mediality, intermediality, figuration

The majority of home movies contain pictures of people, they are filmic human portraits and – to use Hans Belting's terms – a medium of the body (Belting 2005). The family films portray human figures and faces whose realism is further enhanced by the fact that the pictures themselves are in motion<sup>1</sup>. According to Belting, "images live from the paradox of the *presence of an absence*. When absent bodies become visible, they use a vicarious visibility. [...] Images *are* present in their media, but they *perform* an absence which they make visible. Animation means that we open the opacity of a medium for the transmission of images" (emphasis in the original, 2005, 312–313). If the medium of the moving picture functions as a kind of artificial body, in which the images of the family members are animated, then it would be interesting to examine how this animation is related to the portraiture of the person represented in the picture. It is

common knowledge that most home movies are focused on children and their life within the family. Using this myth of childhood attached to home visual media as a point of departure, this essay will focus on the filmic portraits of children and childhood as seen in local (Transylvanian) home movies from the 1930s.

The analysis of scenes from home movies will be preceded by a discussion of theories regarding the interrelation between children and moving images in general, and of the specificities of children's performances in home movies, with emphasis on the moments of direct camera address. Putting the earliest Transylvanian home movies into this theoretical framework is an attempt to build a discourse beyond the localities and idiosyncrasies of the collection and to reveal the way home movies function as an artificial body of childhood. The aim of this paper is to explore the mechanisms working behind children's performances

1) In similar terms, the accounts of film history's first movie-going experiences draw attention to the fact that the moving image, the new medium of film was experienced as "a moment when cinematic experience collapses perceptual distance and brings images almost unbearably close to the viewers" (Margitházi 2012).

for the movie camera, and to reveal how the seemingly transparent images of reality are constructed in the process of mediation.



### Animating the Image of the Child

Children have had a special relationship with the camera ever since the inception of cinema. As Vicky Lebeau puts it: “the new phenomenon of the moving pictures moved in on the child and the infant: with its pictures of *Child Life*, one of the most popular genres of Victorian film, cinema proffered its first contributions to the ongoing project of visualizing childhood, of giving image to the child” (emphasis in the original, 2008, 7–8). The history of the visual representation of childhood is inseparable from the changing role of children in our society. Ever since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the social construction of childhood has been under constant change (Aries 1973); correspondingly, in visual arts and, later, in photography children were no longer pictured as adults, but as innocent and distinct individuals (Higonnet 1998, Bown 2001). “Children are our others” – as Heather Norris Nicholson investigates this idea in the context of home movies<sup>2</sup>: “from an adult’s perspective, children seem to inhabit a different realm where, for a brief time, they do things differently” (2001, 128). The concept of the otherness of childhood coincided with the drive to know and to perceive the child visually (and, in this sense, the emergence of moving images offered an enhanced perceptual access to childhood). Still in a half-conscious state and without any linguistic ability, the young child tends to be discovered through visual culture, through the corporeal image of her body, of her movements and facial expressions (cf. Lebeau 2008, 16–17). In a similar vein, Hans Belting analyses Gerhard Richter’s photo of a toddler that appeared on the cover of *Lettre International* (1997, March,

fig. 1), concluding that this is a body which is not yet in control of its image, of its representation (2003, 106). Thus, the image of the child represents or, to use Hans Belting’s terms, produces the visual excess that is embodied in the medium of the moving image.



In the context of “the modern tendency to visualize existence” (Mirzoeff 1999, 5), at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the spectacle of the child in motion became an emblem of the cinema as the new technology of vision<sup>3</sup>. The unruly performance of a child recorded on celluloid was used to demonstrate the specificity of the new medium: the most famous example is the Lumière brothers’ 1895 film *Le Repas de bébé* (*Baby’s Breakfast*), which was included in the film selection<sup>4</sup> to be projected on the first public screening of films on Dec. 28<sup>th</sup> 1895 (fig. 2).



Recorded and presented in order to promote the cinematograph, this 50-second long recording, showing Auguste Lumière with his wife Marguerite feeding their baby girl (Andrée Lumière) in their garden, is often described in “first contact” narratives<sup>5</sup> and in more recent theoretical interpretations.

One of the first subjective accounts of the film emphasizes the naturalism of the shot:

2) Heather Norris Nicholson (2001) examines children’s spatial experiences, on the socially constructed nature of childhood from the past through the means of home movies. The motto of the article reproduces Leslie Thornton’s words: “children are not quite us and not quite other. They are our others. They are becoming us. Or they are becoming other. They are at a dangerous point” (Thornton 1989–1990, 15, quoted by Norris Nicholson 2001, 128).

3) In the words of Vicky Lebeau: “the perception of the ‘familiar scene of children’ – children as they are, children living in time – is one of the first, and fundamental, mystifications of the new technologies of the moving image” (Lebeau 2008, 39).

4) The program consisted of ten short films, and the date of the legendary screening later became the birth date of cinema.

5) It is a term used by Beja Margitházi for the first descriptions of the collective or individual responses to moving images, of an audience encountering the new medium of the cinema at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup>–20<sup>th</sup> century (Margitházi 2012).



“suddenly a strange flicker passes through the screen, and the picture stirs to life” – wrote Maxim Gorky on the first viewing of the film (Gorky 1896, quoted by Lebeau 2008, 23). The cinematographic naturalism discovered in this film by the practitioner of literary naturalism is even more relevant in the context of Gorky’s widely known objections to the Cinématographe Lumière, which he considered a rather un-naturalistic form of representation: “It is no life, but its shadow, it is not motion, but its soundless spectre” (1960, 407). The reception of the *Le Repas de bébé* suggests that this film became an epitome of the 19<sup>th</sup> century efforts to duplicate life, to accomplish the perfect illusion of the real world, or the Frankensteinian ideology, as Noël Burch calls it.<sup>6</sup> The suppression of death through the medium of the moving image was a preoccupation of the 19<sup>th</sup> century bourgeoisie<sup>7</sup>; later on, André Bazin named it the “embalming of time” in his concept of realism. In these endeavors to reproduce life, to constitute an analogue of reality, the recurring image of the child can be viewed as a figure, as Vicky Lebau convincingly argues: “the image of the child on screen is an object to *think* with, an idea through which to encounter the *institution* of cinema – its historical and social placement, certainly, but also what has been described as its ‘mental machinery’, its forms of address to the spectators ranged before its screens” (emphasis in the original, 2008, 13). Early concerns regarding the animation of images and the concept of immediacy are thus embodied in the figure of the child: images of children were animated through the technological vision of the cinema; in the meantime, the specificity of the new medium was instituted through the figure of the child<sup>8</sup>.

In the case of *Le Repas de bébé*, the concept of immediacy is achieved not solely through the image of the child, but through the filmmaker’s choice of framing as well. Noël Burch explains Gorky’s enthusiasm for this particular Lumière picture with the



relative closer framing (medium shot) of the scene: “probably the first film to catch faces ‘from life’ in and for themselves, on a scale allowing a close reading of those constantly evolving fields of signs” (Burch 1990, 24). Thus, the individuality of a face, the liveliness (of a person) is embodied in the medium shot (fig. 3). As Paul Arthur consistently concludes: “It is the only scene from the early roster of Lumière films whose aura of familiarity deflects the clinical chill of historical distance. Where other scenes are populated by indistinct, albeit highly animated figures, the family in *Le Repas de bébé* creates an impression of particularized identity grounded in corporeal fullness and immediacy” (Arthur 2005, 24). As this quote suggests, the enhanced immediacy achieved through the reduction of the distance between the movie camera and the profilmic reality might be representative for the distinction between the perspective of factual history and that of the history of everyday life. The sensory, almost tactile spectacle of the child’s body (used here as figuration of raw reality) viewed from up close emblemizes the overall perception of human bodies as individuals (faces). Moreover, it shows the “big” processes as “coming alive” and, as such, can be used as a source for an individual-oriented micro-history.

Framing is a crucial decision in the construction of the spectacle in this actuality film as it creates the illusion of raw reality, but there is more to it. As noted by

6) He considers part of the Frankensteinian tradition all those 19<sup>th</sup> century representational and technological endeavours that aimed at recreating the three dimensional perceptual world in its totality. He mentions Daguerre’s Diorama, photography, the Stereoscope and other optical toys as carriers of the naturalistic ideology of representation (see Burch 1990, 6–22).

7) Noël Burch tracks down this type of interest regarding cinema in a journal article announcing the first public screening at the Salon Indien: “when everyone can photograph their dear ones, no longer in motionless form, but in their movements, their activity, their familiar gestures, with words on their lips, death will have ceased to be absolute” (quoted by Burch 1990, 21).

8) The cinematic record of children can be considered figurative in later non-theatrical examples as well, such as the practice of the developmental psychologist, Arnold Gesell, who from 1924 to 1948 used film to collect data on infant behaviour. He considered film a scientific tool, which could turn the ephemeral event into evidence: “the cinema registers the behaviour events in such coherent, authentic and measurable detail that for purposes of psychological study and clinical research, the reaction patterns of infant and child become almost *as tangible as tissue*” (my emphasis, Gesell 1952, 132, quoted by Curtis 2011, 432).



9) George Sadoul observes the framing of the early Lumière films as showing similarities with the 19th century photographs of his uncle (1966, 60), and compares the mise-en-scène of *Le Repas de bébé* to still nature paintings (1966, 58). In a similar manner, Noël Burch addresses the transformations of the mode of photographic representation caused by the emergence of cinema (1990, 16–17).

10) The term remediation is defined by Paul Levinson as the “anthropotropic process by which new media technologies remedy prior technologies. Bolter–Grusin defines it differently, as “a formal logic by which new media refashion prior media forms” (Bolter–Grusin 1999, 273). The theory of remediation examines the interdependence of media: a medium is never isolated; it exists in relationships of respect and rivalry with other media: “a medium is that which remediates” (Bolter–Grusin 1999, 65)

11) One of the few descriptions of the baby addressing the camera can be found in the entry about the film in *Who’s Who in Victorian Cinema* (1996). This oversight is represented by the illustrations of the film: most of the snapshots show the baby looking away from the camera. The difference in the infant’s behaviour might have a different effect: when the actors’ gaze is directed inside the pro-filmic space, it creates a diegetic reality, but the look out of the frame discloses the world behind the camera and acknowledges the presence of an observer.

12) A large number of the early Lumière-films feature the private life of the Lumière-family; among them are the above-mentioned ones, and better known titles as well.

many film historians<sup>9</sup>, framing is borrowed from the conventions of Victorian family photography or from the practice of still life painting. Moving images animate more than just images of children; they surpass their media predecessors as well (recasting them as a form of artifice, see Lebeau 2008, 31). In this respect, the film is an example of remediation<sup>10</sup>, a demonstration of how the new medium of film (re)animates the stillness of the photographic image.

In this animation of images there is a twist that has been seldom mentioned in the descriptions of the movie: the baby makes an unexpected, undirected / unguided move when she offers a biscuit from her breakfast to the man with the movie camera (Louis Lumière) or to someone standing beside the camera (fig. 4).



Fig. 4

While the adults in this picture, the parents of the baby, are trying to avoid direct eye contact with the camera all along, their gaze is directed towards the center of the scene, i.e. the baby, although this central character doesn’t seem to acknowledge this rule. The baby’s look, albeit for a few moments, is slightly directed towards the camera, as she addresses her uncle. The direction of this look suggests an intimacy between the filmmaker and its subject and the continuity of representation with reality. In this sense the camera becomes/ behaves as a third party, or as an accomplice participating at this event. Although this gesture enhances the immediacy effect of the film, strangely, it is rarely mentioned

in its descriptions and interpretations with respect to early cinema<sup>11</sup>, but rather with reference to filmic portraits and home movies. Introducing the discussion of the filmic portrait, Paul Arthur makes a brief, but relevant observation about this scene: “in the performative exchange between observer and observed, this fleeting glimpse of domestic life can be regarded as film history’s primal ‘home movie’. Not coincidentally, it stamps the origins of the portrait film, a fairly recent practice that is latent from the beginning through a confluence of recording impulse, social desideratum, and pictorial inheritance from nineteenth-century painting” (Arthur 2005, 24). This description of the “performative exchange” in *Le Repas de bébé* becomes crucial in Liz Czach’s discussion about the aura of authenticity attached to home movies. The truth value or evidentiary status of home movies is more than just a matter of aesthetic qualities; the familiarity of filmmaker and subject captured in home movies makes it distinct from other forms of documentary cinema (Czach 2006, 4). *Le Repas de bébé* is cinema’s originary home movie (and not *Workers Leaving the Factory* or *Arrival of a Train*<sup>12</sup>) precisely because of this relationship: “the home movie cannot simply be subsumed by the actuality [film]. What differentiates *Le Repas de bébé* from the other Lumière films is a matter of intimacy, familiarity and proximity evident between filmmaker and subject” (2006, 4). While Liz Czach is more interested in the questions of ethics raised by the public screening of private films, her argument about the performances in home movies is relevant because it connects the discourses of realism of early cinema with the discourses of immediacy of home movies. If the home movie “engenders a particular type of performance unlike other forms” (Czach 2006, 6), the look into the camera is decisive of how we recognize a home movie as truthful, natural and evidentiary.

To conclude, *Le Repas de bébé* emblemizes the way in which images of children

came to represent ideas of medium specificity at the beginnings of cinema history and also the performative exchange characteristic to home movies. The following chapters will focus on the articulation of this medium concept: what has become of the 'real' / immediacy concept represented by Andrée Lumière's image when the institution of the home movies emerged? What has become of the performative exchange between the filmed bodies and the camera in the first home movies?



### The History of the Complicity between Children and the Recording Process

With its promise of verisimilitude, the institution of the home movie can be a means to come closer to the child, to discover the child in her everyday world, to reconstruct a cultural history of childhood. At the same time, home movies are embedded in a visual culture, in a drive to perceive and to archive childhood photographically and cinematically; thus, childhood and family films<sup>13</sup> are interrelated institutions. By perceiving childhood visually, we transform children into corporeal images, and archive these images in a medium. Images of children are mediated, and, thus, mediation becomes part of childhood as well. Many generations have grown up with camera lenses pointed at them, and various amounts of photographs and films have been accumulated throughout their lives. These private photographs and films have both reflected and influenced lifestyles, relationships, modalities of paying-attention-to-each-other, the culture of remembrance, identity, and the culture of visual and material objects. As Heather Norris Nicholson puts it: "only with changes in parental attitudes and camera technologies have children begun to picture themselves" (Norris Nicholson 2001, 130).

Photographic cameras, video cameras,

phones and other devices have become accomplices of the adult filmmaker, and, at the same time, they have influenced the experience of childhood as well. The camera has become a third party indeed: parents are perceiving, paying attention to their child medially, and children meet them, interact with them (and even imagine themselves) in an increasingly mediated environment. That is why the emphasis here will not be on the way children's bodies are represented in home movies through the medium of film (the iconography of childhood), but rather on children's performances before and for the camera. How do children participate in the creation and mediation of their own image?

In family films the human figures very often turn to the camera and look at the camera, as if this makes them even more alive and more visible. According to my own research, the look into the camera occurs more often when children are pictured. The look into the camera does not only enhance the immediacy effect, but, in the meantime, it reflects on the process of how the film has been made. While there is a large body of literature discussing the images of children as figurations of life caught unaware, in home movies one encounters a large number of images of self-awareness in front of the camera. The recurrence of this behavior was noticed by the first how-to-do-it manuals, and, later, in the 1980s by research as well. Roger Odin (1995) considers the frequent look into the camera a figure, a trope of home movies, and uses it as an argument to explain that home movies are fragmentary and "bad films" on a textual level. Richard Chalfen describes it as "a repetitive pattern in the on-camera performance" (1987, 67). His description includes much more than the look into the camera: the frontality of the pose, the walk toward the camera or directly into the lens (mostly done by children), striking a pose, the "camera face", waving or hiding faces.

The almost continuous acknowledgement of the camera was recently reevaluated by Liz Czach as a distinctive feature of the

13) Up until the recent past, the dominant form of amateur filmmaking was represented by family filmmaking. The term "home movie" is used less and less often as a synonym of amateur filmmaking in new media culture, as it is increasingly replaced by the term "user-generated content". It is as if the concept of home movie is no longer sufficient to be used as a metaphor of amateur productions: the institution of the family has changed, films have left the social space of the home, technologies have changed, and the ways of usage have multiplied as well (cf. Blos-Jáni 2012).

14) It is by this date the earliest and the sole home movie collection made in the interwar period in Cluj-Napoca by a member of the bourgeoisie. Research has revealed that a member of the Transylvanian aristocracy, Baron János Kemény (1903–1971), also made home movies in the same period, but the whereabouts of these films are yet unknown.

15) Susan Aasman goes further by stating that home movies actually stimulated a new kind of fatherhood that was more involved with family life (Aasman 2009, 47). This can't be applied to this example, because amateur filmmaking wasn't a widespread practice in this region at that time, thus, it couldn't have triggered such changes in social roles.

16) The researchers of media domestication study the process in which information and communication technologies become part of the intimate space of the home and household. Domestication, therefore, is a process in which man and technology meet, thus making many "things" part of the home life: appliances, ideas, values and information. I have discussed the potential of this approach in respect to home movies in a previous article: Blos-Jáni 2013.

17) The media practices of the home movie makers differ from the habitus of the former generation: the already internalized habits and routines will change together with the media, as will the family histories. Media genealogy is an approach conceived by André Gaudreault and Philippe Marion to study the genealogy of media in their dynamics. In my previous papers I have tried to apply the interpretive model ▶

home movie performance aesthetic (2006, 2012). Through a survey of the ameliorative literature of home movies, which (in former times) negatively interpreted direct address as "poor acting" or "acting unnaturally", Czach reevaluates it as a unique attribute of home movies, a sign of crafted behavior, of "acting naturally" (cf. Czach 2012, 154). As home movie-makers do not try to hide the traces of this awareness, but rather tend to accentuate and celebrate them, home movie performances need to be considered presentational performances (Waugh 1993, 71–74; Czach 2012, 162–164), and, in this sense, they are genealogically linked to the presentational mode of early cinema (cf. Gunning 1986). Furthermore, Liz Czach (referring to Paul Arthur) emphasizes the "complicity between the social actors and the recording process" (2012, 164). Familial intimacy and proximity between subject and filmmaker characterizes this different kind of address: "thus, it isn't uncommon to feel like an interloper when watching the home movies of strangers" – concludes Liz Czach (2012, 164). As I see it, direct address reveals more than just a type of performativity / acting, a way of breaking the fourth wall into the lives of people. Looking into the camera includes the viewer in the familial intimacy between people and their media. The viewer gets invited into the way others experience media and feels included as a part of this media.

Pursuing these ideas, the following analysis looks into children's portraiture, stressing details that come to the fore when the actors are facing the camera, or address it with their gestures. The essay will examine what has become of the performative exchange of the primal home movie 30 years later, when the Cine Kodak, specialized home movie technology, was introduced to the market in 1923. The appearance of the new technology marks the emergence of a home media culture as well; in this paper this moment of transition will be exemplified by a Transylvanian home movie collection from the 1930s.



### Children Performing Photographically for the Movie Camera in the 1930s

Throughout the 1930s and 1940s, home movies became "a private version of modern visual memory making" – as Susan Aasman puts it (Aasman 2009, 48), one at whose center was the image of the child. The production of a family history, including the recording of happy moments from one's childhood, became part of the child-raising practice. The earliest Transylvanian home movie collection<sup>14</sup> dates back to this period; the films of the Orbán family were made in the interwar period in Cluj-Napoca, in the late 1920s and at the beginning of the 1930s. In conformity with the new ideology of domesticity, the medium of film got attached to the idea of fatherhood<sup>15</sup>, as it was the father of the family who domesticated the 16mm Cine Kodak equipment (distributed worldwide since 1923 and destined for amateurs, a kind of propagator of home movie-making). Lajos Orbán (1897–1972) was the person who adopted the locally scarcely known amateur cine-technology, brought it home to the courtyard of his bourgeois family home in order to record the three generations of his family and a few outstanding events of his city.

The story of the Lajos Orbán's home movie collection represents a singular case rather than a typical one, which offers an opportunity to examine the emergence of (new) amateur media practices. The appearance of the Cine Kodak camera doesn't indicate in itself the emergence of a new practice: it also takes the decision of people to use it in a certain way<sup>16</sup>; it represents the appropriation of the new device to the existing media practices<sup>17</sup>, and there are the relations between the filmmaker and his social world, which influence this practice. In this case, the brand new technology arrived in Cluj-Napoca sometime around 1927, in the Kováts P. Fiai photography



Fig. 5

shop, located in the centre of the city. The camera and the projector, together with a small screen, were sent by the manufacturer as a sample product to be exhibited in the storefront. But the managers of the shop didn't limit its use to this promotional aim, as Lajos Orbán, a partner in the business, decided to use it as an aid of memory, as an extension of photography in order to record city life and his family life. Thus, Lajos Orbán adopted the cine-technology to his child-raising duties (amongst other uses as well), and used it in the production / archiving of the family history.

The Orbán collection consists of 9 reels of 16mm film containing 19 sequences, out of which 14 scenes are about family life, mostly about children; the remaining 5 capture events related to friends, work and city life. All of these sequences contain the gesture of looking into the lens. By analyzing closely the scenes about family life, I have found 52 shots with children looking into the lens, while the case of adults glancing at the camera occurs 26 times (12 times including women's gaze, 14 times including men's gaze). As most of the shots are close-ups, medium shots or full shots, the effect of direct address is enhanced by the proper visibility of the faces. The acknowledgement of the camera is also detectable in the frontal placement of the actors, and in their movement, which is perpendicular to the camera axis (fig. 5).

The films bear the traces of the

filmmaker's media practices, especially the routines developed for taking photographs. He was an acclaimed amateur photographer<sup>18</sup> as well as an amateur writer, poet and painter. His moving images often show photographic situations, subjects; they also depict men with photo cameras, walking around while taking pictures. Even in his movie made with the purpose of demonstrating the possibilities of the new medium (not capturing his family, but rather his entourage), Lajos Orbán immortalizes the enthusiasm of the photo-amateur.<sup>19</sup> The photographic influence also manifests itself in the presentational performances<sup>20</sup> of the people, mostly children, who appear in this home movie collection.

This recurrent performative style of children consists of the following: first they are recorded performing non-awareness, as being engaged in and absorbed by an everyday activity (fig. 6).



Fig. 6

Children are shown playing in the snow, with a rattle, with dolls and kitchen accessories, with a dog or within a group of kids, corresponding to the genre types of the "romantic child" described by Anne Higonnet, dating back to mid-19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>21</sup>. Their elegant outdoor clothing suggests that the situation they are participating in is an artificial one, directed by the filmmaker (fig. 7). There is a recurrent scene in the home movie collection: children, accompanied by an adult, walk along a path near the house, and the shooting starts when they are at a

► 17) of media genealogy to home movies and videos (cf. Bloss-Jáni 2013) and I have analyzed one of Lajos Orbán's films based on its theoretical conclusions (cf. Bloss-Jáni 2014).

18) Besides working at the photography shop, Lajos Orbán was often invited to give lectures on photography; he organized local photo-contests and was member of a society of amateur photographers named the Tassar Teke Society. He had also won several international amateur photography contests.

19) The short clip entitled *The Walk of Photography Apprentices* exemplifies what the medium of the film meant for these people: the movie shows a group of people taking a walk in the city, and then taking a break on a meadow to make photographs. Thus the film actually reveals a paradoxical situation: moving images about people showing enthusiasm for photography. From this point of view the film reveals a media practice subordinated to the photographic practice of the period. For an in-depth analysis of the film cf. Bloss-Jáni 2014, 141–143.

20) When home movie-makers do not try to hide the traces of the camera awareness, but rather tend to highlight and celebrate them, home movie performances need to be considered presentational performances (cf. Waugh 1993, 71–74).

21) Anne Higonnet differentiates the following genre types in the visual illustrations of Romantic childhood: costumed children, children with pets, fairy children derived from earlier cupid figures, babies with mothers and children playing at adult roles (Higonnet 1998).



Fig. 7



Fig. 8

distant angle. As they approach the camera, their absorptive performance changes when they start to interact with the filmmaker / technical apparatus, thus performing camera-awareness (fig. 8). As they stop performing their everyday roles, their movement halts as well, as long as they are making eye contact with the camera. Rarely do even adults behave like this in front of the camera: the mother walking, feeding her baby, playing with her child stops and looks into the camera as if waiting for some kind of acknowledgment.

This on-off state of performing camera consciousness or performing non-awareness is simultaneously present in a scene depicting the filmmaker-father with his wife and daughter. Probably made with the assistance of the filmmaker's brother, the couple with their child is framed in front of a neutral wall, facing the camera, but not looking at it (fig. 9). As the film rolls up, the father starts looking and waving at the camera, in order to catch his daughter's attention, and convince her to imitate his gesture and address the camera as well (fig. 10). In the meantime, the mother starts to throw a little ball, hoping to catch the child's attention to playing with her (and not looking out of the frame).

This gesture of waving often returns on the screen, even when infants are shown alone, presumably because they are imitating the filmmaker's hand movements, who tries to attract their direct look from

behind the camera (fig. 11). All the scenes featuring children contain the moment of addressing the camera: either performed out of sheer curiosity, or responding to the interpellation of the father / cameraman.

In the moments of camera consciousness, the movement of the body is restricted, and this stillness seems to affect the medium as well. The eye contact with the camera withholds the flow of everyday life, foregrounding the spectacle of the face, becoming an example of haptic visibility. The look of the subject in a photograph is



Fig. 9



Fig. 10

Fig. 11



an image where the portrayed person takes over and refuses to become an object to be looked at. According to Charles Wolfe, “this effect depends upon the affective power of a medium, on its negative dimension, with the capacity to generate impressions, through a process of optical reversals, long after a subject has vanished” (Wolfe 1987, 69). One might say that children’s look in home movies reveals, discloses their character the most; these are instances when the embodiment reaches its maximum (in the sense that Hans Belting uses this term cf. Belting 2005), and moving images become an analogue of children’s being and personality (not fully comprehensible otherwise).

But children’s faces directed towards the camera are more than convincing examples of the presentational mode of home movies; furthermore, they are those instants when everyday people stop in order to become and to perform an image of themselves.

The convention of presenting oneself explicitly for the camera is a presentational performance rooted in photography, as Thomas Waugh suggests (1993, 68). The experience of being looked at through the photographic lens is described by Roland Barthes in *Camera Lucida* as follows: “once I feel myself observed by the lens, everything changes: I constitute myself in the process of ‘posing,’ I instantaneously make another body for myself, I transform myself in advance into an image” [...] In other words, a strange action: I do not stop imitating myself” (Barthes 1981, 10–13). But are children capable of constructing a pose, of projecting an image of themselves? Hans Belting’s answer is negative: the child whose sense of self is not yet formed cannot play himself; thus, his body cannot represent a self-image, it is merely blunt, defenseless (Belting 2003, 106). And yet, these home movies show children performing a pose.

There is a sequence in the Orbán family film collection, which can be viewed as a theatrical version of the enactment of the self. Starting with a title card bearing the words “Öcskö és Csibu” (the children’s names) and the date of the recording (1932. 1. 17.), we become the spectators of the theatre of the family: the mother’s face and those of her children appear behind a miniature curtain and they start to perform their everyday roles (fig. 12-13).

The little boy and girl are shown sitting at their table handcrafting, but they suspend their activity in order to look at the camera.

Fig. 12



Fig. 13







Fig. 14



Fig. 15



Fig. 16



Fig. 17

Afterwards, they play in their room – strongly lit by two lamps – performing direct address multiple times as they present their toys for the camera (fig. 14-15). The mother and the father step into the frame and the father occupies a large armchair, while his wife stands by his shoulders and looks into the camera, as if posing for a studio photograph of a married couple. Their children enter the frame too (fig. 16-17). The scene looks like an anticipation of being photographed, as a rehearsal of a family pose. The family portrait is completed (fig. 18).

To different degrees, the artificiality of the scene is detectable in all the films of the Orbán family. Moreover, this constructed-ness

is multilayered: there is the production of the film, and there is the production of images to be filmed. While the members of the family collaborate in order to produce a film about themselves, there is another image production at the level of the actors, performing themselves photographically. Although these films contain scenes



Fig. 18

that show children acknowledging the filmmaking process, it is not a real collaboration; it is part of a choreographed performance (fig. 19). The performative exchange between children as subjects and the movie camera shows the signs of parental and directorial guidance. Their behavior suggests respect and subordination to the camera, as if to a father figure; the movie camera has paternal attributes.

Especially one photograph taken by Orbán Lajos is indicative of this relationship. The photograph shows a little girl handling a photo camera although she is too short for the tripod (fig. 20). She wears a bonnet and a coat, resembling a miniature adult. The artificiality of this *mise-en-scène* was confirmed by the interviews with family members: children were not allowed to handle or touch their father's photo cameras; image-making machines were not to be used as child play. Thus, a child participating in the production of his or her image is a kind of fiction that resulted from the blending of



parental care and the photographer's visual imagination. Their corporeality, the abrupt changes of mood, their facial expressions are tamed, domesticated in order to achieve the representation that their parents imagined for them. No tears were shed while the film was rolling. Their facial expressions and grimaces are restricted to a smile or a nod, there is no corporeality similar to the Lumière baby's image depicting her unruly, not yet civilized facial transformations and carnality (eating, getting smeary).



### Conclusions

Images of children are central to many aspects of understanding the symbiotic relationship between everyday life and the medium of the moving image as encountered in home movies. The Transylvanian movie collection from the 1930s examined in this article offers a glimpse into the childhood of the interwar period at the point when the institution of the home movie emerged. Photographic and movie cameras structured children's lives, as taking their picture became the turning point where the experience of everyday life becomes a visual experience. The children of the Orbán family, as the analysis of the films has shown, were not in control of their representation rather their father was. In that position of authority, he directed them towards postures reminiscing photographs, and recorded these images on film. In the meantime, with his frontal compositions and imperatives that his children look into the camera, the filmmaker thrives at opening up the opacity of the medium: he makes his best to produce images as tangible as reality. Thus, paradoxically, immediacy is achieved through the intermedial relations of photography and film. Besides the cultural imagination and visual expectations of their parents, the direct address performed by children bears

the traces of this mediality.

Although very similar to the Orbán children at a first glance, the performance of Andrée Lumière in front of her uncle's camera discloses a different type of mediality and a different kind of "real". While the photographic background is a common denominator of Louis Lumière and Lajos Orbán, their photographic skills influenced the outcome of their first moving images to different degrees. In the Lumière film, the choice of framing might have photographic origins, but the actors' performances are not reminiscent of photographic poses. The parents are looking inside the frame, hiding their faces, thus performing non-awareness all along: this performance does not coincide with the 19<sup>th</sup> century photographic habits. The corporeality of the Lumière baby is cinematized in a distinct manner as well: she is not instructed to behave in a more civilized manner; her facial expressions seem to be devoid of any formality and are contingent. The baby and her parents' performance supports, in fact, a performance on the level of the medium: they work together with the filmmaker in order to produce the effect of immediacy, they participate in the figuration of the "real", demonstrating the possibilities of the new medium. In this case the "real" is remediated by the medium of film, foregrounded here as an authentic medium, and the corporeal image of the baby eating becomes a statement about this mediality. In this respect, the Orbán children do not



22) This kind of intermediality, characteristic of the early days of the home movie is described by the literature of the home visual media (Chalfen 1987, Odin 2010). In her recent article (*The Photographic Hangover: Reconsidering the Aesthetics of the Postwar 8mm Home Movie*), Maija Howe analyses the attitude towards this intermediality in the ameliorative literature written after the Second World War for amateur filmmakers (Howe 2014, 39–50).

look into the camera like the Lumière baby. Their bodily performances, their corporeal image can be read as a site of intermedial relations between photography and film, characteristic to the early period of home movies<sup>22</sup>.

Thus, this home movie collection is intriguing not because it is a representative case of home visual media usage in the region. It is rather a relevant case from the theoretical question of this article: what kind of mediality is revealed by the corporeal

images of children from the first home movies? The Orbán home movies exemplify what the medium of the film meant when its uses started broadening, and the ways in which the dissemination of the medium did influence the idea of domesticity and the image of childhood.

*This work was supported by a grant of the Romanian Ministry of National Education, CNCS – UEFISCDI, project number PN-II-ID-PCE-2012-4-0573.*

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ariès, Philippe. 1962. *Centuries of Childhood. A Social History of Family Life*. New York: Vintage.
- Arthur, Paul. 2005. *A Line of Sight. American Avant-garde Film Since 1965*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Aasman, Susan. 2009. "Home Movies: a New Technology, a New Duty, a New Cultural Practice." In *Private Eyes and the Public Gaze: The Manipulation and Valorisation of Amateur Images*, Sonja Kmec and Viviane Thill eds., 45–54. Trier: Kliomedia.
- Barthes, Roland. 1981. *Camera Lucida. Reflections on Photography*. New York: Hill and Wang.
- Belting, Hans. 2005. "Image, Medium, Body. A New Approach to Iconology." *Critical Inquiry*. 31 (2): 302–319.
- Belting, Hans. 2003. [2001] *Kép-antropológia. Képtudományi vázlatok*. Budapest: Kijárat Kiadó.
- Blos-Jáni Melinda. 2012. "The nomads of media- and family histories. Rethinking the moving images of families in the age of user-generated content." In *Acta Universitatis Sapientiae. Film and Media Studies*. 5: 21–34.
- Blos-Jáni Melinda. 2013. "Home Movies as Everyday Media Histories. Approaching Home Made Imagery (as Old Media) in the Age of New Media." In *Panoptikum. Dokumentalizacje*. 12 (19): 121–131.
- Blos-Jáni Melinda. 2014. "Home Movies as Everyday Media and Family Histories. From Amateur Photography to Film-making – from Celluloid Film to Video." In *A qui appartient la tradition? / Who owns the tradition?* ed. Keszeg Vilmos, 136–145. Cluj-Napoca: EME.
- Bolter, Jay David–Grusin, Richard. 1998. *Remediation: Understanding New Media*. MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts.
- Bown, Sue. 2001. *An Investigation into the Contemporary Anxiety Surrounding the Photographic Representation of Childhood*. MA thesis, manuscript.
- Brown, Tom. 2012. *Breaking the Fourth Wall. Direct Address in the Cinema*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Burch, Noël. 1990. *Life to those Shadows*. London: British Film Institute.
- Curtis, Scott. 2011. "Tangible as Tissue: Arnold Gesell, Infant Behavior and Film Analysis." In *Science in Context*. 24 (3): 417–442.
- Chalfen, Richard. 1987. *Snapshot Versions of Life*. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press.
- Czach, Liz. 2006. "From *Repas de bébé* to *Tarnation*." *Interin*. Vol. 1. Nr. 1. Open access journal: <http://interin.utp.br/index.php/vol11/article/view/147/132>. Last accessed at: 2015.06.10.
- Czach, Liz. 2012. "Acting and Performance in Home Movies and Amateur Film." In *Theorizing Film Acting*, Aaron Taylor (ed.), 152–166. New York: Routledge.
- Gunning, Tom. 1986. "The Cinema of Attractions: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde." *Wide Angle*. 8 (3–4): 63–70.
- Higonnet, Anne. 1998. *Pictures of Innocence. The History and Crisis of Ideal Childhood*. New York: Thames & Hudson.
- Howe, Maija. 2014. "The Photographic Hangover: Reconsidering the Aesthetics of the Postwar 8mm Home Movie." In *Amateur Filmmaking. The Home Movie, the Archive, the Web*, Laura Rascaroli – Gwenda Young – Barry Monahan (eds.), 39–50. London: New York: Bloomsbury.
- Lebeau, Vicky. 2008. *Childhood and Cinema*. London: Reaktion Books.
- Margitházi Beja. 2012. "'Last night I was in the Kingdom of Shadows...': The Role of Body and Senses in Various 'First Contact' Narratives." *Apertúra*. 8 (1). Open access journal: <http://uj.apertura.hu/2012/osz/margithazi-the-role-of-body-and-senses/>. Last accessed at: 2015.06.10.
- Mirzoeff, Nicholas. 1999. *An Introduction to Visual Culture*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Norris Nicholson, Heather. 2001. "Seeing it how it was? Childhood, memory and identity in home-movies." *Area* (special issue on Geographies of Childhood). 33 (2): 128–140.

Odin, Roger. 2010. [1995] "El cine doméstico en la institución familiar." In Efrén Cuevas Álvarez (ed.). *La casa abierta. El cine doméstico y sus reciclajes contemporáneos*. 39–60. Madrid: Ocho y Medio. The Spanish translation is based on the French original: *Le film de famille dans l'institution familiale*. In *Le film de famille. Usage privé, usage public*, ed. Roger Odin, 27–41. Paris: Meridiens Klincksieck.

Sadoul, George. 1966. *Louis Lumière*. București: Editura Științifică.

Waugh, Thomas. 1993. "Acting to Play Oneself": Notes on Performance in Documentary." In *Making Visible the Invisi-*

*ble: An Anthology of Original Essays on Film Acting*, ed. Carol Zucker, 64–91. Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press.

Herbert, Stephen. 1996. "Joséphine Léocadie Andrée Lumière. Famous Film Baby." In Stephen Herbert; Luke McKernan (eds.): *Who's Who in Victorian Cinema*. <http://www.victorian-cinema.net/andreelumiere.php>. Last accessed at: 2015.06.10.

Wolfe, Charles. 1987. "Direct Address and the social documentary photograph, Annie Mae Gudger as a negative subject." *Wide Angle*. 9 (1): 59–70.



# MARTOR



---

Title: "Making Sense of the Sapiential Body. A Reading of the Sense Organs in Proverbs"

Author: Raluca Boboc

How to cite this article: Boboc, Raluca. 2015. "Making Sense of the Sapiential Body. A Reading of the Sense Organs in Proverbs". *Martor* 20: 123-139.

Published by: *Editura MARTOR* (MARTOR Publishing House), *Muzeul Țăranului Român* (The Museum of the Romanian Peasant)

URL: <http://martor.muzeultaranuluiroman.ro/archive/768-2/>

---

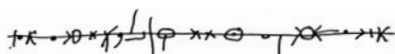
*Martor* (The Museum of the Romanian Peasant Anthropology Review) is a peer-reviewed academic journal established in 1996, with a focus on cultural and visual anthropology, ethnology, museum studies and the dialogue among these disciplines. *Martor* review is published by the Museum of the Romanian Peasant. Its aim is to provide, as widely as possible, a rich content at the highest academic and editorial standards for scientific, educational and (in)formational goals. Any use aside from these purposes and without mentioning the source of the article(s) is prohibited and will be considered an infringement of copyright.

*Martor* (Revue d'Anthropologie du Musée du Paysan Roumain) est un journal académique en système *peer-review* fondé en 1996, qui se concentre sur l'anthropologie visuelle et culturelle, l'ethnologie, la muséologie et sur le dialogue entre ces disciplines. La revue *Martor* est publiée par le Musée du Paysan Roumain. Son aspiration est de généraliser l'accès vers un riche contenu au plus haut niveau du point de vue académique et éditorial pour des objectifs scientifiques, éducatifs et informationnels. Toute utilisation au-delà de ces buts et sans mentionner la source des articles est interdite et sera considérée une violation des droits de l'auteur.

*Martor* is indexed by EBSCO and CEEOL.

# Making Sense of the Sapiential Body

## A reading of the sense organs in *Proverbs*



**Raluca Boboc**

Teaching fellow at the University of Bucharest, Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literatures

### ABSTRACT

In the book of Proverbs, body metaphors are plentiful. Conceived as an invitation to an assumed literal reading of a text presenting a doctrine of wisdom in a language abounding in images of the body, this paper is a challenge to discern Hebrew mechanisms of representing corporeality by means of philologic investigation. The target is to set strategies of reading the body in the text by focusing on the sense organs. This exercise rewards by the approach to the human body it reveals and contributes to the reconstruction of the worldview encapsulated in the Old Hebrew language.

### KEYWORDS

body, wisdom, metaphor, sense, worldview

The body in academic literature is more of a cover name for our dilemmas than being one in itself. But, however misleading as an academic subject, the body pays a price big enough to be the “new historiographical menu of the day” (Roy 2001, 236), by “reflecting the intellectual world which has studied its meanings and contexts” long before its becoming an intellectual trend (Diemling 2009, 1).

