POLICIES OF CULTURAL ASSIMILATION IN TRANSYLVANIA:

MAGYARIZATION AND ROMANIANIZATION

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"There is no such thing as a good influence, Mr. Gray. All influence is immoral – immoral from the scientific point of view."

Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray.*
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This paper examines the issue of cultural assimilation in terms of Romanianization and Magyarization from the angle of a historical ethnography conducted in the Transylvanian village of Ghimeș-Făget, Bacău. These two concepts are readings of social change based on the assumption that the deep social transformations that Transylvania experienced during the changes of rule in the region between Hungary and Romania were parallel to the implementation of deliberate strategies of assimilation. More than simple reforms, these social changes are considered to have created shifts in the population's language, religion, sense of historical heritage and national identity. According to this perspective, Transylvania thus became Magyarized during Hungarian rule, and Romanianized after 1920. Focusing on the evolution of the educational system as a key factor in the execution of these policies, this paper attempts to demonstrate how these two processes can be related to each other and become, in a sense, complementary; it also develops an interpretation of the phenomenon of re-assimilation through the concept of “national therapy.”
CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION: TRANSYLVANIA'S MULTICULTURALISM

“How many books about Transylvania have been written up to the present day? How many stories, poems and hymns, how many volumes and anthologies have dealt with this inexhaustible subject? If we placed them all together into an Alexandrian library, the result would be a fabulous literary utopia, of the kind that Borges imagined: an immense Leviathan of paper that would captivate its readers into insatiable nets”

Sorin Mitu, Transilvania mea: Istorii, mentaliăți, identități [My Transylvania: Histories, Mentalities, Identities].

Transylvania is traditionally seen in Eastern Europe as a cross-road between different cultures and ethnicities, a composite array of cultural heritages inside Romania, itself a borderland, an “island of Latinity”\(^1\). In Transylvania, the Romanian ethnic majority coexists with Hungarian, Saxon, Bulgarian, Armenian and Roma populations, among which the Hungarian ethnic group(s) – Székely and Csangos included –, is the most numerous one. The idea that this region has always been a multi-lingual and cosmopolitan territory contrasts with the general belief that migration and assimilation policies, during communism and other pages of the region’s history, resulted in the creation of a uniform and standardized society.

The fall of communism in Eastern Europe was often accompanied by the establishment of other nationalistic regimes that fueled new tensions between the region's communities by stressing the cultural preeminence of a particular ethnicity.\(^2\)\(^3\)\(^4\) In Yugoslavia, Milosevic’s nationalistic policy and

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\(^1\) “[Romanian] is a Romance language, like Italian, French, Spanish and Portuguese, but one that stands somewhat apart in that it evolved not in the west of Europe like the others but in the East, in the zone where Slavic languages predominate” (Boia 2001:29).

\(^2\) “At the time of the Romanian Revolution, there were no real alternative political groups that were adequately prepared in terms of agenda or ideology, which would have allowed them to become competent actors in the establishment of a new system. This phenomenon was common to all post-communist countries, perhaps caused by the unpredictable nature of the communist system's rapid downfall” (Zamfir 2004:109, my own translation).

\(^3\) “The improvised character of post-communist nation states in Eastern Europe, coupled with foreign intervention, produced a frustration which created in turn different types of populisms based as much on ethnic, agrarian, xenophobic or anti-western foundations, as on civic or Jacobin forms of ideology.” (Hermet 2001:265-266, my own translation).

\(^4\) “For western observers, a striking concomitant of the end of Communist party rule was the sudden appearance of
state propaganda led to social upheaval, genocide and the eventual dismantlement of the country. Romania and Yugoslavia were both multi-ethnic nations whose current borders were shaped in the aftermath of World War I by the international community. Although ethnic conflicts did arise in Transylvania in recent history, the region has not experienced in the past decades a similar crisis to the one in Kosovo. On the contrary, Transylvania is often presented in Europe as an example of a rather successful integration of diverse ethnic communities.

One of the possible factors allegedly accounting for the success of the Transylvanian recipe – whether it is a valid description or an idealized vision of reality – is the fact that Romania underwent a process of democratization after 1990 that allowed minorities to have relative freedom of expression, an alternative bilingual system of education and political representation. Another possible factor would be Romania's gradual process of Europeanization which, parallel to deep institutional and legislative reforms, also possibly encouraged on a different scale the adoption of new and more open mentalities. The present status quo and the relative absence of conflicts in Transylvania between its different communities is thus often described as the prolongation of a historical tradition of openness towards cultural diversity, coupled with the more recent implementation of European models and mentalities. This type of description, while partially legitimate, can sometimes lead to quasi-idyllic representations.

national movements and national sentiments. We were not alone in our surprise: even more taken aback were Party leaders, somehow persuaded by their own propaganda that Party rule had resolved the so-called national question. That this was far from true was evident all across the region.…

From no country [in post-socialist Eastern Europe] was evidence of national conflict absent. Why?… I offer several alternatives to ancient hatred as an explanation of nationalism and national sentiment in postsocialist Eastern Europe. I suggest that to see socialism as having 'suppressed' national conflict is a mistake, as in an understanding of present conflicts that ignores the dismantling of socialism” (Verdery 1996:83-84).

“The old institutional structures, models of social organization and even government itself became replaced by new ways of functioning and new modes of thinking during the transition process towards democracy and the market economy, and the integration of Central and Eastern European countries in the European Union. This process led to the appearance of new actors, groups of interests, regionalist parties, ant the redefinition of public politics.… For the scholars that write on this subject, Europeanization is a process which reflects on the one hand the European Union's influence on the member states (the top-down dimension), and, on the other, the influence of the latter on the institutions of the EU, on its decision-making process and the way European policies are put into practice (the bottom-up dimension)” (Coman and Dobre 2005:10-17, my own translation).

“How many books about Transylvania have been written up to the present day? How many stories, poems and hymns, how many volumes and anthologies have dealt with this inexhaustible subject? If we placed them all together into an Alexandrian library, the result would be a fabulous literary utopia, of the kind that Borges imagined: an immense Leviathan of paper that would captivate its readers into insatiable nets” (Mitu 2006:9, my own translation).
The intention of this study is not to challenge these conceptions of Transylvania as a multicultural land; its aim rather is to highlight the other facet of its history, which ultimately portrays today's renewed sense of cultural diversity as the paradoxical counter-result of failed attempts by its successive ruling states to achieve any kind of homogeneity.
CHAPTER II LITERATURE AND THEORY

The concepts of Magyarization and Romanianization both designate different types of social transformation. One perspective on these phenomena would be to see them simply as cultural influences which, through language, architecture, folklore, crafts and religion have confirmed and enriched Transylvania's sense of composite identity. Romanianization and Magyarization could thus simply refer to the cultural imprint left by the mutual interactions between Hungarian and Romanian populations, especially through phenomena of mass migration and during the numerous shifts of allegiance that the region has experienced throughout its history.

Beyond this “neutral” interpretation of mutual cultural exchange, these concepts can also be applied to designate a particular process of social transformation enforced by a state or an organization in order to integrate, assimilate or homogenize a certain population. More than simple reforms, these social changes often imply that key institutions and agents operate to shift a population’s language, religion, sense of historical heritage and national identity. According to this perspective, Transylvania became Magyarized during Hungarian rule and Romanianized after 1920. It is also possible to claim that, at times, these policies were not unilateral – allowing only a single state actor to operate – but continuously mutual, beyond the generally assumed turn-based chronology.

These models are in themselves problematic not only because they can be very reductive (Willems 1955: 625-626) but also because the topic of cultural assimilation in Eastern Europe is often associated with nationalistic discourses and conspiracy theories. In Urmaşii lui Attila [Descendants of Atilla], Radu Theodoru for example denounces the danger of “today’s Hungarism” and its hold on Romanian society as a tentacular organization which turned President Iliescu himself into “the puppet
of Budapest” (Theodoru 1999:133, my own translation). This tone and argument is not uncommon, not only in Romanian literature but also in international publications. Published in French in 1977 by Simon Telkes, Les Faux Hongrois, La Multiplication artificielle d’un peuple describes the process of Magyarization as a calculated attempt by the Hungarian state to denaturate Transylvanian populations since the 19th century by imposing on them a foreign culture, language, religion and customs. The cover of the book illustrates the argument by depicting a factory where faceless individuals are placed on a Rube Goldberg machine composed of reservoirs, pipes and other mechanisms that apparently serve the purpose of “processing” Hungarians. Although the term Romanianization is less frequently used, similar arguments have been made that Romania, especially during communism, persistently attempted to subdue and assimilate Hungarians and other ethnic populations in Transylvania.

Beyond demonization and caricatured representations, the existence of a two-sided assimilation process occurring between the Hungarian and Romanian states is still posited to account for the present socio-political situation in Transylvania and its cultural specificity. The changing of national borders and Transylvania’s shift of allegiance between Romania and Hungary was often accompanied by many social transformations such as school reforms, the imposition of the Romanian or Hungarian language, the teaching of particular readings of history, the translation of patronyms and toponyms, forced migration phenomena, and religious conversions. While it is difficult to believe that these social transformations actually did create whole pockets of “false” Hungarians or Romanians (Telkes 1977), the idea that these changes were not simply coincidental but part of deliberate strategies is an argument worth examining. It is possible to assume that there is a middle ground between these two extreme positions – on the one hand, the paranoid obsession of omnipresent transnational conspiracies and, on

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7 “The Budapest government, from the very beginnings of the Austro-Hungarian dualist system, adopted the principles of un-nationalism which made the traditional policy of assimilation through Magyarization official. The law granting equal rights to the Romanian nation as well as the other laws enacted by the Diet of Sibiu were abrogated at the time of Transylvania’s incorporation into Hungary, in June 1867” (MacKenzie 1983:74).