The body in the book of *Proverbs* is itself a container of a worldview – which is undoubtedly best encapsulated in the original Hebrew language text. As a matter of fact, the approach to the *Proverbs*<sup>1</sup> put forward in the following pages has been inspired by contact with the language of the Hebrew original text in contrast with some of its different translations. But once the *presence of the body* has been noticed in the original language of the sapiential writing, representations of the body have turned into the subject of a stimulating analysis feeding upon a striking abundance of corporeal images in the Hebrew original text and reflected, to a higher or a lower

extent, by its translations<sup>2</sup>. I have practically embarked on a quest to capitalize the body in the corporeal metaphors abounding in the text.

My target, by focusing my investigation on the specific case of the sense organs, has been to decode the symbolic way in which the human body is represented within the frame of the particular cultural space of Hebrew sapiential literature. Admittedly, featuring such an exercise involves probing a space more generally associated with a mental horizon, which is ultimately a space gaining expression in a certain language and bearing the mark of a certain mental gear. So by its sense organs, the human body is looked at as a cultural artefact shaped by language, which in our case is the Hebrew language.

Of course, my analysis does not rely on interrogating an anthropologic doctrine which is thematically put forth by the text, as in the book of *Genesis*, but in discovering the body in the language of the text. Therefore, my paper does not raise questions about any doctrine about the body exposed by the old Hebrew sapiential

1) In this article the following list of abbreviations will be used:  
- Prov Proverbs  
- LXX Septuaginta  
- Sin The Bible (Synod Version)  
- KJ King James Bible  
- NAS New American Standard Bible

2) Some of which are made, as is well known, after LXX, as is the case of Sin.

literature, but rather discusses the teaching mediated by the *Proverbs* through its very expression. This study is about *initiating* the reader in self-knowledge, but this *initiation* – used in its strict epistemological meaning and without any religious colour – refers to accessing the knowledge about the human being (and, implicitly, about the human body) by reading the *Proverbs*, a book written in a very corporeal language and having an emblematic sapiential value. This value indicates, besides a strong didactic dimension at a thematic level, also an implicit didactic dimension, able to mediate the acquisition of the doctrine of wisdom expressed by the *Proverbs* as a handbook of such. So it is the corporeal language of the book which claims responsibility for its initiating value. Since the reader's access to the teachings about the human being and, implicitly, about the human body is made through the language of the book, the plentiful metaphors, especially in the original Hebrew, deserve to be considered as playing a role in the initiation of the reader in an anthropological doctrine.

Analysing the body in a text and, thereby, looking into the way the body acquires expression in a certain language – which, in its turn, functions as an ambassador of a particular mindset – is an exercise of body discourse analysis and, automatically, belonging to a tradition of research initiated by Foucault. Therefore, methodologically speaking, the exercise I am putting forth is post-Foucauldian<sup>3</sup>. However, being conceptually contained in a stage before the body-soul separation, a stage which would allow us to discover that the Bible man does not *have* a body, but rather he *is* a body while equally and simultaneously *being* a soul, my quest addresses a reality which is impossible to circumscribe to the post-Foucauldian mental stage<sup>4</sup>.

Ultimately, deriving a conception about the human body from a discourse which is about acquiring wisdom while being articulated in a language abounding in body metaphors means nothing but racing

after the real body by probing its metaphoric expression in the text. And this is a matter of figurative language. In a way, the approach to metaphor may be seen as the very stake of the entire quest, the expectation being that the Hebrew mechanism of metaphorization, which is making abundant use of the human body parts, should initiate us into a new way of thinking about the body, introducing a different corporeal mindset.

The materiality of the Bible language and, generally, of the biblical horizon of representations has received enough attention in literature, a lot of stress having been laid on the fact that “the pronounced physicality of the image indicates that the biblical writers perceive no split between body and soul. Greek philosophy aims to *rise above* the body and its needs. By contrast, Israelite wisdom imbues the whole person: body, mind and spirit (see 14:30, 17:22)” (Davis 2000, 40). What has definitely not been stressed upon so far is that the *language of the Bible itself is the very vehicle transporting this particular mentality about the body*. The target of my approach is to explore this vehicle. For this reason, the linguistic coordinates of the source will be heavily exploited, the core of my approach being centered on discussing the use of metaphor and stereometry – a literary device related to metaphor and considered a specificity of the biblical style.

A source of everlasting debate among interpreters of the Bible, the question of the choice between a literal reading and one in a figurative key is practically a fundamental issue for all readers of the Bible (Macky 1990, 1). But looking into a few examples related to the parts of the mouth: “In the mouth of the foolish *is* a rod of pride: but the lips of the wise shall preserve them” (Proverb 14:3 KJV), or “A divine sentence *is* in the lips of the king: his mouth transgresseth not in judgment” (Proverb 16:10 KJV), one can easily see that, when tackling the issue of the body in the text, it is invariably metaphors we are talking about. And speaking about

3) The body being studied as a reality structured by language starting from Michel Foucault's book translated by Alan Sheridan, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* 1977. London: Penguin.

4) Roger Cooter outlines the research directions in body studies following Foucault's somatic turn in historical scholarship in his article “The Turn of the Body: History and the Politics of the Corporeal” published in 2010 in *Arbor Ciencia, Pensamiento y cultura*.

a sapiential text, hinged on the general theme of acquiring wisdom, a text in which access to the body is made almost exclusively through the metaphoric images containing it, one can automatically range the metaphoricalizing mechanism among the instruments employed for working out the sapiential theme. The parts of the body are most of the time vehicles of metaphors speaking about the acquisition of wisdom, so the challenge we are taking upon ourselves involves discussing a body whose presence is *in the vehicle* of the metaphors contained in the text and *not in its tenors*; in the text discussed, the body is rather the image by which a reality is hinted at and not the reality hinted at itself.

Far from aiming at giving a definition of metaphor<sup>5</sup>, we just need to highlight a standpoint defended, from different perspectives, both by the French philosopher Paul Ricoeur in his *Métaphore vive* (Ricoeur, 1975) and by the American linguists Georges Lakoff and Mark Johnson in their *Metaphors we live by* (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980), i.e. that the metaphoric is a category involved in shaping systems that structure our perception of reality and influence our worldview. The way in which a metaphor rewrites reality can disclose something essential about how this is structured in the mental horizon which has produced it.

Metaphor has long been debated between linguists whose dealing with the problem has been confined to semantics. Important contributions in this area have been made either in favour of the theory of substitution in metaphor (in the sense that the meaning of a word is transferred to another one based on their similarity), with researchers insisting on the distinction between tenor or target (what is hinted at, the subject to which attributes are ascribed) and vehicle or source (the image through which one makes the hint or rather the object whose attributes are borrowed) or in favour of the theory of tension in metaphor, with researchers focusing mainly on the importance of the context in revealing the

meaning of a metaphor, which cannot be traced otherwise than by circumscribing it to a certain context<sup>6</sup>. But there is an intersection point of the two theories and that is Paul Ricoeur's *living metaphors*<sup>7</sup> – expressions which re-create or re-describe reality through fiction. According to his integrating definition, metaphor is a discourse strategy serving the poetic function of language; through metaphor, language gets rid of its plain descriptive function and reaches the mythical level. Metaphor liberates the revealing function of language. Thereby, we can take the risk of using the term *metaphoric truth* to designate the realistic intention involved in the power of poetic language (Ricoeur 1984, 380).

This creative, reality-moulding power of metaphor has also been referred to by linguists George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in their book about *dead metaphors* (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). By analysing the words of these literalized metaphors which have become conventional (which most people do not even accept to call metaphors), Lakoff and Johnson hold that albeit used unconsciously, such dead metaphors constitute principles of structuring thinking. And they are strongly backed by arguments coming from today's cognitive research to confirm that literalization of a metaphor does not mean it no longer influences thinking, but rather, on the contrary, it actually shapes it (Lakoff and Turner 1999). Just as Paul Ricoeur, though referencing a completely different kind of metaphors, Lakoff and Johnson consider the metaphoric category as a moulder of systems which structure our perception of reality and influence our worldview.

Without using Ricoeur's or Lakoff and Johnson's *living* or *dead metaphors*, we will just retain this idea of metaphor being a linguistic technique addressing the very core of a worldview. This is also the meaning we will henceforth give to the notion of metaphor, analysing it as an expression able to re-describe or re-create reality through fiction, having the power to structure our

5) According to Oxford dictionary online, <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com>, metaphor is a figure of speech in which a word or phrase is applied to an object or action to which it is not literally applicable. It is used about a thing regarded as representative or symbolic of something else.

6) See more on this Ana-Maria Dudu's article "Metafora – între inerția tradiției și modernitate" in: *Agata Literară* Nr. 1/2014. Botoșani: Editura Agata. Online: [www.agata.ro/arhiva-agata-literara](http://www.agata.ro/arhiva-agata-literara).

7) See the translation by Irina Mavrodin of Paul Ricoeur's *Métaphore vive*. Paul Ricoeur. 1984. *Metafora vie*, București: Ed. Univers.



thinking. The body metaphors analyzed in this article will serve to probe the way these re-create, through the text, the skeleton of a worldview, i.e. the old Israelites' view on the body.

The *Proverbs*, a text whose theme is sapiencial, but whose *flesh* is thick with body metaphors, grants the body the role of a vehicle and not of a tenor, the body being contained in the text as an image serving for discussing a sapiencial reality. Considering that this vehicle, by the way it gets expression in the language, reveals something essential about the conception of the author upon the human body, I advocate a literal reading of the body in the text, drawing special attention to the fact that the lexical preferences of the original Hebrew text always support a certain materiality of the image, whereas several of its translations either psychologize or spiritualize the text.

The assumed literal reading I am hereby putting forward of the corporeal representations behind the body metaphors is by no means a reductionist interpretation. The exercise is not to disregard and place constraints and limitations to the interpretative richness of the text; on the contrary, capitalizing the literal reading of the body involves enriching the interpretation of the text with a measure of corporeal awareness; it basically means taking the body into account when discussing the human experiences which make the thematic substance of the text. Actually, the use of the proposed hermeneutic approach serves no other purpose than to help acknowledging that human beings ultimately participate *in the body* or rather in their unity of living material entities in all the actions and events of their *being* in the world, according to the way these actions and events are described by *Proverbs*.

More often than not, the body in the language has been overlooked on behalf of stereometry, which is a mere literary device representing an aesthetic preference of Bible authors. Stereometry, which represents a

synthesis of metonymy and synecdoche defined as the use, based on a common denominator, of another term from the same lexical family, is often invoked by interpreters of the Bible to explain the fact that, in most of the cases where parts of the body are present in the text of the Bible, what is actually hinted at is the human being as a whole.

In his *Anthropology of the Old Testament*, a reference work in the field of Bible Studies, Hans Walter Wolff counts stereometry among the hallmarks of Hebrew poetry; it is typical of the Hebrew imagination in its effort to catch in very few words the infinite nuances of human experience to use, within Bible parallelisms, some parts of the body in the place of others or of the body as a whole: "Stereometric thinking, thus, simultaneously presupposes a synopsis of the members and organs of the human body with their capacities and functions. It is *synthetic* thinking, which by naming the part of the body means its function" (Wolff 1974, 8). This gets manifested, according to Wolff, "not by the use of terms which are clearly differentiated one from the other, but by the opposite means, namely by the juxtaposition of words related in meaning. This stereometric thinking pegs out the sphere of man's existence by enumerating his characteristic organs, thus circumscribing man as a whole" (Wolff 1974, 8).

Under the influence of this stereometric and synthetic thinking which is a hallmark of Bible expression, all textual reconstructions of a human being have, by naming the characteristic organs, the effect not of an abstract image, but of a whole, of a complete radiography, even in the concrete cases when reference is made to just one part of his or her body:

גַּמְלָה בַּפֶּשׁוּ אִישׁ חָסֵד וְעֹבֵר שְׂאֵרוֹ אֲכַזְרִי: *Mashal 11:17*

The merciful man doeth good to his own soul: but *he that is* cruel troubleth his own flesh. (KJV)

Arguably, this explanation completely disregards the preference of the text for

one or another of the body components in the text, thereby completely ignoring a whole series of implications which the respective representation has upon the general message of the text. Of course, in over 90% of these cases, the body parts in the *Proverbs* are used metaphorically and metonymically. But saying that the meaning behind all these uses is purely aesthetic would involve disregarding a great deal of the richness of the sense. It would ultimately mean ignoring the fact that behind all these literary means there is something being said about the wisdom relative to human beings represented through the components of their physical body. It is by no means accidental that what is being said is being said through different, concrete, corporeal images, images full of *bones, hands, legs, livers, lips, kidneys* and *hearts* – something which is absolutely fundamental for the way in which the reader perceives the message of the Bible. The materiality of this message is saying something essential about the significance of the real body, which in the old Israelites' mindset is irreducible, being *the human person himself or herself*.



## The Mouthparts

The mouthparts with their double, digestive and verbal function offer a unique opportunity of confronting Bible stereometry. Through their digestive function, more exactly by evoking the sense of taste which is the primary association of the mouthparts, references are more often than not made to the verbal function. The fact that the references to the verbal function are very frequently hidden behind references to the digestive one allows us to signal a certain centrality of the corporeal element in the discharge of both functions. Attention upon the verbal function being drawn by the common topos of both functions, i.e. the mouthparts, awareness

of their fundamental inter-relatedness is raised in the reader, who is thereby challenged to see the body as a common denominator and a manifestation ground for both functions. By insisting in such a manner upon the mouthparts as a topos of both functions, the body is revealed as a primary and irreducible reality and as a topos for the manifestation of human acts.

כי נפת תטפנה שפתי זרה וחלק משמן חכה *Mashal 5:3*

For the lips of a strange woman drop as an honeycomb, and her mouth is smoother than oil. (KJV)

For the lips of an adulteress drip honey, and smoother than oil is her speech. (NAS)

Nu te uita la femeia lingușitoare, căci buzele celei străine picură miere și cerul gurii sale e mai alunecător decât untdelemnul. (Sin)

The text in Hebrew maintains a semantic coherence keeping the term *khek* (palate) for references related to the sense of taste and introduces another component of the mouthparts for imagining its verbal function; the transformation of sweetness into bitterness is hereby transferred from the sensorial level to that of the mouth as a whole, which turns from an abode of sweet words into a sharp two-edged sword. The sense of taste and this strategy of invoking transformations at a perceptive level are not only vehicles of an allegory describing the mechanism of seduction, but also models able to show how the process of seduction functions, a seduction involving mind and body alike. Following the beguiling of Adam and Eve described in Genesis 3:6<sup>8</sup>, the seduction process engages the human being as a whole; starting with the level of the body, all levels are touched. The senses, nevertheless, play an essential role.

To reinforce the role played by the body element in the act of seduction, the verse 22:14 compares the alluring mouth with a deep hole of the kind used in hunting – a comparison meant to portray the deceived as a prey. Judging from the strongly moralizing

8) "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat" (Gen 3:6 KJV).

perspective of the verse, the victimization of the deceived is double, the final causality being reported, as always in the Bible, to God. The man who lets himself seduced by the foreign (harlot) woman<sup>9</sup> is punished directly by God, the assigning of final causalities (good or bad) to Divinity being a very important step in formulating a monotheistic conception by the Old Israelites.

**Mashal 22:14** שִׁוְתָהּ עֲמָקָה כִּי גִרֹת וְעֹבֵם יְהִיָּה (פּוֹלֵ-  
[יִפְלֵ-]אָשָׁם:

The mouth of strange women is a deep pit: he that is abhorred of the LORD shall fall therein. (KJ)

The mouth of an adulteress is a deep pit; He who is cursed of the LORD will fall into it. (NAS)

O groapă fără fund este gura femeilor străine; cel ce este lovit de mânia Domnului cade în ea. (Sin)

But the words of the foreign female seducer are not the only sources of deception. Many other verses refer to the lies, falsehood and slyness produced by the mouth, lips and tongue of the wicked and the foolish; the lack of truth and perversity – as distortion of meaning or its erroneous use – is often mentioned, many of the terms used in describing the mouth of the wicked laying even more emphasis on the idea of perverting the truth.

**Mashal 4:24** הַסֵּר בְּמִדָּה עֵקֶשׁוֹת בָּהּ וְלִנְוֹת שִׁפְתֵי־הָרֶגֶת  
הַרְתֵּם מִמֶּנּוּ:

Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee. (KJ)

Put away from you a deceitful mouth, And put devious lips far from you. (NAS)

Leapădă din gura ta orice cuvinte cu înțeles sucit, alungă de pe buzele tale viclenia. (Sin)

**Mashal 20:17** עֲרֹב לְאִישׁ לֶחֶם שֶׁקֶר וְאַחֲרַיִם יִמְלֵא-בָהֶן הַחֶזֶץ:

Bread of deceit is sweet to a man; but afterwards his mouth shall be filled with gravel. (KJ)

Bread obtained by falsehood is sweet to a

man, But afterward his mouth will be filled with gravel. (NAS)

Bună e la gust pâinea agonisită cu înșelăciune, dar după aceea gura se umple de pietricele. (Sin)

Verse 4:24 above contains two metaphoric descriptions, in which the genitive constructions of the *status constructus* type discuss the falsity of the mouth and perversity of the lips. Verse 20:17 is the result of a larger metaphorizing scheme capitalizing the anatomic element through more potent stylistic preferences. Semantically, the image is created by two highly suggestive visual coordinates: *bread* and *stone*. Their joining together, in the context of the symbolism of the mouth, opens the perspective of a sudden break at a perceptive level, announcing an ontologic experience later capitalized by Christian symbolism. This will offer a reversed image of the symbolic representation of the mouth which by the sweet taste of bread is tempted into swallowing the stone; the representation of the mouth of hell likewise defeated through Christ's resurrection receives a positive value.

The rod contained in the mouth of the foolish, itself a metaphor for the words pronounced by the lips of the foolish, and which are turning against himself accusing him on the ground of his own words, that is another example confessing the materiality – of an extremely high variety in the *Proverbs* – of the *mouth metaphors*:

**Mashal 14:3** בְּפִי-אֵוִיל תֵּשֶׁר גְּאֹנָה וּשְׁפָתַי תִּכְלְמוּ  
תִשְׁמְרוּם:

In the mouth of the foolish is a rod of pride: but the lips of the wise shall preserve them. (KJ)

In the mouth of the foolish is a rod for his back. But the lips of the wise will preserve them. (NAS)

În gura celui nebun este varga mândriei lui; buzele pe cei înțelepți îi păzesc. (Sin)

The geography of the body is gradually

9) The Hebrew word is *foreign*, but in the old times the mere fact of women travelling alone would point to a libertine behaviour.

pieced together, in agreement with the specific style of sapiential antinomies, by drawing two opposed portraits – that of the foolish and that of the wise. Following the same procedure at a lower scale, the mouthparts are likewise represented:

**Mashal 10:31** פִּי צַדִּיק יָנוּב חֲכָמָה וּלְשׁוֹן תְּהַפְּכוֹת תִּפְרָת:  
תִּפְרָת:

The mouth of the just bringeth forth wisdom: but the froward tongue shall be cut out. (KJ)

The mouth of the righteous flows with wisdom, but the perverted tongue will be cut out. (NAS)

Gura celui drept rodește înțelepciune, iar limba urzitoare de rele aduce pierzare. (Sin)

Interhuman relations stand proof for the parallel functioning of the two portraits, the mouth being a topos of the verbal meeting with the other. Basically, the verbal activity – one of the two major functions of the mouthparts – is the onset of communication. Mouth, tongue and lips alike – all are directly involved in bringing forth a reality, that of verbally meeting the other. Just like in the case of the ear, this attaches a huge responsibility to the mouthparts:

**Mashal 16:10** קֶסֶם עַל־שִׁפְתַי־מֶלֶךְ בְּמִשְׁפָּט לֹא יִמְעַל־פִּיו:

A divine sentence *is* in the lips of the king: his mouth transgresseth not in judgment (KJ)

A divine decision is in the lips of the king; His mouth should not err in judgment. (NAS)

Hotărâri dumnezeiești sunt pe buzele împăratului; la darea hotărârii să nu se înșele gura lui. (Sin)

A verse introducing a sort of minitreatise on the king – interpreted by Evagrius as a symbolic figure representing Christ, whose judgement knows the hearts of humans – the example above contains a most powerful expression of the responsibility

born by the words produced by the work of the lips and mouth. Their destructive and curative capacity is the subject matter of the next verses as well, where the mouth and lips are *a tree of life* or *a breach in the spirit*, they can *feed many*, *pierce like a sword* or *deliver*; words have the power to bestow life and death.

**Mashal 15:4** מִרְפָּא לְשׁוֹן עֵץ חַיִּים וְקִלְוֵי הָאָרְצָה קְרוּיָה:

A wholesome tongue *is* a tree of life: but perverseness therein *is* a breach in the spirit. (KJ)

A soothing tongue is a tree of life, But perversion in it crushes the spirit. (NAS)

Limba dulce este pom al vieții, iar limba vicleană zdrobește inima. (Sin)

**Mashal 10:21** שִׁפְתַי צַדִּיק יִרְעוּ רַבִּים, לְאֹוֹלָיִים בְּחֶסֶר־לֵב יָמִיתוּ:

The lips of the righteous feed many: but fools die for want of wisdom. (KJ)

The lips of the righteous feed many, But fools die for lack of understanding. (NAS)

Buzele celui drept călăuzesc pe mulți oameni, iar cei nebuni mor din pricină că nu sunt pricepuți. (Sin)

**Mashal 12:18** יֵשׁ בֹּטָה בְּמִדְקָרוֹת תָּרַב וּלְשׁוֹן חֲכָמִים מִרְפָּא:

There is that speaketh like the piercings of a sword: but the tongue of the wise is health. (KJ)

There is one who speaks rashly like the thrusts of a sword,

But the tongue of the wise brings healing. (NAS)

Cei nechibzuiți la vorbă sunt ca împunsăturile de sabie, pe când limba celor înțelepți aduce tămăduire. (Sin)

**Mashal 18:21** מָוֶת וְחַיִּים בְּיַד־לְשׁוֹן וְאֹהֲבָיָהּ יֹאכַל פְּרִיָהּ:

Death and life *are* in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof. (KJ)

Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its



fruit. (NAS)

În puterea limbii este viața și moartea și cei ce o iubesc mănâncă din rodul ei. (Sin)

In Evagrius' allegorical interpretation, the mouth and tongue represent the passionate part of the soul and the intellect (LXX 2006, 469). But the corporeal reading behind the speech metaphor is equally prone to highlight the responsibility of the human being, who is, thereby, revealed as being present as a whole in all his or her deeds manifested through all the functions of his or her body.

**Mashal 18:7** פִּי־רָסִיל מִחַתָּה־לּוֹ וְשִׁפְתָיו מִזִּקָּה נִפְשׁוֹ:

A fool's mouth *is* his destruction, and his lips *are* the snare of his soul. (Pro 18:7 KJV)

A fool's mouth is his ruin, and his lips are the snare of his soul. (NAS)

Gura celui nebun este prăbușirea lui și buzele lui sunt un laț pentru sufletul lui. (Sin)

Speaking about the relation of the mouthparts with other anatomic elements on a map of human physiology, the *Proverbs* have them directly connected to the heart:

**Mashal 16:23** לֵב הַחֲכָם יִשְׁפָּט וְעַל־שִׁפְתָיו יִסְרֵף לִקְחָה:

The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth, and addeth learning to his lips. (KJ)

The heart of the wise teaches his mouth, And adds persuasiveness to his lips. (NAS)

Inima celui înțelept dă înțelepciune gurii lui și pe buzele sale sporește știința. (Sin)

This relation of the wise with his own lips, a mirror of the human being's relation to God, was often quoted by Origenes as a reference to an Old Testament prophecy (LXX 2006, 454). Apparently, prophecy would be in the first place hinted at by verse 16:1, a verse missing in *Codex Vaticanus*, and which seems to contradict the one above:

**Mashal 16:1** לְאָדָם מִעֵר־כִּי־לֵב וּמִיָּהוָה מַעֲנֶה לְשׁוֹן:

The preparations of the heart in man,

and the answer of the tongue, *is* from the LORD. (KJ)

The plans of the heart belong to man,

But the answer of the tongue is from the LORD. (NAS)

În putere stă omului să plăsmuiască planuri în inimă, dar răspunsul limbii vine de la Domnul. (Sin)

But the reference behind the hint is actually a completely different function of the heart: the preparation or devising of plans. This is what is opposed here to God's plan manifested through the work of the tongue. The gap between man's plan and God's plan is reflected by the gap between the purely subjective relation between the human person's rational and volitive functions and the objective reality, which starts when meeting the other.

Hence the urge to keep silent unless the relation with wisdom works in the heart:

**Mashal 30:32** אִם־נִבְלַתְּ בְהִתְנַשֵּׂא וְאִם־זָמַחְתָּ יָד לְפִה:

If thou hast done foolishly in lifting up thyself, or if thou hast thought evil, *lay* thine hand upon thy mouth. (KJ)

If you have been foolish in exalting yourself

Or if you have plotted *evil*, *put your* hand on your mouth. (NAS)

De ești așa de nebun ca să te lași mânat de nebulie, bate-te cu mâna peste gură. (Sin)

To conclude, the mouthparts are, before anything else, essential as the topos of speech, where "the capacity for language provides the essential condition for the humanity of man" (Wolff 1974, 78). Making speech happen and, therefore, being fundamentally involved in the manifestation of the quintessential feature of the human condition, the mouthparts are automatically a topos of meeting otherness, thereby having an ontic, reality-creating dimension. Thus, by opposedly describing the mouth of the wise and of the foolish, one actually probes human relations considering that the reality



created by the lips can be redemptive or destructive, for both the others and the self.

But the mouthparts are equally a topos of digestion and the strategy of mixing the two functions by making use of stereometry is a specificity of the Hebrew text. References to the verbal function are more often than not hidden behind references to the digestive one. This is a process by which the sense of taste attached to the digestive function is evoked as a substitute for the verbal one. By mentioning this twofold dimension of the mouthparts – a topos of both speech and digestion – what is reminded is the involvement of the whole body in all processes theoretically associated with mind or soul. Hence the necessity of an assumed literal reading of the text.

Following – on a further detailed map of human anatomy and physiology – the relation between the sense organs and other organs, while the mouthparts are connected to the heart, I will address the relation of the wise’s heart with his or her ears which mirrors the relation between humans and God.

• • • • •  
**The ear (ozen)**

Starting from Eliphaz’s speech in *The Book of Job* (Job 4:12-15<sup>10</sup>), *Anthropology of the Old Testament* shows that the ear, the first function of which is purely aesthetic, connected to jewellery adornment (Genesis 35:4<sup>11</sup>), and the second social, related to ratifying the act of fixing lifelong possessions (Deuteronomy 15:17<sup>12</sup>) may be associated with the change of the whole state of the body (Wolff 1974, 75). Considered “the root of true humanity” (Wolff 1974, 74), the ear plays an essential role in man’s self-knowledge, which in the Hebrew worldview – developed by both Christianity and Judaism – is initiated by listening and continued by following the divine call. In this tradition, founded by the prophetic calls and especially by that of

Moses (Exodus 3:4<sup>13</sup>), there is a preeminence of hearing over sight (Wolff 1974, 76). Listening involves hearing so the ear plays, in the Hebrew worldview, a higher role than the eye and the sight, which are central in Greek philosophy in its focus on knowing yourself through self-reflection.

But sight is crucial in keeping a sound relation to the self all along the process of answering the divine call. The eye and the sight mirror both self-referentiality and man’s relation to wisdom. But hearing hints at the first moment of the call – a particular, unique, specific call addressed by God to everyone and reiterated during his or her becoming a human person. Many of the proverbs containing the term *ear* insist upon this perspective by exploring the relation between (the words of) wisdom (instruction, teaching) and the ear of the apprentice.

Practically, the ear offers the opportunity of contemplating the most direct conjunction between body and wisdom:

**Mashal 4:20** בְּנִי לְדַבְרֵי הַקְּשִׁיבָה לְאָמְרֵי הַטֹּאֲהָרָה:

My son, attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings. (KJ)

My son, give attention to my words; incline your ear to my sayings. (NAS)

Fiul meu, ia aminte la graiurile mele; la povețele mele pleacă-ți urechea ta! (Sin)

Following the original Hebrew, all translations seem to retain the image of the ear centered on its inclined position. The gesture of inclining or bowing the ear to receive the words of wisdom is clearly predominant in the book of *Proverbs*, being repeated in many verses. It strikes back in extremely similar formulas in the following verses, where words of wisdom are only changed in the first part of the verse:

**Mashal 5:1** בְּנִי לְחֻמְתֵּי הַקְּשִׁיבָה לְחִבּוּנֵי הַטֹּאֲהָרָה:

My son, attend unto my wisdom, and bow thine ear to my understanding. (KJ)

My son, give attention to my wisdom,

10) Now a thing was secretly brought to me, and mine ear received a little thereof. In thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth on men, Fear came upon me, and trembling, which made all my bones to shake. When a spirit passed before my face; the hair of my flesh stood up (KJV)

11) And they gave unto Jacob all the strange gods which were in their hand, and all their earrings which were in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the oak which was by Shechem. (KJV)

12) Then thou shalt take an aul, and thrust it through his ear unto the door, and he shall be thy servant for ever. And also unto thy maidservant thou shalt do likewise. (KJV)

13) And when the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I. (KJV)

Incline your ear to my understanding.  
(NAS)

Fiul meu, ia aminte la înțelepciunea mea și la sfatul meu cel bun pleacă urechea ta. (Sin)

Sometimes, the terms of wisdom are stylistically enforced by comparisons containing ornaments and precious stones, which have always offered a good ground to allegoric interpretations. Gold is, however, the most preferred:

*Mashal 25:12* גָּם זָהָב וְחַלְי־בָתָם מוֹכִיחַ חֹכֵם עַל־אָזְנוֹ  
שְׂמַעַת:

As an earring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold, so is a wise reprover upon an obedient ear. (KJ)

*Like* an earring of gold and an ornament of fine gold is a wise reprover to a listening ear. (NAS)

Inel de aur și podoabe de aur de mult preț este povățuitorul înțelept la urechea ascultătoare. (Sin)

Along with its vertical relations with the words of wisdom, the ear is involved in horizontal relations with other organs, among which the most prominent and most recurrent is the heart, but the sense organs (mouth, lips or eyes) are also present. The relation with the heart is always one of synonymy:

*Mashal 2:2* לְהַקְשִׁיב לְחַכְמָה אֲזַגֵּד תִּפְנֶה לִבְךָ לְתַבְנֵנָה:

So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding. (KJ)

Make your ear attentive to wisdom, incline your heart to understanding. (NAS)

Plecându-ți urechea la înțelepciune și înclinând inima ta la bună chibzuială. (Sin)

*Mashal 22:17* תִּט אֲזַנְךָ וְשָׁמַע דְּבַר־י חֲכָמִים וְלִבְךָ תִּשְׁעִית  
לְדַעְתִּי:

Bow down thine ear, and hear the words of the wise, and apply thine heart unto my knowledge. (KJ)

Incline your ear and hear the words of

the wise,

And apply your mind to my knowledge.  
(NAS)

Pleacă urechea ta și ascultă cuvintele celor iscușiți și inima ta îndreapt-o spre știința mea. (Sin)

The two proverbs above make reference to a three-step process of human self-knowledge based on listening to the call containing the voice of God: the first step is the leaning of the ear, the second one, the hearing of the words, and the third is storing them into the heart. In Evagrius' interpretation, one cannot speak of any true listening to the divine words unless one puts them into practice (LXX 2006,472).

Even looked at in reversed order, the process stays the same. The heart of the wise acquires wisdom to the extent that his or her ear is searching for it. In other words, man himself can be the initiator of the process of self-knowledge to the extent that he or she defines himself as a wisdom searcher. The next verse completes the teaching about self-knowledge in the Hebrew perspective: one never passively waits for the call. The active meaning of a human waiting for God's call can easily be read out in the thirst for wisdom, in man's continuous search for it:

*Mashal 18:15* לֵב נְבוֹן יִקְנֶה־דָּעַת וְאָזְנוֹ חֹכְמִים  
תִּבְקַשׁ־דָּעַת:

The heart of the prudent getteth knowledge; and the ear of the wise seeketh knowledge. (KJ)

The mind of the prudent acquires knowledge,

And the ear of the wise seeks knowledge.  
(NAS)

O inimă pricepută dobândește știința, și urechea celor înțelepți umblă după iscusință. (Sin)

The sense of the search mentioned above is turned upside down by the relation of the ear with the false lips and the naughty tongue:





**Mashal 17:4** מִרַע מִקְשִׁיב עַל־שִׁפְתֵי־אָוֹן שֶׁקֶר מִזִּיז  
עַל־לִשׁוֹן הַדָּת:

A wicked doer giveth heed to false lips;  
and a liar giveth ear to a naughty tongue.  
(KJ)

An evildoer listens to wicked lips,

A liar pays attention to a destructive  
tongue. (NAS)

Făcătorul de rele ia aminte la buzele  
nedrepte, mincinosul pleacă urechea la  
limba cea rea. (Sin)

There are verses whose reading opens  
up a social dimension as well. Used  
metonymically, instead of the human person  
as a whole, the ear may even function as a  
trigger of promotion in the social hierarchy  
(the world of the sapiential writings knowing  
no gaps between the political, economic and  
spiritual dimensions, so the social class of  
the wise is the same as that of the rich and  
of social leaders). Verse 15:31 for example  
contains a typical case of stereometry  
which, looked upon more closely, conveys  
several ideas: those who hear the reproof  
of life get to abide among the wise, this  
learning is life-giving (a feature extending  
automatically to those coming into contact  
with it), and last, but not least, it involves  
the sense of hearing, so it is all based on the  
activity of the ear (LXX 2006, 452).

**Mashal 15:31** אֵזֶן שְׁמַעַת תּוֹכַחַת חַיִּים בְּקֶרֶב חֲכָמִים  
תִּלְוֶה:

The ear that heareth the reproof of life  
abideth among the wise. (KJ)

He whose ear listens to the life-giving  
reproof

Will dwell among the wise. (NAS)

Urechea care ascultă o dojană folositoare  
vieții își are locașul printre cei înțelepți.  
(Sin)

Other verses contain ortopraxy ele-  
ments, telling us how the ear and the sense  
of hearing should be used in relation to our  
fellow human beings.

**Mashal 21:13** אָטָם אָזְנוֹ מִזְעַקְתֵּי־דָל גַּם־הוּא יִקְרָא וְלֹא  
יִשְׁמָע:

Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the  
poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not  
be heard. (KJ)

He who shuts his ear to the cry of the  
poor

Will also cry himself and not be  
answered. (NAS)

Cine își astupă urechea la strigătul celui  
sărman, și el, când va striga, nu i se va  
răspunde. (Sin)

**Mashal 23:9** בְּאָזְנֵי בְּסִיל אַל־תְּדַבֵּר כִּי־יָבוֹז לְשִׂכְלֵי מְלִיד:

Speak not in the ears of a fool: for he will  
despise the wisdom of thy words (KJ)

Do not speak in the hearing of a fool,

For he will despise the wisdom of your  
words. (NAS)

Nu grăi la urechea celui nebun, căci el nu  
va băga în seamă iscusința graiurilor tale.  
(Sin)

Interestingly, the relation with the others  
does not automatically involve feeding  
the others' ears with words of wisdom.  
In other words, transmission of wisdom  
does not ultimately suppose an automatic  
transitivity. In his explanation of the verse  
above, Evagrius makes reference to Mathew  
7:6<sup>14</sup>, the verse on *throwing pearls to pigs*  
(LXX 2006,474). As if to avoid the risk of  
letting the message deviate along the way,  
wisdom brightens everyone directly. Since  
wisdom and the law are one and can only be  
had together, deviations are always possible,  
even with those attached to God by prayer if  
they interrupt their relation to the law and  
break it.

**Mashal 28:9** מִסִּיר אָזְנוֹ מִשְׁמַעַת תּוֹרָה גַּם־תִּפְלְתוּ תוֹעֵבָה:

He that turneth away his ear from  
hearing the law, even his prayer shall be  
abomination. (KJ)

He who turns away his ear from listening  
to the law,

Even his prayer is an abomination.  
(NAS)

14) Give not that  
which is holy unto  
the dogs, neither  
cast ye your pearls  
before swine, lest  
they trample them  
under their feet, and  
turn again and rend  
you. (KJV)

Cel ce își oprește urechea de la ascultarea legii, chiar rugăciunea lui e urâciune. (Sin)



### The eye (*ayn*)

Being located on the face, the eyes are the organ of sight, one of the human's main channels of communication with the exterior. What a man turns to another when they turn their face to each other is ultimately the sense organs involved in communication, which all have their seat in the head. True, for the Bible man, only the mouth, ear and eyes are important (Wolff 1974, 75), the nose being mentioned just once in the *Proverbs* (in verse 30:33, where *scratching the nose* is compared with arousing scandal). The eyes, as we are told in the book of *Proverbs*, are made by God for people to be able to see the light and this capacity is equally given by God to the poor and to the deceitful.

**Mashal 20:12** אֵזוֹן שְׁמַעַת וְעֵינֵי רֹאֵה יְהוָה עָשָׂה גַם־שְׁנֵיהֶם:

The hearing ear, and the seeing eye, the LORD hath made even both of them. (KJ)

The hearing ear and the seeing eye,

The LORD has made both of them. (NAS)

Urechea care aude și ochiul care vede, pe amândouă le-a zidit Domnul. (Sin)

**Mashal 29:13** רֵשׁ וְאִישׁ תְּכַכֵּים נִפְגְּשׁוּ מֵאִיר־עֵינָי שְׁנֵיהֶם יְהוָה:

The poor and the deceitful man meet together: the LORD lighteneth both their eyes. (KJ)

The poor man and the oppressor have this in common:

The LORD gives light to the eyes of both. (NAS)

Săracul și cel ce asupește pe cei săraci se întâlnesc; cel ce luminează ochii amândurora este Domnul. (Sin)

The creation of the eye in the first

example above is rendered by a synecdoche or – considering that both the eye and the ear actually stand for the human person as a whole, just as the eyelids stand for the eyes – rather by a stereometry, since synecdoche and metonymy have been reclassified by specialists in Bible poetry as stereometry. But such an explanation can hardly also cover the meanings of a verse like 29:13. By choosing to say that God bestows sight to the poor and his oppressor alike, this verse invests the context of the poor meeting the deceitful with additional meanings, which are overlooked when only considering the meeting of the two persons as a whole and disregarding the meeting of their eyes. The eye is one of the three major organs of communication having the seat in the head and one of the two to be found on the face. The face, in its turn, is the seat of communication by excellence. It has a plural form in Hebrew, which contributes to identifying it as a topos defined by the many ways in which people can pay attention to and communicate with one another. Therefore, the meeting of two people referred to in the verse above is above all a meeting of the eyes. And the fact that those taking part in the meeting described in proverb 29:13 are none but the poor and the deceitful contributes to doubling the moral dimension hinted at by the very fact that God Himself is governing their meeting. This could make a mystical or eschatological reading (made in a spiritual key, where all the events of this world are invested with salvation-related meanings) acquire ontic significances: what God is bestowing by bestowing the eyelight to both the poor and the deceitful is the capacity to exchange looks with the other, so creating the eye and bestowing the capacity of sight ultimately means creating a reality. We are hereby faced with a typical case where a corporeal reading, i.e. one paying attention to the corporeal dimension of the text, can enrich the meaning of the verse not only with moral, spiritual and eschatological meanings, but also with ontic dimensions;

the verse may invite a reading from the perspective of the ontology of the person.

Proverb 27:20 provides the ultimate definition of the eye as a sense organ: they are never satisfied. There is an avidity pertaining to the eyes, which is as big as the depth of hell:

**Mashal 27:20** שְׂאוֹל (אֲבַדוֹה) [אֲבַדוֹה] לֹא תִשְׂבַּעְנָה וְעֵינֵי הָאָדָם לֹא תִשְׂבַּעְנָה:

Hell and destruction are never full; so the eyes of man are never satisfied. (KJ)

Sheol and Abaddon are never satisfied,

Nor are the eyes of man ever satisfied. (NAS)

Iadul și adâncul nu se pot sătura, tot așa și inima omului e de nesăturat. (Sin)

The comparison between the eyes and *sheol*, the abode of the dead, reiterated by its partial synonym *Abaddon* (rooted in the verb *avad*, meaning to destroy and, therefore, hinting at a topos of annihilation and destruction) opens the way for a rich theology of sin. This perspective is no doubt partially lost through the translation made, under the justification of stereometry being used there, by replacing *the eye* with *the heart*. By comparing the greediness of sight (which can be extrapolated to all the senses) with hell, one implies that for a good, wise and blessed functioning of the senses, they need to be subordinated to thought (which in Hebrew anthropology belongs to the heart) – which, in its turn, needs to be subordinated to God’s words and fenced by His law. Man’s inborn greediness reflecting his being created in the image of God and wrongly investing the depth of his structure in the senses is a consequence of him not adequately subordinating the senses to the heart and the heart to God. This would ultimately be the complete theological chain. Once omitting its first link by replacing the eye with the heart, the very component defining the sensuous dimension of man is lost.

Verse 23:26 shows the relation of the eye with the heart without even putting the two

of them into direct contact:

**Mashal 23:26** תְּנֵה־לִּי לִבְךָ לִי וְעֵינַי דְּרַגְתִּי (תְּרַצְנָה) [תְּרַצְנָה]:

My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways. (KJ)

Give me your heart, my son,

And let your eyes delight in my ways. (NAS)

Dă-mi, fiule, mie inima ta, și ochii tăi să simtă plăcere pentru căile mele. (Sin)

On the other hand, each of the two is directly related to God, even though the structure of the verse does not allow for a triangular reading (made possible by the laws of transitivity) but rather, by the imperfect tense of the verb *raṭa* (literally meaning “will find pleasure”, “will accept favourably”), indicating succession: if the heart is given to God, the eyes will also find pleasure for the ways of God.

The necessity to fence the eyes (as sense organs) and put them into relation with learning and the ways of wisdom is the message of many other verses (as, for example, Prov 3:21, 7:2, 4:25, 4:20-21). Interestingly, the chain is re-built, but in reverse order (to which special significance can be attached) in Prov 4:20-21:

**Mashal 4:20** בְּנֵי לִדְבָרֵי הַקְּשִׁיבָה לְאִמְרֵי הַטִּי־אָזְנוֹךָ:

My son, attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings! (KJ)

Fiule, ia aminte la cuvintele mele, pleacă-ți urechea la vorbele mele! (Corn)

Fiul meu, ia aminte la graiurile mele; la povețele mele pleacă-ți urechea ta! (Sin)

**Mashal 4:21** אַל-יִלְחֲזוּ מֵעֵינַיךָ שְׂמֵרָם בְּתוֹךְ לִבְךָ:

Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thine heart. (KJ)

Do not let them depart from your sight; keep them in the midst of your heart. (NAS)

Nu le scăpa din ochi, păstrează-le înlăuntrul inimii tale. (Sin)

Therefore, the contact with wisdom is guarded by the senses, the eyes being one of





the major ways in and out of man's contact with the exterior. As such, they occupy a vulnerable position between the outer and the inner world, being at the same time very powerful and influential upon other organs. The relation of the eyes with the mouth and especially the relation of both of them with the heart are hinted at in several places. For example, a context referring to excess of wine consumption is followed by one in which the deviation or perversion of the eyes also attracts the deviation or perversion of the heart, which, in its turn, becomes a source of perverted words:

**Mashal 23:33** עֵינַיִךָ יִרְאוּ נְרוֹת וְלִבְךָ יִדְבֵר תְּהַפְּכוֹת:

Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things. (KJ)

Your eyes will see strange things,

And your mind will utter perverse things. (NAS)

Dacă ochii tăi vor privi la femei străine și gura ta va grăi lucruri meșteșugite. (Sin)

Since the perverted words brought to the heart by the works of sight are uttered through the mouth and the mouth is not mentioned in the Hebrew text, the translations enjoy here again the freedom of choosing, under the justification of following stereometry, which of the three components (eyes, mouth and heart) to mention in the perversion chain.

The eye is mostly related to man's rational side / judgement (which, in the Hebrew worldview, belongs to the heart). Thus, the look of the emperor who is fair in his judgement will also be right.

**Mashal 20:8** מֶלֶךְ יוֹשֵׁב עַל־פִּסְאֵי־דָוִד מְזַרְהָ בְּעֵינָיו כְּלִרְעָה:

A king that sitteth in the throne of judgment scattereth away all evil with his eyes. (KJ)

A king who sits on the throne of justice Disperses all evil with his eyes. (NAS)

Un rege care stă pe scaunul de judecată deosebește cu ochii lui orice faptă rea. (Sin)

Sinful judgement and evil doings are associated with eyes partially closed, as described in the Hebrew text, which increases the plasticity of the image:

**Mashal 16:30** עָבָה עֵינָיו לְהַעֲשֶׂב תְּהַפְּכוֹת קִרְיָן שְׁפָתָיו כְּלִמָּה רָעָה:

He shutteth his eyes to devise froward things: moving his lips he bringeth evil to pass. (KJ)

He who winks his eyes *does so* to devise perverse things;

He who compresses his lips brings evil to pass. (NAS)

Cel care închide din ochi urzește viclenii; cine își mușcă buzele a și săvârșit răul. (Sin)

The maximum perversion of the way the eye functions is measureable in their self-referentiality, which can be interpreted as loss of discernment. Once a deviation obtains autonomy by interrupting all relations with an outer (transcendental) world, by the loss of which there is no reference point left, there is no stop to the fall. The eyes, created for man to see his way in God's light, come to show the foolish his way in the light of his own madness.

**Mashal 16:2** כָּל־דְּרָכֵי־אִישׁ טוֹר בְּעֵינָיו וְתַנְהוּ רֵחוֹת יְהוָה:

All the ways of a man *are* clean in his own eyes; but the LORD weigheth the spirits. (KJV)

All the ways of a man are clean in his own sight,

But the LORD weighs the motives. (NAS)

Toate căile omului sunt curate în ochii lui, dar numai Domnul este cel ce cercetează duhul. (Sin)

Unfortunately, the reference to the body is not capitalized by all the translations of the verses containing it in Hebrew, the eyes often being translated as "discernment" etc. But the Hebrew way of expressing the loss of discernment through insistence on the eyes is far from being insignificant and should

not be overlooked. Being the first gate of communication with the outer world, the eyes may be perceived as representative for the whole sensorial dimension of the human person. Therefore, perverting the eyes involves losing the mental compass. This being the full meaning of the text, any translation losing any mention of the body and failing to render all the anatomic and physiological terms in the Hebrew original implicitly loses meaningful dimensions of the text.

אֶת־פְּנֵי מִבְּנֵי הַחִמָּה וְשִׁנֵּי לְסִילִי **Mashal 17:24**  
בְּמַעַתְהָ אֶרֶץ:

Wisdom is before him that hath understanding; but the eyes of a fool are in the ends of the earth. (KJ)

Wisdom is in the presence of the one who has understanding,

But the eyes of a fool are on the ends of the earth. (NAS)

Omul priceput are înaintea ochilor lui înțelepciunea, iar ochii celui nebun se uită la capătul pământului. (Sin)

In the verses making the definition of the foolish a theme in itself, some stereometry cases making heavy use of the *eyes* are employed to introduce the arrogant:

דֹּר מִהֲרָמוֹ עֵינָיו וְנִפְעָפוּיָו יִנְשָׂאוּ: **Mashal 30:13**

There is a generation... O how lofty are their eyes! And their eyelids are lifted up. (KJ)

There is a kind – oh how lofty are his eyes!

And his eyelids are raised in arrogance. (NAS)

Un neam... O, cum ridică ochii lui sus și cât se înalță de sus genele lui! (Sin)

Even among those with lofty eyes, the most foolish of all is he who sees himself clean and pure. He who, in his haughtiness, is self-sufficient, cuts himself off God. In God's eyes, the dirtiest is he whose only point of reference is himself, or who calls his own dirt purity:

דֹּר טָהוֹר בְּעֵינָיו וּמִצְאָתוֹ לֹא רָחַץ: **Mashal 30:12**

There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness. (KJ)

There is a kind who is pure in his own eyes,

Yet is not washed from his filthiness. (NAS)

Un neam căruia i se pare că e fără prihană în ochii lui și care nu e curățit de necurăția lui. (Sin)

To conclude, the eyes and the sight are essential in the self-knowledge process although their importance is secondary to the ear and hearing. The Hebrew perspective upon man's destiny being substantiated by the idea of the divine call, as a first step, or as ontic initiative by excellence, self-knowledge in the Hebrew worldview is founded in listening to a call, not in self-reflection – the cornerstone of Greek philosophy. Nevertheless, the eye and sight play a crucial role in keeping a correct relation with the self throughout the process of answering the call. Man is permanently faced with two choices: self-reference on one side, and bondage with wisdom on the other, his choice being mirrored by the look in his eyes. This is a matter of significance, easily overlooked unless assuming a literal reading of the body in the text.

In a way, the body and metaphor are two issues mirroring each other, the relation between the tenor and vehicle of a metaphor being the same as that between the soul and the body. A metaphor is built on a logical relation or rather of a common denominator between its two terms. Considering the stereometries analysed above, this logical relation has its starting point in the objective reality of the body – by a component which is referenced to by another function of that component. The element referred to is still an element belonging to the same reality of the body, the body becoming the common denominator of the analyzed metaphors. Hence the impossibility to leave the body out from any discourse about man and a

human being's actions.

Before concluding, two brief references to cognitive psychology are to be mentioned in support of the elements of corporeal hermeneutics contained in my plea for an assumed literal reading of the corporeal language of the book of *Proverbs*. Echoing the interest in the body in today's cultural and philosophical research, a research line called *embodiment thesis* is being born in cognitive psychology and linguistics, following Thomas Aquinas' "there is nothing in the mind that was not previously in the senses" and holding not only that the "process of human cognition is mediated by our physical experiences", but also that it "views the more abstract target domains of cognition, e.g. those of thought, emotion and language, as based on concrete source domains such as the human body and the conceptualizations of the internal body parts" (Shariffian 2008, 7).

Moreover, according to American cognitive linguist Raymond W. Gibbs, embodied activities shape human cognition: "People's subjective, felt experiences of their bodies in action provide part of the fundamental grounding for language and thought" (Gibbs 2006, 9). Practically, Raymond Gibbs too explores a line about which Shariffian writes: "in Lakoff and Johnson's framework metaphor and metonymy are not purely imaginative leaps for the purpose of mere aesthetic sense-creation, they are rather more fundamentally rooted in and motivated by the bodily experiences of humans" (Shariffian 2008, 8). Speculations can be made here on the presence of corporeal elements in any discourse about the surrounding reality, which is due to the fact that mental processes are conceptualized by appealing to corporeal realities, so the presence of the body in the language is a consequence of the fact that the parts of the body are automatically recorded, at a mental level, as sources of access to reality. The invitation I have launched to give an assumed literal reading to the corporeal

images making the substance of a sapiential text resonates with this theoretic line. Similarly to the impossibility of conceiving knowledge without the mediation of matter, no wisdom can be acquired without the mediation of the body. Wisdom acquisition is complete only when involving the human person as a whole. Wisdom is attained in the body as well.



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

*Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*. 1997. Germany: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft.

*Biblia sau Sfânta Scriptură*. 2008. București: Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române.

*Septuaginta 4/Tomul I. Psalmii; Odele; Proverbele; Ecclesiastul; Cântarea Cântărilor*. 2006. Coord. de Cristian Bădiliță et al. Iași, NEC: Polirom.

*King James Bible*. 2005. 1769 Blayney Edition of the 1611 King James Version of the English Bible, Cambridge University Press.

*New American Standard Bible*. 1977. The Lockman Foundation, 1977.

\*\*\*

Cooter, Roger. 2010. "The Turn of the Body: History and the Politics of the Corporeal." *Arbor Ciencia, Pensamiento y Cultura*, 186: 393–405.

Davis, Ellen F. 2000. *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs*. Louisville: Westminster / John Knox Press.

Diemling, Maria and Giuseppe Veltri (eds.). 2009. *The Jewish Body: Corporeality, Society, and Identity in the Renaissance and Early Modern Period*. Leiden: Brill.

Dudău, Ana-Maria. 2014. "Metafora – între inerția tradiției și modernitate." In *Agata Literară* Nr. 1/2014. Botoșani: Editura Agata.

Gibbs, Raymond W. 2006. *Embodiment and Cognitive Science*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press.

Lakoff, George and Mark Johnson.1980. *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Lakoff, George and Mark Johnson.1999. *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge to Western Thought*. New York: Basic Books.

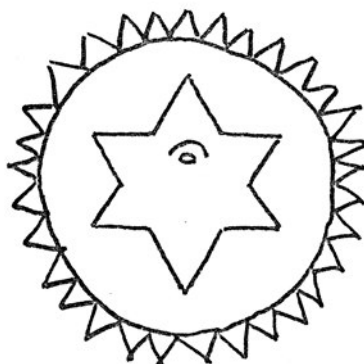
Macky, Peter W. 1990. *The Centrality of Metaphors to Biblical Thought: a Method for Interpreting the Bible*. Lewiston, N.Y., USA: E. Mellen Press.

Ricoeur, Paul. 1984. *Metafora vie*. București: Univers.

Porter, Roy. 2001. "History of the Body Reconsidered." In *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, ed. P. Burke, 233-360. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Sharifian, Farzad et al. (eds.). 2008. *Culture, Body, and Language Conceptualizations of Internal Body Organs Across Cultures and Languages*. Berlin, New York: Mouton de Gruyter.

Wolff, Hans Walter. 1974. *Anthropology of the Old Testament*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press.





# MARTOR



---

Title: "Knowledge Through Gendered Body-Centered Surveillance"

Author: Laura Grünberg

How to cite this article: Grünberg, Laura. 2015. "Knowledge Through Gendered Body-Centered Surveillance".

*Martor* 20: 141-153.

Published by: *Editura MARTOR* (MARTOR Publishing House), *Muzeul Țăranului Român* (The Museum of the Romanian Peasant)

URL: <http://martor.muzeultaranuluiroman.ro/archive/768-2/>

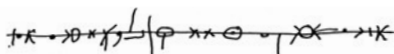
---

*Martor* (The Museum of the Romanian Peasant Anthropology Review) is a peer-reviewed academic journal established in 1996, with a focus on cultural and visual anthropology, ethnology, museum studies and the dialogue among these disciplines. *Martor* review is published by the Museum of the Romanian Peasant. Its aim is to provide, as widely as possible, a rich content at the highest academic and editorial standards for scientific, educational and (in)formational goals. Any use aside from these purposes and without mentioning the source of the article(s) is prohibited and will be considered an infringement of copyright.

*Martor* (Revue d'Anthropologie du Musée du Paysan Roumain) est un journal académique en système *peer-review* fondé en 1996, qui se concentre sur l'anthropologie visuelle et culturelle, l'ethnologie, la muséologie et sur le dialogue entre ces disciplines. La revue *Martor* est publiée par le Musée du Paysan Roumain. Son aspiration est de généraliser l'accès vers un riche contenu au plus haut niveau du point de vue académique et éditorial pour des objectifs scientifiques, éducatifs et informationnels. Toute utilisation au-delà de ces buts et sans mentionner la source des articles est interdite et sera considérée une violation des droits de l'auteur.

*Martor* is indexed by EBSCO and CEEOL.

# Knowledge Through Gendered Body-Centered Surveillance



**Laura Grünberg**

Associate Professor, University of Bucharest, Faculty of Sociology and Social Work

## ABSTRACT

The article asserts an obvious fact: ubiquitous, embodied gendered surveillance has increasingly become woven into the fabric of our everyday life. As part of our daily existence, it affects – explicitly or implicitly – all the areas of our gendered and embodied experiences, but also of our theoretical and critical thinking pertaining to our societies. Ingredients about complex surveillance realities should be added to many areas of theoretical reflections on the body as more and more of “the dominant concerns and anxieties of society tend to be translated into disturbed images of the body” (Turner, 2008, 32).

## KEYWORDS

surveillance, gender, embodiment, body projects, biotechnologies, feminism



## Context: Surveillance Society

Today we live in a surveillance society where we are public by default. Almost nothing is private any more. One’s identity and credit cards gives a lot of information about one. Spectacular biological and behavioral technologies can recognize one based on one’s movements, consumer tastes or on the touch dynamics as one types on the computer or prints a document. Satellites can track one’s position anywhere on this planet. Sophisticated cameras and medical devices are able to look inside one’s body, predict future diseases or improve present capabilities. It is obvious that an unprecedented multitude of personal data is gathered today from all of us. For various reasons, people and populations are under constant scrutiny (Lyon 2003). With our own support, the smallest details of our lives are tracked and traced more closely than ever before. Today’s world, as Bauman concludes, is one in which everything moves from enforcement to temptation and seduction, from normative regulation to PR, from policing to the arousal of desire,

from supervisors to the supervised, from surveyors to the surveyed (Bauman 2012).

The post 9/11 society is one that requires permanent protection, attentive monitoring, systematic profiling, and continuous care. Advances in technology and a general atmosphere of insecurity have stimulated a world of ubiquitous surveillance (Andrejevic 2012). We are witnessing an invasion of watching, being watched, monitored, sorted, and classified for various purposes. To think in terms of a surveillance society means to reflect especially on the sophisticated technologies that allowed the birth of a world of “all seeing”, “a world of no strangers” (Giddens 1990) in which the processes of disassembling and re-assembling never-ending information about events and individuals are complex and screening and targeting those at risk and those posing risks for others are commonplace practices.

Beyond various theories developed in the area of Surveillance Studies, we all have some ideas about what surveillance society looks like due to our basic general culture. We have seen movies such as *Inception* (2010, Christopher Nolan), *Erasing David* (2009,





David Bond), *The Butterfly Effect* (2004, Eric Bress and J. Mackye Gruber), *Brides of Allah* (2008, Natalie Assouline), *Minority Report* (2002, Steven Spielberg), *The Matrix* (1999, Andy Wachowski), *Pillow Book* (1996, Peter Greenaway) or *Gattacca* (1997, Andrew Niccol). We have all read *The Castle* (F. Kafka), *Animal Farm* (G. Orwell) or *The Handmaid's Tale* (M. Atwood). It is improbable also not to be aware of the WikiLeaks phenomenon and the global secrets that have been made public by controversial persons such as Solange or Snowden or the recent diplomatic disputes over mobile interceptions among Germany, the E.U. and the USA. We are, in our daily lives, curious, excited, scared (or both) when thinking about the many technological possibilities that exist in order to be traced wherever we are, to be seen and identified wherever we hide, to be public by default.

Many definitions of the term “surveillance” coexist. From neutral, benign ones (surveillance considered as a fundamental aspect of society) to negative ones (pointing mainly to the repressive character of surveillance processes) or to more positive ones, talking about surveillance as progress, democratization of information, accessibility in terms of healing, protecting, preventing, taking care and in-depth research. Basically, “surveillance” means any collection and systematic processing of personal data, whether identifiable or not, for the purposes of influencing or managing those whose data has been gathered (Lyon 2001). More recently, “surveillance” is approached in terms of knowledge, information and protection against threats (Ball 2002).

As operationalized nowadays, surveillance is more concerned with activities that are possible due to computer power and biotechnologies. But there is a long history of surveillance before the technological revolution of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. A brief tour back in history may easily disclose various mechanisms such as discourses, institutions and technologies that have lead to various

forms of surveillance.

Some forms of technological and non-technological surveillance have existed for a long time. The ancient acts of eavesdropping, looking in the mirror, simple observation, listening, use of human detectives and undercover activities and “voyeurism” have been for a long time part of human behavior. Jesus, Allah or Mahomet are in fact all major “surveillants” of human behavior. Chastity bells, identity cards, fingerprints, the science of craniology or phrenology, but also the more recent manifestations of surveillance such as aesthetic surgeries, pills industry, cryogenics, demographic politics, monitoring movements through satellites or the new modern means of surveillance such as biometrics, voice recognition, DNA analysis, genetic testing – all these (and many others not mentioned) constitute a taxonomy of surveillance that is continuously enriching.

New surveillance technologies have transcended natural barriers (such as distance, time and darkness) or built obstacles (such as walls). We now have scanning of data replacing patrolling the frontiers – so, from material forms of surveillance we have moved to immaterial forms of monitoring. Nowadays, neuro-marketing, social media networks (e.g. Facebook, Foursquare), Tattoo ID system, True Media Technologies (system for facial recognition used in advertising), Next Generation Identification (among the biggest data banks for corporal features), Server in the Sky (global exchange of biometric information on terrorists), EURODAC (a program for comparing refugees' fingerprints) are realities of the world we live in.

Although surveillance is an old practice, the interest in analyzing surveillance processes is quite recent<sup>1</sup>. Over time, attention has moved from public surveillance to private surveillance, to everyday surveillance and to self-surveillance. Today's times are also times of contestation over the cultural meanings

1) The following brief historical summary takes as reference point Wood's article (Wood 2009) and also Grünberg's (Grünberg 2013).

of surveillance: is it control, repression, empowerment and / or pleasure? It is also a period of an increased interest in the biometric forms of surveillance and their consequences on the redefinitions of the human – non-human relations in terms of body, identity and action.

There is a series of theoretical metaphors that guide the reflections and the critical thinking on the theme. Much of the theoretical energy has been consumed around engagement with, modification or rejection of its most famous concept – the *panopticon*. The metaphor refers to the image of the prison where *a few could see all others*, the conscious and permanent state of being watched, the fact that discipline and punishment becomes internalized when surveillance is a constant possibility (Foucault 2005).

Complementing the panopticon model or even paralleling it in importance is the *synopticon model* (Mathiensen 1997), a reversed model whereby *many watch the few*. It indicates a *Big Brother society*, with media playing a vital role in fostering the “viewer society” and making surveillance a highly visible and shared public cultural phenomenon. It is a society where various kinds of reality shows are fashionable, a society where one is asked to report suspect bags on airports or to send pictures taken with individual cameras in view of helping police solve terrorist cases or airplanes accidents.

Another concept proposed, as a challenge to the panopticon view, is that of *omnipticon*. Authors such as Joyce take over the Foucauldian notion of governmentality and challenges his notion of *Panopticism*, considering that neo-liberal governmentality is more adequately conceptualized by an *omnipticon* which means – *the many surveilling the many* (Joyce 2005). By reversing the panopticon gaze, omnipticon refers to situations when monitoring becomes operating inside a framework that incorporates both the

panopticon and the synopticon effects, but also the control of everybody by everybody. It is what we observe in the global networks of communication where government agents constantly capture huge amounts of messages and millions of people seek information about their idols, seeing them live through Google Earth, Google Maps, Facebook or MySpace.

The inspirational dimension of the *post-panopticon* era does not stop here. David Lyon talks of *post-panopticon*, a label he attributes to Boyne (Boyne 2000). The basic idea considers post-panopticon signals as a shift from the Foucauldian society of discipline to a society of control where fabrication of social life is governed by global relations in which surveillance practices spread through geographic mobility, economic production and consumption.

Modern and evolving technology has given rise to new forms of surveillance that are also in need of suitable labelling. For example, Mark Poster sees our wired world as a world that uses its databases to organize panoptic information as a *superpanopticon* – a system of surveillance without walls, windows, towers, or guards, where people with camera phones respond to events by photographing and texting live information across communication networks (Poster 1990). It is a world where the *public is under scrutiny by the public*, where CCTV cameras are no longer the only form of surveillance and control, where one may speak in terms of *democratization of the gaze*. Also called the *participatory panopticon*<sup>2</sup>, this type of surveillance, due to technological developments, is considered a whole new form of surveillance.

Another interesting theoretical proposal is the concept of the *oligopticon* – with reference to the situation in which the observer has only a limited view. The absolute gaze from the panopticon is replaced with a more democratic, but also vulnerable gaze within the oligopticon. Instead of omniscience, we have the ability to see a little bit of a lot of things.

2) Term attributed to Casco James. See Haw, Alex. “CCTV London: Interment, Entertainment and Other Optical Fortifications.” AA Files 52 52 (2005): 55-61.

The oligopticon is a subtle construction that allows comprehensive observation within a narrow framework (Latour 2005). Surveillance within the oligopticon vision provides a post-modern perspective linked closely with the ideas of localizing the global, of *situated surveillance* – one that combines the concept of “situated knowledge” of feminist theoretician Donna Haraway (1991) and Latour’s oligopticon.

Another important approach is *rizomatic surveillance*. Pointing to the work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (Deleuze&Guattari 1980), it is a metaphor that takes as visual reference the notion of “rhizome” – plants which grow on a horizontal interconnected root system with bulbs as nodal points. It is a perspective that highlights the active transmitted arrangements of people, technologies and organizations that become deeply connected in contrast to the static, unidirectional *panopticon* metaphor. Within this frame of thinking, Haggerty and Errison talk about *surveillant assemblage*, referring to ways in which many information systems people are exposed to translate, in fact, bodies into abstract data which are then re-assembled as decontextualized “data doubles” upon which respective organizations act (Haggerty and Errison 2000).

The surveillance typology briefly mentioned above could easily be extended. We may very well consider other forms of surveillance such as: *self-surveillance*, *sousveillance* / *reverse surveillance*<sup>3</sup> (e.g. taking photo of a policeman watching you) or *McVeillance* – with reference to the monopoly on surveillance. We may reflect also on our public exposure in terms of *dataveillance*<sup>4</sup>, *lateral surveillance* (with reference to the seduction of the market, to advertisement manipulation), *counter surveillance* or *deductive surveillance* etc. Whatever approach we take in looking at surveillance, the realities of everyday life are filled with the consequences of watching and being watched at all times.



## The Embodied Dimension of Surveillance

*“The body should be viewed as in the process of becoming, as a project which should be worked at and accomplished as part of an individual’s self-identity.”* (Chris Shilling 2002)

Beyond the theoretical models briefly described above, it is indispensable to understand that all these practices of knowledge through surveillance represent body-centered surveillance practices. In fact, surveillance means embodied surveillance, given that human experience is fundamentally embodied and our embodied selves are the ones under continuous monitoring. We are living in a body-centered-somatic surveillance society. Genetic engineering, technological transplants, modern medical devices have gradually abolished the distinction between “inside” and “outside” of our bodies, made us able to control our blood pressure, levels of insulin or serotonin, to change our moods with anti-depressive medication, to (ex)change organs, to reproduce ourselves outside our bodies (external uterus), to read our DNA and to acquire even more data about our genetic predispositions (Grünberg 2010). All these recent available medical and technological extravagances profoundly change the relationship we have with our own body. In today’s risk society (Beck 1982), individuals invest more and more energy in seeing their bodies as a place where they can exercise individual control as means of building their individual and collective identity. Thus, the body becomes an entity on which one may intervene, being perceived not only as a biological entity under construction, but one at the border between nature and technology, open to endless construction and reconstruction. The body is the one that is watched, controlled, monitored, examined, classified, protected, saved etc. Our flesh and blood bodies have

3) “Sousveillance” is a term coined by Steve Mann in “Sousveillance. Wearable Computing and Citizen “Undersight”, *H+ Magazine*, published on July 10, 2009.

4) Term introduced in Roger Clarke in 1998 in “International Technologies and Dataveillance, *Communications of the ACM*, vol.31, 498-512.

nowhere to hide anymore and reveal (with or without our consent) intimate, in-depth details on who we are, on our intentions to purchase or smell preferences, on the state of our health or our income, on our exact location at any moment in time. Pervasive monitoring of our bodies makes our past, present and future an open book available to many people.

After 9/11, the whole world was able to see pictures and live broadcastings of human bodies falling down from the New York Towers minutes after the terrorist attacks. Our virtual lives surpass and even supersede our off-line lives in ways we have never imagined and confront us with new possibilities of existing (living?) for ever on the internet world and no longer having “the right to be forgotten”. Due to social media, we are able and willing to share pictures, memories and experiences. Such pieces of information about our gender-embodied selves will survive our physical disappearance. We also want to have power to decide even on our death. We not only freeze parts of our bodies, but we also freeze our entire bodies and store them for the future (cryogenics) and euthanasia is a practice accepted in more and more countries.

The unparalleled technological assault on the body through the sophisticated usage of biometrics and nanotechnologies undoubtedly represents a new ontology of the body in the framework of which the body is a trustful provider of more and more information (the body as flesh-made information – Van der Ploeg 2000). The embodied information thus obtained somehow deceives the body as it produces more knowledge about it and less knowledge for it. We utilize more and more science and technology in order to identify the specific body, the dangerous body, the sick body, the ugly body, the abnormal body, the strange body, the non-European body, features of populations of bodies etc. By doing so, we suspect, eliminate, control, repair, interrogate, manipulate the body and, as a

follow-up, we experiment on it.

Turner, among other theoreticians of the body, is right when he analyses the somatic societies of today and affirms that every society had, in time, responsibilities in order to ensure the government of the “4 Rs” of the body: the *reproduction* of bodies in time, the *regulation* of bodies in space, the *restraint* of internal desire and the external *representation* of the body (Turner 2008). Social norms act as invisible boundaries on the expressive capacities of our bodies. The principles of (post)panopticism have infiltrated virtually all aspects of modern life, facilitating the disciplining of bodies to be individualized, compliant and productive.

Increasingly invasive technological monitoring the interventions upon body functions has created bodies that are informatized and controlled. Our physical bodies have somehow become marginalized, shadowed by what some specialists call “a comprehensive data body” that not only follows us, but often precedes us. Before we / our bodies arrive to a certain destination, due to our passports, travel tickets, money cards etc., our identity is already known by “the Big Brother”, because of our passports, travel tickets, bank cards etc. Before we arrive somewhere, we have already been recognized, measured, classified, sorted and evaluated as good or bad citizens. What our data body says about us seems to be more real than what we may say about ourselves. As noticed in many studies, we are witnessing a sort of triumph of representation over being!

In the context of the reflexive project of self-identity (Giddens 1991), the body goes beyond the dualism of materiality – representation. The body is not just a mere *object*, as it becomes an *event*. Within conditions of late modernity, the body, once a given aspect of nature, turns into a project increasingly open to human intervention, colonized and subjected to constant revisions. The boundary between what is given and what is open to choice are more



and more blurred. That means that the self can be freed from bodily determination. Through the development of technologies and techniques such as genetic engineering, reproductive technologies, plastic surgery, health and diet regimes, bodies not only become objects for human management and reconfiguration, but are increasingly central to one's identity. Like other aspects of identity, the body is now more and more the responsibility of the individual who may consciously and actively restructure his / her bodily external and internal content. The body is no more entirely natural as it becomes profoundly social and cultural. Through the pursuit of specific body regimes chosen from a diverse range of lifestyle options, the "body" changes fundamentally over time. The air we breathe, the pills we take, the sports we choose to practice – all these aspects do transform our natural bodies. Even more so today, in the consumer culture in which we live, this link between the self, the body and image is a central feature as our experiences of the self.

As for the future, there are many pertinent questions for all of us to reflect upon. What will the future look like from this perspective of making our embodied selves more and more public and having the technological devices needed to master our bodies and the bodies of others? It may be the case that the way our bodies will look in the near future will depend more and more on our own choice. As technology allows these days the so-called *evolution by design* – so much disputed nowadays, but already in testing – we will be able to adjust, improve, intervene into our "bodies to be" and make them be as close as possible to our desires. We will design in laboratories the shape of our ears or noses and make such organs grow inside various animals (such as mice). We will choose the height or the IQ of our offspring, we will design / create humans close to our normative aspirations and standards of beauty, health and intelligence. We will arrogantly experience the super-power feelings of taking "God's" place!



### **Women's Bodies under Surveillance. The Gender Dimension of Surveillance**

*"The bodies come in genders."* (J. Butler)

The unprecedented assault on the body in terms of supervision, recognition, authentication, modification, improvement, control, manipulation, is not a gender neutral one. The next step we utterly need to make in order to better comprehend the complex phenomenon of surveillance is to analyze it not only from an embodied perspective, but also to genderize these reflections. The permanent monitoring of the body is an activity marked by gendered symbolism, significances and consequences. Bodies are gendered spaces and should be perceived as such. They are carriers of fundamental information about sex, gender, but also about ethnicity, class, nationality, age etc. They transmit messages about social, cultural, religious, moral, aesthetic (gender) norms. They are (technologically) manipulated to reproduce gender and gender roles. They illustrate the power relations in certain societies at certain times in history. Gender norms exert all kinds of pressures on the female / male bodies in order to conform to specified shapes, social or political environments and aesthetics. In this sense, it becomes obvious that surveillance is gendered. We treat, feed, starve, surgically alter, display, move, conceal, care for, damage, control, monitor, evaluate and ignore our bodies in patterned ways that are gendered and sexualized.

The micro and macro practices of gendered surveillance are essential in the social construction of social institutions such as youth, motherhood, beauty, power, sexuality, reputation etc. We have adorned, constrained, improved, punished and controlled our bodies for a very long time. Women's bodies in particular have conformed over time to various cultural, social norms, being, as Foucault and, later



Susan Bordo, says, docile bodies, subjected, used, transformed by the society of discipline (Foucault 2005). Even before the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, when bodies in general were considered sacred and intangible (for example, dissections were not yet practiced being forbidden and punished), humans exercised control over their bodies in general and over women's body in particular. A cultural fixation on female virginity, on women wearing high heels or on female thinness is not only proof of an ongoing obsession with beauty, but of an obsession with female obedience (Wolf 2002).

Gradually, over time, the agentic character of our gendered and embodied bodies became more and more visible and accepted. Today, as mentioned above, arrogantly, we have taken control over our gendered bodies as we have never done before. Due to biological and behavioral biometric technologies, we dare to look for *life without aging* and *perennial youth (and beauty)*, spending lots of money on miraculous creams or sophisticated aesthetic surgeries. Centuries ago, women would bathe in virgin blood. Today, women and men alike pay hundreds of Euros on rejuvenation (blood rejuvenation and even DNA rejuvenation), hydration, and making wrinkles disappear. The figures are impressive. More than 15 million people worldwide underwent cosmetic surgery in 2013 – the majority was Asian women<sup>5</sup>. Breast augmentation, liposuction, rhinoplasty, laser skin rejuvenation, eyelid surgery, injection with growth hormones to reverse the aging process (*vs.* sleeping, drinking or taking baths in virgin blood as was the case with privileged women some centuries ago!). We are also in search of *life without pain* or disease, inventing and consuming drugs for almost everything (antibiotics, energy drinks, pain killers, antidepressants and antioxidants) in order to slow down the aging processes, to eliminate pain, to fix health problems and to be happy. We pay (legally or illegally) for organs for various transplants to cure,

replace or improve what is damaged in our bodies. *Procreation without sexuality* is also something already possible. We as women are able to become pregnant as virgins – without having sex in order to procreate. Due to ovule-freezing technologies, we are able to postpone motherhood and concentrate on our careers. Apple and Facebook are among the first multinational companies that pay for their female employees who decide to freeze their ovules for later pregnancy as part of what they consider to be good practice in supporting work-life balance.

When speaking about surveillance of women's bodies one important area of reflection is what could be generically called *ideological surveillance*. The Islamic veil in the Islamic world, the Holocaust, the pro-natalist policies in totalitarian Romania (with over 100.000 dead women between 1966-1989 due to illegal / unsafe abortions), demographic policies in China (bringing an important deficit of girls due to selective abortion policies that have been implemented for a long period of time), pornography on internet, the “clean / unclean body” – as approached in many religions, female genital mutilation, honor killings (still in place in countries such as Pakistan, Afghanistan, Turkey) or force-feeding practices (still in place in some countries such as Mauritania) are just some examples of the direct and subtle ways in which women's bodies have been and continue to be ideologically controlled, of the pervasive ways in which their bodies are under permanent control and manipulation in conformity with various religious, economic, political or cultural norms.

*Medical surveillance* (of course often closely linked with ideological control) is another major field of reflection with reference to what Foucault calls the *clinical gaze*, the permanent surveillance and specialized knowledge affecting women's bodies (Foucault 2005). Due to disciplinary technologies, we have witnessed, for

5) Data from the International Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgery (ISAPS), 2013, available at [www.isaps.org/news/isaps-global-statistics](http://www.isaps.org/news/isaps-global-statistics).

example, over time a total transformation of major gendered bodily experiences such as childbearing, childbirth, maternity or sexuality-experiences that are lived exclusively by women. Re-location of childbirth from home to hospitals that has taken place in the last few decades means, in fact, extending the obstetric gaze. Modern pregnancy and maternity are nowadays more of public experiences, as pregnant women are much more visible on streets showing their pregnant bodies in public, breastfeeding in public spaces, wearing clingy, molded clothes instead of large ones to disguise pregnancy, and sharing with everybody (partners, families, real and virtual friends) sophisticated photos of their unborn children. Sexuality, on the other hand, has also benefitted from surveillance technologies, becoming increasingly subject to enhancement technologies via vaginal tightening, labia reduction etc.

Due to available medical technologies, a total new medical vocabulary has been created in the field of medicine. Sometimes it is close to science-fiction for the public at large: artificial insemination, artificial wombs, human cloning, freezing of egg and sperm, embryo transfer, genetic engineering (manipulating genes in an organism), hormone for fertility treatment, in-vitro fertilization (the egg is fertilized outside the woman's body), pre-implantation genetic diagnosis (PGD) – a test on embryos for genetic disorders prior to implantation in the uterus and the potential possibility for sex selection and in general for designed babies. As consequence of the existence of such new artificial tools for bodily surveillance, there are complex medical practices confronting our daily lives: prenatal testing, privatization of genes, storage of genetic data in bio banks, preventive abortion, elective abortion, suspended maternity, surrogate mothers, virgin mothers, casual uterus, sperm traffic etc.

Of course all these new biotechnological opportunities and results have brought serious *ethical implications*. A woman could

wait until after retirement to give birth; a surrogate mother may give birth to her own nephew; a single infant could have more than two parents; an infant could have parents who might die whilst the child is still not born; a child might not resemble her mother / father at all (due to cosmetic surgeries). *Artificial insemination* raises the issue of the rights of the sperm donor or the child's right to know his or her parentage. Postponing maternity by freezing ovules is more of a global business as it provides real support for balancing life-work policies. *In-vitro fertilization* comes with the problems of the rights of the surrogate mother who carries the fetus. We can easily imagine also the ethical implications of a donor egg and a donor sperm being implanted into a surrogate mother (who is the biological mother?). *Cloning* also means that the child has no parents, so the first simple question for reflection is whether he / she a product or a human being. *Designer babies / test-tube babies* (the first one was Louise Brown back in 1978) make us wonder who really sets the standards for the "perfect human being"? The gender reassignment surgery to "fix the problem" of an intersex child that is born means deciding whether to call a child a boy or a girl, using social definitions of the essential components of gender, consequently using measurement techniques to determine medically acceptable penis or clitoris (methods that Fausto Sterlin defines as "phallo-metrics" techniques) (Fausto-Sterlin 2000). *Genetical discrimination* (therapeutic abortion after prenatal scanning) puts serious health problems and indicates the existence of discrimination issues (who-in terms of class, education, wealth, ethnicity, geographical location etc. – has, in fact, access to such tests?). And last, but not least, such advanced medical technologies make it possible nowadays to take the genes of someone no longer alive and create a child, thus enabling *planned orphanhood* – a life model that comes with serious ethical dilemmas.



The '70s feminism provided a vocal source of criticism of the different types of surveillance, including ideological and medical surveillance, available on the market. As consumers of medical services, many women were dissatisfied with what they considered to be a patriarchal, paternalistic and sexist profession. Women asserted their right to exercise control over their own bodies and voiced their frustration over the encroaching medicalization, along with surveillance, of normal events in women's lives, including childbirth and menopause, and the attitudes of male doctors towards such issues as abortion and birth control. They also criticized the disparity between the needs and concerns of women and the attitudes and approaches of the medical profession<sup>6</sup>. They also protested against various ideological intrusions in their lives – their right to abortion, their right to uncover themselves if they want to, their right to bike or drive a car, their right over their bodies.

Feminists were initially more interested in researching the social and cultural constructions of gender, not paying much attention to the biological body. This was the effect of the fact that in much of history, the body has been conceptualized as simply one biological object among others. Women were considered to be more biological, more corporeal, and more natural than men. With the publication of *The Second Sex* by Simone de Beauvoir, the feminist theory on the relation between the body and the self took center stage, together with a recognition of the fact that “to be present in the world implies strictly that there exists a body which is at once a material thing in the world and a point of view towards the world” (Beauvoir 2006, 32). Feminist theorists, along with critical race theorists and theorists of disability, are the ones that have ensured that attention to the body plays a central role in social and political thought.

In the beginning, women's bodies had to be extracted / detached from biology

and connected with the social and cultural construction of femininity. Today, after decades of reflection and discoveries, the motto “we are born and became women / and men” seems more viable. If, at the beginning, for many feminists the body was more of a passive medium through which normative/oppressive cultural norms of femininity (such as diet, make up, dress etc.) were expressed, today, for the majority of feminists, women are not simply passive victims of such normative constructions of femininity, but active producers of their cultural bodies through their pursuit of continually shifting ideals. The agentic nature of women in constructing and deconstructing their bodies is today, in the feminist thinking, more of a postulate.