8 “King is right when he insists on the dialectics of ‘Romanianization,’ that is, appropriation by the regime (first under Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, during the early 1960s, then under Nicolae Ceaușescu) of the symbols of patriotism and the usurpation and manipulation of national(ist) symbols, practices, and values” (Tismaneanu 2007:724-727).
the other, the naïve assumption that the successive transmission and spread of Romanian and Hungarian languages and cultural markers has invariably been in Transylvania the result of an “invisible hand” devoid of any intentionality.

An analysis of the concepts of Romanianization and Magyarization can be related to an array of interconnected terms all revolving more or less around a certain interpretation of culture as a “process” – or “operation” – and to the notions of state coercion, (en)forced cultural assimilation and hegemony. As processes, they designate the quantitative enlargement of a national state's sphere of influence through a qualitative shift operating on a given population. It leads – at least in theory – to the redefinition of a social group's nationality. Whether directly or indirectly linked to the state, these particular types of policies are enforced through the cooperation and directed action of certain state institutions and agents (Teske and Nelson 1974:351-367; Willems 1955: 625-626).

“Culture” in this context is seen as a self-expanding sphere of influence that propagates certain norms, symbolic systems of representation and models of behavior intentionally, through the action of particular agents, institutions, discourses and policies. In this model of culture, the state administration, the educational system, the media, and the Church are seen, more than anything else, as engines of influence and instruments of power. In such a scenario, any national policy of assimilation would necessarily require control over these different structures and their respective agents in order to operate and to succeed (Nelson 1982: 26-47).

It is not rare that historical analyses reduce the dynamics of Transylvania’s modern history to one theme, that of cultural assimilation only. To challenge the foundations of these historical analyses does not imply that such processes did not take place in Transylvania; the problem is that they reduce

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9 “Power must be understood in the first instance as the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organization: as the process which, through ceaseless struggle and confrontations, transforms, strengthens, or even reverses them; as the support which these force relations find in one another, thus forming a chain or a system, or on the contrary, the disjunctions and contradictions which isolate them from one another; and lastly, as the strategies in which they take effect, whose general design or institutional crystallization is embodied in the state apparatus, in the formulation of the law, in the various social hegemonies” (Foucault 1990: 98-99).

10 “Questions of truth are largely predicated on relations of power, as Foucault and others have taught us. Thus the other side of this task is to define the political context within which such assessments are made” (Herzfeld 1987:57).
the history of Transylvania to a single process or model. The question also needing to be raised is how cultural diversity – as it is observable in present-day Transylvania – can be accounted for in relation to the problem of cultural assimilation (as counter-evidence, resistance or counter-reaction to these assimilation policies?) But to equate multiculturalism in the region with the problem of cultural assimilation is itself an example of such a reductionism, which both anchors and disguises the role that nationalistic ideology plays in such arguments. In fact, interpretations like this “may do the state's own work of homogenizing society” (Herzfeld 1987:57). The purpose of this study is to explore the ramifications of such “readings” of history without presenting them as master narratives.

As a dominant part of this analysis, the case study of communist Romania’s educational institutions shows how the increasing politicization of the education system served the purposes of homogenizing the territory’s ethnic groups and propagating the regime's totalitarian ideology. Because educational institutions represent the main “battle ground” for the implementation of policies of cultural assimilation the analysis of their structure and their evolution in Transylvania had a central place in this study. An anthropological perspective on state education in this case allows not only the analysis of the power relations emerging from their normative nature and their institutional relation to the state, but also their role in the propagation of certain models of national identity (Eldering 1996:315-330; Nagengast 1994:109-136; T’sou 1975:445-456).

As a way to designate a counter-reaction to past measures of Magyarization by the Hungarian state, or perhaps a posture of resistance to other “external pressures” that supposedly denatured the Romanian “spirit,” the use of the metaphor of “national therapy” attempts here to capture the identity work and logic of the Romanian communist state promoting a certain type of “return to the origins” in terms of national identity. Romanianization thus becomes not only a process of integration of foreign elements but also a presumed “recovery.” In the particular case of Transylvania, the perspective of this analysis is to place these measures in relation to Hungary's past Magyarization policies.
Our research group was composed of an interdisciplinary team of 11 students\textsuperscript{11} under the supervision of James M. Nyce and Gail Bader. During the initial three weeks of the field-study, 27 interviews were collected with the help of four translators – including myself – and Alina Beteringhe, our local Romanian contact and coordinator. These interviews were conducted in Romanian and Hungarian, and at times in both languages alternatively, as the informants were often bilingual and sometimes shifted from one language to the other according to the topic or their interlocutor. During three more weeks of independent research in the area, Brigitta Szöcs and I conducted 15 additional interviews in Ghimeș-Făget and the neighboring village of Lunca de Sus.

From the start, there was some difficulty in defining our interview sample group into precise and clear categories. For example, it was not uncommon for informants, when asked if they considered themselves as Romanian, Hungarian or of another nationality, to have difficulties in answering categorically. Some explained for example that they descended from two or more nationalities and, while some considered themselves as predominantly Romanian or Hungarian for example, their description of themselves often incorporated elements of both cultures (and possibly others) in their definition of personal identity. Those presenting themselves as Csangos or Székely – ethnic groups sometimes incorporated too quickly by scholars into the Hungarian ethnicity\textsuperscript{12} – seemed to transcend

\textsuperscript{11} Brian Beasley, Barbara Boznac, Lauren Holditch, Natalie Houston, Cheryl Klimaszewski, Jessica LaFountain, Julie Sheil, Lydia Spotts, Emily Sweetman, Brigitta Szöcs and myself.

\textsuperscript{12} To a certain degree, this study itself does not completely avoid such simplifications. The main justification for not emphasizing more the differences between the Hungarian, Csango and Székely ethnic groups arises in this analysis from the taking into account– as expressed by the local community members themselves – of a common bond uniting these groups under a single nationality and a shared historical heritage, reinforced by the fact that they all speak a common language. Another reason for using a broader lenses in this study was the subject of the analysis itself, a study of those socio-cultural transformations that emerge from the historical transfer of power between the Romanian and Hungarian nation states, especially in Transylvania, and the ideological impact(s) these alternations in sovereignty have had on the local populations in relation to the problem of assimilation (with special attention to the field of education). The dichotomization of cultures (Hungarian/Romanian) emerging from these socio-historic factors is here paradoxically both a key to the problem and a misleading simplification.
the potentially reductionist interpretation of multiculturalism in the village into a purely Romanian/Hungarian dichotomy.

Apart from the limitations of these ethnic categories, general access to information about the community was also at times relatively difficult to obtain. One reason for this was the researchers' status of “outsiders” in the community – a situation encountered in the case of any ethnographic study – but also by the perception by some villagers of our group as “officials.” The use of the Romanian language in particular seemed for the Hungarian-speaking population in the village to be associated with state authorities. Most of our informants understood well enough our purposes and recognized our integrity; however, the degree of reserve some interviewees displayed, especially in the initial moments of our interactions, was certainly not only due to natural shyness or inhibition but also reflected perhaps traces of Romania’s recent totalitarian experience. This was possibly exacerbated by the fact that we had arrived just before the local elections and it created at times a feeling of unease, which at first limited some of our initial exchanges, but progressively dissipated as we became more integrated in the community.

At all times, it was not the intent here to determine which interpretation of history community members held should be considered right or wrong. Nor was it to impose a single set of standards or measures to these different versions of the region’s history. During the research, we instead have considered different perspectives on the matter to be equally relevant, in some cases complimentary. One of the goals of this analysis is thus to show how each of these views reflect a fragmented aspect of a complex and often polemic Transylvanian historical “reality.”

Through participant observation, our group assembled a variety of data sources, ranging from

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13 “The encounter between the villager and anthropologist reproduces on a small scale the relations of power in which both are enmeshed” (Herzfeld 1987:41).

14 “For ethnography personifies, in its methods and its models, the inescapable dialectic of fact and value. Yet most of its practitioners persist in asserting the usefulness – indeed, the creative potential – of such 'imperfect' knowledge. They tend both to recognize the impossibility of the true and the absolute and also to suspend disbelief. Notwithstanding the realist idiom of their craft, they widely accept that – like all other forms of understanding – ethnography is historically contingent and culturally configured. They have even, at times, found the contradiction invigorating” (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992:9).
material aspects of culture to the documentation of individual/group behaviors and performances. These different materials had been treated as a variety of symbols and performances to be interpreted within a particular context, keeping in mind the need to take into account (and to account for) the internal perspective that the culture's “insiders” had on them.

Access to our informants was facilitated by our initial contact in the village: Mr. Deaky, former history teacher and owned of a tourist guest house. After an initial phase of reconnaissance, each new interview allowed us to extend our connections and reach other informants whose contributions were relevant to the research. The Roman Catholic and Orthodox priests of the village were particularly insightful gatekeepers to the different ethnic communities in the region; during our long discussions, they also led us to some other informants, whose perspective was also included in our research.

All members of the research team kept daily field note, in which the significant events of each day were recorded, along with the informants' answers and interpretations to our questions, as well as our own comments and syntheses. The aims of our interdisciplinary research team ranged from information and technology access to the study of ethnic identity and political transitions; this provided us with insightful and complementary information and analyses.

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15 “Perhaps the most difficult part of actually doing participant observation fieldwork is making an entry” (Russell 1994:326).

16 “Local gatekeepers are people who control access to resources, whether human, geographic, social, or informational. The best strategy for any researcher is to attempt to find out whom they must meet to gain access to a specific research environment in order to study it.… Depending on their characteristics, gatekeepers may become excellent research partners and key informants” (Russell:1994:83).

17 “The opportunity to 'collect locally and compare globally' is a strength of ethnography” (Schensul et al. 1999:220).
CHAPTER IV A HISTORICAL ETHNOGRAPHY OF GHIMEȘ-FĂGET

Ghimeș-Făget, situated in the county of Bacău in North-Eastern Romania, was a favorable setting for studying interaction between Romanian and Hungarian ethnic groups because of the approximately equal portions of these two populations in the area. Although this type of data, we learned, had to be taken with a certain degree of reserve\textsuperscript{18}, it did represent information collected from both local agents and from the state authorities. The general intent of the research team as a whole was to explore the diverse interactions and influences between the Romanian and Hungarian ethnicities in the village, while resisting the temptation to reduce the study of ethnicity to the simplistic task of systematic categorization.\textsuperscript{19}

Being situated on the old frontier between Romania and the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Ghimeș-Făget’s tradition of coexistence between the Hungarian and Romanian nationalities had a strong historical continuity. As an example of the importance this historical patrimony has had in the region, the newly inaugurated railroad museum in the village attested to the importance the train had as a major instrument of exchange, development, administration and military logistics during the periods of the two nations’ successive rule over the Transylvanian territory. The museum crystallized the town's image as a former borderland which now, after years of communist suppression, has again become an important element of the area’s history.

\textsuperscript{18} Because of the intrinsic limitations of ethnic categories.

\textsuperscript{19} “We need to make clear, therefore, what we mean when we refer to someone as Hungarian or Romanian. On the one hand, this can be a general, context-independent, nominal characterization. When we refer to someone as Hungarian or Romanian in this sense, we mean that she would consistently and unambiguously identify herself as Hungarian or Romanian if asked to identify herself by ethnic nationality; she would not have difficulties in placing herself in a particular ethnonational category, given a particular set of ethnonational categories from which to choose. [Footnote: Our point is not that all Transylvanians can unambiguously or unproblematically place themselves in an ethnonational category. A small but non-trivial minority – mainly some children of ethnically mixed marriages – cannot do so. These people cannot be characterized in a context-independent manner as 'Hungarian' or 'Romanian'” (Brubaker et al. 2004:210).
Religious affiliation divided the population mainly between Roman Catholicism and Orthodoxy. In this case again, the proportion of Orthodox and that of Roman Catholic believers was relatively equal, with a slight majority of the latter over the former. One of the purposes of our research was to explore the potential connections between the area's different religions and nationalities. Parallelisms between faith and ethnicity were revealed by many interviews; informants frequently highlighted in their discussions of cultural identity a close connection between religion and nationality. Many also used these categories to define one of groups or category in opposition to the other. In this context, Catholic was thus often presented as non-Orthodox.20

Because of the relatively equal proportion of Hungarian and Romanian populations, because of the historical status of Ghimeș-Făget as a former borderland between Romania and the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and because of the potential correspondence between its ethnicities and their religions affiliations, our research group chose this village as a setting for examining Romanian and Hungarian influences as the region moved through four consecutive historical periods, i.e. from Austro-Hungarian rule to the Romanian annexation, and from the communist period to democracy. This historical ethnography is an attempt to bring an interdisciplinary perspective to bear on the processes that led to the reshaping of Transylvania's populations' sense of national identity through different phases of cultural reshaping members of the region described as assimilation polices.

The following analysis discusses these different historical phases chronologically with the purpose of placing the problem of cultural assimilation – as it was expressed in our discussions with the locals of Ghimeș-Făget – in relation to the history of Transylvania, and more particularly with its shifts of power. The focus of this analysis thus moves progressively from the more general – historical contextualization – to the particular case of Ghimeș-Făget and the discussion of its locals’ different

20 “It is important to note that while disemia can be treated as a pairing of codes, what matters socially is how these codes are actually used; and that use is often affected by historical processes of which the actors may only be partially aware. The Ceausescu regime's pro-Orthodox stance decided the public face of disemia, but use and choice of these now 'overcoded' symbols (see Eco 1976: 133) would depend on particular actors and could perhaps influence future events” (Herzfeld 2005:19).
perspectives on the *va et vient* of power relations, on assimilation attempts by its successive governments and on the question of cultural identity. Showing the complementarily of the historical and ethnographic methods of inquiry as well as the interdependence between the broader historical factors and current debates among Transylvanian ethnic communities were central in the structuring of this study.

**Initial educational reforms in communist Romania, a historical perspective**

“Is it not enough that you are only a semblance, 
To gladden the heart that flees from the truth?”


“Nothing is easier to see and explain than the installation of communism in Central and South-eastern Europe. Regardless of particular national conditions, of cultural and political traditions, and of the effective balance of forces, Communism came to power precisely where the Red army advanced.”

Lucian Boia, *Romania.*

As it entered the age of information, post-communist Romania regained freedom of expression, and ended an era where state propaganda and censorship had been omnipresent. The type of knowledge promulgated during Ceausescu's regime had not been in line with its self-proclaimed humanistic ideal of intellectual integrity. Its propaganda apparatus however was far more complex than a simple sum of misinformation. Considered in its totality, it constituted an ensemble of mutually reflecting webs that sought to isolate its targets from the outer world. This was potentially the strength of soviet indoctrination: creating a *love of lies*, to use Baudelaire's expression, that people would to call *home.*
“Knowledge is power,” and it seems more sensible to assume that it is usually the absence of it that leads to subjugation than the opposite. Yet, when attained through a national system of education, this “empowering” process also binds and constrains because it serves the state's purpose of establishing control. This “control” does not only consist in the designation and reinforcement of a referent authority, it is also dependent on processes of acculturation and homogenization. By fusing individuals into the common mold, it also gives them a sense of belonging and a more or less normative “vision of the world,” reaffirmed through the use of a common language, shared values and referents.²¹

In Romania's totalitarian regime, the educational system and state propaganda formed a combined, even a total apparatus designed to produce obedience and uniformity. It would be possible to argue, somewhat provocatively, that any state education is inherently “totalitarian” because it establishes normative control over the individual. This position pushes to the limit Foucault's argument about the inevitability of existing power relations especially those connected to state institutions:

State supported education is totalitarian education. The essence of totalitarianism is simply this, that it maintains that the state has all the answers to life, and virtually every sphere of human activity should be governed by the state. The totalitarian believes that education, economics and trade, the family, child welfare, old age welfare, medicine, science, and all things else need the controlling and guiding hand of the state. There are different kinds of totalitarianism – Marxist, democratic, Fascist, Fabian, and the like – but their differences are not basic, whereas their agreements are. Common to all forms of totalitarianism is a belief in the state control of education. From Plato’s blueprint for a communist state to the present, totalitarian planning has centered heavily on the control of education. [Rushdoony 1984:139]

Education, no matter how progressive and open its providers may present it, is always basically a master-slave relation. In communist Romania, however, the principle that the school was a place to be

²¹ “The legal and academic establishment tries to reify meaning as far as law and formal education will stretch; the supposedly absolute character of official discourse reproduces the attempt of the state to create independent beginnings, to escape from the albatross of ascribed origins, when the game is still in practice defined by external powers. The government tries to fix meaning, context-dependence becomes the symbol of political dependence” (Herzfeld, Michael 2005:123-124).
formed was pushed to an extreme through the state propagandists' constant insistence on civic duty over individual interest, through censorship, and through the omnipresent cult of personality surrounding Ceausescu and his family. This *nationalisme banal* was not only intended to discipline and educate, it attempted to create a “new man”, one completely dedicated to the state: “The Marxist conception of cultural values considers that these values are social in nature, and that they cannot exist unless they express the appreciation, the dedication to a social organization, to the interests of a class, and they have the objective the satisfaction of these needs (Borgeanu et al. 1968:284, my own translation).

The *non-existence* of “cultural values” outside of the “social organization” posited here is not simply a philosophical axiom about Man as a social animal. In Romania’s totalitarian context, this meant something quite different: the impossibility of conceiving any thought outside the reach of the state. Censorship and propaganda no longer were just instruments of dissimulation and indoctrination; they became a way of making knowledge *thinkable*. A thought outside of this selective vision of “knowledge,” one that would not support loyalty and dedication to the “needs” of the state, was to be stigmatized and ultimately eliminated.

Among the different national institutions, the educational system was the main laboratory for the execution of this “revolution of thought.” In communist Romania, it became clearer and clearer that the role of school teachers was not only to instruct the students and develop their capacities. It was, more than anything else, to make them “integrate the ideology and political stance of the party, its conception of life and its vision of the world.”\textsuperscript{22} While one can argue that any formal education system can influence one's vision of the world, the Romanian communist regime pushed this idea to the totalitarian extreme: to obtain maximum control over the minds and bodies of the social group.

Dinu C. Giurescu (2001) has described the evolution of the totalitarian system of thought – as it manifested itself in the Romanian educational system – as a succession of three phases:

a) the implementation of the soviet model of education based on class struggle (from 1948 to the beginning of the 60s)

b) the coming back to a relative normality and to some Romanian traditions (from 1962-64 until 1978-79)

c) the renewed influence of politicization, ideology, and the so-called 'cultural revolution' (from 1978 until 1989). [Giurescu 2001, my own translation]

The first of these steps was to create a new model of education in accordance with the soviet revolutionary principles. This “new direction” was expressed in Monitorul Oficial (the Official Gazette) of August 3, 1948, issued by the National Union Council; the latter stipulated, first, that the state should be granted the exclusive control of the system of instruction (Art. I), and, second, decreed the state education be secular (Art I). This measure led to the nationalization or disestablishment of religious and private schools and to a centralized model of instruction intended to guarantee the propagation of the “spirit” of the new “popular democracy” and the fulfillment of its “needs” (Giurescu 2001, my own translation).

While the Constitution of the Romanian Popular Republic of 1952 supposedly guaranteed “freedom of expression” and other “democratic” rights, the educational reforms that were put in place from 1948 onwards showed the true face of this totalitarian regime. Through these reforms, “the control of the state over every level of instruction bec[ame] complete” (Giurescu 2001, my own translation).