Today we analyze gender discrimination from an embodied, but also intersectional perspective-looking at the intersections of embodied gender with other major social categories such as class, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation. The material, biological body has been (re)introduced in the discussions in view of offering a more political dimension to the debates dealing with issues of pornography, sexuality, violence and, of course, (medical) surveillance. To name just a few of the important feminist thinkers focusing on the gendered bodies, Judith Butler, well-known for her concepts of *performativity of the body* – in the sense of a stylized repetition of acts, an imitation or miming of the dominant conventions of embodied gender – and *corporeal politics* (Butler 1992); Elisabeth Grosz talks about *volatile bodies* as part of corporeal feminism where sensuality is socially constructed (Grosz 1994); Rosalyn Diprose looks at gendered surveilled bodies in terms of *corporeal generosity* of the women's bodies (Diprose 2002) and Susan Bordo analyzes women's body as texts of femininity (Bordo 1993). In line with the general embodiment of sociological thinking, such feminists (and many others) invested explicitly or implicitly intellectual efforts with a view to better understand the gender dimension of

6) See, for example, Ann Oakley. 1990. *Essays on Women, Medicine and Health 1990*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

surveillance as it manifests itself in all areas of life and its significance for women.



### **Gendering the Reflection on Embodied Surveillance. Themes for Thought**

Why is there more progress in the area of treating erectile dysfunctions of the body (by inventing and a wide scale usage of Viagra) and not in the area of safe masculine contraception? Why are the “looks” of the female bodies (shape, size, dimensions) more important, being under permanent social and cultural supervision, in comparison with the appearance of male bodies? Does having access, as women, to specific body experiences (such as pregnancy, giving birth, breastfeeding), to a sort of type of knowledge closer to nature, give women an epistemic privilege of knowledge in science, art, literature? Is women’s way of viewing the world as women a better way or just a different way from men’s? Why, in today’s abundant Western society, do we as women do our best to be skinny and are so encouraged by media industries to do so? What will reproduction (and, consequently, human relations and families) will look like in the next 50 years?

The list of gender-sensitive questions linked to the pervasive surveillance society we live in may continue. What this article asserts is, in fact, obvious: ubiquitous embodied gendered surveillance has increasingly become woven into the fabric of everyday life. Being part of our daily existence, it touches explicitly or implicitly all areas of our gendered and embodied experiences, but also of our theoretical critical thinking about our societies. Ingredients about surveillance need to be added to many areas of theoretical reflections.

Research itself is a form of surveillance as it means collecting, organizing, analyzing, controlling, checking, interpreting and

manipulating data about embodied and gendered knowledge. Actually, research experiences are instruments of control, power, naming, classifying, rating etc. As research has been for a long time made from a masculine perspective, ignoring women from research samples or taking masculinity as the norm, research results have been for a long time gender-biased. The way research deals with gender stereotypes, the way research constructs sex, gender, sexuality, bodies etc. obviously influences the results, knowledge, practices and policies. From Freud, who defined the female body as “lacking of / envy of”, to the fundamental cultural switch from the one-sex story (with the woman as an imperfect story / version of the man, the vagina seen as an inferior penis and ovaries as testicles) to the two-sex story that became popular, for various reasons, around the 18<sup>th</sup> century (with woman as the opposite of man<sup>7</sup>), all theories and researches have framed and organized knowledge about gender in specific ways. Looking at research as a surveillance institution, we may not also only ask ourselves why there is more progress in the area of the treatment of masculine sexual dysfunctions (Viagra) than in masculine safe contraception, but we may better frame possible answers to such social realities. We may also reflect on the demographic data recorded and stored for analysis and used not only to survey existing populations, but to support predictions of trends and future developments, to monitor the future before it even happens. This type of research has, undoubtedly, its benefits – helping, for example, to control the spread of disease or to better understand demographic trends connected with mobility, migration or birth control policies –, but it also brings serious social, economic and moral concerns.

Another issue for further gender-sensitive reflection is linked to neoliberal policies as embodied gendered surveillance policies: what are the corporeal effects for (women’s) bodies in terms of over-work, lack of work-life balance, insecurity, stress, fear

7) For details, see Laquer, Thomas. 1990. *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud*. LA: Harvard University Press.

of unemployment, cultural pressure for the perfect body etc.? How do class, ethnicity and gender structure these corporeal experiences and what are the gendered embodied consequences of the consumer neoliberal society of today?

Surveillance and violence against women could (and should) be an important subject for additional gender-sensitive analysis. Women as a class are surveilled and monitored, but individual women are frequently beyond the gaze of justice and rights. We are more and more loaded in data and knowledge (about violence), but, despite this mass of knowledge, freedom from punishment for violence against women / women's bodies continues. The unresponsive eye of the CCTV can only observe and record, but it cannot stop violence. So what is the human result of the permanent observing and recording of violence against women? Is it working to end violence? How could surveillance really help, be "surveillance for" and not only "surveillance of"?

The role of the media in the embodied gendered surveillance is also of importance and deserves closer attention. Media voyeurism, the way media controls gender stereotypes, how, for example, dietary and exercise advice is self-empowerment or how containment practices produce perverse effects such as anorexia or bulimia – all these issues (and many others) are of great importance for our gendered embodied existences.

Last, but not least, problems dealing with gender, surveillance and social inequalities are of particular significance. In today's post-*panopticon* world, we have differentiated/unequal access to many of the body projects proposed by the consumerist and technologized world. Not all of us have access to high quality medical interventions to fix our bodies. Not all of us have access to the latest generation of pills and medical treatments able to cure our bodies. Only some of us may benefit from fitness, healthy food or prenatal testing to improve our

bodies, our lives and the lives of others. When new drugs are invented, they are first tested on animals and then on the poor population (as was the case with testing the contraceptive pills!). New surveillance technologies enforce or often create new gaps between the poor and the rich or between people of different genders, classes, ethnicities, level of education, geographical location etc. From this perspective, arguing for a feminist reevaluation of the body means understanding better surveillance as creating powerful social norms, crucial to the maintenance of existing power structures, including patriarchy, race, consumerism and the media. It means being aware of various social inequalities created by surveillance technologies and also of their gendered dimensions.

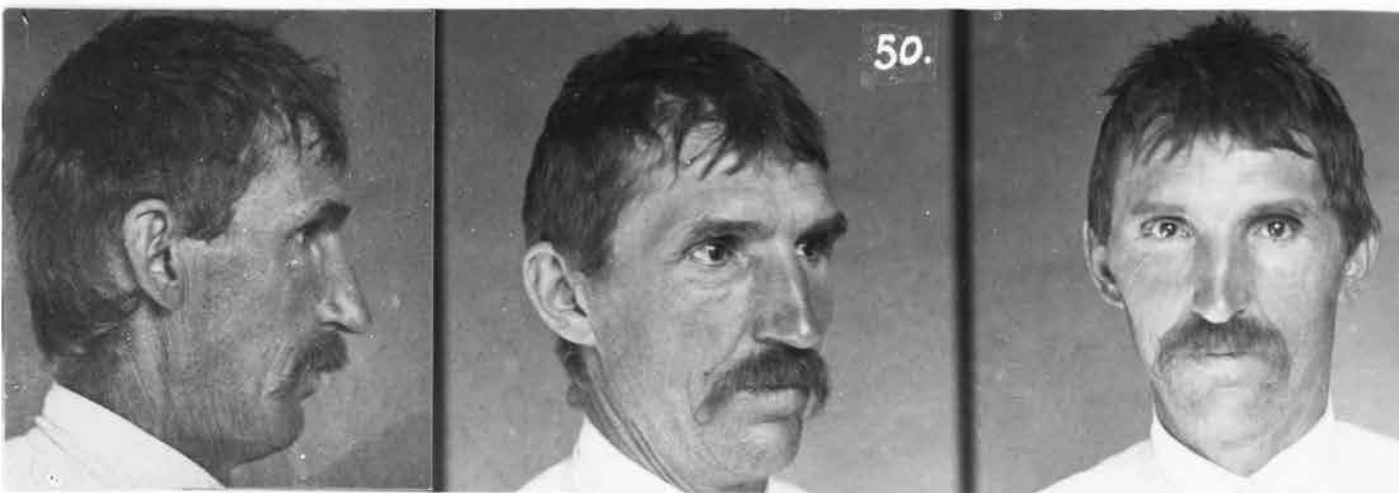
The list of "themes for thought" is an open list. There are crucial questions addressing our present lives, but also our future. How will our gendered embodied lives be and look like in the all-pervasive somatic surveillance society? What kind of (women's) bodies will there be in the future? Will we be more and more cyborgs (Haraway 1991) instead of humans? Will our sex or gender still really matter in the future? Will we continue investing in doing gender or will we start to undo gender? How far will surveillance instruments and policies continue to penetrate our gendered bodies and with what ethical and moral consequences? Will our minds and bodies be totally public by default? What will be private in our bodies, in our lives anymore? We don't know yet. But we do know that what we know and how we know it is due to our gendered bodies. What we do know is that, as Margaret Atwood put it, "in the end, we all become stories". Stories told by our surveilled and self-surveilled gendered bodies! Then, what we surely need is greater, more vigilant, interdisciplinary, systematic, critical, responsible and active listening to the multitude of stories told by our gendered flesh and boned bodies in this world of omnipresent surveillance.



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Andrejevic, M. 2012. "Ubiquitous Surveillance." In D. Lyon & K. Ball (eds.). *The Routledge Handbook of Surveillance Studies*. New York and London: Routledge, 91-98.
- Ball, K. 2002. "Elements of surveillance. A new framework and future directions." In *Information, Communication & Society*, vol.5, nr. 4, 573-590.
- Bauman, Zygmunt. 2000. *Liquid Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Beauvoir, Simone. 2006. *Al doilea sex*. București: Univers.
- Bordo, Susan. 1993. *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture and the Body*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Boyne, R. 2000. "Post-panopticon." In *Economy and Society*, vol. 29, 285-307.
- Butler, Judith. 1993. *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex.'* New York: Routledge.
- Butler, Judith. 1999. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge.
- Deleuze G. and F. Guattari. 1987. *A thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Diprose, Rosalyn. 2002. *Corporeal Generosity. On giving with Nietzsche, Merleau-Ponty & Levinas*. New York: SUNY Press.
- Fausto-Sterling, Anne. 2000. "The Five Sexes: Why male and female are not enough." In *The Sciences*, 33:2, 20-25.
- Foucault, Michel. 2005. *A supraveghea și a pedepsi. Nașterea închisorii*. Pitești: Paralela 45.
- Giddens, Anthony. 1990. *The consequences of modernity*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Grosz, Elizabeth. 1994. *Volatile Bodies: Towards a Corporeal Feminism*. London: Routledge.
- Grünberg, Laura. 2010. "Corpul ca informație în societatea supravegheii de azi." In Grünberg L. (coord.), *Introducere în sociologia corpului. Teme, perspective și experiențe întrupate*. București: Polirom.
- Grünberg, Laura. 2013. "Adjusting Locally to a World under Ubiquitous Surveillance." In *Review of Research and Social Intervention*, vol. 43. Iași: Expert Projects, 197-215.
- Haggerty, K. & R.V. Ericson. 2000. "The surveillance assemblage." In *British Journal of Sociology*, vol. 51 (4), 605-622.
- Haraway, Donna. 1991. *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Re-invention of Nature*. London: Free Association Books.
- Latour, B. 2005. *Reassembling the Social. An introduction to actor-network theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lyon, David. 2001. *Surveillance society. Monitoring everyday life*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Lyon, Davis. 2003. *Surveillance as social sorting: Privacy, risk and digital discrimination*. New York: Routledge.
- Mathiesen, Thomas. 1997. "The Viewer Society: Michel Foucault's Panopticon's Revised." In *Theoretical Criminology*, vol. 1(2), 215-33.
- Palmer, C.L. 1994. *Omniopticon: Design Alternatives for a Spherical Projection System*. USA: University of Alberta Press.
- Parry, D. (ed). 2011. *Ubiquitous Surveillance*. Living books for life, Open Humanities Press, open access books series, available at [http://www.livingbooksaboutlife.org/books/Ubiquitous\\_Surveillance](http://www.livingbooksaboutlife.org/books/Ubiquitous_Surveillance).
- Poster, M. 1990. *The mode of information: Poststructuralism and Social Context*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Shilling, C. 2002. *The Body and Social Theory*. London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage Publications.
- Turner, Bryan. 2008. *The body and Society: Exploration in Social Theory*. London: Sage.
- Urry, John. 1995. "The tourist gaze and the Environment." In *Theory, Culture and Society*, vol. 9, 9-26.
- Van de Ploeg. 2003. "Biometrics and the body as information: normative issues of the sociotechnical coding of the body." In Lyon D. (ed.), *Surveillance as Social Sorting: Privacy, Risk and Automated Discrimination*. London: Routledge, 57-74.
- Wolf, N. 2002. *The Beauty Myth. How images of women are used against women*. Boston: Harper Perennial.
- Wood, D.M. 2006. "A report on the Surveillance Society", available at <http://www.ico.org.uk/media/documents/library/>







# MARTOR



---

Title: "Y a-t-il un corps du péché et de la maladie? La Paresse et la Peste dans l'iconographie religieuse roumaine (XVIIIe-XIXe siècles)"

Author: Cristina Bogdan

How to cite this article: Bogdan, Cristina. 2015. "Y a-t-il un corps du péché et de la maladie? La Paresse et la Peste dans l'iconographie religieuse roumaine (XVIIIe-XIXe siècles)". *Martor* 20: 155-170.

Published by: *Editura MARTOR* (MARTOR Publishing House), *Muzeul Țăranului Român* (The Museum of the Romanian Peasant)

URL: <http://martor.muzeultaranuluiroman.ro/archive/768-2/>

---

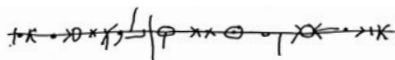
*Martor* (The Museum of the Romanian Peasant Anthropology Review) is a peer-reviewed academic journal established in 1996, with a focus on cultural and visual anthropology, ethnology, museum studies and the dialogue among these disciplines. *Martor* review is published by the Museum of the Romanian Peasant. Its aim is to provide, as widely as possible, a rich content at the highest academic and editorial standards for scientific, educational and (in)formational goals. Any use aside from these purposes and without mentioning the source of the article(s) is prohibited and will be considered an infringement of copyright.

*Martor* (Revue d'Anthropologie du Musée du Paysan Roumain) est un journal académique en système *peer-review* fondé en 1996, qui se concentre sur l'anthropologie visuelle et culturelle, l'ethnologie, la muséologie et sur le dialogue entre ces disciplines. La revue *Martor* est publiée par le Musée du Paysan Roumain. Son aspiration est de généraliser l'accès vers un riche contenu au plus haut niveau du point de vue académique et éditorial pour des objectifs scientifiques, éducatifs et informationnels. Toute utilisation au-delà de ces buts et sans mentionner la source des articles est interdite et sera considérée une violation des droits de l'auteur.

*Martor* is indexed by EBSCO and CEEOL.

# Y a-t-il un corps du péché et de la maladie?

## La Paresse et la Peste dans l'iconographie religieuse roumaine (XVIII<sup>e</sup>-XIX<sup>e</sup> siècles)



**Cristina Bogdan**

Chargée de cours à la Faculté des Lettres (Université de Bucarest) et directrice du Département des Sciences de la Communication de la Faculté des Lettres

### ABSTRACT

L'étude se propose d'analyser l'image de la *Paresse* et de la *Peste* dans le discours iconographique de l'espace roumain des XVIII<sup>e</sup>-XIX<sup>e</sup> siècles. Le péché capital et la maladie par excellence de l'imaginaire collectif roumain acquièrent des corps dans la décoration de certaines églises en bois du nord de la Transylvanie. Les peintres itinérants transportent parfois d'un édifice à l'autre, proposant des variations sur le même thème. La personnification de la *Peste* apparaît aussi sur d'autres supports (icônes sur verre de Transylvanie, dessins sur les pages des manuscrits contenant la *Vie* et l'*Hymne acathiste* de Saint Charalampe, le protecteur contre l'implacable maladie). À l'aide des enquêtes sur le terrain, qui ont conduit à la construction d'un corpus d'images, nous proposons une analyse d'anthropologie historique, afin de surprendre les points de contact et de divergence dans la figuration des deux entités négatives. Placés sous le signe du féminin (imposé par l'appartenance des deux mots qui désignent la *Paresse* et la *Peste* en roumain à ce genre), les personnages exhibent sous les regards des contemporains leurs contours détériorés par le temps et souvent obnubilés par la perte du code de lecture visuelle.

### KEYWORDS

iconographie religieuse, corps des calamités, églises de bois, icônes sur verre, la *Paresse*, la *Peste*

•••••

### Images et corps

Nous vivons dans un temps où les images ont été accusées d'avoir provoqué une crise de la représentation, d'être devenues, selon l'expression de Jean Baudrillard, *les meurtrières du réel* (Baudrillard 1976; Baudrillard 1981). La prolifération presque sans limites des images et l'importance de plus en plus accrue qu'on leur a prêtée pendant les dernières décennies ont conduit à une sorte de réaction de sursaturation: l'œil est fatigué, le spectateur se sent désarmé devant ce spectacle des images qui pollue constamment son univers et qu'il ne peut plus administrer, car il n'est plus à même de le dominer mentalement. L'habitude

de l'être humain de fabriquer des images (apparue en même temps que les premières formes de culture (Ariès 1983, 7), comme une tentative de transférer la nature sur des supports qui la rendent permanente et qui la re-sémantisent), le pousse aujourd'hui aussi à penser le monde comme un labyrinthe de miroirs où tout ce qui existe, et surtout le sujet pensant, se reflète.

La relation de l'être humain avec la mort (une réalité perceptible au niveau visuel seulement par l'intermédiaire de ses conséquences, les *corps des défunts*) a contribué à l'émergence et à l'évolution de ce que Philippe Ariès nomme « le film continu des cultures historiques » (Ariès 1983, 7). Il y a là un jeu pertinent, surpris par Régis Debray, entre « la décomposition de la mort » et « la recomposition par l'image » (Debray



1992, 38), un geste substitutif nécessaire pour la création et la perpétuation du flux de la mémoire.

La présence de l'image implique l'apparition d'un *corps-récepteur*, mais aussi d'un *médium-support* qui la véhicule. La liaison entre l'image et le corps suppose un double conditionnement: le corps constitue l'instrument par lequel l'image est filtrée et reflétée (dans une expérience sensorielle qui approche l'œil du toucher, le visible du tangible – Didi-Huberman 1992, 11; Merleau-Ponty 1964, 177), devenant, à son tour, un objet qui peut être inséré dans l'image. Quels que soient les supports qui accueillent l'image et qui l'aident à atteindre le stade de la visibilité (miroir, tableau, photographie, écran), celui qui en atteste l'existence reste le spectateur. Entre celui-ci et ce que l'on offre à sa connaissance apparaît un dialogue des miroitements mutuels, car ce n'est pas seulement le récepteur qui regarde l'image, mais celle-ci regarde son interlocuteur aussi. C'est le sens de la métaphore du livre de Georges Didi-Huberman – *Ce que nous voyons, ce qui nous regarde* – qui pose le problème de cet espace interstitiel qui naît entre le corps du spectateur et l'image, et celui de l'échange de statut ontologique (sujet-objet) qui s'opère constamment entre les deux instances. Dans les territoires de cet *entre* se porte le dialogue qui constituera l'objet de l'analyse qui suit.

religieux de l'espace roumain aux XVIII<sup>e</sup>-XIX<sup>e</sup> siècles? Quelle serait l'explication du désir d'introduire dans l'aire visuelle des gens de la période en question les visages, plus ou moins terrifiants, des désastres? Comment les spectateurs des siècles passés ont-ils « lu » ce genre de représentations et comment le faisons-nous aujourd'hui (quand les codes de lecture ont été oubliés, altérés ou souvent remplacés)? Et comment les images (celles qui ont été conservées) nous regardent-elles, à travers toutes les couches temporelles qui nous séparent du moment de leur apparition et à travers le rideau de brouillard des yeux qui s'y sont attardés, le long des années, en cherchant, en trouvant, en perdant ou en ajoutant un sens aux peintures.

Le discours pictural proposé par les peintres d'églises qui ont décoré les monuments en bois de la partie nord-ouest de la Transylvanie aux XVIII<sup>e</sup>-XIX<sup>e</sup> siècles<sup>1</sup> met en évidence souvent des scènes à caractère eschatologique (*Le Jugement Dernier, les Péages aériens, l'Apocalypse, La Roue de la Vie, la Parabole des vierges folles et des vierges sages*). Les visages squelettiques du spectre de *la Mort* – muni d'une faux et d'autres instruments destinés à séparer l'âme du corps – à cheval, en position pédestre ou assis sur le couvercle d'une tombe, sont parfois accompagnés des figures d'autres calamités (*la Famine*<sup>2</sup>, *la Peste*) ou du personnage féminin qui symbolise un péché capital (*la Paresse*) dans la mentalité paysanne de jadis.

D'une manière ou d'une autre, les calamités sont liées entre elles, composant un cercle vicieux dont on ne peut sortir que difficilement. Un hiver très long, une période d'inondations ou une sécheresse puissante détruisent les récoltes, entraînant le spectre de la famine. Si une épidémie commence aussi (souvent provoquée par les déplacements des troupes, qui n'ont point évité les territoires roumains, surtout au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle), elle sera « maintenue » et répandue à l'aide de l'état précaire d'alimentation des masses. Un dicton grec

1) Nous ferons référence à une suite d'églises en bois des départements actuels de Sălaj, Maramureș, Satu-Mare, Hunedoara et Arad, dans le discours pictural desquelles ont été incluses les images des deux personnages que nous analyserons ci-après (*La Paresse et La Peste*). Pour la période que nous avons en vue (le XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle et la première moitié du siècle suivant), la division territoriale était autre (et les zones respectives étaient sous l'autorité habsbourgeoise), mais afin de rendre plus facile la compréhension du texte pour son lecteur contemporain, nous avons préféré de nous rapporter aux délimitations contemporaines des territoires (en départements).

2) Le seul cas où nous l'avons identifiée est celui de l'église de Desești (département de Maramureș).

## Le visage des calamités

Comment le récepteur actuel regarde-t-il le corps de certaines entités apparemment irréprésentables (soient-elles des calamités naturelles – *la Mort, la Peste, la Famine* – ou des péchés, tout aussi meurtriers dans le mental collectif des temps pré-modernes que les calamités mentionnées précédemment – *la Paresse*) qui ont tout de même trouvé leur place dans la décoration des monuments

établit une relation de continuité entre les désastres – « la peste après la famine » –, et les peintres qui ont décoré quelques unes des églises en bois des départements de Sălaj, Satu-Mare ou Maramureș ont voulu les représenter juxtaposées, dans une énumération des *réprimandes divines*, pour reprendre un syntagme que nos chroniqueurs d'antan utilisaient, dans un esprit moralisateur.

La plus ample représentation des catastrophes peut être vue dans le narthex de l'église de Desești, peinte en 1780 par Radu Munteanu de Ungureni Lăpușului (avec Gheorghe Vișoveanu). Au-dessus d'un fleuve de feu qui porte les damnés de manière implacable vers la bouche aux dents pointues du Léviathan (symbole de l'*Enfer*), sur trois chaises, improvisées des couvercles de quelques cercueils, trônent, de la gauche à la droite, la *Famine*, la *Paresse* et la *Peste* (conformément aux inscriptions adjacentes, en caractères cyrilliques). Représentées comme des semi-nus, une serviette autour des hanches seulement, les personifications à allure féminine sont aujourd'hui acéphales. La peinture a été couverte d'une couche de chaux pour quelques décennies et, à la suite de la restauration, on n'a pu conserver que les contours des visages, mais non pas les détails de leurs physiologies. Le seul personnage qui n'a pas de réserves à nous montrer son visage, même deux siècles après le jour où il a été peint, est la *Mort*, située tout près de la *Peste* et habillée de couleurs différentes par rapport aux trois désastres décrits antérieurement.

Nous ne nous arrêtons pas en ce qui suit sur le personnage de *La Mort*, dont nous avons traité plusieurs fois (Bogdan 2002; Bogdan 2009, 58-78; Bogdan 2014a, 75-98; Bogdan 2014b, 147-162). Nous analyserons en revanche les figures d'un péché (la *Paresse*) et d'une maladie (la *Peste*), qui accompagnent parfois le spectre macabre, dans une sorte de défilement des désastres. Celui-ci pourrait constituer une réplique populaire, locale, à la séquence des *Cavaliers de l'Apocalypse* ou aux illustrations occi-

dentales de la *cavalcade des vices*, tirées des commentaires du Pape Grégoire le 1<sup>er</sup> au *Livre de Job*. Les sept péchés capitaux (l'orgueil, l'envie, la colère, l'acédie, l'avarice, la gourmandise, la luxure), que le premier pape moine met en question, composent un vrai système dont les éléments s'entrelacent et se conditionnent. Les

commentaires de Grégoire à la fin du VI<sup>e</sup> siècle séparaient cette série en deux parties: les cinq premiers étaient des vices spirituels, les deux derniers étaient des péchés charnels (Casagrande, Vecchio 2003, 8). Les représentations plastiques du septénaire des vices ont été précédées par l'image de la lutte entre les vices et les vertus des enluminures des manuscrits qui illustraient la *Psychomachie* de Prudence. Ici (tout comme, plus tard, dans la sculpture des portails romans de l'Occident) les allégories étaient des incarnations *féminines*, organisées dans des couples dichotomiques: colère est vaincue par patience, superbe par humilité, luxure par sobriété, avarice par largesse (Baschet 2003, 341).

À partir des XV<sup>e</sup>-XVI<sup>e</sup> siècles, *La Peste* est représentée dans la peinture occidentale en tant que personnage féminin, souvent les cheveux défaits, chevauchant rapidement les corps moissonnés des mortels. Antérieurement elle avait eu les traits d'un squelette, une image influencée par la synonymie avec le personnage de *La Mort* dans les *Danses macabres*, *Les Triomphes de la Mort*, *Les Cavaliers de l'Apocalypse* (Aicardi-Cheve 2003, 365). D'autre fois, elle est figurée comme un monstre poilu, ailé, de couleur foncée; sa faux impitoyable accrochée à la taille et l'arc et les flèches dans



La Peste, Desești (départ. de Maramureș)

3) Les textes lyriques roumains d'amour mentionnent, dans de nombreux cas, le caractère irrésistible des cheveux laissés libres.

la main, prêt à viser et à percer ses victimes pour l'éternité.

La peinture religieuse roumaine ne retient le rapport entre les vices et les vertus que de manière allusive, par un marquage symétrique, dans la scène du *Jugement Dernier*, de la mort du juste (dans la proximité du jardin édénique) et de la mort du mauvais riche (entre les scènes des damnés, à côté de la rivière de feu). Les images présentes dans l'espace roumain n'ont pas un degré très haut de généralisation (et d'abstractivité); on préfère la représentation du pécheur dans l'acte (le moment) de la punition, plutôt qu'une figuration du péché proprement dit. La *Paresse* en est la seule exception que nous ayons identifiée jusqu'à présent. Ce n'est peut-être pas par hasard que, de tous les péchés, ce fut justement la *Paresse* que l'on a choisie, si nous tenons compte de ce que les voyageurs étrangers ont transmis le long du temps. C'est le défaut mentionné le plus souvent dans leurs récits concernant le comportement des autochtones, jusqu'au point où l'officier allemand Erasmus Heinrich Schneider von Weismantel affirme, dans les pages de son journal de 1713, que « le travail est leur ennemi » quel que soit le genre, car « les hommes travaillent peu, et les femmes encore moins et l'on ne trouve pas un journalier dans le pays, mais en revanche on y trouve bien des paresseux » (Barbu 2000, 26-27). Ce n'est peut-être pas par hasard que le sens archaïque du mot qui signifie en roumain *travail* [*muncă* < sl. *Monka*] renvoie à l'idée de *tourment, torture*.

• • • • •

### **Une femme nue, grasse, les cheveux coulant sur ses épaules**

Dans la plupart des cas (dans la peinture des églises en bois de la partie nord-ouest de la Transylvanie), la *Paresse* apparaît comme une femme nue, de proportions exagérées (monstrueusement grasse), les cheveux

toujours coulant sur ses épaules – un élément érogène (Ispas, Truță, 1986)<sup>3</sup>, signe d'une sexualité non-censurée et du manque de l'encadrement dans un ordre social préétabli. Dans la pensée paysanne d'autrefois, « les cheveux tressés en nattes (chez les filles) ou coiffés chez les femmes sont un signe de la culture, de la cosmicité et de l'ordre, tandis que les cheveux laissés libres approchent l'être humain de la sphère du chaos et du démoniaque » (Evseev 1998, 355).

Toute une suite de monuments religieux, peints à la fin du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle et dans la première moitié du suivant, dans des zones relativement proches (dans les actuels départements de Sălaj, Maramureș et Satu-Mare), proposent la juxtaposition *Mort – Paresse* (Chieșd, Dragu, Săcălășeni) ou la triade *Mort – Peste – Paresse* (Corund, Ulciug, Orțăța).

A Chieșd, d'une part et de l'autre de la porte d'entrée, sur la paroi sud du narthex peint en 1796 par Țiple Popa et Ioan d'Elciu, initialement veillaient la *Mort* et la *Paresse*. Aujourd'hui, seulement la dernière survit.

Dans l'église en bois de Dragu, département de Sălaj (fondée au début du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle et peinte en 1806 par le peintre d'églises Iosif Perso), nous sommes accueillis dans le narthex par la *Mort* (squelette gris foncé, une main – dans laquelle elle tient une sorte de fouet rouge – appuyant sa tête et l'autre soutenue par une faux), près de la *Paresse*. Ce personnage féminin, surdimensionné, est si confortablement assis sur une chaise au dossier haut et coussin pour la colonne, qu'elle paraît endormie, étant donné qu'elle a les yeux fermés, et le fuseau lui tombe de la main.

Dans l'église en bois de Săcălășeni, département de Maramureș (reconstruite au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle et repeinte en 1865, par le peintre Paul Weis de Baia Mare), la *Mort* en tant que squelette blanc, en position pédestre, armée de la faux, a des dimensions lilliputiennes par rapport à l'image gigantesque du personnage féminin nu qui représente la *Paresse* (assise, les cheveux libres sur le dos et le fuseau à la main,



La Mort et la Paresse, Gura Văii (départ. de Vâlcea)

esquissant un geste ample qui ressemble à celui du filage).

On rencontre parfois la *Paresse* dans l'absence de la *Mort* et d'autres incarnations des calamités, comme un signe du mépris envers ce vice. Elle est représentée toujours assise (sur une chaise basse, de facture paysanne, ou sur un tonneau, rarement sur une siège avec dossier haut et un coussin pour la colonne, comme dans la peinture de Dragu), avec des gestes lascives et ennuyés, en essayant de s'arranger, avec un peigne<sup>4</sup>, les cheveux, appuyant entre ses jambes la fourche et le fuseau qui semblent être sur le point de tomber. Nous avons pu identifier de telles situations, de la *Paresse* en tant que personnage indépendant, dans les églises en bois de Zalnoc et Bulgari<sup>5</sup> (département de Sălaj).

L'association entre la *Mort* et la *Paresse* est aussi présente dans quelques édifices en bois embellis par Nicolae Bădău de Lupșa Mare, dans les premières décennies du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle. À Sălciava (département de Hunedoara) et Julița (département d'Arad),

à une distance de deux ans seulement (1811 et, respectivement, 1813), l'artiste populaire représente les deux personnages de manière similaire: la *Mort* apparaît comme un squelette noir, portant la faux contre l'épaule, tandis que la *Paresse*, une femme rubiconde, nue, assise sur une chaise basse à dossier, ayant l'air d'être découpée d'un intérieur paysan, file une quenouille.

Avec des traits beaucoup plus délicats, habillée d'une robe fluide, transparente, la *Paresse* apparaît dans la scène de la façade sud du narthex de l'église « Saint Georges » de Gura Văii (département de Vâlcea), la fondation du *pârcălab* (gouverneur militaire) Gheorghe de Bogdănești, construite en 1759. Dans un paysage collinaire, marqué ci et là par des silhouettes de conifères, feuillus et fleurs, se déroulent plusieurs séquences, provenant de registres thématiques différents: des personnages qui jouent de la flûte et du tambour à friction, l'ours et le montreur d'ours, différents oiseaux (la cigogne, l'aigle), des épisodes de chasse (un tireur visant un lapin), une

4) Dans quelques unes des séquences, l'image de la peigne est indubitable (à Orăștea, département de Maramureș; à Ulciug et Bulgari, département de Sălaj), dans d'autres, à cause de l'état avancé de dégradation de la scène, nous ne pouvons plus voir avec précision la présence de cet objet de toilette intime, mais dans tous les cas où nous avons identifié le personnage il apparaît une main dirigée vers la tête, comme pour s'arranger les cheveux.

5) Il s'agit de la représentation sur la paroi sud du narthex, près de la porte, dans la proximité de Saint Nikita (qui tient dans sa main gauche un diable qu'il frappe avec sa droite), de l'église de Bulgari, département de Sălaj.



La Paresse,  
Gura Văii (départ.  
de Vâlcea)



femme tourmentée par un démon, la punition (par des coups) d'un apprenti, *la Mort avec la faux* et l'homme agenouillé en dessous et, dans un coin, *la Paresse*, assise confortablement et pointant vers un pichet. La juxtaposition *Mort-Paresse* et l'association de scènes de damnation et de chasse dessinent l'image d'un espace du *Jugement*, en dehors du thème proprement dit de la *Parousie* (représenté surtout sur la paroi est du narthex).

Cette fois-ci (à la différence des exemples des régions du nord du pays, invoqués antérieurement), les proportions du personnage féminin sont naturelles, et les traits sont ceux d'une femme normale; ce ne sont que les sourcils courbés et les cheveux longs, en désordre, qui pourraient trahir son inclusion dans le groupe des entités négatives, relevant de la dimension larvaire du chaos. C'est d'ailleurs la seule image de la *Paresse* que les recherches de terrain<sup>6</sup> dans la région de l'ancienne province de Valachie nous aient montrée.

Nous n'avons identifié dans l'espace roumain pas une seule représentation de ce péché avec des traits autres que ceux

féminins. Une explication possible pour cette option relève non seulement de la tradition d'une figuration des éléments négatifs comme appartenant au sexe faible et pécheur, mais aussi du genre féminin du substantif qui nomme le vice en roumain. La manière dont nous nommons la réalité détermine une certaine représentation mentale, surtout dans l'absence d'un contact direct avec une idée ou un concept auquel on devrait attribuer un corps. Le cas de la *Peste*, que nous discuterons dans ce qui suit, vient avec une solution différente, ambivalente, bien que le mot soit du genre féminin et que les textes folkloriques la décrivent comme une femme vieille, très laide, maigre, plutôt mince, et dans certaines variantes des légendes très hirsute<sup>7</sup>, ce qui conduit souvent à des superpositions avec la *Fille de la Forêt* (Eretescu 2007, 48-49).



### La Peste – sous le signe du féminin ou du masculin

En fonction du type de support sur lequel la *Peste* est figurée, elle semble changer de genre. De manière générale, dans la peinture murale (quand elle apparaît comme personnage indépendant, sans la présence dominatrice de Saint Charalampe) elle est représentée avec des traits féminins, et quand elle est fixée dans une chaîne, aux pieds du Saint qui l'a vaincue, devenant ainsi un intercesseur contre la maladie (surtout dans les icônes sur verre, mais aussi dans les manuscrits enluminés), elle est figurée comme un personnage masculin. Mais il y a aussi des exceptions, où l'on ne peut pas préciser l'identité de genre du personnage, tracé comme un monstre asexué (comme, par exemple, dans le cas de la peinture murale des églises en pierre de Cristian, Tohanu Nou, Veneția de Jos et Comăna de Jos – du département de Brașov, où elle apparaît tirée par ses cheveux en désordre par le Saint vainqueur). Nous ne l'avons

6) Les recherches dans le terrain ont été déroulées dans l'espace de l'ancienne province de Valachie, dans la période 2000-2014, pour un nombre de plus de 800 églises (des zones rurales et urbaines), représentant des fondations des princes, des boyards, des couches sociales moyennes (petits boyards, petits bourgeois, baillis, clercs) et surtout des communautés locales.

7) Voir, en ce sens, les légendes racontées dans le recueil édité par Pamfil et Maria Bîlțiu. 1999. *Izvorul fermecat. Legendă, basme mitologice și mito-credințe din județul Maramureș* [La source enchantée. Légendes, contes mythologiques et mytho-croyances du département de Maramureș]. Baia Mare: Ed. Gutinul, 324-335.



découvert que rarement sur les icônes sur bois, soumis à Saint Charalampe, comme sur les icônes sur verre. Dans une icône a tempera sur bois, datant du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, faite par Preda le peintre et conservée à présent au musée du monastère de Cozia, les cheveux longs, tombant sur les épaules, et les détails corporels l'incluent facilement dans le genre féminin.

Les icônes sur verre nous montrent la personnification de la maladie dans le contexte suivant: Saint Charalampe, vieux, avec une moustache et une barbe longues et blanches, figuré dans la plupart des cas debout (rarement assis dans une stalle), frontalement, dans des vêtements d'hérarque, bénissant de la main droite et tenant l'Évangile dans la gauche (ou, plus rarement, le bâton pastoral). C'est de la main gauche aussi qu'est fixée la chaîne qui ferre la *Peste*. Le saint la piétine, comme signe de son pouvoir thaumaturge et de sa victoire sur l'affreuse maladie.

St. Charalampe, Cristian (dép. de Braşov)



Squelette d'une couleur foncée<sup>8</sup> (grise, terreuse, brune) ou personnage humanoïde en nuances claires, la *Peste* se dévoile dans les icônes sur verre peintes par les artistes populaires transylvains, comme Savu Moga de Arpaşu de Sus, Matei Țâmforea de Cârțișoara ou les membres de la famille Țămaş de Făgăraş; elle tient dans sa main la faux, un instrument qui la rapproche de la personnification de la *Mort*, ayant au-dessus de sa tête (dans certains des cas) le sablier, un symbole commun avec les figurations du *Temps*. Souvent doté de cornes, afin de marquer l'appartenance à la catégorie du maléfique, le personnage peut avoir un corps humanoïde ou zoomorphe (lion). Le fait qu'il est muni, dans quelques unes des icônes sur verre, de moustaches (Băjenaru 2007, 239)<sup>9</sup> (Matei Țâmforea) et de barbe (Băjenaru 2007, 31) (Petru Țămaş-le fils) le situe dans les territoires de la masculinité, tout comme un contour évident des seins<sup>10</sup> ou des cuisses proéminentes l'inclue dans la sphère de la féminité.

Quelques manuscrits contenant la *Vie et l'Hymne Acathiste de Saint Charalampe*, conservés dans les collections de la Bibliothèque de l'Académie Roumaine<sup>11</sup> (ms. 453, ms. 2348 etc.), nous proposent un dessin (à la plume à l'encre noire et rouge ou, plus rarement, en couleurs) qui surprend la relation entre les deux personnages. Saint Charalampe (honoré le 10 février, dans le calendrier orthodoxe) est figuré en tant que *Vainqueur de la Peste*; il tient celle-ci étroitement liée dans une chaîne. À son tour, la *Peste* est représentée comme un monstre composite, à la tête humanoïde, la langue bifide, des cornes de bœuf, des griffes aux mains et aux pieds, une queue et l'immanquable faux à la main. La lecture de l'image est parfois dirigée par l'artiste même, comme dans le dessin du manuscrit 2348 B.A.R., où le spectre de la *Peste* a de la barbe et des organes génitaux masculins.

Revenant à la peinture des édifices du culte en bois au nord de la Transylvanie, il faut dire que, dans certains cas, entre la *Mort* et la *Paresse* s'insère le spectre de la

8) Dans l'art byzantin, la peste est représentée parfois par des *gens noirs* (nous soulignons) qui sèment la mort ci et là. Cf. Prut, Constantin, 1972. *Fantasticul în arta populară românească* [Le fantastique dans l'art populaire roumain], Bucarest: Ed. Meridiane, 35.

9) Icône de la collection du Musée du Pays de Făgăraş (1877)

10) Prut, Constantin, op. cit., la partie destinée aux illustrations, la *Peste* au corps de femme, détail d'une icône sur verre de Valea Sebeşului.

11) La Bibliothèque de l'Académie Roumaine (Bucarest) conserve 28 manuscrits roumains contenant la *vie* et le *martyre* du Saint, le *paralipsis* et des *vers* qui lui sont dédiés. Le plus ancien date de 1745 et se base sur un original slave. Cf. Marin-Barutcieff, Silvia, 2014. *Hristofor: chipurile unui sfânt fără chip. Reprezentă rile din cultura românească veche și sursele lor* [Christophe: les visages d'un saint sans visage. Les représentations de la culture roumaine pré-moderne et leurs sources]. Cluj-Napoca: Ed. Mega, 137.

12) Dans la décoration du narthex des églises de Corund (département de Satu-Mare) et Orțăța (département de Maramureș).

13) Dans la peinture de l'exonarthex d'Ulciug (département de Sălaj).

14) Bogdan, Cristina. 2013. "Avaturile unui simbol escatologic (*calul*) în iconografia monumentelor de cult din Țara Românească (secolele XVIII-XIX)" [Les Avatars d'un symbole escatologique (*le cheval*) dans l'iconographie des monuments de culte en Valachie (XVIII-XIX<sup>e</sup> siècles)]. Dans *Lumea animalelor. Realități, reprezentări, simboluri* [Le monde des animaux. Réalités, représentations, symboles], sous la direction de Maria Magdalena Székely, Iași: Ed. Editura Universității "Al. I. Cuza."

15) Godea, Ioan, Cristache-Panait, Ioana. 1978. *Monumente istorice bisericesti din Eparhia Oradei. Bisericile de lemn* [Monuments historiques sacrés de l'Éparchie d'Oradea. Les églises de bois]. Oradea: Ed. Episcopiei Ortodoxe Române a Oradei, 424.

*Peste* chevauchant un cheval<sup>12</sup> ou un bœuf<sup>13</sup>, dont elle serre la crinière, le râteau et le balai appuyés contre l'épaule. Sa présence atteste les échos du sentiment d'anxiété et d'insécurité, créé par les épidémies du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle et le début du suivant. Ce n'est peut-être pas de manière accidentelle que les peintres ont choisi de représenter la *Peste* à cheval, comme pour suggérer la rapidité de la dispersion du fléau, en l'absence de mesures prophylactiques ou à cause de la perpétuation de pratiques funèbres fortement enracinées dans la tradition populaire roumaine, comme le partage des vêtements du défunt lors des funérailles. D'ailleurs, l'association entre *La Mort* ou *La Peste* et le *cheval* (comme monture macabre) est fréquente non seulement dans l'iconographie roumaine<sup>14</sup> (Bogdan 2013, 141-144), mais aussi dans celle occidentale, conformément à toute une suite de traditions populaires anglo-saxonnes et germaniques, qui connotent de manière néfaste l'étalon (Aicardi-Cheve 2003, 367).

Sur la paroi ouest du narthex de l'édifice religieux de Corund (département de Satu-Mare), à la gauche de la porte d'entrée, nous sommes accueillis par trois symboles de la destruction: la *Mort* (en tant que squelette, la faux dans une main et la coupe dans l'autre), la *Peste* (chevauchant un coureur blanc, le balai de brindilles et le râteau contre l'épaule) et la *Paresse*, « assise sur un tronc, la fourche à la main gauche dont elle échappe le fuseau [...]. Avec la main droite, la femme gratte sa tête, avec un geste de torpeur et d'ennui » (Godea, Christache-Panait 1978, 462). Ce trio sinistre peut être vu aussi dans la peinture de l'église d'Ulciug (département de Sălaj). La forte ressemblance des scènes, placées dans le même endroit à l'intérieur du narthex, pourrait indiquer la main du même peintre dans le cas des églises de Corund et d'Ulciug. D'autre part, Ioana Cristache-Panait suggère l'hypothèse que le peintre d'Ulciug soit aussi l'auteur des ensembles muraux d'Orțăța et Bicz<sup>15</sup> (département de Maramureș). Des similitudes réelles



La Peste, Corund (dép. de Satu Mare)

entre les scènes, la distance géographique relativement réduite entre les édifices religieux et l'intervalle temporel très court entre leurs dates de peinture respectives, pourraient accréditer l'idée que l'artisan Țiple Popa est l'auteur non seulement de la décoration de l'église de Chieșd (où son nom apparaît explicitement dans une inscription au-dessus de l'entrée dans la nef), mais aussi de la peinture des monuments du culte de Corund, Ulciug, Orțăța et Bicz. Marius Porumb, dans son travail intitulé *Un veac de pictură românească din Transilvania (secolul XVIII)* [Un siècle de peinture roumaine en Transylvanie (le XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle)], saisit les mêmes ressemblances entre les ensembles picturaux d'Ulciug, Orțăța et Bicz, mais les attribue (toujours sous le signe d'une présupposition) à Petre Diacul de Preluca, un artiste qui a travaillé comme peintre d'icônes et d'églises dans Țara Lăpușului et Chioar, dans la deuxième moitié du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle (Porumb 2003, 89).

À cheval, la *Peste* que nous trouvons dans la décoration de l'église d'Orțăța (peinte probablement au cours de la

dernière décennie du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle) est la seule calamité *couronnée* des scènes que nous avons en vue. L'attribution d'un tel signe distinctif, que nous aurions pu rencontrer dans l'art médiéval occidental sur la tête de la *Mort*, renforce l'idée de la toute-puissance dont ce fléau jouissait dans l'imaginaire collectif.



### Le temps des effrois et les Saints protecteurs

Les épidémies de peste ont laissé une empreinte indélébile sur les périodes temporelles où elles se sont manifestées. Un tel climat des effrois ne peut donner naissance qu'à des réactions situées à l'extrême. Le tableau des modifications induites par la terreur de la mort omniprésente et omnipotente dans la sensibilité collective est esquissé par François Lebrun pour l'espace français des aubes de la modernité, mais il se retrouve partout où les gens ont été soumis au sentiment du vivre, chaque instant, dans la proximité de la fin: « En temps d'épidémie, la mort cesse d'être un spectacle ou une éventualité, elle devient une menace personnelle, directe, immédiate. Dès lors, toutes les perspectives sont modifiées, les barrières morales sont renversées, les liens de la chair et de l'affection ne comptent plus, le vernis de la civilité, là où il existe, s'écaille. Chez la plupart, ne subsistent plus qu'un instinct de conservation et la volonté de fuir. Dans la cité ou le village atteint par l'épidémie [...] s'installe pour quelques semaines un climat de terreur et d'égoïsme viscéral » (Lebrun 1975, 312).

Les notes faites sur les manuscrits qui ont circulé dans les territoires autochtones parlent des mêmes comportements altérés par l'effroi paralysant de la contamination et du procédé de la fuite comme moyen de s'échapper de la zone « assiégée » par la maladie (Corfus 1975).

De tous les types de catastrophes, la peste

semble être restée le plus profondément imprégnée dans le mental collectif, d'autres maladies se cachant en réalité sous le même nom. Ses effets ont été d'ailleurs comparés à de possibles conséquences d'un désastre nucléaire moderne (E. Le Roy Ladurie *apud* Boia 1985, 150). Dans certaines parties de l'Europe, la population s'est diminuée à demi pendant les pandémies de 1348 ou du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle. Les exemples européens offerts par Lucian Boia sont illustratifs pour la dimension des dégâts provoqués par l'affreux fléau: « L'une des épidémies les plus connues (et pour laquelle nous disposons d'une documentation ample) est la peste de Londres de 1665. La ville comptait alors 460 000 habitants; dans quelques mois en sont morts presque 70 000 (conformément aux statistiques; à prendre en considération d'autres évaluations, même 100 000). Dans la première moitié du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle, l'Italie a perdu à cause de la peste 14% de sa population, et l'épidémie qui a frappé Naples en 1656 a tué entre 240-270 000 de la population de 400-450 000 de la ville, plus donc d'une moitié. En Espagne, toujours au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle, sont enregistrées plusieurs épidémies; au milieu du siècle, des villes telles que la Séville et Barcelone, perdent une moitié de leur population. [...] Mais en France aussi, la même maladie a provoqué dans l'intervalle 1660-1670, entre 2,2 et 3,3 millions de morts » (Boia 1985, 150-151).

Pour le monde roumain, les statistiques proposées par Paul Cernovodeanu et Paul Binder concernant le XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle s'inscrivent dans la même dimension des calamités enchaînées (*sécheresse, famine, déclanchement d'une épidémie*). Les témoignages des voyageurs étrangers attestent le sentiment généralisé de la peur, causé par le spectacle désolant des localités désertes, dans l'essai des communautés de se soustraire à l'implacable fléau: « ... ruines, villages brûlés et abandonnés, une misère indescriptible dans les masses et enfin une peste étouffée, puis puissante et dévastatrice, qui propage la peur » (Samuel Kelemen Didák, *apud* Cernovodeanu,



Binder 1993, 133). Les épidémies de peste restent fréquentes en Transylvanie et Maramureș jusqu'au milieu du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle (la dernière épidémie de grandes proportions datant de 1755) et le spectre de la mort est également entraîné par les carences alimentaires (provoquant des maladies de nutrition, telles que la pellagre et le scorbut<sup>16</sup>) déterminées par des récoltes très faibles dans certaines périodes.

On ne peut pas estimer (dans l'absence de statistiques précises) quel a été l'impact de la peste sur la population des espaces roumains aux XVIII<sup>e</sup>-XIX<sup>e</sup> siècles et comment se sont modifiées les courbes démographiques. Mais il est certain que le développement d'une iconographie de la mort et de l'au-delà dans des moments où les communautés se confrontaient avec de telles horreurs n'est pas dû au hasard. Le discours pictural, avec l'exposé homilétique et eschatologique proposé par toute une suite de livres populaires (qui ont circulé dans les territoires roumains aux XVIII<sup>e</sup>-XIX<sup>e</sup> siècles, fréquemment traduits et copiés dans l'environnement monastique) essayaient de préparer l'homme pour une fin le plus souvent imprévisible. Dans le monde ancien, la mort était en général une présence familière, mais pendant les épidémies son spectacle devenait fatigant par sa redondance. L'effroi pénétrant ressenti devant la mort devait être annihilé d'une façon ou d'une autre: en esquissant avec humour et ironie son portrait, en faisant appel aux enseignements de l'Église, en respectant une série de traditions censées assurer une bonne séparation de l'âme de ce monde et son intégration dans l'autre ou en invoquant l'aide des personnages à rôle protecteur. Les visions apocalyptiques des périodes d'intensification de la maladie ont mis à la disposition du spectre de la maladie un char « aux roues faites de têtes des grands boyards, les plateaux faites des côtes des vierges, les ridelles faites des os des jeunes hommes et les essieux faits des os des braves » (Gomoiu 1923, 158 *apud* Nicoară 2006, 97). Cette image du parcours

victorieux de la Peste rappelle les *Triumphes de la Mort* dans la peinture italienne.

À l'Occident, la compétence sacrée attribuée dans l'espace roumain au Saint Charalampe a été réservée à Saint Roch (qui étale souvent dans des fresques ou des statues le « stigmat » de la maladie – le bubon de peste ruisselant de sang) ou à Saint Sébastien, frappé de flèches. Dans le dernier cas, le Saint devient un intercesseur contre la peste non pas pour avoir été atteint de la maladie en question et pour l'avoir vaincue, mais pour avoir survécu au grand nombre de flèches dont il avait été transpercé. L'analogie symbolique y fonctionne: celui qui a réussi à survivre aux flèches des persécuteurs sauvera ceux qui lui adressent des prières contre les flèches de la colère divine, manœuvrées par l'intermédiaire de l'effrayante maladie.

Un autre Saint qui incluait parmi ses compétences celle de la protection contre la peste était Christophe, l'intercesseur contre la male mort. Silvia Marin-Barutcieff traite largement de ce cas dans son livre dédié au géant porteur du Christ, rappelant, parmi d'autres choses, la convaincante inscription qui accompagne le personnage sacré dans la cathédrale de Worms (1210): « Per te serena datur, / Morbi, genus omne fugatur, / Altra fames, pestis, / Christi, Christophore, testis! » (Marin-Barutcieff 2014, 133)<sup>17</sup>.

Chez les Roumains, comme dans le cas des peuples Balkaniques orthodoxes (surtout dans les cultures grecque et bulgare), il existe une suite de Saints dont la compétence se manifeste dans le domaine médical, étant considérés comme des patrons des maladies. Saint Charalampe est secondé par deux autres Saints regardés parfois comme ses « disciples » (Athanase et Cyril, archevêques de l'Alexandrie, honorés le 18 janvier). À ceux-ci s'ajoutent la Sainte Grande Martyre Marina (le 17 juillet), Saint Grand Martyr et Thaumaturge Pantéleimon (le 27 juillet), les Saints Anargyres Côme et Damien (le 1 novembre), la Sainte Grande Martyre Barbara (le 4 décembre), Saint Sabas le Sanctifié (le 5 décembre) etc.

16) Cernovodeanu, Paul, Binder, Paul. 1993. *Cavalerii Apocalipsului: calamitățile naturale din trecutul României (până la 1800)* [Les Cavaliers de l'Apocalypse: calamités naturelles du passé de la Roumanie (jusqu'en 1800)]. Bucarest: Silex, 180.

17) « Tu nous donnes du beau temps, / Tu chasses les maladies, / L'affreuse famine, la peste / Christophe, témoin du Christ! ».

Mais Saint Charalampe est le seul qui soit accompagné par la personnification de la maladie qu'il a vaincue. Une explication réside aussi dans le fait que, pour plusieurs siècles, la peste reste dans le mental collectif roumain *la maladie par excellence* (Bogdan 2010, 184-188; Marin-Barutcieff 2012, 3-21).



### Similitudes et différences

Qu'est-ce qui approche et qu'est-ce qui sépare les deux figures (la *Paresse* et la *Peste*) présentées antérieurement? Les deux sont des matérialisations de réalités conceptuelles, elles sont, autrement dit, *des idées qui ont reçu un corps*. Conformément au genre des mots qui les nomment en roumain, le corps qu'elles ont reçu a été, dans la plupart du temps, *féminin*.

Une seconde similarité entre le corps de la maladie et celui du péché est leur figuration comme des *nus*. Dans la peinture de type post-byzantin, peu de corps se permettent « le luxe » de ne pas se couvrir de vêtements. D'habitude, la nudité partielle ou totale est destinée aux Saints du désert (couverts par leurs propres cheveux et portant une barbe longue jusqu'aux chevilles), car les hagiographies parlent des longues années qu'ils ont passées loin de la civilisation. Ils semblent se transformer dans une sorte d'hommes sauvages (*Wilder Mann*), une pilosité excessive étant l'élément commun. Parmi les femmes saintes, Marie Madeleine est représentée dans l'art occidental enveloppée dans ses propres cheveux, tandis que Marie l'Égyptienne est figurée dans l'art oriental surtout comme une femme au visage émacié par la souffrance, très sommairement habillée.

Dans le cas des personnifications de la *Peste* et de la *Paresse*, la nudité est négativement connotée, renvoyant à l'idée de nature qui ne peut absolument point être apprivoisée en faveur de l'homme, pour être soumise aux constrictions de

la culture (dont celles des vêtements). L'habit représente une « peau culturelle » qui ne peut pas être propre à ces deux personnages, qui restent cantonnés dans la sphère d'une nature imprévisible et d'autant plus effrayante. Leur nudité (« renforcée » par l'absence d'auréoles) attirait l'attention, à ceux qui ne savaient pas lire, incapables donc de déchiffrer le sens des inscriptions adjacentes, sur le fait que les personnages en question ne s'inscrivaient pas dans la sphère des figures sacrées.

Un troisième élément de congruence symbolique est représenté par la figuration des personnages aux cheveux longs, hirsutes. Cette exhibition des cheveux épars relève aussi du désordre mentionné antérieurement, du chaos que la présence de la maladie ou du péché génère dans la famille / la communauté touchée par le fléau.

Quant aux différences entre les deux personnages, celles-ci concernent plutôt la posture (bien qu'ils soient tous les deux figurés de profil ou de demi-profil<sup>18</sup>) et les instruments qu'ils manoeuvrent ou exhibent au spectateur. La *Paresse* est toujours assise aussi confortablement que possible, dans une attitude de relâchement très proche au sommeil, tandis que la *Peste* apparaît souvent dans une position pédestre, en soulignant ainsi la rapidité de la contamination, du passage de la maladie d'un territoire à l'autre. Les outils figurés, bien que sélectionnés à partir du même groupe d'instruments populaires quotidiens, mettent en évidence des types d'activités différents. Si la *Paresse* accomplit des activités spécifiquement féminines (tenant dans ses mains la quenouille et le fuseau ou le peigne, dont elle s'arrange les cheveux d'un geste à la fois las et coquet), la *Peste* est équipée de l'objet traditionnel de la *Mort* (la faux – surtout dans les icônes sur verre) ou d'un râteau et d'un balai, dans la décoration des édifices en bois du nord de la Transylvanie.

Une dernière différence réside dans la manière d'imaginer le corps des deux entités négatives. La *Paresse* apparaît

18) Dans l'iconographie religieuse de facture byzantine et post-byzantine, les personnages positifs, saints, sont figurés frontalement, tandis que les figures maléfiques (les démons, par exemple) sont représentées de profil ou demi-profil.



souvent surdimensionnée, [les proportions anormales étant chargées de significations (Garnier 1982, 67) – positives ou négatives – en fonction du registre dont le personnage fait partie], comme une femme qui est déjà devenue obèse à cause de ce comportement pécheur. Son corps tout de même se maintient dans les territoires anthropomorphiques, tandis que la *Peste* (dans les icônes sur verre ou dans les dessins des manuscrits roumains conservés dans les collections de la Bibliothèque de l'Académie Roumaine) peut aussi adopter des corps aux confins entre le règne animal et celui humain. Dans la *cavalcade des vices* occidentale, la *Paresse* ne figurait que dans sa variante spirituelle (l'acédie), le plus grave danger couru par le moine d'après Cassien, qui contenait aussi une dose significative de *tristesse*. L'acédie était le plongement dans un certain état d'inertie, induit par les contraintes et le rythme de la vie monacale, étant accompagnée par une série de manifestations extérieures: « fainéantise, fatigue, somnolence, in-tranquillité, vagabondage » (Casagrande, Vecchio 2003, 133). Son statut se disputait sur la frontière entre «une faiblesse du corps» et « une maladie de l'âme » (Casagrande, Vecchio 2003, 134).

L'iconographie roumaine, tributaire à un imaginaire plus fruste, retient l'image du péché par excellence dans le monde paysan: la paresse, l'inappétence pour le travail (compris surtout en tant qu'effort physique). La parémiologie des Roumains abonde dans des proverbes et des dictons construits

autour de ce péché (considéré capital) et de celui qui le commet. Les autres péchés graves (l'adultère, l'avortement, le vol, la sorcellerie, l'homicide etc.) sont sanctionnés dans les scènes de damnation du *Jugement Dernier*, sans acquérir leur propre corps, une identité circonscrite par représentations visuelles. Ils ne sont que suggérés par les tourments infernaux réservés aux pécheurs qui les avaient commis.

Les peintres d'églises qui ont choisi d'inclure aux XVIII<sup>e</sup>-XIX<sup>e</sup> siècles, dans le programme iconographique des édifices qu'ils ont décorés, les corps nus de la *Peste* et de la *Paresse* (le plus souvent dans la proximité du spectre de la *Mort*) ont voulu transmettre un message et obtenir un effet de lucidité, qui conduise à un ajustement du code comportemental. Leur geste forçait une réaction, un arrachement de l'inertie, car il proposait au chrétien qui entrait dans l'église la rencontre avec une réalité qui quittait la sphère de l'hypothétique, de l'idée, pour rejoindre le domaine du visuel. Regarder la maladie, la mort ou le péché en face signifie se rendre conscient de la vulnérabilité et de la périssabilité de l'être humain et se demander comment on pourrait se sauver. Tant que les images survivent (bien que s'effaçant petit à petit) sur les supports détériorés par le temps et par la précarité de la conservation des églises, la question persiste. Les corps des calamités racontent la même histoire, pour un autre public, moins prêt ou moins dispos, peut-être, à l'entendre.

## BIBLIOGRAPHIE

Aicardi-Cheve, Dominique. 2003. *Les Corps de la contagion. Etudes anthropologiques des représentations iconographiques de la Peste (XV<sup>e</sup><sup>me</sup>-XX<sup>e</sup><sup>me</sup> siècle en Europe)*. Thèse de doctorat d'Université, Université de la Méditerranée – Aix-Marseille II.

Ariès, Philippe. 1983. *Images de l'homme devant la mort*. Paris: Ed. Seuil.

Baschet, Jérôme. 2003. "Les sept péchés capitaux et leurs châtements dans l'iconographie médiévale." Dans Casagrande, Carla et Vecchio, Silvana, *op. cit.*

Baudrillard, Jean. 1976. *L'échange symbolique et la mort*. Paris: Ed. Gallimard.

Baudrillard, Jean. 1981. *Simulacres et simulations*. Paris: Ed. Galilée.

Băjenaru, Elena. 2007. *Icoane și iconari din Țara Făgărașului. Centre și curente de pictură pe sticlă* [Icônes et peintres d'icônes dans le Pays de Făgăraș. Centres et courants de peinture sur verre]. Bucarest: Ed. Oscar Print.

Bilțiu, Pamfil et Maria. 1999. *Izvorul fermecat. Legende, basme mitologice și mito-credințe din județul Maramureș* [La source enchantée. Légendes, contes mythologiques et mytho-croyances du département de Maramureș]. Baia Mare: Ed. Gutinul.

Bogdan, Cristina. 2002. *Imago mortis în cultura română veche (secolele XVII-XIX)* [Imago mortis dans la culture roumaine pré-moderne (XVII<sup>e</sup>-XIX<sup>e</sup> siècles)]. Bucarest: Ed. Universității din București.

Bogdan, Cristina. 2009. "Visages de la Mort en Roumanie. Considérations iconographiques." Dans *Death and Society. Transdisciplinary studies*, ed. Mihaela Grancea. Cluj-Napoca: Ed. Casa Cărții de Știință.

Bogdan, Cristina. 2010. "A peste, fame et bello, libera nos, Domine! Lumea românească premodernă sub lupa calamităților." Dans *De la fictiv la real. Imaginea, imaginarul, imagologia* [Du fictif au réel. Image, imaginaire, imagologie], eds. Andi Mihalache, Silvia Marin-Barutchieff. Iași: Editura Universității "Al. I. Cuza".

Bogdan, Cristina. 2013. "Avatarurile unui simbol escatologic (calul) în iconografia monumentelor de cult din Țara Românească (secolele XVIII-XIX)" [Les Avatars d'un symbole escatologique (le cheval) dans l'iconographie des monuments de culte en Valachie (XVIII<sup>e</sup>-XIX<sup>e</sup> siècles)]. Dans *Lumea animalelor. Realități, reprezentări, simboluri* [Le monde des animaux. Réalités, représentations, symboles], sous la direction de Maria Magdalena Székely, Iași: Ed. Editura Universității "Al. I. Cuza".

Bogdan, Cristina. 2014a. "Le discours de la peur: Mort, calamités et eschatologie dans la peinture des églises transylvaines (XVIII<sup>e</sup>-XIX<sup>e</sup> siècles)." Dans *Memento mori. Il genere macabro in Europa dal Medioevo a oggi. Atti del Convegno internazionale, Torino, 16-18 ottobre 2014*, ed. Marco Piccat, Laura Ramello. Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso.

Bogdan, Cristina. 2014b. "Les visages changeants du patri-moine iconographique. La double temporalité des images de la Mort." Dans Linda Idjéroui-Ravez, Nicolas Péliissier (coord.), *Quant les traces communiquent. Culture, patrimoine, médiatisation de la mémoire*. Paris: L'Harmattan (Communication et Civilisation).

Boia, Lucian. 1985. *Probleme de geografie istorică* [Problèmes de géographie historique]. Bucarest: Ed. Universității din București.

Casagrande, Carla et Vecchio, Silvana. 2003. *Histoire des péchés capitaux au Moyen Age*, trad. de l'italien par Pierre-Emmanuel Dauzat. Paris: Ed. Aubier.

Cernovodeanu, Binder. 1993. *Cavalerii Apocalipsului: calamitățile naturale din trecutul României (până la 1800)* [Les Cavaliers de l'Apocalypse: calamités naturelles du passé de la Roumanie (jusqu'en 1800)]. Bucarest: Silex.

Corfus, Ilie. 1975. *Însemnări de demult* [Notes de jadis]. Iași: Ed. Junimea.

Debray, Régis. 1992. *Vie et mort de l'image. Une histoire du regard en Occident*. Paris: Ed. Gallimard.

Didi-Huberman, Georges. 1992. *Ce que nous voyons, ce qui*



ÎNCEPUT





nous regarde. Paris: Les Editions du Minuit.

Eretescu, Constantin. 2007. *Fata Pădurii și Omul Noapții. În compania ființelor supranaturale* [La Fille de la Forêt et l'Homme de la Nuit. Dans la compagnie des êtres surnaturels]. Bucarest: Ed. Compania.

Evseev, Ivan. 1998. *Dicționar de magie, demonologie și mitologie românească* [Dictionnaire de magie, démonologie et mythologie roumaine]. Timișoara: Amarcord.

Garnier, François. 1982. *Le langage de l'image au Moyen Âge. Signification et symbolique*, I. Paris: Le Léopard d'Or.

Godea, Ioan et Cristache-Panait, Ioana. 1978. *Monumente istorice bisericesti din Eparhia Oradei. Bisericile de lemn* [Monuments historiques sacrés de l'Éparchie d'Oradea. Les églises de bois]. Oradea: Ed. Episcopiei Ortodoxe Române a Oradei.

Ispas, Sabina et Truță, Doina. 1986. *Lirica populară de dragoste. Index motivic și tipologic* [La lyrique populaire d'amour. Index des motifs et typologique], I, II. Bucarest: Ed. Academiei.

Lebrun, François. 1975. *Les hommes et la mort en Anjou aux XVII<sup>e</sup> et XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles. Essai de démographie et de psychologie historiques*. Paris: Ed. Flammarion.

Marin-Barutcieff, Silvia. 2012. "L'anxiété de la mort et ses échos culturels. Saint Charalampe en Olténie au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle." *Actes du XV<sup>ème</sup> Congrès International d'Études sur les Danses macabres et l'Art macabre en général*, I, édité par l'Association "Danses Macabres d'Europe." Chartres.

Marin-Barutcieff, Silvia. 2014. *Hristofor: chipurile unui sfânt fără chip. Reprezentările din cultura românească veche și sursele lor* [Christophe: les visages d'un saint sans visage. Les représentations de la culture roumaine pré-moderne et leurs sources]. Cluj-Napoca: Ed. Mega.

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. 1964. *Le Visible et l'Invisible*. Paris: Ed. Gallimard.

Nicoară, Toader. 2006. *Sentimentul de insecuritate în societatea românească la începuturile timpurilor moderne (1600-1830)* [Le sentiment d'insécurité dans la société roumaine aux débuts des temps modernes (1600-1830)]. Cluj-Napoca: Ed. Accent.

Porumb, Marius. 2003. *Un veac de pictură românească din Transilvania. Secolul XVIII* [Un siècle de peinture roumaine en Transylvanie. Le XVIII<sup>ème</sup> siècle]. Bucarest: Meridiane.

Prut, Constantin. 1972. *Fantasticul în arta populară românească* [Le fantastique dans l'art populaire roumain]. Bucarest: Ed. Meridiane.



La Paresse et la Mort, Julița  
(dép. d'Arad)



La Mort, la Peste, la Paresse, Corund  
(dép. de Satu Mare)



St. Charalampe, icône sur verre,  
peinte par Savu Moga, 1872  
(Coll. du Musée du Paysan  
Roumain)

La Mort, la Peste, la Paresse,  
Ulciug (dép. de Săla)



Saint Charalampe, Veneția de Jos (dép. de Brașov)







La Paresse, Zalnoc (dép. de Sălaj)



La Paresse, Dragu (dép. de Sălaj)



La Famine, la Paresse, la Peste, Desești (dép. de Maramureș)

La Mort et la Paresse, Sălciva (dép. de Hunedoara)



St. Charalampe, icône sur verre, peinte par Savu Moga, 1872 (Coll. du Musée du Paysan Roumain)



# MARTOR



---

Title: "The House of the Soul"

Authors: Cosmin Manolache, Lila Passima

How to cite this article: Manolache, Cosmin and Lila Passima. 2015. "The House of the Soul". *Martor* 20: 172-180.

Published by: *Editura MARTOR* (MARTOR Publishing House), *Muzeul Țăranului Român* (The Museum of the Romanian Peasant)

URL: <http://martor.muzeultaranuluiroman.ro/archive/768-2/>

---

*Martor* (The Museum of the Romanian Peasant Anthropology Review) is a peer-reviewed academic journal established in 1996, with a focus on cultural and visual anthropology, ethnology, museum studies and the dialogue among these disciplines. *Martor* review is published by the Museum of the Romanian Peasant. Its aim is to provide, as widely as possible, a rich content at the highest academic and editorial standards for scientific, educational and (in)formational goals. Any use aside from these purposes and without mentioning the source of the article(s) is prohibited and will be considered an infringement of copyright.

*Martor* (Revue d'Anthropologie du Musée du Paysan Roumain) est un journal académique en système *peer-review* fondé en 1996, qui se concentre sur l'anthropologie visuelle et culturelle, l'ethnologie, la muséologie et sur le dialogue entre ces disciplines. La revue *Martor* est publiée par le Musée du Paysan Roumain. Son aspiration est de généraliser l'accès vers un riche contenu au plus haut niveau du point de vue académique et éditorial pour des objectifs scientifiques, éducatifs et informationnels. Toute utilisation au-delà de ces buts et sans mentionner la source des articles est interdite et sera considérée une violation des droits de l'auteur.

*Martor* is indexed by EBSCO and CEEOL.

# Proposal for the theme **Fundamentals** – Venice Biennale 2014

## **The House of the Soul**

Cosmin Manolache and Lila Passima

*Curators at the Museum of the Romanian Peasant*

*„We may argue the following, without overly betraying symbolic thinking: the passage from one world to another was ‘spiritual’, without the experience being an ordeal lacking in physical manifestations. [...] What in today’s society has become a metaphor was in traditional society a real experience, albeit one difficult to communicate, an experience necessary in order to make explicit the paradoxical nature of extension. (Radu Drăgan – Inverted Worlds)*

**A number of preliminary clarifications.** *The House of the Soul* is the idea for an exhibition. We owe the idea in large part to the “Regions of Romania — The Buzău Region. Cultural and Natural Heritage as a Basis for Sustainable Development” project, initiated by the University of Bucharest — Geomedia Centre and financed by the Administration of the National Cultural Fund in 2007. During fieldwork carried out in the summer of that year, we were able to do preliminary research on the subject of the *alms cottage* custom, one of a series of burial and commemoration practices from the north of Buzău county. In 2013 the curatorial idea took shape as a response to the proposal that the Venice Biennale of Architecture made to the National Museum of the Romanian Peasant (MȚR) to put forward an exhibition that would enter into dialogue with the theme for 2014, *Fundamentals*, in a space made available to the MȚR. For various reasons, the exhibition did not come to fruition, remaining at the proposal stage. In the meantime, the project was resumed in a somewhat more complex form and with more substantial funding—“Applied Research for Sustainable Development and Economic Growth following the Principles of Geo-Conservation; Supporting the Buzău Region UNESCO Geo-park initiative”, set underway by the Romanian Academy’s Sabba S. Ștefănescu Institute of Geodynamics and financed by the European Economic Area Financial Mechanism (EEA Grants) and the Romanian Ministry of Education — which made it possible to revisit the locations where we had discovered the alms cottage tradition, mentioned cursorily in the *Festivals and Customs* volumes published by the Institute of Ethnography and Folklore. The title we have chosen for the exhibition we present below — *The House of the Soul* — was inspired by Radu Drăgan’s book *Inverted Worlds*.

**Contexts and structures.** In the traditional world the system of dwelling struck a balance between the criterion of utility and that of rules relating to protection from all kinds of danger. The starting point was a mono-cellular space that had to be big enough to contain the bare essentials for dwelling. (Wooden) structures were shelters that guaranteed continuity: houses — families, churches — communities. Both the one and the other could be moved under extreme circumstances: portability was taken into account during the design phase. In any event, churches also adopted the symbolic model of the ship, which through the rituals enacted in them transported the community safely to the next world. There was potential for mobility both within the material world and between this world and the next. Sacred architecture found its fulfilment in the practice of ritual, abidance by the canons, and affirmation of dogmas.

The opposite model can also be found in the potential imaginary modes present in the world of the village: ritual can generate a built space, whose purpose is likewise to enable crossing between worlds. But here we are no longer dealing with an institutional type of organisation and administration. We have entered the realm of folk beliefs, a blend of theology and magic. This system of rules is more readily subject to modification than in the institutional case of the church. The main tools of actualisation are

piety and charity on the part of the believers. One such example is the “alms house” we found in Bisoca, in northern Buzău County, near the old monastery of Poiana Mărului.

**Description.** In brief, the custom of the “alms house” is as follows: at a set period of time after the funeral — forty days, termed the *Panagia* in the ecclesiastical space and in the traditional village, but also other intervals of up to one year, in special circumstances — the family of the deceased donates as alms to a poorer family a wooden structure that has all the trappings of a temporary dwelling / shelter, furnished and equipped with the bare essentials for survival or a simple life (bed, chair, table, bucket, crockery, cutlery; to these may also be added various other items: an icon, stove, cooker, cupboard, shelves, clothes rack, calendar, paintings etc.). The rationale behind this arrangement comes from the mode in which peasants from this region (and also other regions) picture the next world. According to this conception, the next world mirrors the world in which we live our earthly lives. In the next world, you will still be able to meet your friends and neighbours. Consequently, a projection of the real village is a world that enables a form of dwelling which preserves all the characteristics of the material world. But in order for the deceased to possess all the household items he needs in the next world, his family must perform the ritual of *pomană* (commemorative almsgiving). Practised in all the Romanian traditional spaces, *pomană* enables communication between this world and the next. In the particular form encountered in Bisoca, *pomană* transcends a merely alimentary order. The physiological and sensorial possibilities of the human body as it is imagined post mortem are thereby enlarged: from the interior (alimentation) to the exterior (habitation). In addition, whereas alimentary alms are believed to reach the deceased by means of the consumption and use of the offering by the living (once only, in the case of food, and on various occasions in the case of crockery and utensils), use of the alms house is continuous: quasi-permanent habitation of the new space by a new body, which in their writings some theologians and monks call the *spiritualised body*. This ritual can also be found in Moldavia — Galați, Bacău and Neamț counties — where the house is simulated through the use of rush matting rather than blankets or prefabricated wooden elements. Also relevant is the name of the practice: *Grijă* (Care) or *Grijanie* (Caringness), because it includes a psychological function, even if this is sooner a secondary element for the family of the deceased in relation to what makes the funerary practices as a whole viable, namely a particular mode of viewing life, death and the world.

**How the ritual unfolds.** The “alms house” is built in the yard of the deceased’s home. The person who will receive the house lies down on the bed inside and the priest blesses the *pomană*: “This house, with its bed and table, is given to X for the soul of Y!” The structure is then disassembled, and the parts are taken to the yard of the family that will receive the *pomană*, where they are re-assembled. More often than not, “alms houses” are used as summer kitchens or storage spaces. Improvements are made to some of them and they are then lived in. The materials used to build them are wood, but we have also come across examples in which prefabricated wood materials are employed. They are situated near the main house and the garden.

The “alms house” is an element of continuity (a bridge, threshold, passage) and articulation between this world and the next. But what enables the existence of this element connecting the two worlds is corporeality. The transfer of the house and its items from one family to another binds them through the custom of commemorating the dead both in the real community and, above all, in a future, imagined community, to which the villagers from Bisoca relate with remarkable urgency. We witnessed such a commemoration, carried out a few days before the *Panagia* (fortieth day). We were told that the deceased had to find his house as soon as he was subjected to the *provisory judgement* (according to Orthodox Christian doxology, the *individual judgement* of the soul takes place forty days after burial), whence the family’s concern that the ritual be fulfilled in time and in accordance with all the prescriptions of the community. The deceased’s body and the living body of him who receives the alms enter into a relationship of likeness and communication whereby the two worlds find points of convergence, with the *alms house* thereby becoming a sounding box. The minimal house (in this world)



and the garden (in the next world) create a utopic space. The house is conceived as a dwelling / shelter sufficient to allow survival in a world imagined as the Garden of Heaven.

**Documentation.** The bibliography we consulted widened the area encompassed by these spatial simulations of dwelling in the next world, which besides their symbolic nature also display a mode of relating to life and death. Similar but non-durable structures (found in Moldavia and Muntenia) were made from rush mats or blankets (carpets, rugs): four poles the height of a room were planted in the ground and then the walls and ceiling were hung using these fabrics, also making assembly and disassembly easier. These flimsier versions are more similar to a shelter / tent, which obviously facilitates mobility. The same as in the case of the alms house at Bisoca, the interior was equipped with all the things required for living / dwelling. Then the structure was disassembled. In fact, almost all the items that furnished an interior are also to be found as offerings for the soul of the deceased in other areas of the country. But given that every custom always has the potential to be brought up to date and adapted, innovations will also occur, reinvigorating an old belief with new forms and materials.

We have found an interesting detail, which might open up research into possible connections, in a story that J. L. Borges adapts from the spiritualist writings of Emanuel Swedenborg. The story, "A Dying Theologian", was inspired by *Vera Christiana Religio, Continens Universam Theologiam Novae Ecclesiae* (1771), rather than by *Arcana Cœlestia* (1749–1756), as Borges claims, and recounts the sensorial experiences of a theologian (Melancthon) after his death. Everything around him is identical to the world he has just left. Gradually the new world alters in significant ways, and finally it is perceived according to the standard representation of hell. The cause of this transformation is the absence of charity in the writings and above all the soul of the theologian.

I have not spoken with Melancthon so often or so near as with Luther... Because he could not approach me in the same way, inasmuch as he devoted his study so fully to justification by faith alone, and not to charity... I have heard that as soon as he entered the Spiritual World, a house was prepared for him like the house in which he had stayed in the world... In his chamber also all things were like: a like table, a like desk with compartments, and also a bookcase; and therefore, as soon as he came thither... he placed himself at the table, and continued to write; and this concerning justification by faith alone; and in like manner for some days; and nothing whatever about charity. When this was perceived by the Angels, he was asked through messengers why he did not write about charity also. He replied that in charity there is nothing of the Church; for if that were to be received as a kind of essential attribute of the Church, man would also ascribe to himself the merit of justification, and thence of salvation; and thus he would bereave faith of its spiritual essence.

The story is provocative precisely for the link between the two perfectly mirrored worlds and the act of Christian charity, whereby the real world seems to find its perfect continuation after death, exactly the same as in the model found in the village of Bisoca, where we find the ritual of gaining access.

Apart from the ethnographical information that localises the custom (also named *care*, *alms at the gate*, *the dead man's house*, and *the rush-mat house*), there is also a consistent description of the intermediate form, which is also practised with the alms you give during the recipient's life:

*"I have made a house of rush mats, of four rush mats, I have put the bed inside the house, I have put rugs on the walls, we have placed a lamp to the east, by the lamp and the bed I have placed a table. On the table I have placed all kinds of dishes: a plate of kolivo, a plate of pilaff, whole roast chickens and loaves of bread. Take a bag, in the bag place a roast chicken, a loaf of bread and a knife, food as for a journey, that he may have it in the world beyond. I have planted a tree over there, to the east, as at a betrothal, a tree taken from the earth, roots and all. We have planted two trees, for the man and for myself, for we have each thought of it. I put my clothes in the tree. I put there stockings, footwear, blouse, slip, then a white skirt... At root of the tree place a live chicken. Make a ladder from candles and ring loaves, also place in the tree a towel for wiping the eyes. Put everything there. Then start to give them away: give away the clothes, give them to whom you like. First to strangers. Give not to a young boy, because you will say you have fathered him once more."*



**Similarities.** We have observed that the logic behind the building and donation of such structures is the same as that behind the wayside crosses / shelters to be found at crossroads, which are points where a tension exists between this world and the next. Likewise, wayside crosses / shelters are also erected to commemorate the souls of the departed and often feature a well, which is also viewed as a means of communicating with the next world. We asked ourselves whether the “humbleness” of such structures might have a connexion with the tabernacles that St Peter the Apostle thought to erect on Mount Tabor, during the Transfiguration, for Jesus, Elias and Moses, who crossed between worlds and whom he wished to bring closer. It is a supposition whose validity remains to be examined.