23 Prezidiul Marii Adunări Nationale.
25 This “popular democracy” was, in theory, supposed to provide:
   “a) freedom of expression
   b) freedom of the press
   c) freedom of association and meeting
   d) freedom to participate in parades and street demonstrations”

These rights were to be “guaranteed and put to the disposition of the working masses and their typographic organizations, editorial deposits, public buildings, streets, communication tools and all other material conditions necessary”.

26 “On the road to power, and then in the unrivaled exercise of power, Communism excelled in the combination of democratic discourse and totalitarian practice” (Boia 2001:115).
In order to achieve this objective, a ministerial decision in June 1948 announced a massive restructuring of the educational institution in the form of the replacement of its teaching personnel.\footnote{27} \footnote{28}

This purge was destined to ensure that the new educational system would be a clear departure from the past and guarantee that the new teachers would be completely loyal and dedicated to the ideology of the party.

This new curriculum not only reflected communist ideology, it was also the direct application of a policy of Russification. School manuals were directly translated from Russian and the teaching of the Russian language was made mandatory.\footnote{29} History manuals were “adapted” to emphasize cultural and political collaboration(s) between Russia and Romania throughout history. The description of the “analytical program of Romanian and universal history,” as it was expressed in June 13, 1948 in the “Official Gazette,” bore the title “Relations with Russia; wars and the assistance provided to the [Romanian] principalities by the Russian nation.”\footnote{30} The chapter entitled “[Beginning of the XX\textsuperscript{th} century until the First World War]” included the study of “[Proletarian movements],” “[The Peasant revolt of 1907],” and “[Consequences of the War, revolutionary uprising].”\footnote{31}

The “liberation” by the Russian forces from fascist oppression was a constant object of mythification in school manuals and their recommended readings. The “joining of hands” that had ensued after World War II between Romania and the Soviet Union was presented in schools as the apex of history, a quasi-Manichean confrontation between the forces of good and evil, whose end-result had
been the saving of the Romanian people by the communist party.

Cultural assimilation by the Russian soviet government thus consisted not only in the imposition of the Russian language;\textsuperscript{32} it also relied on a strong propaganda apparatus that influenced the school system largely through intellectual purges, the complete reshaping of the old educational institutions, and the rewriting of history from the soviets' perspective.\textsuperscript{33} These measures were implemented throughout Romania including Transylvania, where they are remembered as a time when “Romanian nationalism was present, but Russia was the dominant model” (Imre Antal, interview by Burcea and Szőcs, June 16, 2008). This model was that of “the soviet atheistic state,” noted Ghimeş-Făget’s Orthodox priest (interview by Burcea and Szőcs, June 23, 2008).

This period of Russian predominance and its strategy of Sovietization was paradoxically a period of relative cultural autonomy however for the ethnic minorities living in Transylvania. Despite the fact that “soviet indoctrination” penetrated “every aspect of everyday life,” according painter and art teacher in Lunca de Sus (interview by Burcea and Szőcs, June 16, 2008), non-Romanian populations living in the region were granted the right to attend to schools in their maternal language.\textsuperscript{34} “This was because the soviets desired to appear sympathetic to the 'international cause,'” argued Dr. Vilică Munteanu, historian and Bacau's director of the state archives (interview by Burcea and Szőcs, June 27, 2008). As an example of this “opening”, the “[Official Gazette]” of August 1948, stated that the country's “[co-existing nationalities]” should be granted the right to have an education in their

\textsuperscript{32} Even before the 1948 “Reform of Education” was announced, the “Official Gazette” stipulated that “the preparation of faculty members in the teaching of the Russian culture and language” was to take place in the “Institute for Romanian-Soviet Studies (section academic pedagogy).”


\textsuperscript{33} “Education was reorganized according to the Soviet model. Even the textbooks were translated from Russian (a language that became compulsory in all schools from the fourth grade). An intensive policy of Russification was carried out through the “Cartea Rusă” publishing house (Russian Book, founded in 1946), the Institute for Romanian-Soviet Studies, the Maxim Gorki Russian-Language Institute (1948), the Romanian-Russian Museum (1948). Even spelling was modified in 1953. National history was rewritten on a Marxist basis, to fit the criteria of friendship with the Soviet Union” (Bulei 2007:157).

\textsuperscript{34} “The period 1945-1948 of communist rule in Romania saw considerable improvement in the treatment of ethnic minorities in exchange for the settling of state and national borders. The young socialist Romanian state was quite aware of the fact that by far the most serious and perhaps the most troubling problem remained the question of Transylvanian Hungarians. For the time being, and in comparison to the realities of the German and Hungarian minorities of Czechoslovakia, both facing forced evacuations and mistreatments by the regimes in power, the Hungarians in Romania were relatively well-off” (Kürti 2001:36).
language, provided they also learned Romanian starting from the first grade. This was welcomed by
the Hungarian communities in Transylvania; as Mr. Deaky noted, “there were still bilingual schools [at
that time]. And this helped the community keep the Hungarian language and culture alive” (interview
by Burcea and Szőcs, June 19, 2008).

Overall, the initial educational reforms after 1948 were clearly part of a general plan consisting
in the implementation of the soviet apparatus of state through key political and social reforms. These
included the intended Russification of the Romanian population (regardless of ethnicity or nationality)
through the imposition of the Russian language in schools, the teaching of soviet ideology and the
redefinition of historical “reality.” In parallel, ethnic minorities living in Romania, especially
Transylvanian Hungarians, were granted the right to keep some bilingual school open so that younger
generations could be instructed in their native language. The soviet government made much of this
gesture of good will and emphasized its symbolic value for the “socialist nations.” In other words, at
the same time as they brutally imposed a totalitarian model, the learning of the Russian language and
communist ideology, the soviets in Romania wished to appear open-minded and sympathetic to other
ethnicities and nationalities. While they displayed this supposedly strong dedication to the
preservation of cultural difference and to the defense of ethnic minorities, they also suppressed half of
Europe's rights to self-governance and national integrity.

35 “Monitorul Oficial”, CXVI, nr.177, Part I-a, August 3 1948, pp. 6321-6324.
36 “The sustaining of the Romanian political system was made possible by its incorporation into the forces of the socialist
system as an international organization subordinated to the Soviet Union, and, as a subsidiary, by the internal political
forces of the Romanian communist party. The latter, however, would not have been able to be keep its position on the
long run without the support of the international communist party and its mechanisms of self-preservation” (Zamfir
2004:103, my own translation).
37 “After World War II, the Romanian university [of Cluj] was restored to its inter-war home, but a new Hungarian
university was established alongside it. For fourteen years, parallel Romanian- and Hungarian-language universities
functioned in Cluj…. It is therefore not surprising that many Hungarian intellectuals look back on the parallel
universities of the postwar years as a desirable model for the organization of higher education” (Brubaker et al.
2004:147).
38 “During this period [1945-1959], as we observed, universities were subjected to tight political supervision, intensive
ideological indoctrination, and periodic purges. The Hungarian Bolyai University was separate, but it was certainly not
autonomous” (Brubaker et al. 2004:147).
Countering past Magyarization policies

“[While forced Magyarization awakened a greater number of reactions in terms of opinion in Europe, a factor strengthening the national cause of Romanians, the Romanian reaction transformed itself into political, economic, cultural and spiritual action.]”

Radu Theodoru, *Urmașii lui Attila* [The Descendants of Attila].

The double-game played by the soviet central government became a source of tension and resentment for many Romanians, especially in relation to the Transylvanian question, not only because it meant the imposition of a foreign model, but also because it seemed to give special treatment to the Hungarian minority, a treatment quite different from what Romanians and other ethnic groups living in Transylvania had experienced during the Hungarian war occupation and the Dual Monarchy:

Although the Romanians were the majority of the population in Transylvania, in the course of time they had often been subject of the double domination of the Habsburg Empire and of the privileged social strata in Transylvania. In 1848 and then in 1868, Transylvania had become a constituent part of Hungary, in spite of the protest of the Romanian population. In the political context of Austrian-Hungarian Dualism, the Hungarian governments promoted a policy of forced assimilation and forced Magyarization of the other nationalities in the country, including the Romanians. Therefore, their normal evolution was hindered in every field of activity. [Iancu 2002:8]

Objections to granting bilingual education and relative cultural autonomy to the Hungarian minorities in Transylvania was however not simply motivated by the law of the Talion. The logic of opposing the maintenance of Hungarian schools also rested on the belief that their main role in the past had been to establish a policy of forced Magyarization. If the Transylvanian populations had indeed
been “shifted” arbitrarily from one nationality to another, it was then “logical” in the aftermath of the Great Unity to counteract these measures by allowing these “Magyarized Romanians” to return to their “true nature,” i.e. to “reanimate” their formerly suppressed sense of national identity.

Magyarization in Transylvania was seen by Romanians as a set of policies of forced assimilation by which Hungarian institutions intended to subvert and “switch” the nationality of the Romanian (and other) ethnic group(s) living on the territory. The schools were key in the implementation of these measures because of the role they had in creating and policing the “monopoly” of the Hungarian language:

The 'law of nationalities' of 1868 (Law XLIV) and the law of education (Law XXXVIII) likewise intensified the policy of forced Magyarization. In the 'Hungarian' part of the Dual Monarchy, the law of nationalities proclaimed the existence of 'one and indivisible' Hungarian nation –, including all non-Hungarian nationals which represented a majority of the population (the Hungarians indeed represented a numeral minority even in the lands that were granted to them during the Dual Monarchy). The only official language was Hungarian. In regard to education, the Hungarian language was taught in every school and had the 'monopoly' of higher education. Non-Hungarian languages could only be used in religious teaching. [Constantiniu 2008:557, my own translation]

In The History of Transylvania, Andrew MacKenzie spends a great deal of time discussing the policies regulating nationalities and ethnicities in Transylvania and the issue of cultural assimilation. In the chapter entitled “the policy of Magyarization” (1983), he writes:

39 “The [Hungarian] state power has acted by all means, legal and illegal, to the detriment of the Romanians who, little by little have abandoned the language and faith of their ancestors, thereby augmenting the number of Szeklers. This is why today we meet at each in all the towns and all the villages denationalized Romanians”.(Senton-Watson [1908] 1972:6).