**The artistic concept of the project.** We propose to construct an “alms house”, which will be accompanied by a book and a documentary film. The exterior space (the gallery) will become habitable, having been structured in accordance with the ritual. The structure will come into being *in situ* and will be invested with the alterity of a place possessing the symbolic power of ritual dwelling. Being a composite of building materials and specific items, the structure of the dwelling space, although fundamentally symbolic / religious in its functions, will, as a visual space, acquire the features of a post-modern cultural product.

**Version 1.** As a counterpoint (work-in-progress) to the alms house (dimensions: 2.5 / 2.5 / 2.2 metres), a craftsman will build a wayside cross (dimensions: 1.5 / 1.5 / 2 metres). The relationship between the two structures will create a more powerful and complex territory situated at the point where two worlds intersect and overlap: this world and the next, the HERE and the BEYOND.

**Version 2.** The current form of the alms house (dimensions: 2.5 / 2.5 / 2.2 metres) will be encapsulated in the previous form (consisting of traditional carpets that incorporate the vegetal elements of the garden through textile fibres, natural colours and decoration, reconstructing the symbolic context of the Garden of Heaven), expanded to dimensions of 6 / 6 / 4 m. The “house inside a house” formula (the perishable husk and the seed that actualises and gives re-birth) is one in which past and present, this world and the next coexist.

**Items for the exhibition space.** Old and contemporary realia, autobiographical items (photographs, furniture) and typical bought items (from wholesalers, markets) used in commemorative almsgiving, in order to achieve a true-to-life recreation of the ritual.

**Materials.** Wood, in the framework of the structure. Wool and blends of synthetic fibres for the fabrics and carpets. OSB panels and pine planks. Undulated or sheet metal panels for the roof.

**Household items.** Plates, cups, cutlery, kettle, mirror, clothes, hooks, bed, pillow, blanket, table, chairs, bucket, stove.

**Sound installation.** Audio montage in which we have included archive recordings of *bocete* (*bocet s.*, *bocete pl.* – improvised lament, usually versified and sung to a particular melody, part of the funeral ritual), as well as field recordings with those whom we interviewed on the subject.

Translated by Alistair Ian Blyth.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Radu Drăgan. 2000. *Lumile răsturnate* [Inverted Worlds]. Bucharest: Paideia.

Ion Ghinoiu, Ofelia Văduva, Cornelia Pleșca. 2001. *Sărbători și obiceiuri* (IV. Moldova) [Festivals and Customs (IV. Moldavia)]. Bucharest: Editura enciclopedică.

Ion Ghinoiu. 1999. *Lumea de aici, lumea de dincolo* [Our World, The World of Beyond]. Bucharest: Editura Fundației Culturale Române, (seria Antropologie culturală).

Mihaela Pușcaș. 2000. *Pomana din timpul vieții* [Commemorative Almsgiving During Life]. In *Practici funerare și reprezentări ale lumii de dincolo* [Funeral Practices and Representations of the Next World]. Bucharest: Editura Paideia (Anthropology Cahiers Series).

# ALMS HOUSE 1 /

## details

01



02



03



a



b



c



d



e



f



At a set period of time after the funeral, the family of the deceased donates as alms to a poorer family a wooden structure that has all the trappings of a temporary dwelling/shelter, furnished and equipped with the bare essentials for survival or a simple life (bed, chair, table, bucket, crockery, cutlery; to these may also be added various other items: an icon, stove, cooker, cupboard, shelves, clothes rack, calendar, paintings, etc.). The rationale behind this arrangement comes from the mode in which peasants from this region (and also other regions) conceive of the next world.



# ALMS HOUSE 2 /

## contexts

01



02



03



a



b



c



d



e



f



g



More often that not, "alms houses" are used as summer kitchens or storage spaces. Improvements are made to some of them and they are then lived in. The materials used to build them are wood, but we have also come across examples in which prefabricated wood materials are employed. They are situated near the main house and the garden. The "alms house" is an element of continuity (a bridge, threshold, passage) and articulation between this world and the next. The minimal house (in this world) and the garden (in the next world) create a utopic space. The house is conceived as a dwelling/shelter sufficient to allow survival in a world imagined as the Garden of Heaven.





01



02



03



04



05



06



07



How the ritual unfolds

# VERSION 1a /

wayside crosses  
contexts

01



02



03



04



05



found at crossroads

06



07



wayside crosses/  
shelters

08

wayside crosses are also erected to commemorate the souls of the departed and often feature a well, which is also viewed as a means of communicating with the next world

points where a tension exists between this world and the next

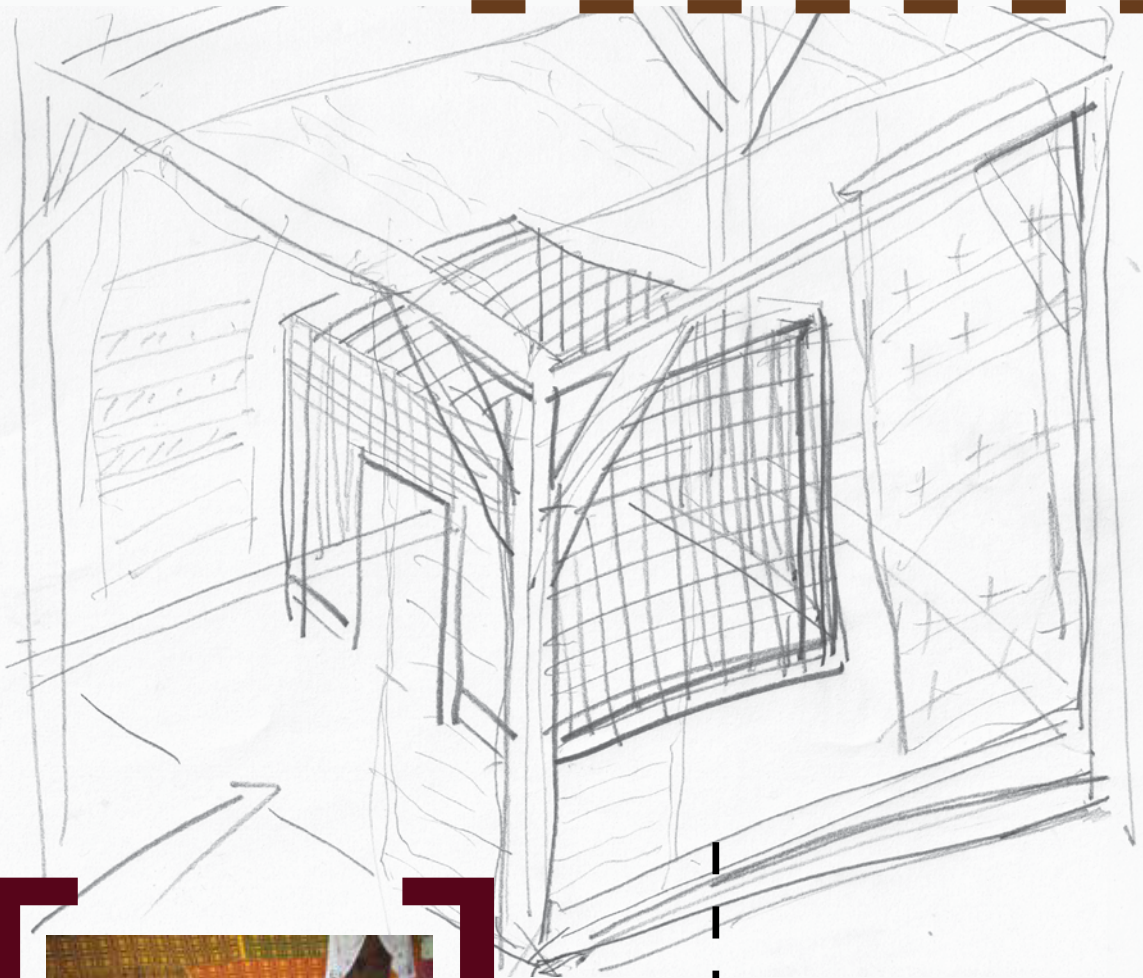




# VERSION 1a /

## details

The current form of the alms house (dimensions: 2.5/2.5/2.2 metres) will be encapsulated in the previous form (consisting of traditional carpets that incorporate the vegetal elements of the garden through textile fibres, natural colours and decoration, reconstructing the symbolic context of the Garden of Heaven), expanded to dimensions of 6/6/4 m.



# MARTOR



---

Title: "Displaying the Undisplayable: *Nameless in the World. An Exhibition on the Pro-Natalist Policies of the Ceaușescu Regime*"

Authors: Gabriela Nicolescu, Lila Passima, Corina Doboș

How to cite this article: Nicolescu, Gabriela, Lila Passima and Corina Doboș. 2015. "Displaying the Undisplayable: *Nameless in the World. An Exhibition on the Pro-Natalist Policies of the Ceaușescu Regime*". *Martor* 20: 181-192.

Published by: *Editura MARTOR* (MARTOR Publishing House), *Muzeul Țăranului Român* (The Museum of the Romanian Peasant)

URL: <http://martor.muzeultaranuluiroman.ro/archive/768-2/>

---

*Martor* (The Museum of the Romanian Peasant Anthropology Review) is a peer-reviewed academic journal established in 1996, with a focus on cultural and visual anthropology, ethnology, museum studies and the dialogue among these disciplines. *Martor* review is published by the Museum of the Romanian Peasant. Its aim is to provide, as widely as possible, a rich content at the highest academic and editorial standards for scientific, educational and (in)formational goals. Any use aside from these purposes and without mentioning the source of the article(s) is prohibited and will be considered an infringement of copyright.

*Martor* (Revue d'Anthropologie du Musée du Paysan Roumain) est un journal académique en système *peer-review* fondé en 1996, qui se concentre sur l'anthropologie visuelle et culturelle, l'ethnologie, la muséologie et sur le dialogue entre ces disciplines. La revue *Martor* est publiée par le Musée du Paysan Roumain. Son aspiration est de généraliser l'accès vers un riche contenu au plus haut niveau du point de vue académique et éditorial pour des objectifs scientifiques, éducatifs et informationnels. Toute utilisation au-delà de ces buts et sans mentionner la source des articles est interdite et sera considérée une violation des droits de l'auteur.

*Martor* is indexed by EBSCO and CEEOL.





# **CEI DIN LUME FĂRĂ NUME**

-----  
POLITICA PRONATALISTĂ A REGIMULUI CEAUȘESCU



# Displaying the Undisplayable: Nameless in the World. An Exhibition on the Pro-Natalist Policies of the Ceaușescu Regime

Gabriela Nicolescu

Associate lecturer in anthropology at Goldsmiths, University of London. Her research on the politics of display and representation includes fieldwork in the National Museum of the Romanian Peasant.

Lila Passima

Curator and visual artist. She is in charge of the museum's education department from the National Museum of the Romanian Peasant.

Corina Doboș

Historian working at the University of Bucharest and "Carol Davila" University of Medicine and Pharmacy in Bucharest on bio-politics in Communist Romania.

---

*Cei din lume fără nume. Expoziție despre politica pronatalistă a regimului Ceaușescu // Nameless in the World. An Exhibition on the Pro-Natalist Policies of the Ceaușescu Regime* is an exhibition organized by the Institute of the Communist Crimes and Memory of the Romanian Exile (ICCMRE) in partnership with the National Museum of the Romanian Peasant (NMRP), displayed at the NMRP Headquarters (Foyer Room) in October - November 2012.

**Concept & curatorship:** Lila Passima and Cosmin Manolache (NMRP)

**Documentation:** Florin S. Soare and Corina Doboș (ICCMRE)

**Virtual tour** (<http://politicapronatalista.iiccr.ro>): Mihai Bodea & Youngminds

**GN:** I remember that the idea of making an exhibition on the theme of abortion in socialist Romania, in the last decades of the socialist regime, came to me and Corina in London in 2011. Back then, I had suggested to Corina that it would be an interesting project to make. My concern was how to create exhibitions not starting from objects, but the other way around, starting from a theme / concept and having available plenty of research material to work with. Corina, in your case, I know you have coordinated an important research on the theme of abortion in communist Romania at the Institute for the Investigation of Communist Crimes in Romania and Memory of the Romanian Exile (IICCMRE), whose results were synthesized in two volumes: *The Pro-Natalist Policy of the Ceaușescu Regime. Vol I. A Comparative Perspective* (2010)<sup>1</sup> and *The Pro-Natalist Policy of the Ceaușescu Regime. Institutions and Practices* (2011)<sup>2</sup>. The first volume compares the Romanian pro-natalist policies with the pro-natalism practices in other six Eastern European countries and France, while the second volume focuses on the institutions and practices of Romanian pro-natalism.

I know this research and these two volumes were made in collaboration with other people from the IICCMER (*note*: Florin Soare, Luciana Jinga, Cristina Roman). A wonderful piece of work resulted and I was interested in finding out how this kind of material could be displayed in an exhibition. So, are there any differences between the book and the exhibition?

**CD:** You know, before the two of us discussed in London about the exhibition, Florin Soare had come to me and told me that he was thinking of somehow doing an exhibition based on our research. So, when you proposed the same thing to me I said: "All right. Let's do it". So, after our talk, I contacted Lila Passima and Cosmin Manolache and the four of us, together with Florin, worked together to set up this exhibition. I would say there are important differences between the book and the exhibition, and, at the beginning, this was quite difficult for us (me and Florin Soare) as historians... We gave Lila and Cosmin the two volumes and lots, lots, lots of documents and photos. It was huge. So Lila and Cosmin told us: "OK, this is a huge deal, and it's better to talk a little bit about what happened there,

1) Corina Doboș (coord.), Florin S. Soare, Luciana M. Jinga. 2010. *Politica pronatalistă a regimului Ceaușescu*. Vol. I: O perspectivă comparativă. Iași: Polirom.

2) Florin S. Soare, Luciana M. Jinga (coord.), Cristina Romana, Corina Doboș. 2011. *Politica pronatalistă a regimului Ceaușescu*. Vol II: Instituții și practici. Iași: Polirom.

you know?" So, we tried to explain to them what had happened in a much simpler way. We tried to give them some kind of shortcuts into the thought process behind the books, and the pictures of hospitals from the '60s-'70s which Florin found in the archives; these pictures proved to be very important for the exhibition. Cosmin, for example, had memories of the medical office his mother was working in as a nurse, and said: "Oh, I know what a medical office should look like, you know? Because I remember from my childhood how everything was laid out in a medical office."

We had visited many exhibitions on historical themes in Romania (I participated in the organization of some of these, so I am quite familiar with this "concept")... and they were boring because there were lots of documents on the walls for one to read. We didn't want to do this. In fact, Lila didn't want to do this. So we said: "OK. Let's try to keep it more visual. So, we focused on visuals – we had the hospital pictures Florin found in the archives of the Ministry of Health, and these were quite important. We had some wonderful letters, handwritten by citizens and addressed to the Ministry of Health... and this is important too; this is, I think, the main difference between the book and the exhibition. The book is historical research, written by historians and addressing mainly historians. Historians write mainly on laws and institutions, not on individual stories. And when you write about this, you write a book. When you want to put this on display, first and foremost, you have to make it more visual. Secondly, you make it more personal –that is why you use the personal (hi)stories more.

**GN:** Why did you choose for this exhibition this museum (the National Museum of the Romanian Peasant)?

**CD:** Well... in the first place, it was because of you: you put me in contact with Lila and Cosmin. And secondly, because I really like that museum – it was the obvious choice for me.

**GN:** Why do you like this particular museum? What exactly do you like so much about it?

**CD:** I think it was the first one I visited when I came to Bucharest, after I graduated in Cluj-Napoca. And... I remember visiting the permanent exhibitions and I was surprised there was not much explanation written under the objects. You had to be more engaged with the object you see, as the information on that object was not just simply delivered to you. You had to find out for yourself. And I liked this.

**GN:** Now, to come back to the curators working in the museum. Lila, how was your experience of curating this exhibition?

**LP:** This exhibition was a challenge for me. I did not know much about pro-natalist policies except for the well-known Romanian expression: "**children of the decree generation**" – a generation I was part of, being born in 1967, despite my parents telling me I was a wanted child. By chance or not, I was subliminally and anonymously one of the thousands of hundreds of victims pertaining to this phenomena. My personal experience became part of the concept of the exhibition.

**GN:** How did you decide on the narrative centers of the exhibition?

**LP:** The exhibition centered on two powerful narrative centers: **the medical examination room** with the gynecological bed and the torture instruments and **the domestic space**, where I wanted to introduce visitors to the material life of the 1970s lifestyle. The first space was often reluctant to understand and hear the personal drama and the real causes which led women to such experiences. The second space had all the aesthetic and material elements of a flat in 1970s' Bucharest. I operated an autobiographic scenery, I moved my own library and books, as well as all the objects I could find from that epoch: magazines, dollies, porcelain *knickknacks*, displayed in glass cabinets, on the bed frame or on the TV set. I have included the ever-present glass fish and the Gloria radio, the telephone, also displayed on a dolly, the carpet, the nylon curtains with sewed colorful flowers, the sofa and the dolly put on display, all integrated in the museum scenography to make the exhibition



space look real, inhabited and warm. We invited the audience to read the books on display and to watch a documentary entitled **The Children of the Decree**, directed by Florin Iepan. The audience was invited to become active participants, challenged to relate with the subject on display in a different quality: not as a spectator, but as a participant. The personal space of the domestic space was supposed to oppose the traumatic, empty and painful medical space.

One of the connection elements between the two spaces were **the empiric instruments used in amateurish methods of abortion**: the kitchen table and its plastic cover, on which such practices took place; the vinegar and alcohol bottles used for (irritant) internal irrigations, hand-made “perfusion-tubes”, helped, one way or another, evacuate the embryo / fetus from the uterus. Directly on the floor, I exhibited instruments which contributed to the breaking of the uterus: the knitting needles and the spindle. All of these, together with some other empirical methods that made use of “natural” poisonous substances, such as those contained by the pelargonium flowers or by oleanders, very often caused irremediable traumas and even the mothers’ death.

**GN:** How was it to work and to make an exhibition together with two historians? Did you ask them information that they were not ready to give out? I am thinking about interviews with people or about certain objects. I remember you told me you worked with various types of visual materials.

**LP:** Curating this exhibition was one of the rare experiences I had – in fact, the second one – where I worked inter-disciplinarily with historians, directors, students and experts in communication. The first time I did that it proved to be an awkward experience, somewhere in the heart of Siberia, in 2001. It took place at the Tomsk Regional Museum, one of the “three-in-one” museums – where history, archeology and art were displayed in the same place. I had been invited there to curate an exhibition on the theme of *Exile in Archives* as part of a Museum Biennial. The subject of Siberian deportations was very local, not yet discussed publicly and never put on display. As I’ve said, I worked together with many other people in an interdisciplinary way, by combining curatorial work with presentation workshops where we explained the concept to the audience. I mention this example because it was one of the first exhibitions I curated and also because it was a project in which I collaborated with historians.

I usually choose the concepts for the exhibitions I curate, or, if not, I discuss these concepts with Cosmin Manolache [curator at RPNM]. I collaborate with art historians, philologists, ethnologists or anthropologists and musicians. Corina Doboş and Florin Soare’s invitation was a real challenge. The subject was very sensitive, complex and based on an impressive corpus of already researched material. After having a first meeting with them, I realized I was free to build the exhibition concept, which was good for me. The fact that they had not imposed on me the approach or the manner of display of their historical material (with printed cardboards, too much descriptive information to display the phenomenon) excited me even more. The title of the exhibition, *Cei din lume fără nume*, was decided following a conversation we had with Ruxandra Grigorescu, a colleague of ours. She remembers that in 1980s’ Bucharest, the [Orthodox] Church was also praying for the aborted kids. Because they had not been baptized, the Church called them *the children with no name* which in Romanian is a very poetically rhymed expression<sup>3</sup>.

During some of the meetings we had, I realized what kind of materials I needed: from personal letters written by women themselves addressed to the Ministry of Health, to personal objects, testimonies from archived files, to official documents and laws of the pro-natalist politics, articles from newspapers, propaganda literature where the role of the family and of procreation were emphasized. I realized I needed to work with various types of images to create a complex visual discourse for this theme. I also realized I needed some powerful objects to render the drama of the phenomena visible to all. The gynecologic table, the surgical instruments and, in contrast, the medals given to heroic mothers. An important place in the exhibition was given to the so called “lethal” objects, those which triggered the mothers’ death through informal, amateurish practices of abortion. Next to these, death certificates printed in black and white were exhibited, in addition to the anti-abortion law.

3) “Cei din lume fără nume” can be literally translated as “nameless in the world”.

**GN:** So many images...What do you mean by "various types of images"?

**LP:** I wanted to give the impression of a state of conflict. The visual frame helped me to do this by putting together different types of realities; the fact that women and the officialdom were two separate entities, with no communication in-between, in a state of... disjunction. The black and white image of Romanian hospitals [during last years of the communist regime] acted as an image of poverty and brutality, devoid of the human element and the predominant state is one of absence, emptiness. This image was supposed to work as omnipresent and troubling subliminal pain. In contrast, the colorful postcards from socialist cities or touristic destinations were meant to represent the image of a happy society. Other types of images of beautified reality with advertising images from magazines and newspapers, such as *The Woman* (with the face of a happy woman capable of being a mother and an employee simultaneously) were counterpoints to the black and white images mentioned before. Images of women were meant to be prompts for happy families, communist childhood and successful, multi-developed society – because the family was the basic / vital unit of the communist society. There were some other recurrent images in that era: the image of the falsely protective, utterly demagogic and misleading totalitarian couple [Nicolae Ceaușescu and Elena, his wife] – always surrounded by youngsters, Communist "pioneers" and the Homeland's "falcons", showing unreserved care for the future of the country – the kids of the Golden Era. To stress the disjunction between how individuals suffered because of this law (which was, in fact, controlling and punishing their private life) and the official standpoint, I added the emotional element of personal histories, painfully re-embodied through re-collection: women's voices. We used three such audio installations to put on display the voice of women telling their painful traumas of their induced abortions, as well as that of the medical personnel involved in such situations and forced to abide by the law.

**GN:** Now to come back to Corina and at the relation between the exhibition and the books. If you wrote the book again, if you were to coordinate the two volumes, now, after you've participated in the curation of the exhibition, would you write them differently?

**CD:** No. No, because I think you can do the personal – or the microhistory – approach only if you have done the first one, only if you have done / researched the big chunk of history, where you sort things out, chronologically and institutionally. For me, I wouldn't know how to write a history book starting from these personal stories. But you know, because I had written this book historically, objectively and institutionally, and blah blah blah, I did not feel pleased with myself as a woman, you know? Because the book(s) weren't so much about these tragic stories that happened that I became aware of when researching for the project. These tragic histories do not come from the book. And I did not feel at ease with myself, that was the main thing. So I said to myself: "Let's do this [exhibition]!"

**GN:** That's very interesting. So the tragic story did not come from the book.

**CD:** Not really. Because, first of all, the research is huge and mainly institutional, with laws and things like this and there is not enough room for these little, personal stories that show you the tragedy of what happened on a personal level. So I felt I was somehow guilty, especially as a woman, of not bringing these stories in.

**GN:** Is the book more informative than the exhibition? Does the book explain better what the context was and what the similar laws in other countries were? What does the book say about abortions?

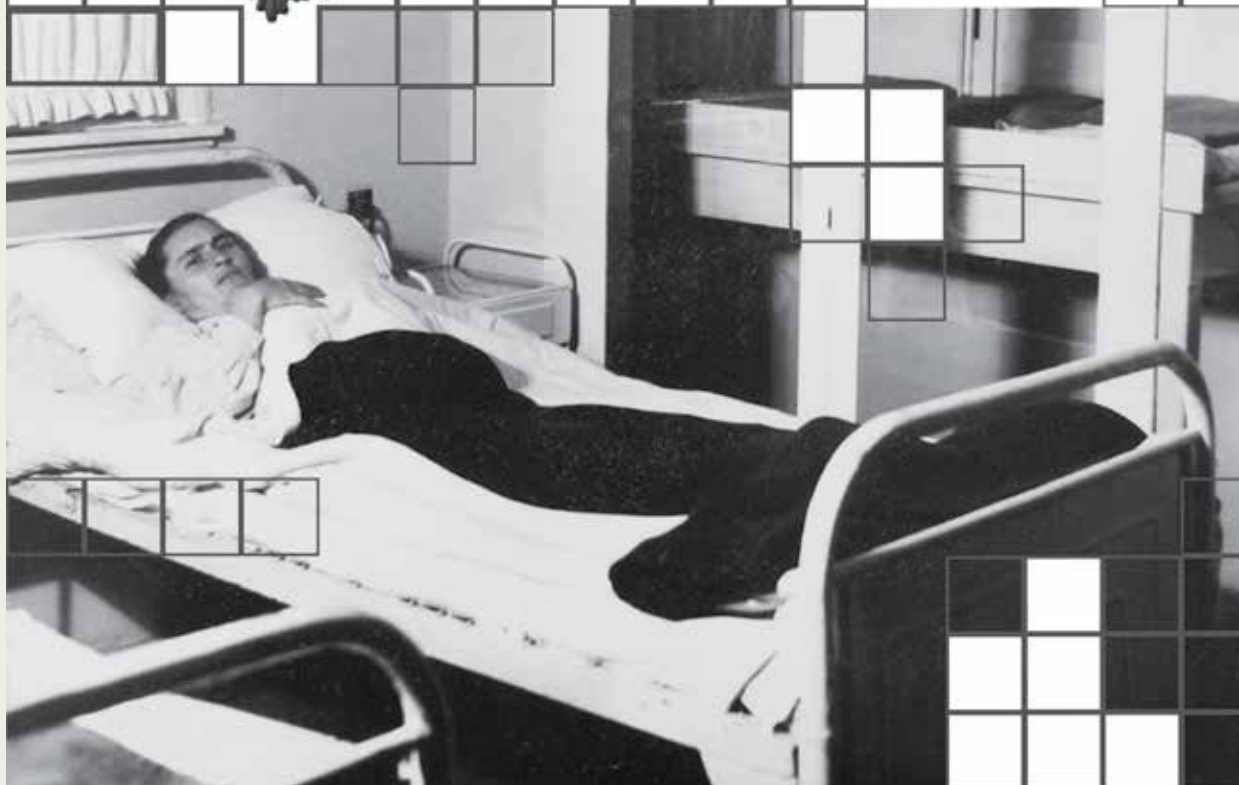
**CD:** About abortion in Romania, it says... it was a stupid policy. Not that it was a tragic policy, but a stupid one. Especially if you compare it to what the other countries around Romania were doing at the same time and in the same situation. In terms of the type of the pro-natalist measures taken and in terms of their results. It was a stupid policy and a stupid decision.

VEGHIND CU DRAGOSTE COPIII  
SI VIITORUL LOR FERICIT



CONCLUZII :

Incetarea a-a datorat stării deprimare  
unui' având deosebit de mare l' și a cu dete  
vizuale având ca puzic de pliere eudon  
Pe organele genitale externe și interne  
constată lezuni' traumatice, crește un exclu  
avutului pînă la marea marea abstr



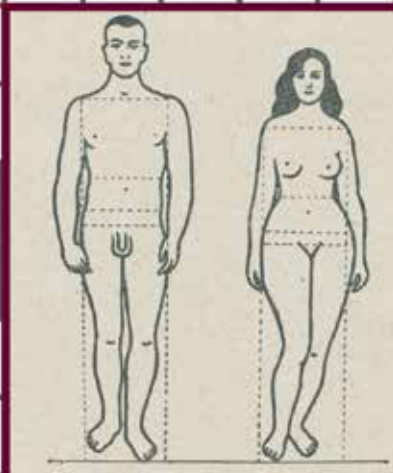
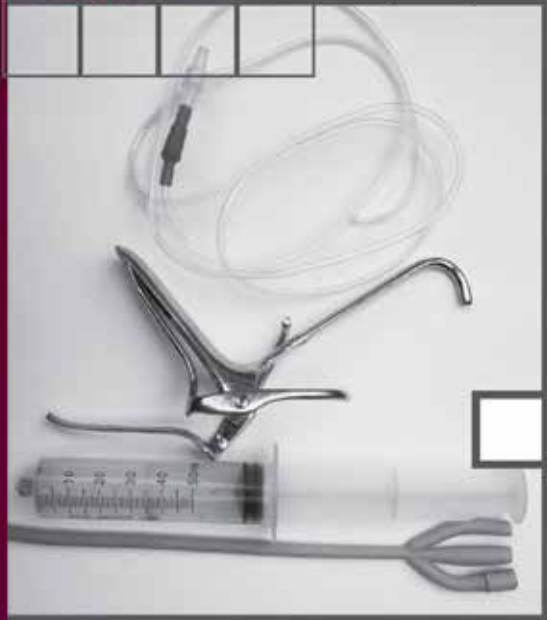


**URMĂRILE  
FATALE  
ALE  
ÎNTRERUPERII  
DE SARCINĂ**

*consentimă  
măi pe  
stabilă abcedata  
m a cu  
de producerea  
e empiric =*



MEDICINA PENTRU TOȚI  
**69**  
VASELE JUCĂ  
Avortul  
provocat



Cîteva diametre corporale ale unor tineri normal dezvoltati (vezi și tabelul din pagina precedentă).

**GN:** In terms of numbers? Was there an increase in natality?

**CD:** Yeah, there was; there was a very high birth rate in the first three years after abortion was almost prohibited in Romania, and, afterwards, the numbers decreased... The birth rate was a bit higher than that of the other Communist European countries, but it was not that high, you know? If you compare what they wanted to do to what they had actually achieved, they had not achieved that much. The Western demographers were very interested in what happened in Romania, as they wanted to know if the increase of birth rates was sustainable over the years... And they arrived at the conclusion that no, in the long run, it was not. Changing the law does not make it easy to change people's behavior. This was the thing.

**GN:** Is there any relationship between Romanian peasants and your project?

**CD:** Hmm...it might have a connection with the research project, but not with the exhibition. There was this idea of somehow differentiating – in the exhibition – between the urban space and the countryside, to focus a little bit more on the rural space, but we did not have enough visual material to do this. We have some interviews made especially for this exhibition; Florin managed to get some interviews with women from the countryside, which are included in the exhibition, but the story we told, or most of it, was an urban story... because I believe that the main scene for all these tragic stories was the city, the urban areas, not the rural ones.

**GN:** This might have to do also with the fact that so many peasants moved to the urban areas during the Communist decades... so it does have to do with peasants, but with peasants that became urbanites...

**CD:** Yeah, and I guess, it has somehow to do with a tradition that is lost. And with those social connections which are lost by moving from the village to the city. Abortive practices had existed in Romania before (Communism), but in the village it was a totally different story – you knew someone [an old woman] who could help you... but when they moved to the cities, to the factories, it was more difficult for women to get to know someone who could help them get rid of an unwanted pregnancy. Hearing all these confessions, I came to realize how lonely these women were. I mean, they did not talk to anyone. They wouldn't tell not even to their husbands or partners, they just kept it to themselves... and they were quite young – 20-22 years old, something like this... [Pause] and they kept this burden on their shoulders. To conclude, I think that one of the causes which led to this tragedy was the lack of social connections in the urban areas.

**GN:** What object or piece of the exhibition, or installation, or a corner, or a label, or something struck you? Anything that made you feel something powerful?

**CD:** Let me think.... I guess it was that installation with the obstetrical bed / table and with the lights on it (see <http://politicapronatalista.iiccr.ro/krpano/index/3>). It looks like a space made for interrogation... A space supposed to be a space for healing which, instead, becomes a place for scrutiny and interrogation of the body. Looking at this bed, I realized what happened in those years: the medical space became a policed space. The women coming there were not first saved and afterwards interrogated, but the other way around.

**GN:** A question to both of you: do you know how many visitors entered the exhibition? What kind of feedback did you receive? Did you receive any criticism? This is a difficult topic to put on display, especially in contemporary Europe where birth rates have been going down and where different governments supported especially by the Catholic Church have increased....

**LP:** Almost four hundred visitors. It is a high number of visitors, if compared to other temporary exhibitions in the museum. It was good to see that, other than people aged 40-70, who were

directly interested in the subject on display, many young people came, kids born after the fall of the communist regime. Some of the people who lived through those years had real moments of happiness in discovering some of the vintage objects which seemed to attract more attention than the subject of the display itself and anything that had to do with the trauma. Overall, I think the exhibition left the visitors with some thoughts and made them reflect more on the meaning of the objects on display. The display was free of constraints: we did not tell visitors what to think...

**CP:** I don't have a feedback: even if we made and left some questionnaires there, to be filled in by the visitors, they did not write anything. We even bought pens for them, but still, they did not write.

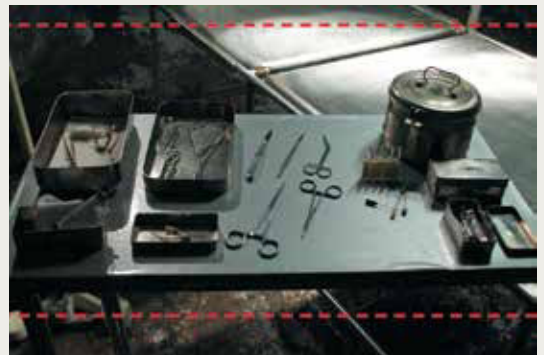
**GN:** Stubborn visitors... Maybe it was a very sensitive theme or maybe the public that comes to the temporary exhibition is an elitist audience...

**CD:** I don't know about that, but the students that participated in a workshop we organized were highly interested, smart and informed, and they knew a lot of things about abortion in communist Romania. During the exhibition, IICCMRE organized a workshop on abortion in Communist and post-communist Romania in partnership with two NGOs working on sexual education and women's rights: Societatea de Educație Contraceptivă și Sexuală (SECS) and Centrul Euroregional pentru Inițiative Publice (ECPI). During the workshop, the show "FĂRĂ URME", by Bogdan Georgescu and Irina Gădiuță, supported by AFCN, was presented. It brought into focus the project of the so-called "psychological counseling" that was supposed to be mandatory before each abortion on request, a controversial project that was discussed at the beginning of 2012 in the Romanian Parliament. The dialogue between Bogdan and Irina, played in the Communist living room set up in the exhibition (<http://politicapronatalista.iiccr.ro/krpano/index/1>), was a dialogue inspired by a real situation, showing how this kind of counseling ran on. Their show, reproducing a real-life counseling session, gave the participants an idea of how tough this "psychological counseling" could actually be, as it was not meant to help, but to frighten.

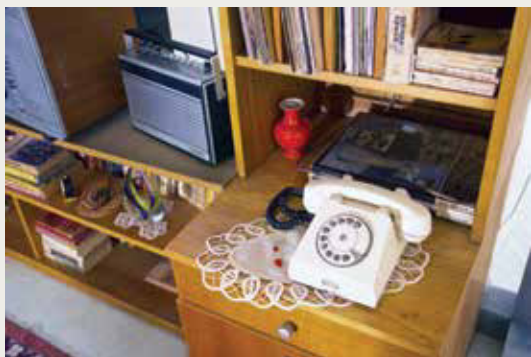
You know, whenever you have a significant drop in the birthrates, the easiest thing to do is to blame abortion practices. It was the case in the 1960s and it's been the case since the 1990s. But abortion in itself cannot cause this drop. It's always a symptom of something that is actually much bigger. As in the '60s, the main causes for the low birthrates were the accelerated industrialization and urbanization, while between 2009 and 2010, the economic crisis, poverty and migration of the young population caused this significant drop in natality. And it was so easy to blame abortion, not poverty, for this. But the number of abortions in the current decade has significantly dropped in comparison to that of the '60s and of the '90s. And that's a good sign, as it means that the present generations are in control of their reproductive lives.

Anyway, anyone can find more about this subject by visiting the virtual tour of the exhibition (special thanks to Mihai Bodea for the wonderful photos, and to Youngminds for the virtual tour), which can be accessed and explored online at <http://politicapronatalista.iiccr.ro>. It is easier to get all this information with one single click, by simply sitting in front of the computer. The miracles of technology – you have more documents, more explanations, if you want to. Just a click and you'll find more – the information does not just pop up, it's for you to access it. And it's more comfortable to hear the interviews thematically displayed in the virtual tour than in the real exhibition.

**LP:** In hindsight, I personally believe that the wisest and most responsible attitude of an open society is to try as much as possible to protect its citizens from irremediable traumas by civic, cultural and educational means, directed against the artificial juridical constraints against someone's own body, against the relationship with the other, against freely consented unions. At the same time, society has to promote the respect towards those members who reject abortion for religious reasons, as well as to fully inform everyone about the dangers, risks and the possible physical and mental consequences caused by aggressions against one's own body.







# Cei din lume fără nume





# MARTOR



---

Title: "Being Carolyn Carlson: An auto-ethnography exploring the body as a site for knowledge transmission"

Author: Jana Al Obeidyine

How to cite this article: Al Obeidyine, Jana. 2015. "Being Carolyn Carlson: An auto-ethnography exploring the body as a site for knowledge transmission". *Martor* 20: 195-199.

Published by: *Editura MARTOR* (MARTOR Publishing House), *Muzeul Țăranului Român* (The Museum of the Romanian Peasant)

URL: <http://martor.muzeultaranuluiroman.ro/archive/768-2/>

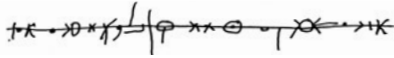
---

*Martor* (The Museum of the Romanian Peasant Anthropology Review) is a peer-reviewed academic journal established in 1996, with a focus on cultural and visual anthropology, ethnology, museum studies and the dialogue among these disciplines. *Martor* review is published by the Museum of the Romanian Peasant. Its aim is to provide, as widely as possible, a rich content at the highest academic and editorial standards for scientific, educational and (in)formational goals. Any use aside from these purposes and without mentioning the source of the article(s) is prohibited and will be considered an infringement of copyright.

*Martor* (Revue d'Anthropologie du Musée du Paysan Roumain) est un journal académique en système *peer-review* fondé en 1996, qui se concentre sur l'anthropologie visuelle et culturelle, l'ethnologie, la muséologie et sur le dialogue entre ces disciplines. La revue *Martor* est publiée par le Musée du Paysan Roumain. Son aspiration est de généraliser l'accès vers un riche contenu au plus haut niveau du point de vue académique et éditorial pour des objectifs scientifiques, éducatifs et informationnels. Toute utilisation au-delà de ces buts et sans mentionner la source des articles est interdite et sera considérée une violation des droits de l'auteur.

*Martor* is indexed by EBSCO and CEEOL.

# Being Carolyn Carlson: An auto-ethnography exploring the body as a site for knowledge transmission



**Jana Al Obeidyine**

Member of Choreomundus Alumni Association

---

## ABSTRACT

This article is an auto-ethnographic essay that analyses a one-day workshop on dance transmission delivered by Jean-Christophe Paré. It aims to demonstrate how the body can act as a site capable of sensing and feeling certain dimensions of the past through imagination.

## KEYWORDS

body imagery, embodiment, transmission, movement analysis, kinesthesia, AFCMD, Jean-Christophe Paré, Carolyn Carlson, *Density 21.5*

*”The medium of embodied knowledge is not words but sensations in which are stored intertwined corporeal, emotional and conceptual memories.*

- Sklar 1994, 14

Going back to my early performing days, I can still recall one of my first staged performances. The performance took place at a historical site of an international festival. After six years of learning and rehearsing the company’s dance repertoire, movements were inscribed in my body. There was no need for my mind to recall any movement or step. Even under the effect of stage fright, the simple act of turning on the music was enough to release the set of movements in their proper sequences, without me having to think about it. That night, the enormous auditorium was fully packed; I could see the excited crowd through the temple columns. I was wearing a long white dress made of soft white silk that created a pleasant bodily sensation. As with the dress, I can still recall the desert night breeze awakening my senses.

Once on stage, the sensory elements were enhanced by the music and the width of the dancing space. The music was stimulating my movements and the extremely wide and roofless stage gave me a bodily illusion of unlimited extension. Slowly, I began to lose sight of the other dancers without losing the feel of their presence. I felt that I was blending with the whole environment, including the outreaching sky and the soil under my feet. Two years later, we were performing the same repertoire at the same venue, when one of the male dancers forgot a step, which led to a total block of his body memory. He tried to recall what was to come next through his mind, but was completely incapable. Astonishingly, what happened to him was contagious in the men’s row, steering a complete mess on stage. Consequently, I assumed that the only meaning “embodiment” could signify was this “etching” of movements in the body, independently from the faculties of the mind. I was convinced that the ultimate aim of dancers was to attain the “trance” state, which could only be reached by shutting down some functions of the mind. An ephemeral state generated by an intense sensory experience that can only be



momentary lived, but never transmitted.

I have used this anecdote as an introduction to highlight the difference in perception that occurred after having participated in Jean-Christophe Paré's workshop on dance transmission. As an auto-ethnographic account, this paper will explore one way through which bodily knowledge can assist in understanding, reviving and transmitting bodily experiences from past to present without losing the kinaesthetic pleasure of dance. Thus, it will recall, describe and attempt to analyse the mode of transmission deployed by Paré during the workshop.



### Introduction to the workshop

Within the framework of Choreomundus<sup>1</sup> MA programme, on Friday 25<sup>th</sup> of January 2013, I attended a one-day workshop on dance transmission, conducted by Jean-Christophe Paré and organized by Georgiana Wierre-Gore, dance anthropologist, professor of anthropology at Blaise Pascal University of Clermont-Ferrand and principal convenor of Choreomundus. Paré is a former Principal Dancer at the Paris Opera, a contemporary dancer, choreographer, and teacher. In addition, Paré has also held the position of Dance Inspector at the French Ministry of Culture and he was later assigned the Direction of The National Dance School of Marseille. The workshop took place at one of the university dance studios, with the participation of twenty students. The day was divided into two sessions: a morning session that included body awakening exercises, followed by exercises aiming to increase bodily awareness in relation to space and time, and ending with dance technique exercises. At the end of the morning session, Paré introduced the "functional analysis of the body in the dancing movement"<sup>2</sup>, a movement analysis system developed in France in the 1990s and

employed by Paré in his work as a dancer and trainer. The AFCMD was initiated by Odile Rouquet and Hubert Godard and, at the time, it was integrated into the national diploma programme for dance teachers, to be later included into dancers' training programme in several dance schools. The AFCMD is based on notions from the fields of anatomy, physiology, neurophysiology, basic biomechanics, psychology, sociology, phenomenology, and movement observation (Topin, 2001). The afternoon session intended to "transmit" a part of *Density 21.5*, a solo choreographed and performed by Carolyn Carlson in 1973. Carlson is an American dancer and choreographer who has been working and living in France since 1974. She is considered an influential figure in the French contemporary dance scene. Carlson adapted and passed her choreography, *Density 21.5*, to Paré in 1978 to be added to his repertoire. During this session, Paré used three levels of transmission: a verbal theoretical introduction to Carolyn Carlson, positioning her in the lineage of contemporary dance history, a bodily exercise accompanied by verbal description of Carlson's physical attitude as a person and as a choreographer, while the last level aimed to teach the beginning of Carlson's choreography.



### The workshop

Before proceeding with movements' teaching of *Density 21.5*, Paré asked us to try Carlson's way of moving in space. "She looks forward while she walks, as if she wants to perceive something above her height level", he said. In my attempt to imitate his description, I felt my neck stretching slightly and extending horizontally. One can argue that he could have simply said: "Extend your necks horizontally." Thus, I decided to try both options in front of a mirror. Two main differences were visually

1) Choreomundus is an Erasmus Mundus International Master Programme in Dance, Knowledge, Practice and Heritage.

2) Analyse fonctionnelle du corps dans le mouvement dansé.

perceptible: with the first instruction, I slightly raised my chin, something that I was not able to physically sense or feel, but I was able to visually see, which gave the movement a certain attitude; with the second instruction, however, the intent of “looking higher” was missing, which made the movement seem mechanical and empty of significance. Therefore, if he had adopted the second instruction the result would have lacked “attitude” and “intention”, hence, remained technical. Paré followed his first instruction by adding the “movement initiator” of Carlson’s walk: “Her walk is initiated by her forehead.” The assignment intrigued me as I noticed that I don’t actually know what body part initiates my own walk. So, I started by walking normally to make sure that my walk was not initiated by my forehead. Trying to execute his instruction, I was tempted to rush at first. Apparently, I was not the only one in the studio to be rushing since Paré asked us to maintain the same pace. Combining both the look and the forehead instructions created in my body a sense of sovereignty that, implicitly, included a sense of autonomy and a feeling of confidence. Once more, I reversed the formula assuming that he had simply said: “walk confidently.” In this case, I could have thought: “I think I am confident; my walk should be a confident walk” and, thus, could have maintained my own bodily habits of walking. Although those movement descriptions and bodily sensations could be viewed as personal or subjective, nevertheless, the relevance of this exercise is that I was forced to step out of my bodily habits and attempt to move in someone else’s manner.

Paré called Carlson’s embodied way of being in the world “the corporal imagery.” The experience of travelling towards another person’s “corporal imagery” can be seen as an experience of meeting the absent “other” through the body and the imagination. Paré went further by offering an improvisation exercise that aimed to introduce us to Carlson’s “choreographic

imagery”, in addition to her everyday “corporal imagery.” While we were improvising, Paré asked us to choose a random moment when we decide to make a sudden change of direction, creating a sharp geometrical figure in the space. Again, we were forced to abandon the patterns our “body and mind” were accustomed to, by stepping into Carlson’s way of conceiving movements. Paré said: “create a rounded figure with your arms as if you are holding a huge balloon.” I felt distance being created between my dorsal scapulae. Paré confirmed my sensations when he prompted: “A circle created by Carlson does not involve a torso contraction, but rather a back expansion.” In this process Paré had attempted to separate us temporarily from our bodily habits, in order to create – through imagination – a bodily space that can accommodate Carlson’s embodiment. My lived bodily experience in this process included both technical and emotional dimensions, meeting anthropologist Deidre Sklar’s assertion that “different ways of moving generate different kinds of feeling experiences that are not only somatic, but affective” (1994, 11).

Prior to this stage, Paré had provided us with a brief historical background of Carlson’s position in the contemporary dance lineage. She danced with Alwin Nikolais, an American contemporary choreographer and musician, a disciple of Hanye Holm. At the beginning of the 1970s, she moved to France where she still currently works and resides. *Density 21.5* was her first solo creation. In a way, and in Paré’s terms, the piece can be viewed as the first break with Nikolais’s style, though it still carries the graphical aspect (geometrical shapes) of Nikolais’s work. Even if we weren’t familiar with Nikolais’s style, we could have still drawn a vague picture of Carlson’s persona by referring to the given geographical and historical characteristics of the era. In the United States and in Western Europe, the sixties and seventies included a major counterculture, where the



youth was rebelling against war, societies of consumption, racism and was calling for women's rights, individual liberty and sexual freedom. Growing up in the sixties, "a period of great social upheaval and unrest among American youth, the social and cultural climate to which Carlson was exposed made her very much part of what was later to be called *the sixties generation*" (Turnbull 1999, 71). Consequently, both *Density 21.5* as a "solo" choreography and the artist could have carried some of the ideals of that period. From this perspective, what I felt in terms of confidence and autonomy resonates with the spirit of the epoch Carlson's choreography belongs to. Moreover, in the process of choreographic creation, Carlson uses "improvisation as a way towards self-understanding and expression in movement" (Turnbull 1999, 70), thus, that could be why improvisation has also been used by Paré in the process of transmission. Paré took us through some aspects of Carlson's "body imaginary" as a person and choreographer before approaching the choreography itself. In other words, he transmitted an invisible layer of the dance as the fundamental ground that carries most of the meaning. Afterwards, the transmission of the dance movements could have taken any form, from imitating an instructor, copying from a recorded video performance, to reading a dance notation. The infrastructure was ready to carry out the choreography. Nevertheless, it might be important to note that by conveying Carlson's "corporeal imagery", Paré did not intend to reproduce a conformed copy of Carlson's interpretation of *Density 21.5*, but he aimed rather to give depth to our performance by creating a meeting space with its creator.



### The Method

The method deployed in the transmission of *Density 21.5* is based on a functional analysis of Carlson's dancing movements

and carried out by a reconstruction, through imagination, of "what the eye cannot capture: invisible internal movements, intentions, projects of moving" (Schulmann, 2008), while giving an overview of her sociocultural and professional history. Interestingly, this method shares a lot of similarities with a method composed by dance ethnographer and anthropologist Deidre Sklar, in the process of "feeling" her way into the movement's invisible layer of the *Danzante* performance during the *Torugas Fiesta* in New Mexico. Sklar refers to the "corporeal imagery" or the invisible layer of movement as the "abstract symbols embodied in movement, [which] are not necessarily evident in the movement itself" (1994, 13), while using the term "embodied schema" to designate "the full range of sensory modalities through which we apprehend and represent the world" (2006, 119). Drawing on a basic concept that knowledge can be gained equally through body and mind, Sklar proposes "a methodology for working with corporeal expressions that relies on qualitative movement analysis in conjunction with a technique [she] would call kinaesthetic empathy" (1994, 14). Sklar's qualitative movement analysis indicates a system conceptualized by Rudolf Laban and developed by Irmgard Bartineff as "effort-shape" analysis system that "focuses on eight core qualities: light or strong use of weight, quick or sustained time, direct or indirect use of space, and bound or free movement flow" (2006, 103). She suggests that distinguishing those qualities which "give clues to another's *felt* experience" (1999, 18) is a matter of training in observation. What she means by kinaesthetic empathy is "the capacity to participate with another's movement or another's sensory experience of movement, [...] a corporeal/conceptual skill that calls for the development of specific bodily techniques that will further our ability to both perceive and think sensorially" (1994, 16). Paré introduced concepts of time, space, weight, flow and



shape during his transmission process. He also “fabricated, through words and other media, [Carlson’s] sensory worlds and disembodied” (Sklar 1994, 14) us from some of our bodily habits, allowing our bodies to access Carlson’s sensorial sphere through imagination. Without analysing, comprehending and translating into words the abstract dimension of *Density 21.5*, Paré would not have been able to transmit what lies underneath the choreography itself; therefore, we would not have been able to get a sense of Carlson’s choreographic world. Correspondingly, without “moving from distanced visual observation to close corporeal imitation” and “turning awareness inward to feel [her] body as a continuum of kinetic sensations” (2006, 100), Deidre Sklar would not have been able to identify and “appreciate the meaning of the *Danzante* performance and the quality of the dancers’ experience” (1991: 8).

Apparently, both methods were based on the same concepts, but motivated by different aims. The conceptual framework of these methods proves to be very useful for ethnographic dance research and study, as well as for dance training, teaching, and expanding bodily creativity in the process of dance creation. Additionally, it could be very useful for the preservation of bodily practices as a dynamic historical representation.



## Conclusion

Thereafter, in the dance field, “embodiment” is a quality that can be thought about, analysed, preserved and transmitted. Moreover, one of the purposes of a museum is to give its visitors a glance at lives distant in either time or place, through a classic exhibit, or an interactive display of historical, cultural and artistic artefacts. The explored method in this paper could be

seen as a guide to the activation of human body as a space that can sense and feel other people’s bodily experiences and corporal expressions, even when they are distant in time and / or place. Thus, it would be very significant to dance, as an intangible heritage, not to restrict its exhibition to the visual display alone, but to also open the way for an interested public to live and sense the “psychosomatic, non-verbalized state” (Giurchescu 1973, 176) of its bearers.

\* All translations from French in this article have been made by the author.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Schulmann, N. 2008. Excerpt of “*Dictionnaire De La Danse* under the direction of Philippe Le Moal”, LAROUSSE, *AF-CMD Définition*, available at: <http://www.afcmd.com/definition.html> (Accessed: 20 April 2013).
- Turnbull, A.V. 1999. “Carolyn Carlson.” In *Fifty contemporary choreographers*, ed. M. Bremser. London: Routledge.
- Giurchescu, A. 1973. “La Danse comme objet sémiotique.” In *Yearbook of the International Folk Music Council*, 5, pp.175–178, JSTOR, Available at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/767502>.
- Sklar, D. 1991. “On Dance Ethnography.” In *Dance Research Journal*, 23 (1), 6–10, JSTOR, Available at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/1478692>.
- Sklar, D. 1994. “Can Bodylore Be Brought to Its Senses?”. In *The Journal of American Folklore*, 107 (423), 9–22, JSTOR, Available at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/541070>.
- Sklar, D. 1999. “All the Dances Have a Meaning to That Apparition: Felt Knowledge and the *Danzantes* of Tortugas, New Mexico.” In *Dance Research Journal*, 31 (2), 14–33, JSTOR, Available at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/1478330>.
- Sklar, D. 2006. “Qualities of Memory: Two Dances of the Tortugas Fiesta, New Mexico.” In *Dancing from past to present: nation, culture, identities. Studies in dance history (1997)*, ed. T.J. Buckland. United States: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Topin, N. 2001. “L’Analyse du Mouvement Dansé, une danse du regard: l’enseignement d’Hubert Godard.” In *Revue Nouvelles de Danse « Incorporer »*, 46/47, 100–113, Available at: <https://danse.uqam.ca/departement/personnel/professeurs/68-nicole-harbohnier-topin.html>.





# MARTOR



---

Title: “*The Mother of Us All. A Few Considerations on the Female Archetype and the Body during Pilgrimages*”

Author: Mirel Bănică

How to cite this article: Bănică, Mirel. 2015. “*The Mother of Us All. A Few Considerations on the Female Archetype and the Body during Pilgrimages*”. *Martor* 20: 201-210.

Published by: *Editura MARTOR* (MARTOR Publishing House), *Muzeul Țăranului Român* (The Museum of the Romanian Peasant)

URL: <http://martor.muzeultaranuluiroman.ro/archive/768-2/>

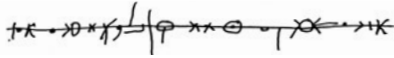
---

*Martor* (The Museum of the Romanian Peasant Anthropology Review) is a peer-reviewed academic journal established in 1996, with a focus on cultural and visual anthropology, ethnology, museum studies and the dialogue among these disciplines. *Martor* review is published by the Museum of the Romanian Peasant. Its aim is to provide, as widely as possible, a rich content at the highest academic and editorial standards for scientific, educational and (in)formational goals. Any use aside from these purposes and without mentioning the source of the article(s) is prohibited and will be considered an infringement of copyright.

*Martor* (Revue d'Anthropologie du Musée du Paysan Roumain) est un journal académique en système *peer-review* fondé en 1996, qui se concentre sur l'anthropologie visuelle et culturelle, l'ethnologie, la muséologie et sur le dialogue entre ces disciplines. La revue *Martor* est publiée par le Musée du Paysan Roumain. Son aspiration est de généraliser l'accès vers un riche contenu au plus haut niveau du point de vue académique et éditorial pour des objectifs scientifiques, éducatifs et informationnels. Toute utilisation au-delà de ces buts et sans mentionner la source des articles est interdite et sera considérée une violation des droits de l'auteur.

*Martor* is indexed by EBSCO and CEEOL.

# The Mother of Us All. A Few Considerations on the Female Archetype and the Body during Pilgrimages



**Mirel Bănică**

Researcher, Institute for the History of Religions, The Romanian Academy, Bucharest

## ABSTRACT

More than 20 years after the fall of the communist regime, we are witnessing the unprecedented development of religious pilgrimage in Romania, a country where, according to the latest census, 84% of the population self-identifies as Orthodox Christian. Apart from the pilgrimages to well-known destinations (Jerusalem, Rome etc.) organized by the Romanian Patriarchy's Pilgrimage Bureau, a separate category is represented by the improvised, hybrid pilgrimages (both religious and touristic) organized by individuals using hired minibuses. The pilgrimage represents the ideal occasion to study the body and female corporality within the performance of a religious ritual, as well as the persistence of certain archetypes regarding the female archetype. Among the history of religion, anthropology and ethnography, we have tried to capture those experiences, to transcribe them as accurately as possible so as to reach one of the most delicate aspects linked with the "living religion": the female body during rituals.

## KEYWORDS

pilgrimage, ritual, body, Orthodox Church, archetypes, saints



## Preliminaries

Between October 2009 and October 2013 I studied the Orthodox pilgrimage practice which took place as a queue; four years and twenty-two individual or group pilgrimages, in the search to understand one of the most visible, yet controversial aspects of the contemporary religious act in Romania.

Since the very first hours spent on field in Iași (during Saint Parascheva's celebration), I noticed the majority of female participants in this pilgrimage, their special way of dressing or the symbolic gestures they performed when approaching Saint Parascheva's coffin. But what took me most by surprise was the extraordinary female solidarity taking form in the hardest moments of queuing, as well as the almost

total identification with the image of the Saint, perceived as a mother, sister, mediator and advisor. I intuitively felt that, as a man, a certain essential "something" of the female practice and spirituality would always remain inaccessible to me.

Later on, I tried to approach this state of facts by studying the female archetype in the history of religion and by considering the body and the female corporality within the specific context of a pilgrimage. Having myself become a pilgrim, I used my body as an instrument and means of understanding the experience of queuing. Only the women around me somehow did it *differently*. Thus, the main challenge proved to be the **transcription** of these experiences and the visible differences.

How to explain one of the most subtle aspects of the religious experience which has always been a challenge for classical



anthropology – the exact interpretation of certain experiences and rituals strictly dedicated to the opposite sex?

All great religious systems in the world have the tendency to separate the roles of men and women in religious rituals. Some characteristics of gender differences are common to all cultures, while others are temporal and geographically located (Davidson 2002, 195). Specific anthropological studies dedicated to female religiosity are increasingly numerous, but the intense promotion of the “equality” myth and the similarity between men and women have also had unexpected consequences, meaning that, quite often, the fact that women’s religious experiences and practices are different, has been left unnoticed (Bowie 2000, 91). Through the emergence of feminist approaches and theories, women’s “religious life” is chartered into an older religious tradition, ignored so far, despite numerous phenomena and religious manifestations, mainly feminine, conceived and analyzed, from an androcentric perspective, as a context, as well as documentary sources. A possible methodological solution would be to find some specific data on the female religious history, as well as on other marginalized groups.

The advantages of “feminist approaches of the feminine” would, thus, be the occurrence of new approaches and method challenges, allowing the understanding of certain contradictions in religious practices, contradictions which have been incomprehensible until now (Hawthorne 2005, 3024).

• • • • •

### **Between Ethnography and the History of Religions**

I will reference mainly the pilgrimage in Iași during the celebration of Saint Parascheva, although the elements linked with the

female archetype are to be found as well in Curtea de Argeș (Saint Filofteia) or at Nicula Monastery (the miraculous icon of the Virgin Mary).

In his study dedicated to the psychological aspects of the female archetype, Jung creates an outstanding analysis of its attributes (solicitude, understanding, magical authority, wisdom, spiritual exaltation, spontaneity) that can also be of interest in the case of some aspects of pilgrimages. Thus, I was able to notice that Saint Parascheva is perceived by pilgrims as a “swift helper”, being addressed with formulas such as “the mother of us all”, “Mother, your child has come to see you!” and other similar ones. In the previously mentioned study, Jung draws attention to the existence of major differences between men and women regarding the perception of the **meaning** of the female archetype’s, linked mainly to the image of the mother. For women there is an unconditional type of communication, linked directly to their own gender, whilst for men it’s about a foreign contact, acquired, with a rich vision, but completely outside their conscience. The result is, according to Jung’s conception, “a symbolic identification with the image of the Mother for men and a direct one of women, of which men will never be capable” (Jung 1968, 106).

Whilst waiting in line I was truly surprised by the way women, regardless of age, were identifying themselves with the life, the suffering and the sacrifice of Pious Parascheva, in a direct manner, without intermediaries, as if everything would have been part of a **whole** we could perceive, but never understand from “within”.

For Erich Neumann, a Jungian psychologist, the female archetype represents a true “human culture therapy” because this is not just *dynamics*, but a real directing force influencing whole parts of the human psyche, like religion, for instance (Neumann 1991, 15).

There are two aspects of the female archetype as a symbol and as a deity: the

female as a source and undried life spring, and the female as an agent of evolution and perpetual transformation, as shown in the famous definition formula: *Terrible Mother, Great Mother, Good Mother*. The study “*Démone et Chretienne: Sainte Vendredi*” by Marianne Mesnil and Assia Popova shows precisely these two facets of the female archetype, perceptible as well in the image of Saint Parascheva – Saint Friday, having as a starting point hagiographic and mythological aspects from both sides of the Danube: the good and generous “mother” versus the evil and avenging “mother”. South of the river, there are a couple of small sanctuaries, caves or springs honoring Saint Parascheva, “scantily furnished, visited mainly by women, especially to pray and address the Saint directly, without any male intermediaries (priests)” (Mesnil; Popova 1993, 743). Pictures of such miraculous springs from Serbia or Bulgaria are to be found, for instance, in a richly illustrated album edited by Petru Sidoreac (*Saint Parascheva. A Pilgrim’s Guide*), retracing the difficult route of Saint Parascheva’s relics before being brought to Iași by Vasile Lupu (Sidoreac 2000). Any quick internet search containing the key words “Saint Parascheva + Balkans” yields various touristic sites offering excursions on Tempi River Valley in Greece where there is a famous monastery dedicated to Saint Parascheva (*Aghia Paraskevi*) and a miraculous spring. Another study which references the double dimension of the female embodied by Saint Parascheva belongs to researcher Claudine Fabre-Vassas, who conducts an ethnological field-research of what is left of the memory of “Saint Friday” among contemporary pilgrims and of the way they perceive this legendary double dimension of the Saint as a “fierce virgin or an aggressive old woman” (Fabre-Vassas 1995, 74).

Mircea Eliade ascertains the existence in Eastern Europe, long before Christianity, of “a sincere and popular devoutness towards the woman and mother, exactly towards

the principle of fruitfulness and kindness embodied by the Mother” (Eliade 2011, 192).

An entire study belonging to B.P. Hașdeu talks about Thracian deities *Kupala* and *Omoroka* (the latter having left significant traces in Slavic languages under the form of words about darkness, death, fog) as being also “the goddess mother of all things, the embodiment mixed without discerning of the feminine and masculine faces of nature, world and darkness, of *sky* and *earth* (in italics in original).” He also declares that in Slavic legends, both have survived the pagan era, for instance, through “Baba Iaga, the ugly, bad and revengeful one” or other words linked to death, cold, darkness, underground, earth (Hașdeu 2003, 121).

Other Romanian ethnographers and folklorists, whom we will not list here, have glimpsed into Saint Parascheva – Saint Friday’s recollections of features and links of the cult of older deities such as Minerva, Juno and Venus. Concerning the North Danube region, ethnologist Bogdan Neagota puts forward the idea that the entire Christianity around the area had been established following the specific functioning mechanism of oral cultures “through non-traumatic and a little acculturated agglutination, in the symbiosis and syncretism (*apud* Eliade 1988, 232) of different symbolic-religious levels which, in time, overlapped, merging at last into archetypal convergent and cognitive points” (Neagota 2003, 7).

George Coșbuc, the erudite poet, trying to conceive a mythological approach of our popular literature under the influence of the “sămănătorist” circle, brings into discussion the double nature of the female in the study “The saint Crones in our Mythology”. “In our mythology, the saints represent **clear notions** (my underlining) and distinct impersonations. Saint Friday represents the principle of the good, the gentle and the eager to help, while the other three, Thursday, Tuesday and Saturday, are mischievous, and solar heroes avoid them





because they embody the concept of evil” (Coşbuc 1986, 148).

Personal note: not one single female subject that I interviewed on field or outside used the name of “Saint Friday” when referring to Saint Parascheva. Is it a sign of profound secularization of the rural area, a loss of its memory? Linguist Ivan Eseev writes that “the patron of Fridays in the popular calendar is Saint Friday, whose persona represents a blend of features of an old nature deity, elements of the Mother of God and Saint Parascheva’s cult, Moldova’s patron, revered by the Eastern Slavs under the name of Praskovia-Piatnitza, and the Southern Slavs as Saint Petka and Paraskeve for the Greeks which became the name for Friday; the cult of the Saint whose relics are found in Iaşi comprises agrarian elements and rituals linked to water consecration, proving its true *Alma Mater* characteristics.” The cult of Friday is related to the “cultural and religious unity of the old Indo-European lineage which had a female deity of nature, love and fertility, whose prototype is Venus” and the fear of the “linked Fridays” noticed by M. Mesnil and A. Popova, “a form of respect towards the ancient pagan deity Friday whose features we discover in the Saint Friday of Romanian fairy tales and legends” (Evseev 2007, 640).



### **The Female Archetype and Rituals. A case of Sacred Mutilation**

Once more I ask: why is a saint like Saint Parascheva so fascinating and so captivating? What could be the explanation of the success and attachment shown by Romanian female pilgrims? Eric Neumann is suggesting a functional equation of the female archetype: the woman **is** the body, corporality represents a vessel and the recipient in itself is the receptacle of the female *corporality*.

**The body of saints** could be one of the interpreting keys. It is Saint Parascheva’s femininity that has “distinguished” her in the symbolic competition from the other saints for which we organize pilgrimages; underneath her clothing one can read the shape of a human body placed in an oblong coffin, as a nave, sacred concentrated in a feminine shape.

As Joachim Wach noticed, the gesture of incorporating the object of devotion in a perceivable environment for the human senses represents “the union between the intellectual and the emotional life of man” (Wach 1958, 100). Or Saint Parascheva **is** a perceivable body and presents to the external world a bright image, solar, full of warmth, accentuated by the manner she is seated in the coffin on an imposing canopy, her clothing, her gold, gemmed crown on her head. From an archetypal point of view, the “bright bodies” are symbols of knowledge, of the spiritual aspects of man (Neumann 1991, 57).

As an empirical observation, *the devotional culture* of the pilgrim body in front of Saint Parascheva’s coffin (praying positions, the direct touch or the touch of various clothing items, icons etc.) seemed more intense in Iaşi than in Suceava or Bucharest, sites where there are coffins of male saints, sites known to be harsher and more fastidious concerning the pilgrims’ requests.

In *Bucarest* (his well-known travel diary in interbellum Romania), writer and diplomat Paul Morand senses the fascination exerted by Saint Parascheva, assigning her archetypal roots (precisely by her icon at Sf. Vineri Church in Bucharest, demolished in June 1987), stating that “a silver Virgin with charcoal face receives, among sweet-smelling fumigations, *wishes addressed to Venus and Ceres* (my italics)” (Morand 2000, 181).

The motif of the female archetype is relaunching the interrogations about the

massive presence of the Rroma at the pilgrimage in Iași, but at other Marian pilgrimages in Romania as well (Costești, Curtea de Argeș, Nicula). Researcher Delia Grigore launches the idea that the Rroma can see a link between the figure of the Virgin Mary, other female saints and “the mother-goddess revered by the pre-Aryans from India. Actually, in the same spirit of worshipping the sacred mother, the Rroma have a special veneration for female saints, a lot bigger than for male saints, which is proven by other two great pilgrimages: the Rroma one in West Europe at St. Sara (Camargue, May 24-25) and the Orthodox Rroma one from Romania at St. Parascheva’s relics (Iași, October 14) (Grigore 2001, 134).

When asked the question “why is Saint Parascheva’s coffin covered with a transparent plexi-glass board?”, the pilgrims came up with a similar explanation, with only small variations: in time people have tried to obtain a shred from the relics on display using their teeth (or *splinters* as some were saying – interesting formula showing the founding ambiguity of relics, placed between alive and mineral). The church had to react and protect the relic by covering it completely.

The episode of the “theft of the relics” is mentioned as an oral story legitimated by the authority of the ministrant priests from the Iași Metropolitan Cathedral, “a story from around 1900 when the face of Saint Parascheva was uncovered to be cherished by the faithful and a woman ripped off, with her mouth, while crossing herself, the Saint’s nose. After that, it was decided that Saint Parascheva’s face, as well as the other parts of the Saint’s relics, should be covered with a piece of clothing.” The plexi-glass board mentioned earlier was placed in 1992 (Adumitroaie; Vicovan 2011, 263).

This episode told by pilgrims during the interviews is placing the sacred mutilation gesture around 1960s or 1990s and its author was described as a “simple woman,

from the countryside” or “a witch”. In E. Neumann’s vision, the female archetypal body is crossed by a straight line which connects the Sky – (the Paradise) – the Moon – (the Logos) – the Breath – (the Mouth) – the Heart – the Abdominal Belt – the Navel – the Underground World – the Night – the Fear – the Darkness. If we are to agree that the gesture really happened (at a closer look one can notice that the nasal protuberance is not visible), the hypothesis that the act can be interpreted as a desperate, last attempt to connect with the circuit of the divine breath of the female archetype, seemed truly appealing to me.

Other post-Jung interpretations perceive the female archetype as a vessel, chalice or receptacle, thus surpassing the common image of the womb, and dealing, in fact, with “an all-encompassing, protective quality, an embrace, nourishment that allows something else to grow. The female archetype nourishes the human *Self*” (Sease; Schimdt 2011, 61). The suggestion of a vessel or a chalice at the Iași ensemble is also accentuated by the coffin which displays the relics, as one of the most dazzling and imposing saints’ coffins in Romania. The actual coffin dates from 1891, but was fully restored in Greece in 2009. The coffin itself is perceived as a “conductor” of the relics’ sacredness, hence “the multitude of names being found written on it during restoration, thankful notes, akathists for the departed, cotton balls and parts of the objects pilgrims and members of the clergy left at the time of contact” (Adumitroaie; Vicovan 2011, 264).

Another interesting ritual about Saint Parascheva which can be linked to the persistence of the female archetype is the changing of her clothes five times a year. The clothes “differ from a liturgical period to another, according to the celebrations on the Church’s calendar, from light or dark colors” (Adumitroaie; Vicovan 2011, 240). After being renewed during a somewhat





secret ceremony where only women are allowed, “the old clothes are offered as comfort to Christians from different regions of the country and to some churches abroad in order to keep the Orthodox faith alive and for God-loving people *to feel near* (my italics) Moldova’s Patron Saint.” Usually, Saint Parascheva’s clothing fulfills a protective role against the wear and the daily pressure from the pilgrims’ incessant succession in front of her coffin; in the interpretation key suggested by E. Neumann, the clothes bare a cohabitation function, consecrating and dispersing the feminine concept of that “primordial figure bearer of the benefactress *manna*, well-hidden in the human subconscious. The wisdom of feminine representations is not abstract or disinterested, but it is wisdom that demands communion through love as a Whole” (Neumann 1991, 330). The travels of the Saint’s attire, the gift and counter-gift game, complements and universalizes its cult.



### **The Social Function of the Female Archetype and Female Body**

The analysis of the social function of the pilgrimage, in connection to the illness, the suffering, the therapeutics of physical and spiritual sicknesses, cannot be properly understood if one ignores the intimate dynamics of society, of the manner in which some historic eras have left their mark on the body and the illness per se. As a working hypothesis, I can see a link between the social function of the female archetype and the “gender crisis” of a part of the female population that I met during the pilgrimages. More precisely, after 1990, the majority of communist institutions supporting the family, maternity, the hygiene and health of children collapsed. Even if they were faulty in content and function, they played an essential role,

especially in the rural area, which finds itself nowadays completely lacking any social and medical support. Maybe it’s not by accident that the “collections of miracles” that have lately flourished are full of recovery stories of children from modest social backgrounds.

I believe the direct and extremely honest manner, without intermediaries, the intense emotional scenes that take place during pilgrimages centered on female holiness can be better understood by taking into account the abovementioned. And for the psychology of depth, the entire Orthodoxy possesses a true “matriarchal” dimension, a loving mother, an accomplice and an understanding for all people going through a profound crisis (Kristeva 1987, 16).

A particular case is represented by the pilgrimage at the Prislop Monastery in Hunedoara, centered around the charismatic figure of Father Arsenie Boca, who had focused during his lifetime on married life and the suffering of women – an aspect that deserves special development and which partially explains the present success of the popular cult that addresses him. Prislop became a true sanctuary for women who had aborted babies during the communist period; as if a process that would repair the “rupture in equilibrium” between a world of extra-human entities, but still linked to the mothers’ bodies, and the current bodily health could still occur via the use of various rituals.

Do women believe otherwise? Or is there a feminine specificity in the creation of the religious fact perceived under the pilgrimage form? The persistent dichotomy existent in the sociology of religions between *ritual* and *faith* or between *practice* and *representation* is to be found as well in the consecrated studies on the account between gender and religion; at present, there is a series of analysis centered on social and cultural issues. In the specialized literature dedicated to pilgrimages, the difference contained in the experiences and the



manner of female religious manifestation is well represented. Thus, Alice-Mary Talbot notices the fact that in Byzantium, religious cults had a particular role in women's destinies because "for feminine secularism, taking part in liturgy and processions, visiting saint shrines etc., was the only possibility approved by society to get out of the house. All these opportunities were, in fact, a way of satisfying some psychological and spiritual needs" (Talbot 2000, 154). Her observation seems to me quite pertinent and perfectly valid as a motivation even nowadays.

Talking with women from the rural area, I have understood that moving from their residence to the pilgrimage site, the actual time spent in ritual or the journey in itself by train or bus, represented for them a breakthrough, a change in their daily routine, probably the only one in an entire year. The pilgrimage offered the possibility to get out of the sometimes suffocating family ambiance, of the daily routine and the careful "surveillance" of their husbands in a world that isn't familiar with the notion of "tourism" (in the contemporary meaning of term).

The female participation rate at pilgrimages is verified by a quantitative research conducted by the Faculty of Sociology (Iași University) and dedicated to the religious implications and motivations in the Iași pilgrimage; 51,9% of the subjects were female (Netedu 2008, 173). Given the Orthodox conditions of the pilgrimage, women's particular behavior, the number of female participants was higher than that of the men, which is similar to pilgrimages in Greece; these statistics can be placed in a direct relationship with the role and the secondary position women hold in society (Gothoni 2010, 73). The Catholic sources that have been consulted – for instance, the synthesis of French historian Edmond-René Labande, a tertiary Franciscan, dedicated to "the problems, behavior and mentalities of the Christian pilgrim" since the Middle

Ages – accept the fact that "women are always more faithful than men because they convey life, being linked to traditions as well as superstitions and being simultaneously denied access to the ritual" (Labande 2004, 110). The author stresses "the misogyny" expressed towards pilgrim-women for centuries, perceived as a "weak gender", incapable of withstanding the supposed dangers and temptations of long distance pilgrimages. The preferred solution for high-rank women in the Middle Ages was to travel as a family or accompanied only by women, followed by armed guards.



### **The Body of the Pilgrim and the Construction of the Religious Identity**

During the trip, the pilgrim's body suffers because of the deprivations and because of the weather conditions; accounts focused on this aspect are abundant in all pilgrimage stories from the Middle Age onwards. "The pilgrim travels in order to suffer and to be healed through suffering. The pain and its progressive teachings merge into some sort of 'dialectics'" (Fabre; Julia 2000, 137), giving birth to the pilgrim's final identity. The role of pain in the spiritual "treatment" of the female body is stressed in the famous study of Marian pilgrimage on the Greek island of Tinos; the study, conducted by American Jill Dubisch, states that the full assumption of physical pain (as it is for the Nicula Monastery where one crawls on knees and elbows, on rocks) is a means of constructing one's identity. Pain becomes "a female-privileged language taking part in daily life, as well as in religious practice" (Dubisch 1995, 34). Women's suffering, visible to anyone, also represents the suffering provoked by their lesser social status; thus, the pilgrimage becomes a healing path, in addition to a means of revalidation of one's identity (Derks 2009, 130).





Women do not reproduce the religious act in a passive way; they “reformulate” it through their acts, probably because they are charged with supplementary “guilts”, including giving life – see the six-week purification prayers for women if they give birth to a girl or three weeks if it is a boy, the interdiction of entering the church while on their period (Manolache 1994, 46). Through the devotion shown to the Virgin Mary, one can identify with the image of the “suffering mother” who sacrifices herself for the whole family. In this very context, we have to bring into discussion Mihaela Miroiu’s position on the manifestation of “somatophobia” from Western Christianity, “that can no longer find its place in the East, because this type of Christianity bears a cosmic meaning. Through Christ, the sacred penetrates into the embodied existence as a spirit, soul and body, as it does in the entire nature as well, that person giving an account of both worlds. Evil has nothing more to do with physiology, the matter itself being transfigured through the holy grace” (Miroiu 2002, 14).

Women insist on physical pain, they talk publicly about it, trying to invent techniques and procedures to cope with it in the best possible way. K. Seraidari states that, by doing this, women build themselves **a common base of identification and experience**, prolonging in time and space the symbolic sacrifice made by honoring the pilgrimages dedicated to “female figures” (Seraidari 2005, 150). The French researcher suggests it would be wrong to associate women to suffering, bereavement and pain too easily.

Although the theme is a recurrent one in gender and anthropology studies, I would like to mention a research study regarding “female sanctity” sociology in the Christian West: the woman and her religious practice are placed in a dramatic context stating that “women are best at experimenting the condition of ‘brides of Christ’ through suffering” (Albert 1997, 163).

Regarding Eastern Christianity, “the suspicion towards the body, especially the female body, a recurrent theme of the Eastern monasticism in the 4<sup>th</sup> century” is noticeable (Delumeau 1986, 110). However, it was not only the anthropology of religions that sensed this essential aspect of the female practice.

Slavist Georges Nivat, a fine *connaisseur* within Orthodoxy, mentions in a travel diary through contemporary Russia the fact that, within this confession, the body plays an essential role in understanding the faith. “The female *body* is the one that understands, prostrates, embraces the icons, lights candles, makes lists of names of the departed and the living family members to be read by the priest (‘akathists’ and ‘diptychs’)” (Nivat 2004, 281).

Another observation linked to female corporality on pilgrimages: the peculiar attire, following specific and strict dress codes, is a lot more visible for women than for men. American anthropologist of Tunisian origin A. Hammoudi, who studies the great pilgrimage at Mecca, emphasizes the universal importance of clothing from the moment of entry into the space dedicated to the pilgrimage. A part of his statements are valid also outside Islam.

Thus, under specific pilgrimage conditions (stress, jams, various deprivations), differences are accentuated between men’s and women’s dress, the clothes themselves ritualizing, in turn, gender transgressions. The whole body image should not be ostentatious, hence the need for specific clothing. Any excess is immediately denounced by the pilgrims themselves (Hammoudi 2005, 46).

This statement has been verified in the field of pilgrimages in Romania; I have seen many situations in which female pilgrims tried to hastily improvise some sort of *tenue* to cover their head or their legs either by their own means (scarf, head kerchief, sweater) or by those put at their disposal by the religious

authority (at Prislop Monastery).

In a documentary made by Trinitas Television of the Romanian Patriarchy entitled "Israel, land of Salvation", many frames show what I would call the *model-pilgrim in Jerusalem*: a woman between 55 and 65 years old. The body position while praying is a correct and decent one, which has been previously practiced. She is making the sign of cross with wide didactic gestures, with an emphasis on the three symbolically closed fingers. She is wearing a small backpack for practical reasons. Finally, she wears sober-colored clothes, with a compulsory long skirt hiding the ankle and on her head she is wearing a gauzy veil which she doesn't wear all the time, only when imposed by the proximity of a sacred site (Truşcă 2009).

Abidance by the dress codes and interdictions contributes to the sacral construction of the pilgrimage site. Starting from Victor Turner's statement that "the sacredness grows gradually while the pilgrim progresses on the path", Jill Dubisch

shows that in Orthodox pilgrimages in Greece dress codes are a mixture of official church directives and the pilgrims' self-imposed attitude (Dubisch 1995, 127). Regarding queues, I have noticed the pilgrims' *tenuë* becoming stricter and stricter as they approached the coffin in order to touch the relics which is the final purpose of the journey. A head cover pulled out at the last minute from the luggage or the pocket completes one's pious image.