40 “Transylvanian schools had witnessed struggles for cultural supremacy long before 1918. After the Ausgleich of 1867 which relegated Transylvania and other Habsburg lands to Hungarian rule, Hungary intensified the pressure to assimilate non-Magyar nationalities through the schools. Although the Primary Education act of 1968 and the Law of Nationalities of 1969 enshrined the liberal principle of instruction in the mother tongue, the education laws of 1879, 1883, 1891, and 1907 were intended to Magyarize the teaching staff, expand schooling in Hungarian, and utterly restrict teaching in the minority languages” (Livezeanu 1995:143-144).

41 “A look at the situation of books in Transylvania illustrates the hardship of a lycée in Gherla in 1920, the Ministry of Public Instruction found 13,830 Hungarian books and 49 Romanian ones. A middle school in Aiud had only 100 Romanian volumes. A boys' normal school had not a single Romanian book” (Livezeanu 1995 150, based on the consultation of the Romanian State Archives, Bucharest, Fond Casa Scoalelor 1920/160, July 21, 1920; Fond Casa Scoalelor 1920/7/211, September 15, 1920; and Fond Casa Scoalelor 1920/7/263, November 8, 1920.
The Budapest government, from the very beginnings of the Austro-Hungarian dualist system, adopted the principles of uninationalism which made the traditional policy of assimilation through Magyarization official. The law granting equal rights to the Romanian nation as well as the other laws enacted by the Diet of Sibiu were abrogated at the time of Transylvania's incorporation into Hungary, in June 1867. These actions placed Transylvania – according to contemporaneous usage – in an 'exceptional and discretionary' state, which allowed governance according to the wishes of the government rather than according to law. [MacKenzie 1983:74]

MacKenzie describes how these policies operated through the executive, legislative and educative systems, through the press, through administrative and religious institutions. He traces out as well how the ideology and practice of assimilation became elevated to the rank of “political dogma.” In Transylvania: History and Reality by Milton G. Lehrer (1986), the author attempts to establish the “truth” about the socio-political condition of Transylvania. The “very simple central European problem” he sees is accordingly the direct result of ethnic oppression in Transylvania orchestrated during Hungarian rule:

For all these reasons, the Romanians had to be kept in a perpetual state of misery, extreme poverty and ignorance, so they would not be able to add to their power through numbers. Their status could be improved only if they first gave up their nationality. … Thus, Magyar policy wavered between two options. First, there were people like Heteny who asserted that 'first you plant the tree, then you gather the crop' – that is, first, the Romanians had to be emancipated and only then should one proceed to their Magyarization. Second, there was the opinion of the Magyar conservatives who took the stand that the Romanians should be completely Magyarized first, and only then should they be granted their liberty. [Lehrer 1986:95]

If Hungarian schools in Transylvania had contributed to the “artificial” spread of the Hungarian language and culture, it was perhaps important to reverse this process afterwards, not out of vengeance.

42 “I have sought to be as objective as possible in writing my book. My goal is the establishment of the truth. In striving towards this goal, I shall be content if I have contributed to clarifying this ostensibly intricate, but in fact very simple central European problem” (Lehrer 1986:3).
but as therapy.\textsuperscript{43} \textsuperscript{44} This type of logic, one prevalent after the Great Unity but attenuated during the first half of the Romanian communist rule, can be linked to the rise of ethnic tension and nationalism in the region,\textsuperscript{45} a phenomenon perhaps most revealed in Ceausescu's educational reforms beginning in the late 1970s.

**Romanianization as ‘national therapy’**

“In this renewed sense of national mythology, to the question, 'Who is the proper Magyar?' The answer was simple and easy: the Transylvanians (\textit{Erdélyiek}). …

In this ideological essentialization of the peasantry, Hungarian elites were not alone. The Romanian villages of the Maramures district in northwestern Transylvania have been told by the Romanian elites to be 'the cradle of Romanian civilization.'”

\textit{Lazlo Kürti, The Remote Borderland.}

During the second half of Romania's communist period, the educational system pushed to the extreme the school’s role as a mechanism of indoctrination. Ceausescu's “cold relations” with the

\textsuperscript{43} “The Day of December I, 1918, inaugurates a new world: Romanism has become free of its own master. It must build for itself its own state and set its own mission in this world. In this historic work, what role belongs to school and education?… The oppression of the Magyar language… history and… geography has fallen.… In high schools and the University instead of the Magyar language the French, English, and Italian languages [will be taught]. Romanian language... history,... [and] geography [will serve] the purpose of consolidating a new state and founding a new nation” (Gibu 1941:855).

\textsuperscript{44} “The Romanianization measures in Transylvania involved a major effort of cultural and social mobilization among the Romanians. As Gadja mentions in his memorandum, the difficulty of recruiting Romanian pupils was in some places as serious as finding qualified teachers. Lycées found enrollments most problematic, because they had been strongholds of Magyarism. Faced with apathy, the Directing Council's Education Department mounted a campaign to enlist pupils for the new Romanian schools. Unless the schools filled up quickly, their raison d'être could be subject to question. More importantly, the project of creating a Romanian elite to wrest Transylvania away from Magyarism and its elites could be derailed” (Livezeanu 1995:160).

\textsuperscript{45} “The policy of Magyarization promoted by the Budapest government and the persecutions – in particular those affecting the Romanian population – have strongly impacted the Romanian public opinion…. In the Romanian collective consciousness, Transylvania acquired a preponderance in relation to the other Romanian border territories, and ended up becoming a national obsession” (Constantiniu 2008:259, my own translation).
Soviet Union, arguably as much of a public performance as a genuine political posture, nonetheless had a visible impact on the education system and its curriculum. In comparison with the initial reforms of 1948 and those made during Gheorghiu-Dej's time, the new educational program of the 1970s reflected a dramatic shift away from Russian cultural and political predominance to a more and more exclusivist Romanian form of nationalism. The previous idea of a multiplicity of peoples under a common soviet banner was replaced by an ethnocentric fixation on Romanian culture's privileged position in world history.

The attempts of the time to move away from the soviet model of culture and national identity – a policy of cultural de-Russification – did not led however to a true de-stalinization. The lack of reform of the heavily centralized state apparatus, the terror exerted by the state police, the systematic indoctrination of the youth and the cult of personality surrounding Ceausescu contrasted in Romania with the more “reformist” agenda chosen by the majority of East-European countries at the time:

The specificity of Romanian communism was underlined by all those investigating the subject. Its history is quasi-unique within the Iron Curtain.... After Stalin's death and that of the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, the communist governments of Eastern Europe were confronted with the task of reforming the system, a most-needed phase for most of the countries who experienced the trauma of Stalinist terror. Should reform be permitted? … The answer of Romanian communists was categorically negative. [Turcanu 2005]

This refusal to accept almost any type of deep political reform was to be supported by an elite-driven (re)construction of historical tradition that was linked to ideological dogmatism. The roots of “Romanianness” were to be actively preserved from deterioration and change; the state being their guarantor, its conservatism and political rigidity was supposed to represent a defensive stance against both internal and external menaces threatening its purity. This attitude manifested itself in all aspects of Romanian public life of the time. However, it was in the schools that it became most apparent because of the increasing extrapoliticization of the educational program in the 1970s:
The ideas and directives of the leader of the R.C.P. regarding education were applied to the Law regarding education and teaching (nr. 28) of the December 21\textsuperscript{st} 1978. It followed the main directions of the legislation of 1968, but saw however as a development an accentuated politicization of the school instruction. […] It insisted on the need to teach to the young the principles of dialectical materialism and the ideology of the Romanian Communist Party. It presented this instruction as a 'major element of the education of the new man,' which was to ensure the 'application of the policies of the state and the party', 'the formation of the socialist consciousness of the young people' (Art. 1).” [Giurescu 2001, my own translation]

The education and propaganda systems did not just emphasize, they “(re)invented” Romania's “glorious past,” and argued for the imminent realization of its even more glorious communist future. To counter the idea that Romanian culture was merely mimetic or synthetic in relation to Western and Eastern influences, the intellectual trend of the time was to (re)emphasize the genuine and superior nature of the Romanian “spirit.” This was first of all a refusal to carry on the complex of inferiority that many Romanian intellectuals were partially responsible for;\textsuperscript{46} it also became a way to present Romanian modern (communist) society as the apex of its glorious and positive history. This school of thought became known as Romanian “protochronism.”

Protochronism does not refer to the simple “study of the past” but to the ability of a nation to anticipate change – “before time.” This theory of history assumes that a nation emerges from certain spontaneous mutations specific to its culture. Historical and cultural changes arise not so much from exterior influences (synchronism), but rather from a nation’s inherent principles of invention and creativity.\textsuperscript{47} In short, Romanian culture had not been absorbing influences passively throughout its history and thus do not simply constitute some synthetic, artificial mélange of Oriental and Occidental traits. According to this school of thought, from the Dacian “glorious origins” to the modern period,

\textsuperscript{46}“Everything that has been created until now in Romania has been fragmented. Apart from Eminescu, everything has been approximative” (Cioran 1990 [1936]:49, my own translation).

\textsuperscript{47}“Both imitation, the principle of synchronism, and anticipation, corresponding to protochronism, can co-exist within a culture. The phenomenon of synchronism is valid in our [Romanian] culture but has been mistakenly considered as the only one. Alongside was also the other phenomenon, protochronism, to which my book is dedicated” (Papu 1977:16, my own translation).
Romania had itself been a source of innovation, one of the most prolific and adaptive civilizations in European history. Consequently, the solutions to its social problems were to be found within itself, not in the copying of foreign nations and cultures.

After the reforms of 1978, the Romanian educational system was tasked to preserve and transmit this sense of cultural solidarity and exceptionalism. This meant not only a renewed focus on Romania's glorious past full of heroic figures who were elevated to the status of quasi-religious icons; this also meant that the school curriculum began to be purged of international references and decreased the importance of subjects like comparative literature. In the Law of Education of 1978, something like a hierarchy of academic disciplines was established (Giurescu 2001). Foreign languages and the humanities were devalued as fields of study and the “real” sciences gained more status and importance. Among the human sciences, Romanian literature and mytho-history became increasingly dominant.

In history classes, the achievement by the Romanian nation of the Great Unity was presented as one of the most important elements of its modern identity. The integration of Transylvania into Greater Romania in 1918 was to be seen as a providential victory of justice against Hungarian oppression and its Magyarization policies. The theme of “national unity” became over time more and more central, which basically meant conforming to the cultural and ideological standards of the party. This negatively impacted most of Romania’s ethnic minorities. Bilingual schools were closed throughout the country, including those in Transylvania. It also became more and more difficult for Hungarians or almost any other non-Romanian group to make jural or public policy claim(s) on the basis of ethnic or cultural difference.

As the regime confounded equality with uniformity, the presence of different nationals among

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48 “On the column of Rome we can see figures of Dacians that appear to be anything but defeated. They are proud, intelligent, well-dressed, clean. It seems that the Dacian civilization, through certain personalities, influenced for a long time modern civilization, at least until Constantine the Great” (Savescu 2007, my own translation).

49 “A Romanian, and especially a foreigner who would make a study of the great figures in the history of the Romanian spirit, according to Carlyle's vision of the 'hero,' of 'geniuses,' of the great 'markers of history,' may not understand the precise way in which the Romanian spirit took shape…. More than in the West, such figures acquire general collective features and, one after the other, enter 'history,' 'tradition' and 'folklore.' Hence the response they arouse in the people, the assimilation of their message by the ever-broader sections of the Romanian people. The Romansians lack the egocentric vision of the great personalities. The[se] become 'great' first by redeemed, recuperated collectivity” (Marino 1972).
its population became seen more and more as a potential threat. In Transylvania, Hungarian teachers were prevented from giving courses in their language, and their schools' curriculum was placed under strict supervision. Remembering this period, father Solomon, Făget’s Catholic priest, said: “You had to be a 'true Romanian' you see. If you were different, for example, if you spoke a different language, you were considered a potential traitor to the nation” (interview by Burcea, Hilditch, Lafauntain and Sheil, June 5, 2008). On this topic, Mr. Deaky added: “From bilingual schools, [the government] imposed classes to be taught only in the Romanian language. It then became more and more difficult to use Hungarian at school” (interview by Burcea and Szőcs, June 19, 2008).

In Ghimeş-Făget, this period represented one of the darkest hours of the communist regime for the Hungarian community. “During communism, there were no bilingual schools. Now there are separate schools because they didn’t trust the state to include Hungarian. Language and faith are important. If you take away a people’s language and faith, you destroy a people” (Andras Deaky, interview by Burcea and Szőcs, June 19, 2008). “The schools... they stopped having classes in Hungarian. They had to teach in Romanian. If you do not study in the maternal language, then you do not get all the information simply because you cannot understand. That is what happened here” (Father Solomon, interview by Burcea, Hilditch, Lafauntain and Sheil, June 5, 2008). “The idea was to progressively remove the Hungarian language from schools. The government made every effort to discourage the expression of difference and to impose the exclusive use of the Romanian language” (Andras Deaky, interview by Burcea and Szőcs, June 19, 2008).

50 “Hungarian ethnic institutions, publishers, churches, schools, and ethnic broadcasters were all subjected to the same pressure of forced assimilation policies since Ceauşescu stepped up his Romanianization policies. As the Romanian state became more and more serious in its attempt at creating a homogeneous Romanian nation, it abolished, for example, the Hungarian television station in 1985, and the number of Hungarian language publications was decreased at an alarmingly rapid pace…. That the tensions were mounting was easy to see then, but from the way the interethnic situation was worsening, no one could tell just how far the Ceauşescu regime would go to force Hungarians to give up their identity and culture” (Kürti 2001:40).
After the end of communism, bilingual schools reopened and the subsequent Romanian Constitution guaranteed the right for national minorities to receive an education in their maternal language.\textsuperscript{51} In Transylvania, although the school situation in the 1990s was far from ideal, the reopening of bilingual and church schools, especially from the point of view of the Hungarian minority, was considered to be a step towards the “return to a certain normality” (Andras Deaky, interview by Burcea and Szőcs, June 19, 2008). Still the committees in charge of assessing these changes had concerns about both the kind and number of schools that had been opened to serve the minority needs:

In Romania the persons belonging to national minorities have also the right to education in their mother tongue, in all forms and at all levels of the educational system, including universities, and to use their mother tongue in administration. The political party of the Hungarian minority (UDMR) is part of the current governing coalition.…

Although, after 1998, the reform of education in Romania made significant progress, beyond this kind of problems, from the perspective of the integrating concept that is the education for all, the\textbf{ partial approach} still constitutes a general characteristic of the educational policies. Thus, aspects regarding the access, the equal opportunity, the protection and education of socially disadvantaged children, the protection and education of disabled persons, the education of children from ethnic minorities, the

\textsuperscript{51} “(1) The State recognizes and guarantees the right for national minorities to preserve, develop and express their ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity.
(2) The protection measures taken by the state towards the preservation, development and expression of the identity of the ethnic minorities must conform with the principles of equality and non-discrimination applied to all Romanian citizens.”

street children problem, the basic education provision, the literacy, the adult education, the development of the distance education; the universities opening towards larger groups of young people, the development of the educational forms for adults or lifelong education are viewed as separate issues. [Birza 2009]

How these measures worked out locally for example in Ghimeș-Făget suggests that they did in fact represent a major step towards the “democratization” of the system. This was confirmed by Hungarian nationals in the community we interviewed. The double reform, i.e. the teaching of Roman Catholicism in church schools and the teaching of classes in the Hungarian language in state schools, represented an important aspect of what “cultural transmission” and equality meant for the ethnic minority (Father Solomon, interview by Beasley, Boznak and Burcea, May 23, 2008).

The Union of the Hungarian Teachers of Romania, an association formed in 1991 to defend the “didactic” rights of the Hungarian ethnic minority, emphasized the remaining obstacles to reform:

The Union of the Hungarian Didactic Organization of Romania and other non-governmental organizations of the town of Targu Mures have organized a petition demanding the granting for students of an instruction in the Hungarian language.…

According to the signers, the public education system is 'obliged to guarantee to all citizen, including the minorities, the possibility of studying in their maternal language… according to the present Law of Education. [Ziare 2009, my own translation].

Two years earlier, the association had protested against the new Law of Education because it failed to specify that Romanian was not the native language of a significant number of the nation’s population, e.g. the Hungarian ethnic minority:

The Union of the Hungarian Didactic Organization of Romania opposes the new project of law by the Ministry of Education, considering that it is non-didactic and non-scientific to state that the Romanian language should be considered as the maternal language of all the ethnic communities living in Romania.… The Union suggests the use of the denomination non-maternal in regard to the study of the Romanian

52 Uniunea Cadrelor Didactice Maghiare.
language for members of the ethnic minorities. [Kovacs 2007, my own translation]

Other Romanians saw these claims as questioning, if not challenging, the status of Romanian as the official language of the country. In one example of a “hardcore” reaction to this issue, journalist Liviu Campeanu argues that these demands deserve a “prize in shamelessness” – which is provocatively the title of his article:

So if I understand you well, dear professors, this is the motive why Hungarians do not learn the Romanian language? because the denomination causes them disgust? Aaa... but you should note that, for the majority of Hungarian students, schools are the only place where they can learn Romanian. As for the study of its literature, it is indeed the only occasion that Hungarian students will ever have to attend it, regardless of where they live. [Campeanu 2007, my own translation]

In Ghimeș-Făget, most teachers and instructional staff told us that they had no part in such polemics. Antal Imre, painter and retired art teacher in the neighboring village of Lunca de Sus, saw these as “more of political maneuvers than true questions of society” (interview by Burcea, June 15, 2008). However some Romanian teachers worried about the country having a Hungarian minority population which is not literate in Romanian. “There are people who do not speak Romanian at all in the village,” declared Petrică Bilibok-Bârsan, Romanian school teacher, “especially among the older generations. It is not normal for a citizen… not to speak the language of the country” (interview by Burcea and Szőcs, June 10, 2008).

In relation to this question, the town's librarian added: “This is a very practical problem. If you live in France, you need to speak French because it is the official language of the country, no?” I nodded. Looking at Brigitta, she said: “same thing in the United States, isn't it?” Brigitta nodded. “Why would it be different here in Romania?” concluded Mrs Bârsan. When discussing the subject, the librarian assured us that her position did not represent any kind of extreme nationalism. “It is simply common sense,” she argued, adding that she respected the Hungarian culture and had herself learned
the Hungarian language: “All cultures are equally important... We all are human; I have nothing against the Hungarian people but they have to respect the fact that they live in Romania, and thus they need to learn the Romanian language in order to be able to integrate themselves” (interview by Burcea and Szőcs, June 10, 2008).

Many Hungarians in Ghimeş-Făget made the same argument themselves. The train station chief, for example, told us it had been a “chance” that he learned Romanian at school. “We say: the more languages you know, the more men you are,” he added. “It means if I know ten languages, then I am ten men” (interview by Beasley, Burcea, Huston and Szőcs, May 24, 2008). In Romania today, this kind of enthusiasm for foreign languages is often associated with the “new mentality” of “belonging to Europe,” a mentality that both promotes and reinforces a kind of liberal “open-mindedness” as well as the “democratic” values of multiculturalism.