The sacred space built (as well) through dress codes appears to be even more obvious for pilgrimages taking place inside a Monastery (as for instance Suceava or Prislop) and less for those where the queue is in an aggregation relationship with the road and the public city space (Iaşi, Bucharest) or impregnated by a long commercial and touristic tradition (Curtea de Argeş). The contact with the sacred is the pilgrim's main goal. Looking for it is what defines the pilgrim's behavior, often without external obvious constraints, but through self-imposition.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adumitroaie, Cătălin and Vicovan Ion, eds. 2011. *Cuvioasa Parascheva, Sfânta Populară a Ortodoxiei în Istoria și Evlavia Poporului Român*. Iaşi: Editura Doxologia.
- Albert, Jean-Pierre. 1997. *Le sang et le ciel. Les saintes mystiques dans le monde chrétien*. Paris: Aubier Editions.
- Bowie, Fiona, 2000. *The Anthropology of Religion: An Introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.
- Davidson, Linda Kay. 2002. *Pilgrimage: from the Ganges to Graceland. An encyclopedia*. Santa-Barbara, California: ABC-Clio.
- Delumeau, Jean. 1979. *La peur en Occident*. Paris: Fayard.
- Derks, Sanne. 2009. *Power and Pilgrimage. Dealing with Class, Gender and Ethnic Inequality at a Bolivian Marian Shrine*. Berlin: LIT Verlag.
- Dubisch, Jill. 1995. *In a Different Place: Pilgrimage, Gender, and Politics at a Greek Island Shrine*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Eliade, Mircea. 2011. "Maica Domnului." In *50 de conferințe radiofonice*. Bucharest: Humanitas.
- Evseev, Ivan. 2007. *Enciclopedia simbolurilor religioase și arhetipurilor culturale*. Timișoara: Editura Arhiepiscopiei Timișoarei.
- Fabre, Pierre-Antoine and Julia Dominique, eds. 2000. *Rendre ses vœux. Les identités pèlerines dans l'Europe moderne (xv<sup>e</sup>-xviii<sup>e</sup> siècle)*. Paris: EHESS Press.
- Fabre-Vassas, Claudine. 1995. "Paraschiva-Vendredi. La sainte des femmes, des travaux, des jours." *Terrain*, 25 (1): 57-74.
- Gothoni, René. 2010 *Pilgrims and travelers in search of the holy*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Grigore, Delia. 2001. *Curs de antropologie și folclor rrom*, Bucharest: Editura Credis.
- Hammoudi, Abdellah. 2005. *Une saison à la Mecque. Récit de Pèlerinage*. Paris: Seuil.
- Haşdeu, Bogdan-Petriceicu. 2003. *Folcloristica*. Bucharest: Editura Saeculum.
- Hawthorne, Sian. 2005. "Feminism, Gender Studies and Religion." In *Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Lindsay Jones, 3023-

3027. Macmillan Reference.

Jung, Carl Gustav. 1968. *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Kristeva, Julia. 1987. *Soleil Noir: Dépression et mélancolie*. Paris: Gallimard.

Labande, Edmond René. 2004. *Pauper et pèlerin: problèmes, comportements et mentalités du pèlerin chrétien*, Turnhout: Brepols.

Manolache, Anca. 1994. *Problematica feminină în Biserica lui Hristos*. Timișoara: Editura Mitropoliei Banatului.

Mesnil, Marianne and Popova Assia 1993. "Démon et chrétienne: Sainte Vendredi." *Revue des études slaves*, 65 (4): 743-763.

Miroiu, Mihaela 2002. *Convenio. Despre natură, femei și morală*. Iași: Polirom.

Morand, Paul, *București*, 2000. Cluj-Napoca: Editura Echi-nox.

Neagota, Bogdan, 2003. *Motive mitico-religioase mariane*. Cluj-Napoca: Editura Ecco.

Netedu, Adrian, 2008. "Pelerinajul religios. Aspecte sociologice." In *Actele Colocviului internațional de științe sociale ACUM 2008*, 172-179. Brașov: Editura Universității Transilvania.

Neumann, Erich. 1991. *The Great Mother. An Analysis of the Archetype*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Nivat, Georges. 2004. *La pas prin noua Rusie. Memorie, tranziție, renaștere*. București: Editura Compania.

Schmidt-Brabant, Manfred and Victoria Sease. 2011. *Feminul Arhetipal în curentul misterial al umanității*. București: Editura Univers Enciclopedic.

Seraidari, Katerina. 2005. *Le culte des Icônes en Grèce*. Toulouse: Presses Universitaires de Mirail.

Talbot, Alice-Mary, "Femeia." In *Omul Bizantin*, ed. Guglielmo Cavallo, 137-166. Iași: Polirom.

Trușcă, Alexandru. 2009. *Israel, Pământ al Mântuirii*. Documentary. Bucharest: Trinitas TV.

Wach, Joachim, 1958. *The comparative study of religions*. Columbia University Press.



# MARTOR



---

Title: "Son propre corps sur les mains des autres. La manipulation quotidienne du corps souffrant"

Author: Anca-Maria Pănoiu

How to cite this article: Pănoiu, Anca-Maria. 2015. "Son propre corps sur les mains des autres. La manipulation quotidienne du corps souffrant". *Martor* 20: 211-214.

Published by: *Editura MARTOR* (MARTOR Publishing House), *Muzeul Țăranului Român* (The Museum of the Romanian Peasant)

URL: <http://martor.muzeultaranuluiroman.ro/archive/768-2/>

---

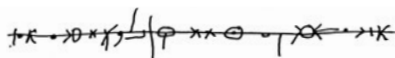
*Martor* (The Museum of the Romanian Peasant Anthropology Review) is a peer-reviewed academic journal established in 1996, with a focus on cultural and visual anthropology, ethnology, museum studies and the dialogue among these disciplines. *Martor* review is published by the Museum of the Romanian Peasant. Its aim is to provide, as widely as possible, a rich content at the highest academic and editorial standards for scientific, educational and (in)formational goals. Any use aside from these purposes and without mentioning the source of the article(s) is prohibited and will be considered an infringement of copyright.

*Martor* (Revue d'Anthropologie du Musée du Paysan Roumain) est un journal académique en système *peer-review* fondé en 1996, qui se concentre sur l'anthropologie visuelle et culturelle, l'ethnologie, la muséologie et sur le dialogue entre ces disciplines. La revue *Martor* est publiée par le Musée du Paysan Roumain. Son aspiration est de généraliser l'accès vers un riche contenu au plus haut niveau du point de vue académique et éditorial pour des objectifs scientifiques, éducatifs et informationnels. Toute utilisation au-delà de ces buts et sans mentionner la source des articles est interdite et sera considérée une violation des droits de l'auteur.

*Martor* is indexed by EBSCO and CEEOL.



## Son propre corps sur les mains des autres. La manipulation quotidienne du corps souffrant



**Anca-Maria Pănoiu**

MA student at the Center of Excellence in Image Study (CESI), University of Bucharest

”Le patient est un matériel humain soumis à une « activité sur l’homme », expression qui témoigne la réification de l’individu.

- Detrez 2002:50

Les prescriptions contemporaines qui dictent que le corps s’estompe d’une manière ritualisée pendant les interactions quotidiennes (Le Breton 2009:232-242) transforment celui-ci en une barrière infranchissable pour autrui. Par conséquent le toucher – soit volontairement, soit accidentellement – devient le plus souvent une sorte de violation des limites, une chose inhabituelle et même inconfortable. Néanmoins, le corps handicapé<sup>1</sup>, le corps souffrant, accidenté, marqué par l’impuissance, est un corps auquel il arrive très souvent d’être manipulé par les autres, faisant ainsi l’expérience d’une altérité souvent envahissante, sans qu’il puisse s’y opposer. Le fait peut être supporté plus ou moins difficilement, selon l’individu, mais il touche, sans exception, l’intégrité de la personne. L’accès des autres à son propre corps peut provoquer des sensations allant du malaise jusqu’à la douleur, il peut être perçu comme une routine nécessaire ou comme une corvée, il peut éveiller des sentiments de gêne, de honte, de répulsion, il peut provoquer la

révolte stérile, en étant perçu comme un envahissement de l’intimité.

Les situations dans lesquelles le corps handicapé est saisi afin d’être traité ou soigné peuvent se circonscrire à deux cadres majeurs de référence. Le premier d’eux tient de la routine quotidienne. Ayant un ou plusieurs membres impuissants, parfois même inertes, la personne éprouvant un handicap perd souvent – en dépit des stratégies personnelles d’auto-maîtrise – certaines capacités nécessaires au bon déroulement des quelques gestes quotidiens très habituels: se nourrir, s’habiller, se laver, aller à la toilette, sortir de chez soi, peuvent devenir, dans certaines situations, de vrais problèmes dont la résolution exige l’aide des autres. Le plus souvent, la personne chargée des soins du corps handicapé est quelqu’un du proche, qui arrive progressivement à éprouver une connaissance très fine des disponibilités et des particularités du patient, en apprenant ainsi le handicap à son côté et en s’efforçant que la manipulation de son corps soit la moins envahissante possible – sinon même délicate et fluide.

Mais, quand il y a des événements graves et imprévisibles qui interviennent – comme les traumatismes –, qui alors exigent des soins spéciaux, le corps impuissant, marqué profondément par la douleur, est pris en main, sans préparations préliminaires, par le personnel médical, le plus souvent étranger et qui ne connaît pas ni ses dispositions, ni

1) Par « corps handicapé », je me réfère à l’équivalent français du ‘disabled body’ ou ‘body with an impairment’ de la littérature anglaise, il ne s’agit donc d’aucun étiquetage discriminatoire, par rapport aux discussions soulevées par l’utilisation du mot « handicapé » dans certains milieux.

ses seuils de tolérance ou ses caprices. Pour la personne accidentée ou arrivée dans un état critique à la suite de son affection, la prise en charge par le personnel médical – même si assez fréquente – constitue, néanmoins, un événement. De l'autre côté, pour le personnel médical – des ambulanciers paramédicaux et des brancardiers jusqu'aux infirmières, assistants, anesthésistes et chirurgiens, s'occuper d'un corps malade, d'un corps accidenté constitue un fait habituel, se répétant plusieurs fois par jour (Penneff 1992). Qu'est-ce que se passe, par conséquent, lorsque l'urgence des uns devient la routine des autres?

Les fragments d'entretien dans la suite de cette note de terrain sont extraits d'une recherche que j'ai menée en février-mai 2015 autour des manières d'incorporer et de gérer la différence représentée par l'handicap dans les cas des personnes éprouvant l'expérience profonde et prolongée de la douleur et du handicap orthopédique.

- Andreea P., 27 ans, diagnostiquée dès son enfance avec la Maladie *Lobstein* – “la maladie des os de verre”. Tout au long de sa vie, elle a souffert plus de quarante fractures des jambes. Elle se déplace uniquement à l'aide des béquilles:

“Et... j'étais déjà habituée aux douleurs et je les connaissais, je savais déjà ce qui allait se passer, je savais (*un ton mécanique, répétitif*) que l'Ambulance allait arriver, qu'il faudrait qu'ils me prennent de l'endroit où j'étais, qu'ils allaient me bouger, évidemment, et que cela allait me heurter très durement, qu'ils allaient me prendre pour me mettre dans l'Ambulance, que celle-ci allait prendre tous les trous de la chaussée et que cela allait me secouer et me provoquerait des douleurs – chaque mouvement, quand on a un os cassé, chaque mouvement est douloureux, si petit soit-il! – oui... ensuite il y avait la sortie de l'Ambulance, la mise sur le brancard, la visite au médecin, pour l'examen, le médecin mettait encore sa main et demandait: *Ici? Ici?* Et on

répondait *Ouuuuu!* Ensuite on était mis sur un autre brancard, pour être emporté à la radiologie (*prolongement ironique des voyelles*), puis on était mis sur un autre brancard et emporté de nouveau dans la salle d'attente, pour attendre les résultats... Sur ce brancard on était amené à la salle de gypse et toute cette agitation d'un endroit à l'autre, tout ce passage d'un main à l'autre, tout ce mouvement était... il me provoquait des douleurs. [...] Je me sentais comme... un objet, pas comme une personne, ça c'est clair! Pour eux, c'était la routine... tout se passait comme si l'on apportait un paquet, comme si l'on transportait un sac par ici et par là. Et pas du tout... très rarement il m'est arrivé que... Très rarement il m'est arrivé qu'un cadre médical soit attentif à ma douleur. Personne ne me prenait en compte. Et non seulement personne n'était attentif à ma douleur – on ne considère pas l'idée de vraiment *compter (elle accentue)* pour eux, cela était exclus dès le début! Mais au moins prendre un peu de soin, car... il y avait des situations où la douleur pouvait être diminuée: on pouvait manipuler le patient plus doucement, ... il y a des modalités pour le prendre sans l'élever. Ils me prenaient, ils me brandissaient, ils me mettaient sur toutes les surfaces, ils me déshabillaient et là encore... ma pudeur ne les intéressait guère... non, ces choses ne comptaient pas du tout.”

\*\*\*

“Je me souviens un matin où le médecin est venu pour la visite accompagné par cinq jeunes hommes, étudiants ou... stagiaires en fait, tous beaux (*elle rit*) et le médecin m'enlève la couverture, je ne portais que ma lingerie intime et évidemment j'en avais trop honte et je me souviens que le médecin commence à parler: *C'est quoi cette maladie, qu'est-ce que vous en pensez?* Et les étudiants s'étaient mis là, tout simplement en me regardant: *Bah... ça et ça...* Ils se prononçaient: c'est celle-ci, c'est celle-là – donc c'était un cours ouvert! Donc j'étais devenue... un matériel ouvert, un matériel

d'étude. Mais en même temps j'étais en dixième, quelques garçons me regardaient – et je ne crois pas qu'ils avaient plus que 23-24 ans d'âge, donc la différence entre nous n'était pas trop grande..."

- Dana A., 29 ans, diagnostiquée dès son enfance avec la Maladie *Lobstein*. Tout au long de sa vie, elle a souffert plus de vingt fractures des jambes. Elle se déplace à l'aide d'un deambulateur ou d'un fauteuil roulant:

"Je lui ai dit [au chirurgien]: *Que jamais, jamais vous ne me raccourcirez la jambe droite!* Et, évidemment, ils me l'ont raccourcie sans me le dire. Et au moment où je me suis réveillée de l'opération... J'avais posé quelques questions en avance: sur la tringle, sur la plaque... Il m'avait expliqué en général, mais après l'opération je me suis rendu compte qu'il ne m'avait tout dit. Il n'avait pas mentionné ces six centimètres-là. Quand je me suis réveillée de l'opération, en réanimation, et que j'ai levé tête, pour la voir – parce que je sentais une douleur très aiguë – pour voir la jambe, comment allait-elle, je voulais toujours la voir...! J'avais la sensation qu'en la voyant, je pouvais mieux contrôler la douleur. Et je l'ai vue, j'ai vu un truc très grand, des bandages et... une éclisse, comme ça, et j'ai observé qu'elle était plus courte. (*Elle rit.*) Je ne sais pas comment. Mais j'ai vu qu'elle était plus courte. Et justement à ce moment-là le professeur entrait dans la salle, l'anesthésiste à sa côté, dans cette salle-là où nous étions plusieurs... Et alors j'ai commencé à pleurer. J'ai lui dit: *Monsieur le professeur, vous m'avez raccourci la jambe?* Et il m'a répondu: *Alors, qu'est-ce qui t'intéresse à toi, hein? Marcher ou l'esthétique?* Et alors l'anesthésiste a dit: *Aaah, monsieur le professeur, vous ne savez pas les filles! Laisse-la, tout va bien se passer, ça importe peu!* Puis il est parti. Et j'ai commencé à rouspéter, et j'ai rouspété, et j'ai rouspété... jusqu'au moment où je me suis calmée. (*Elle rit.*)"

\*\*\*

"Ils n'y pensent guère, pour eux ce concept de protéger le patient, de le préparer... ça n'existe pas. J'ai même écrit à un certain moment sur internet: moi, à l'hôpital, je ne me sens pas un être humain – je me sens un cas! A la fin, c'est ça que nous sommes! Ouuuui, j'étais *le Lobstein* plusieurs fois! *Comment va-t-il, le Lobstein? Nous venons de recevoir un autre Lobstein, viens pour qu'on te fasse faire connaissance!* Bon... maintenant cela ne me dérange plus, tu sais... même si je ne le trouve pas très normal non plus... Pour eux c'est normal, mais il faudrait que nous ne les entendions pas!"

- Mihaela C., 31 ans, diagnostiquée dès sa naissance avec la Maladie *Lobstein*. Elle ne se souvient plus le nombre de fractures qu'elle a subies. A la suite de sa maladie, sa croissance s'est arrêtée très tôt, ainsi qu'elle n'a que 95 centimètres d'hauteur. Elle se déplace à l'aide de béquilles. Après les innombrables interventions chirurgicales qu'elle a subies, un de ses genoux est resté raide:

"Je ne sais pas pourquoi, mais cela est ma plus grande déception. [...] Et crois-moi, ça m'empêche plein de choses! Surtout en étant si petite, j'ai besoin que mes genoux soient flexibles afin que je puisse monter dans mon lit. Ou sur une chaise. Néanmoins, monsieur le professeur a l'habitude de me dire: *Laisse-le, tu peux marcher comme ça aussi!* Mais qu'il se mette dans ma situation, ayant un mètre d'hauteur, qu'il monte sur une chaise! Voyons, comment pourrait-il le faire? Mais personne ne pense à ces choses-là... Ils ne voient la situation que de leur perspective..."

\*\*\*

"Mais le pire était, je viens de te le dire, quand les fémurs se cassaient, parce qu'on était mis sur un truc, comme ça, je ne sais pas comment l'expliquer... assis, les jambes pendues. Et on était tenu comme ça, afin

d'être bandé, tu comprends? On était pendu, exactement! Et ce vide-là, où la jambe était cassée, était en l'air. C'était affreux! Donc... on pleurait jusque... on restait sans larmes jusqu'au retour chez soi."

• Cătălin F., 24 ans, il y a trois ans il a souffert un traumatisme de la moelle épinière, ce qui l'a rendu paralysé des épaules vers le bas. Il se déplace à l'aide d'un fauteuil roulant électrique. Il n'a pas interrompu sa vie sociale d'avant et actuellement il continue ses études en médecine:

"Mais, je ne sais pas... je suis arrivé à un moment où j'ai acquis mes propres mouvements, mes endroits, mes propres manières d'être assis, de bouger et c'est seulement ma mère qui les connaît entièrement. [...] Et nous nous entendons, d'un mot seulement, elle sait très bien quoi me faire! A quelqu'un d'autre il faut que je dise cent mots! Si je vois un nouveau truc

qui m'aide, si cela se répète une fois, deux fois, trois fois... la quatrième fois je veux qu'elle le sache. Seulement la quatrième fois elle le fait d'une manière différente, donc il faut que je le répète dix fois et ça m'énerve! A long terme, ça devient une routine... mais le truc entre dans ma routine plus vite qu'il entre dans sa routine! [...] Et tu sais... La chose très amusante c'est qu'on a des querelles tout le temps!"

\*\*\*

"J'ai été à un concert il y a deux semaines et les gars m'ont assis parfaitement, sauf qu'il a fallu que je leur explique en avance pendant cinq minutes ce que je voulais qu'on me fit. A un certain moment je leur expliquais, car c'était pas bien et pendant ce temps, ils me tenaient en l'air, j'avais commencé à leur expliquer et d'un coup j'ai dit: *Heureusement que tu gardes ta main sur moi et que tu ne l'utilises pas pour te gratter la tête, afin de mieux comprendre!*"

## BIBLIOGRAPHIE

Detrez, Christine. 2002. *La construction sociale du corps*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil.

Le Breton, David. 2009. *Antropologia corpului și modernitatea* (trad. Liliana Rusu). Chișinău: Cartier.

Penneff, Jean. 1992. *L'Hôpital en urgence*. Paris: Éditions Métailié.

\*L'auteur souhaite de formuler ses remerciements à Annick Caritan, professeur d'histoire de Bordeaux, pour avoir lu ce travail en nuancant délicatement la version française du texte.



# MARTOR



---

Title: *“Latin Eugenics in Comparative Perspective, by Marius Turda and Aaron Gillette. London&New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014”*

Author: Călin Cotoi

How to cite this article: Cotoi, Călin. 2015. *“Latin Eugenics in Comparative Perspective, by Marius Turda and Aaron Gillette. London&New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014”*. *Martor* 20: 217-219.

Published by: *Editura MARTOR* (MARTOR Publishing House), *Muzeul Țăranului Român* (The Museum of the Romanian Peasant)

URL: <http://martor.muzeultaranuluiroman.ro/archive/768-2/>

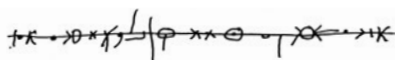
---

*Martor* (The Museum of the Romanian Peasant Anthropology Review) is a peer-reviewed academic journal established in 1996, with a focus on cultural and visual anthropology, ethnology, museum studies and the dialogue among these disciplines. *Martor* review is published by the Museum of the Romanian Peasant. Its aim is to provide, as widely as possible, a rich content at the highest academic and editorial standards for scientific, educational and (in)formational goals. Any use aside from these purposes and without mentioning the source of the article(s) is prohibited and will be considered an infringement of copyright.

*Martor* (Revue d'Anthropologie du Musée du Paysan Roumain) est un journal académique en système *peer-review* fondé en 1996, qui se concentre sur l'anthropologie visuelle et culturelle, l'ethnologie, la muséologie et sur le dialogue entre ces disciplines. La revue *Martor* est publiée par le Musée du Paysan Roumain. Son aspiration est de généraliser l'accès vers un riche contenu au plus haut niveau du point de vue académique et éditorial pour des objectifs scientifiques, éducatifs et informationnels. Toute utilisation au-delà de ces buts et sans mentionner la source des articles est interdite et sera considérée une violation des droits de l'auteur.

*Martor* is indexed by EBSCO and CEEOL.

**Marius Turda and Aaron Gillette, *Latin Eugenics in Comparative Perspective*, Bloomsbury Academic, London & New York, 2014, 306 p.**



**Reviewed by Călin Cotoi**

*Călin Cotoi is a lecturer at the Faculty of Sociology, University of Bucharest*

The scholarly interest in the social and historical aspects of the biosciences has been increasing constantly during the last years. Various strands of thematic and theoretical visions are coming together in what seems to be an ever-expanding domain.

From neo- or post-Foucauldian interpretations of the politics of life – in the vein of Nikolas Rose, Paul Rabinow, Thomas Osborne or Ian Hacking – to the history of eugenics, demography or racism, a loosely connected field has captured the imagination of scholars and publishing houses worldwide.

Marius Turda and Aaron Gillette are no newcomers to this scholarly area. Both of them have published extensively on eugenics, race, biology, nationalism and the historiography of social sciences and biosciences. This book is part of a large comparative historical endeavor that brings together competences honed during historical research in various parts of the world, and proposes a new theoretical and geographical perspective on eugenics.

Usually, the lay, but also scholarly, understanding of eugenics has a strong bias in favor of German and Anglo-Saxon (British and U.S.) variants. The focus on “Latin eugenics” attempts to break this hegemony and tells a fascinating story of science, politics, degeneration, modernity and frantic attempts at national regeneration and purification. The idea of an international Latin cultural community, which gained strong support during the late nineteenth century and the first half

of the twentieth century, was articulated with eugenics as political, scientific and cultural elites tried to carve a secure place in a rapidly changing world. The benefits of modern medicine, science and technology were becoming central in the projects of individual and collective improvement espoused by the “Latin” countries.

Latin eugenics, which had a strong French and Italian scientific, cultural and political core, was a mixture of projects aimed at improving the biological and social quality of the human population, but, usually, it shied away from radical measures of “negative” eugenics. The importance of the Catholic and Orthodox Churches, the demographic crisis and the existence of a rather large rural population modulated the eugenic ideal of a powerful state, guided by scientific expertise, intent on controlling family reproductive patterns. Across the world, public hygienists, physicians, biologists, anthropologists, demographers and social scientists from the self-alleged Latin countries created variously shaped alliances, during and after WWI, with political, religious and military elites often attracted to this radical project.

France, Italy, Spain, Belgium, Romance-speaking Switzerland, Portugal, Romania, Argentina, Mexico, Cuba, Brazil, Paraguay, Peru, Venezuela and Chile were all part of a heterogeneous, but still unitary Latin eugenicist community that defined itself more and more against the German and Anglo-Saxon racial hygiene and negative birth-control variants. Latin eugenics sought the biological betterment of the



individual and the community by means of preventive medicine, social hygiene, demographic studies, and public health, rather than genetic engineering, racial selection, and compulsory sterilization (p. 237). Nevertheless, during the interwar and WWII, especially the German eugenics, strongly supported by the state and political elites, became very influential inside the Latin countries.

Neo-Lamarckism was a synthesis of Darwinism and Lamarckism that focused on the inheritance of acquired characteristics and the progressive adaptation of individuals. It had a particularly long life, despite the challenges posed by scientific studies of inheritance and genetic heredity, especially in French medicine. Neo-Lamarckism allowed for a rather optimistic view on the effects of state intervention on population and permitted some kind of accommodation with the views of the Catholic and Orthodox Churches on family life. The eugenicists that embraced Neo-Lamarckism believed that society would become healthier and more productive “if a number of prescriptions were followed, including the improvement of living conditions in urban areas, nationwide programs of vaccination, the criminalization of prostitution and pornography, and so on” (p. 30).

A steep demographic decline in *fin-de-siècle* France triggered a renewed interest in puericulture in the context of pro-natalist policies. Adolphe Pinard, professor of Clinical Obstetrics at the Paris Medical School, promoted a distinct eugenics program “based not on the elimination of the ‘unfit’, but on the promotion of sanitary and public health measures destined to improve the health of the population” (p. 35), centered on pre- and post-natal care and the protection of mothers and infants. In Italy, Corrado Gini and Nicola Pende cautioned against a hasty implementation of eugenics among the population and proposed a self-assumed holistic theory built on the existence of human biotypes that combined

models from the old constitutional medicine, but also from pathology and endocrinology. Each individual has, says Pende, its own biological constitution:

“The constitution is the morphological, physiological and psychological resultant (variable in each individual) of the properties of all cellular and humoral elements of the body and of the combination of these in a special cellular state having a balance and functional output of its own, a given capacity for adaptation and a mode of reaction to its environmental stimuli” (N. Pende, *Constitutional Inadequacies: An Introduction to the Study of Abnormal Constitutions*, Philadelphia, PA: Lea & Febiger, 1928, p. 25 *apud* Turda & Gillette 2014: 92).

Influenced by French puericulture and Italian bio-typology, American eugenicists from Cuba, Eusebio Hernandez and Domingo Ramos, championed a specific theory of eugenic improvement called “homiculture” that combined family protection, child health, public hygiene with a strong belief in the superiority of the European race and culture, and concerns about immigration (p. 150).

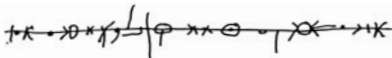
By the mid-1930s, Latin eugenics was constituted around a general model of human improvement that was based on Neo-Lamarckism, puericulture, bio-typology, homiculture, Catholicism, and the opposition to interventionist reproductive practices such as sterilization. Its success as a scientific template for modernization projects sponsored by the state was inconclusive until WWII. By then, “the relationship between the future of the nation and the health of the population was already an established eugenic trope, but the war transformed it into a national obsession” (p. 239). The successful articulation of Latin eugenics with state policies during WWII opened it to influences from the dominant German coercive racial hygiene and foreshadowed its gradual disappearance in the 1950s.

The authors summon eugenicists

from many national and (post)imperial geographies, in a comprehensive comparative picture that carefully takes apart, re-contextualizes, and brings to light conceptual similarities and discrepancies between biological theories, state policies, and modernist theories of national

degeneracy and regeneration. For a moment, all these were brought together, under the banner of an international Latin cultural community, in a collaborative effort to overcome marginality and to energetically modernize the states and populations of a series of European and American countries.

## **Constantin Bărbulescu, *România medicilor. Medici, țărani și igienă rurală în România de la 1860 la 1910*, București, Humanitas, 2015, 356 p.**



**Reviewed by Lidia Trăușan-Matu**

*Lidia Trăușan-Matu is an associated lecturer at the Faculty of History, University of Bucharest*

Constantin Bărbulescu's volume, *Physicians' Romania. Doctors, Peasants and Rural Hygiene in Romania from 1860 until 1910*, (Humanitas, 2015), is built around the idea of the "degeneration of the Romanian race". This idea appears in the Romanian public space – largely because of the inefficiency of the medical system – in the second half of the nineteenth century and, slowly, until the end of the century, amplifies and acquires sharp contours. Using this theme, along with an enviable critical lucidity and sources lesser-known or lesser-used by researchers, Constantin Bărbulescu analyzes individually the most haunting topics, concerns and fears of the medical elite in Romania regarding the peasant and the rural world, in a time of accelerated modernization, under the reign of King Carol I.

Some of the themes (for example, "The Power of Medical Culture: New Laws for

Old People") are – as stated in the introduction to Bărbulescu's book – previous, older "independent studies". Rewritten as a whole or partially adapted, they complement the new texts, and by their renewed theme, they are written specifically for this book. Together, they breathe life into a complex picture drawn by the medical elite, between 1860 and 1910, in whose forefront shines the rural world and its lifestyle rules. Moreover, the transition of the peasant from the background to the foreground points to the historian's subtle concern for the deconstruction of some stereotypes and deeply-rooted prejudices in Romanian historiography. Finally, the construction, shown as a whole, is new in the literature of Romanian space.

The book opens with a broad and necessary discussion on the sources underlying the research (pp. 27-74). These are regular doctors' reports, be they of the county, regiment or employees in rural

# MARTOR



---

Title: "România medicilor. Medici, țărani și igienă rurală în România de la 1860 la 1910, by Constantin Bărbulescu. București: Humanitas, 2015"

Author: Lidia Trăușan-Matu

How to cite this article: Trăușan-Matu, Lidia. 2015. "România medicilor. Medici, țărani și igienă rurală în România de la 1860 la 1910, by Constantin Bărbulescu. București: Humanitas, 2015". *Martor* 20: 219-222.

Published by: Editura MARTOR (MARTOR Publishing House), Muzeul Țăranului Român (The Museum of the Romanian Peasant)

URL: <http://martor.muzeultaranuluiroman.ro/archive/768-2/>

---

*Martor* (The Museum of the Romanian Peasant Anthropology Review) is a peer-reviewed academic journal established in 1996, with a focus on cultural and visual anthropology, ethnology, museum studies and the dialogue among these disciplines. *Martor* review is published by the Museum of the Romanian Peasant. Its aim is to provide, as widely as possible, a rich content at the highest academic and editorial standards for scientific, educational and (in)formational goals. Any use aside from these purposes and without mentioning the source of the article(s) is prohibited and will be considered an infringement of copyright.

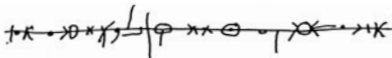
*Martor* (Revue d'Anthropologie du Musée du Paysan Roumain) est un journal académique en système *peer-review* fondé en 1996, qui se concentre sur l'anthropologie visuelle et culturelle, l'ethnologie, la muséologie et sur le dialogue entre ces disciplines. La revue *Martor* est publiée par le Musée du Paysan Roumain. Son aspiration est de généraliser l'accès vers un riche contenu au plus haut niveau du point de vue académique et éditorial pour des objectifs scientifiques, éducatifs et informationnels. Toute utilisation au-delà de ces buts et sans mentionner la source des articles est interdite et sera considérée une violation des droits de l'auteur.

*Martor* is indexed by EBSCO and CEEOL.

from many national and (post)imperial geographies, in a comprehensive comparative picture that carefully takes apart, re-contextualizes, and brings to light conceptual similarities and discrepancies between biological theories, state policies, and modernist theories of national

degeneracy and regeneration. For a moment, all these were brought together, under the banner of an international Latin cultural community, in a collaborative effort to overcome marginality and to energetically modernize the states and populations of a series of European and American countries.

## **Constantin Bărbulescu, *România medicilor. Medici, țărani și igienă rurală în România de la 1860 la 1910*, București, Humanitas, 2015, 356 p.**



**Reviewed by Lidia Trăușan-Matu**

*Lidia Trăușan-Matu is an associated lecturer at the Faculty of History, University of Bucharest*

Constantin Bărbulescu's volume, *Physicians' Romania. Doctors, Peasants and Rural Hygiene in Romania from 1860 until 1910*, (Humanitas, 2015), is built around the idea of the "degeneration of the Romanian race". This idea appears in the Romanian public space – largely because of the inefficiency of the medical system – in the second half of the nineteenth century and, slowly, until the end of the century, amplifies and acquires sharp contours. Using this theme, along with an enviable critical lucidity and sources lesser-known or lesser-used by researchers, Constantin Bărbulescu analyzes individually the most haunting topics, concerns and fears of the medical elite in Romania regarding the peasant and the rural world, in a time of accelerated modernization, under the reign of King Carol I.

Some of the themes (for example, "The Power of Medical Culture: New Laws for

Old People") are – as stated in the introduction to Bărbulescu's book – previous, older "independent studies". Rewritten as a whole or partially adapted, they complement the new texts, and by their renewed theme, they are written specifically for this book. Together, they breathe life into a complex picture drawn by the medical elite, between 1860 and 1910, in whose forefront shines the rural world and its lifestyle rules. Moreover, the transition of the peasant from the background to the foreground points to the historian's subtle concern for the deconstruction of some stereotypes and deeply-rooted prejudices in Romanian historiography. Finally, the construction, shown as a whole, is new in the literature of Romanian space.

The book opens with a broad and necessary discussion on the sources underlying the research (pp. 27-74). These are regular doctors' reports, be they of the county, regiment or employees in rural

hospitals, reports of the Superior Health Council, of the capital's Health Service or of the sanitary inspections, the memoirs of physicians and health legislation. The author draws attention to the real danger of using these sources: the distortion of truth by suspending one's critical thinking. And rightly so; in the absence of critical thinking, any source, regardless of type, style and importance, tends to mortify. In the case of medical reports which claim themselves to be, in principle, "scientific and objective", the result would be a blunt investigation reflecting the views (although profoundly ideological) of the person who registers the information and writes about it (medical elite).

The second part of the book is dedicated entirely to the medical discourse "on peasant and the rural world". Thematic subchapters are devoted to different aspects of hygiene: body and clothing ("*Dirt lies thick on their skin* or on personal and clothing hygiene"), food ("*The peasant's food is only polenta* or on food hygiene"), house and household ("*Most live in worse conditions than the Zulus* or on house and household hygiene"). Constantin Bărbulescu, investigating articles and school textbooks of the time, has noted that the discourse on peasant hygiene (body, clothing, dwelling place) is entirely negative. For example, physicians from the time write that most peasants "never" fully wash their bodies, few "wash at major holidays" and, finally, even fewer "wash once a week" (p. 82). Moreover, farmers don't use soap, don't comb daily, don't "freshen their clothes", and don't "take care of the home and household". In other words, nineteenth-century peasants are, from the doctors' perspective, dirty and smelly; they live in unsanitary conditions and are, thus, "prone to disease". This would be the image that sources provide at a first reading. However, historian Bărbulescu states that things are much more nuanced, raising the ideological dimension of these sources. As C. Bărbulescu notes, reports are part of a "descriptive discourse in

which doctors claim to describe an actual situation" and which overlaps another discourse (of a regulatory nature), "giving us the hygienic standards of the time, a hard-to-reach ideal for the Romanian peasant" (p. 82). In other words, black strokes and tough positions reflect a way to civilize and impose medical and hygienic modernity. On the other hand, doctors (urban people) come into contact and are faced with a totally different kind of man than the one from the world they live in, a man with whom they do not have any sort of familiarity, communication or understanding. It is hard enough for them to perceive that some elements of the Romanian peasant's food, clothing and housing do not only relate to the social group's material possibilities, education and the primitive state, but also to a certain cultural identity. Polenta, "opinca" (peasant's sandals) and "chirpicul" (clay and straws) are both products within the peasants' reach, but also symbols of a traditional lifestyle.

A special chapter, entitled "*Are Romanians alcoholics?* or on the hygiene of alcoholic beverages", is dedicated to a vice frequently invoked at the time: the "drunkenness" of the Romanian peasant (p. 160). The theme is an older concern of the medical elite in Moldavia and Wallachia. A good example is Dr. Ludovic Steege (not mentioned in Bărbulescu's book), who published a study entitled "On the Use of Spirits in Diseases and the Dangers Caused by the Abuse of these Drinks" (in the "Scientific and Literary Paper" from Iași, 1844). Like the writings of doctors from the second half of the nineteenth century, this study reflects the concern of the Moldavian doctor about the "reckless alcohol consumption" in villages and tries to convince the reader, citing a series of medical, physiological and economic reasons that this life style accelerates "the ruin of the body and health of the addict", which tends to become a real social problem. Constantin Bărbulescu identifies new aspects in medical writings after 1860, such as the shift in emphasis

from the insights and concerns to apparent certainties: alcoholism is a “social problem”, it is “intimately connected as a social problem to the Jewish problem” (p. 164), or alcohol is a sure cause of the “immense morbidity and mortality in modern Romania” and an enhancer of “race degeneration” (p. 179). The way the situation is described causes the author to conclude that, through their writings, physicians promoted an apocalyptic idea: “Alcohol – the universal evil – causes poverty, disease and decay” (p. 176). That is why the state, via its means of power and authority, attempts – especially after 1894 – sometimes radical measures (e.g. the removal of unrefined alcohol from trade or the encouragement of abstinence) to combat alcoholism “as a social scourge”. We are not just stating that the authorities simply prohibited alcohol. They couldn’t. In essence, it was an attempt to control the quality of alcohol in conjunction with the call to moderation. Moreover, we know that, at the time, doctors credited alcohol (especially wine) with major therapeutic virtues. Wine was considered a “medicine” for a wide range of diseases and distilled alcohol was used as the basis for the preparation of syrups and medicines. In addition, the peasant was drinking wine mixed with water, the latter in greater quantity. The reason is only one: at the time, it was quite difficult to find a reliable source of potable water and the use of wine for the “correction” of water served as an “antiseptic”.

The following text naturally completes the previous study: “*Pellagra, the Scourge of our Peasant* or on the birth of a disease”. Before addressing the heart of the matter, Constantin Bărbulescu sets the time, place and especially the causes that led to the outbreak and spread of pellagra, but also its manifestations and its tragic *denouement* (death). Studying doctors’ writings, especially doctoral theses, the author notes that in the 1860s “bits of information on a strange disease almost entirely particular to peasants appear in the

medical discourse, and, through it, in the public arena” (p. 186). Its name: pellagra. Incidentally, the disease was first reported in western Spain, around 1730, from where it spread to France and northern Italy. In its initial stages, the disease manifests itself as a “simple rash” and then, gradually, the body is infested with devastating purulent wounds followed by physical and mental decay and, ultimately, death. Furthermore, the historian notes that the debate became complicated as “in the absence of certainty regarding the etiology of the disease”, controversies on the account of prescribing medication appeared (p. 210). It all stemmed from “polenta”, the food presumed to have caused the disease. Two sides with different arguments and viewpoints were formed. One group pointed to damaged corn and flour as the leading cause of the disease and, therefore, blamed the patients (peasants) for eating food worth throwing away. The other side brought into discussion the plain, monotonous diet or nutrition, referring to the state of chronic and excessive misery of the peasantry. The conviction of the latter was that the situation could be fixed with a small amount of meat and fresh vegetables to be included in the peasants’ daily diet. This menu would ensure the daily requirement of niacin, a vitamin essential to the human body. Medical findings from the first decades of the twentieth century confirmed the latter hypothesis. In the years that followed, regardless of their belief, doctors did not close the subject; on the contrary, they turned it into a serious social problem, with catastrophic consequences, such as “race degeneration”.

The idea of “race degeneration” and its consequence, “the death of the nation”, are not just a chapter in the work of Constantin Bărbulescu, but rather its leitmotif. Being well-acquainted with the medical discourse, the author reviews the constituting elements of the degeneration theme. Step by step, we find a lot of causes that threatened the good path Romania was on: from diseases to morbid and moral heredity, from anti-



Semitism to hygiene and infant mortality. All these causes boil down to the same point: “population stagnation or decline”. The grim picture gave rise to fears, fantasies and prejudices. The whole process is highlighted by careful monitoring of medical reports and population censuses.

The book closes with a discussion on “Medical Culture versus Peasant Culture” in which Constantin Bărbulescu raises the issue of the process of medicalization in Romanian society. A variety of aspects such as the emergence and implementation of sanitary legislation, the functioning of the health service, the doctor-patient relationship, the rivalry between doctors and traditional healers etc. are widely portrayed. Relevant is also the conclusion reached by the author after having analyzed the process

of medicalization in the mid-nineteenth century: “it is only the beginning: really just the medical elite... is the one medicalized” (p. 328). We fully agree. Furthermore, we would like to point out that the reformatory process triggered in the Romanian principalities between 1830 and 1869 was indeed important, but limited. It should be perceived as an action which will trigger change and not one that enshrines a change that has already happened. In fact, even to this day the upgrade process of the medical system is still an unfinished project.

At the end of such considerations, given the rigor of documentation and the conclusions, one must admit that it is hard to imagine a future history of the Romanian peasant’s life without the book of historian Constantin Bărbulescu.