Recuperating Ghimeş-Făget

“[Cohabitation between Romanians and Hungarians led to the transformation of many inhabitants into bilinguals. Often, the elders remember the consequences of the two historical periods of the Hungarian occupation, when oppression left its powerful print on society. Not even after all these years would this recollection fade away from the minds of those who felt on their own skin the dreadful echo of these events. Those that tried to disobey were continuously exposed to crude treatments. It was not uncommon for families who had the courage to speak Romanian at home to be evicted. Even at night they were spied upon by gendarmes who had been informed that they were using the Romanian language.]”

Petrică Bilbok-Bârsan, & Ion Gabor, Din Universul Spiritualităţii Româneşti – Plaiurile Ghimeşene [On Romanian Spirituality – the Plateau of Ghimes].

In [The Study of the Romanian Language, from the Perspective of the New Curriculum's Objective], a volume of articles written by Transylvanian teachers – among whom ten work in Ghimeş-
Făget –, the challenges of teaching Romanian in a bilingual environment are discussed by both Hungarian and Romanian teachers who equally recognize the importance of their pedagogic mission:

The Romanian language is an important object of study in all schools, including those which teach in the language of the national minorities…. The Romanian language is the language of the state, and the resolution of most official affairs is impossible without its preliminary knowledge… The establishment of bonds between the inhabitants of the different areas of the territory is impossible to conceive without considering the formative and cognitive value of the Romanian language [Bilibok-Bârsan and Gabor 2006:62-63, my own translation].

In our present time, the mission of the school is to ensure the learning of the Romanian language as an instrument of communication particularly important for the development of social life…. In the conditions of a bilingual education, the Romanian language being the official language of the state, it is an important communication tool of our society…. In the conditions of a bilingual education, children learn with ease a non-maternal language, and this phenomenon does not hinder the learning of their native language when it is realized in the proper conditions. [Tanko 2006:118, my own translation]

The volume is in fact a collection of answers to the question “what defines the proper conditions for an efficient and open education?” The collection also emphasizes the role of the county of Bacau, Romania, as a test site for the implementation of new “pedagogic and didactic theories” regarding teaching in a bilingual environment. In contrast to the rigidity of the communist regime's educational system, these new approaches show a willingness to adopt a bi- or multi-cultural approach that would both preserve a healthy status quo in Transylvania and encourage dialogue and cultural exchange among the region’s different ethnic communities.

This volume also introduces the reader to the Transylvania’s historical background and discusses the effects of past assimilation policies. The first article by Dr. Dumitru Zaharia (2006), historian and former head of Bacau's state archives, is thus entitled “Ghimeş-Făget under the Hortyst terror.” Its subject is the “drama of the Hortyst occupation beginning in September 1940, due to the Decree of Vienna, which was imposed on Romania by the hitlerist-fascist-soviet collaboration”
Many of the 2486 inhabitants [of Ghimeș-Făget] who declared themselves to be Hungarian nationals were in fact Romanians, who, during the domination of the Magyarized nobility of Transylvania, at the time of the national oppression exerted by the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, had been de-nationalized and Catholicized by the most drastic measures exercised by the Viennese powers and its local authorities. The fact that, in 1930, around 2500 inhabitants of Ghimeș-Făget auto-declared themselves of Hungarian nationality did not provoke any kind of political, economic, national or religious persecution from the Romanian state, nor did it expose them to insults from their Romanian co-citizens. The town's situation demonstrates the guarantee of the rights and liberties that were provided at the time in Europe under the name of Greater Romania.

[Zaharia 2006:6-7, my own translation]

One interpretation of this analysis is that Romania – especially Transylvania – has always preserved a tradition of tolerance towards other cultures even during the darker hours of its history. This was one aspect of “Romanianness” often put forward by informants in Ghimeș-Făget. “Romanians are by tradition a hospitable and tolerant people,” as Father Olaf put it (interview by Burcea and Szőcs, June 23, 2008). This discussion of these historical events by Dr. Zaharia here perhaps serves to remind its readers that, during the interbellic period, Romania refused to impose on the Hungarian ethnic minority the same treatment that it had previously endured.53 Although the communists had tarnished this image by practicing assimilation policies, Dr. Zaharia reminds us that there were times in Romanian history where tolerance and equity were much more predominant.

But this article also suggests that Ghimeș-Făget, Transylvania, and by extension the nation as a whole not only needs more enlightened policies and educational methods, but also literally a therapy:

All these [Magyarized] people, lost for the Romanian nation through the use of the crudest terror tactics in Transylvania, and incarnating the suffering of the Romanian nation, should be recuperated.

53 “The emotional comparison between the cold, disapproving atmosphere of the Magyar schools and the nurturing ambience of the Romanian ones illustrates the 'impermeability' of Hungarian cultural institutions to most Romanians in Transylvania before 1918. These institutions offered upward mobility only to the assimilated. In general, the majority of Romanians did not get far in the Magyar system. Those Romanians who did succeed had to assimilate, and did so, in fact, so well that they passed for Magyars and then were lost as Romanians” (Livezeanu 1995:147).
It is the duty of the government, the Orthodox Church and the Romanian Greek-Catholic Church to accomplish this holy and noble task for the Romanian people. [Zaharia 2006:16, my own translation]

Here re-Romanianization is portrayed as a *cure* to the previous policies of Magyarization experienced in Transylvania during the Hortyst occupation and the Dual Monarchy. As a “holy and noble task,” it would constitute basically the “recuperation” of those *sheep* that had been *lost* to Romania during these times of “terror.”

This particular interpretation of the educational mission of the Romanian teachers, one perhaps unique to the Transylvanian question, suggests that the specter of cultural assimilation may yet again be emerging from its own history. The problem with such an interpretation is above all the inescapably of its own logic. If indeed populations had been forcibly “converted” from one nationality to another, it seems sensible to assume that, when these political pressures end, the populations who endured them should be granted the possibility to return to their “normal identity.” To ignore that such policies have taken place, and, more importantly, to provide no “remedy,” would be itself an injustice and an admission of defeat.

Perhaps the main problem arising from this type of reasoning is first of all the assumption that a social group possesses within itself an essential national identity. Even more problematic is the idea that one can somehow lose consciousness of this essential inner nature (through the use of forceful assimilation strategies), but not the essence itself. In other words, nationality could be *forgotten* but never truly *lost*, and it would be the responsibility of the state to *revive* it through a (re)education, even if the individual is not fully aware of this “loss”, or truly willing to accept a *therapy*. It can be argued that this medical metaphor as applied to the “problem” of national identity has been perhaps the main justification in Transylvania for the constant manipulation and “renegotiation” of its ethnic communities.

The “right to choose,” one so dear to today's Ghimeș-Făget's residents, may require the
renouncing of these chimeric fabrications of both Hungarian and Romanian intellectuals whose essentialistic definitions of ethnicity have become a justification for more or less forceful shock treatments designed to reawaken a forgotten sense of “who we are”, preceding the “immoral influence” and the denaturation of immutable social ties whose restoration becomes, to use Zaharia’s terms, a “holy task.” This logic has led to a circular and potentially unending quest for a supposedly lost sense of “ethnic purity”, which, in the present multicultural environment, seems merely a fantasy. Both this logic and its end result, i.e., people who consider themselves Hungarian, Romanian or simply European today in Ghimeș-Făget have no legitimate reason to do so apart from having been denationalized, has not been acknowledged in many discussions of ethnicity in Transylvania.

The historical shaping of notions of Hungarianness and Romanianness in Transylvania has progressively become crystallized as a dichotomy. Yet the problem of this dichotomy, one inherent in such an essentialistic binary definition of ethnicity, is that it leads inescapably to the idea of one “true” or “false” nationality. The idea that Ghimeș-Făget's populations have been Magyarized and Romanianized rests on the assumption that its inhabitants somehow have been alienated from their own respective cultures. Yet it seems that a strong internal cohesion within and between the region’s two ethnic communities emerges from this historical background. There is too a growing awareness of how important it is to preserve the community’s cultural patrimony. The recent opening of various “memory places” in the town, including an ethnographic museum with more than two hundred traditional costumes, a railroad museum that represents the region as an ancestral borderland linking Romania and the old Hungarian Empire, the funding of many community programs that encourage bilingualism as well as the study of both Romanian and Hungarian folklore and traditional culture, all suggest that Ghimeș-Făget has begun to freely acknowledge and express its cultural richness and multiplicity. While

54 “So the battle for origins has been fought out. The mythological approach tends towards simplification and promotes racial purism; the Romanians cannot be other than Romans, Dacians, or Daco-Romans. The idea of a more complex ethnic and cultural mixture, indeed one that has varied from one period to another, rarely enters the discussion. And yet what is striking about Romania is precisely the multitude and variety of the elements which have gone to make it up” (Boia 2001:43).
this statement may seem to be over-enthusiastic, or to represent some kind of idealistic triumphalism regarding the present condition, one has to compare it to other (much less open-minded) periods of history and acknowledge to what has been done in the village in the last few years to promote and encourage cultural plurality.
“Anthropologists have conventionally made two, mutually opposed kinds of statements about their discipline: first, that it establishes the essential unity of human intellection; and second, that it explores the uniqueness of each culture and society in its own terms.”

Michael Herzfeld, *Anthropology through the Looking-Glass.*

Much can be said about the fragility of such concepts as “Romanianness” and “Hungarianness” – ones that reify culture and reduce its complexity to simplistic abstractions. Much can also be said about the arbitrariness of such discourse and symmetrical dichotomies that oppose such concepts to each other. It is arguable that these terms should rather be discarded than used in an analysis; for who today would take a discussion of Americanness, Frenchness or Germanness seriously?

However easy it is to dismiss such discussions because of their supposed naiveté, their lack of consistence and accuracy, it is possible to see them as self-reflected *simulacra* of the social group; as such, their study is still relevant to the comprehension of cultural differences within a historical continuity. Such an approach poses many epistemological difficulties: on the one hand these concepts remain purely symbolic and abstract – lying beyond (or even belying) “cultural intimacy” –, and on the other they can be seen as dynamic and empirical – emerging from historical factors and the apprehension of a number of often observed social norms and regularities.

One major problem with concepts like Romanianness and Hungarianness resides in the fact that they may carry and communicate a misleading illusion of coherence and unanimity. In crisis, caricature and stereotypes can become instruments of ethnic dissension and persecution, and sublime landscapes
can lead to nationalistic or romantic fervor. The anthropological perspective itself is not devoid of oscillation between these two emotional poles, from Montaigne's noble savage to Caliban's bestiality. Not only “what” is said about the culture but also “who” and “in what context” matters obviously.55

What supposedly constitutes the Romanian or Hungarian “essential character” is not only an isolated set of characteristics but also a dynamic counter-projection (and communication) of what the “other” is considered to be. In the case of Transylvania, Romanian and Hungarian nationals have come to a certain extent to represent an interdependent duality, each supposedly symbolizing for the other the notion of alterity. Throughout Transylvania's history, the attempts made to impose one cultural model over the other possibly created a kind of “cultural symmetry.”56

The problem of cultural assimilation as symmetry-asymmetry, as analyzed here, follows a simple, perhaps simplistic, hypothesis: the possibility of a “conversion” from nationality A to B. The assumption is that, in times of crisis and often moved by imperialistic and totalitarian ideologies, the Hungarian and Romanian states have successively attempted to imprint on Transylvania's multi-ethnic populations their own conceptions of national identity. Because these assimilation attempts were not unilaterally emerging from Romania or Hungary but successively from both countries (perhaps at times simultaneously), their respective national policies in Transylvania needed to be considered in relation to each other, with special attention to the 1869 Nationalities' Law in Austro-Hungary, the Horthyst occupation of Transylvania, the period of the Romanian Great Unity, and finally the communist period,

55 “Finally, as a modality of experience, ethnicity is not continuous but an intermittent phenomenon. It happens at particular moments, and in particular contexts, when Clujeni interpret their experience or diagnose situations or identify themselves or others in ethnic terms. Although we speak routinely of persons as having an ethnicity, we might more aptly speak of them doing ethnicity at such moments; although we routinely speak of them as being Hungarian or Romanian, we might more aptly speak of them becoming Hungarian or Romanian, in the sense that “Hungarian” or “Romanian” becomes the relevant, operative description or ‘identity’ or self-understanding at that particular moment and in that particular context” (Brubaker et al. 2004:208).

56 “It is hard to avoid implicitly or explicitly treating 'Hungarian' and 'Romanian' as parallel or coordinate categories. There are Hungarian- and Romanian- language schools; Hungarian and Romanian churches; Hungarian and Romanian newspapers; Hungarian and Romanian theater and opera companies, even Hungarian and Romanian sections of the municipal puppet theater. For the 2002 census, as for earlier censuses, one could choose Hungarian and Romanian (or one of the other categories) to indicate one's ethnocultural nationality, and also to indicate one's native language…. Yet in important respects, 'Hungarian' and 'Romanian' are not parallel, coordinate symmetrical categories. The asymmetry has obvious political, institutional, and demographic dimensions. The very condition of identifying with a minority nationality in a state defined as the state of and for a majority nationality is by definition asymmetrical, and almost always involves asymmetries of power, position, and perspective” (Brubaker et al. 2004:211).

Although state education cannot be isolated from the wider consideration of the general political apparatus, the state education system, as it evolved over time, played a central role in the state’s assimilation attempts. An analysis of the ideologies disseminated by these state structures can help us understand why these assimilation projects have had the place they had in the history of Transylvania and Romania.

By describing the historical development of the increasingly rigid and dogmatic educational institutions of communist Romania, the intent was to show how the politicization of the educational institutions did not only reflect but helped to propagate a totalitarian ideology. The justification of cultural assimilation policies not only became the instrument of the state in achieving obedience through homogeneity, it was also a way for the regime legitimatize itself by “hijacking” the country’s national symbols and its historical patrimony. The tactic of the communist state had been to present itself as the most zealous “champion” of these values, whose faith was supposedly demonstrated by its proselytizing strategies.

As Romania's isolationism and cultural self-fixation increased in the 1970s, so did the state’s attempts to politicize its educational system. In Transylvania, this meant the systematic closing of bilingual schools and the quasi-exclusive use in state schools of the Romanian language (the exception being the teaching of a selection of foreign languages). The historical continuity of the Hungarian cultural presence in the region was minimized in favor of a return to Transylvania's Romanian “roots,” which in themselves were not only (re)constituted as a historical “truth” but as a model for identity and community that would inform the future of the region. In other words, Romanianization was firstly the reaffirmation of the past continuity of the Romanian culture in Transylvania (as a dominant one), and it was also secondly a policy of cultural orientation for the future – which paradoxically entailed a return

57 “In line with the great humanistic traditions of the Romanian people, in the vast context of historical revolutionary transformations in Romania, the outstanding personality of Nicolae Ceauşescu expresses, in a striking militant hypostasis of a modern, independent, fully sovereign socialist country, the loftiest aspirations of the Romanian people” (Marino 1972).
to the region’s “founding origins”\textsuperscript{58}—, which manifested itself in the party’s protochronic vision of history.

One of the main justifications for these policies, apart from the reasons already mentioned, was that they were counter-measures to—or “remedies” for—Magyarization attempts the Hungarian state carried out while it held Transylvania. Romanianization policies could thus be seen as simple retribution or “historical vengeance,” but also as attempts at achieving “national therapy.”

Communist Romania, especially during its renewed nationalistic phase of the post 1970s, was a regime that not only propagated a particular model of “Romanianness”—with its increasing ethnocentrism and obsession with uniformity—but also revealed a state determined to represent as the ultimate guarantor of this redefined vision of “national purity.” The party in other words sought to \textit{incarnate} the nation and its symbols in itself. This political posture perhaps exemplifies a general trend of nationalistic regimes which claim to \textit{embody} the symbolic and historical “character” of their nations while in reality they simply attempt to hold on to power by appropriating national ideological discourses and symbols. These self-generating \textit{simulacra} of the national character are then used to legitimize the imposition of increasingly stricter normative codes of behavior destined to preserve its (perpetually threatened) integrity.

Romanianness here can thus be considered not only as the ensemble of elements for an individual that would constitute the conditions for his or her belonging to the Romanian nation; it also led to a representation of the communist state as the embodiment of a particular “Romanian spirit,” imbued with a (predestined) “will” of its own.\textsuperscript{59} This metaphor itself relies on an organicist representation of the state— in which it becomes seen as a “living being”—, one governed by strong

\textsuperscript{58}“The origins of our historical trajectory remained within \textit{our vision of the world}: a great Dacia, united, with strong men, with glorious leaders; Dacians, Daco-Romans, and then the Romanians fought for unity and continuity under the banner of great commanders: Burebista... Ceauşescu... X” (Bărlea 2003:41-42, my own translation).

\textsuperscript{59}“The Romanian political spirit had reached the stage of theoretical, crystallized and codified presentation. It was a decisive step forward in the art of governing, in the relationships between the ruling prince and his subjects, in moral principles, at the opposite pole of ‘Machiavellism.’ Influenced by the Christian lore... the Romanian spirit constantly rejected cynicism and political amorality” (Marino 1972).
self-preservation mechanisms and principles of expansion and growth. It is with this organic representation of that state that the cultural assimilation of foreign elements into the nation’s “body” becomes “natural,” even self-evident, because it directly links cultural assimilation to the biological processes of incorporation. Although this organic representation can itself be reductive – being simply a key metaphor –, it allowed us to show the importance that the concept of “national therapy” has in a particular logic of nationalism. When this is understood, the kind of “self-defense” undertaken in Transylvania and Romania to insure and defend national and cultural integrity becomes more intelligible. The figure of the vampire, so often seen as the major Transylvanian myth, embodies best perhaps this allegorical portrayal of the tyrannical being feeding itself on the blood of the people, and at the same time irremediably altering their inner nature in accordance to its own image (Créméné 1981).

As Transylvania attempts to reconstruct itself after years of such destructive logics, hopefully it will refrain from implementing cultural assimilation policies today as a remedy to the cultural assimilation policies of the past.60 This study has attempted to develop a reflection on why and how Transylvanian populations have been caught into this dehumanizing process and have been “pulled successively on either side of the border” (Magdalena Bârsan, interview by Nyce, Burcea, Holditch, Huston, Klimaszewski, Sheil and Spotts, June 4, 2008). Magyarization and Romanianization policies did not succeed in their objective of creating a “uniform culture”, but instead have had the paradoxical effect of strengthening – a process that has strong parallels to “vaccination”, to return again to a medical vocabulary – the self-consciousness of the region’s communities in terms of ethnic identity. The prevalence of these models of thought has, in turn, stood in the way of these communities turning to alternative discourses and metaphors, especially in relation to the preservation and development of their (multi)cultural values, and there are many arguments in favor of redefining these perspectives in

60 “The first modern university in Transylvania, established in Cluj in 1872, at once symbolized and promoted Hungary's nationalizing mission in Transylvania during the Dualist era. The abrupt Romanianization of the university in 1919 vividly symbolized the sharp reversal of nationalizing policies; in 1940, this reversal was itself reversed.... The merger [between the Hungarian and Romanian universities of Cluj in 1959], moreover, portended the gradual withering away of Hungarian-language higher education: by the late 1980s, only a few subjects offered instruction in Hungarian” (Brubaker et al. 2004:146-147).
the light of the new European, transnational environment.
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