

Copyright 2015 Diana Georgescu

“CEAUȘESCU’S CHILDREN:”  
THE MAKING AND UNMAKING OF ROMANIA’S LAST SOCIALIST GENERATION  
(1965-2010)

BY

DIANA GEORGESCU

DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History  
in the Graduate College of the  
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2015

Urbana, Illinois

Doctoral Committee:

Professor Maria Todorova, Chair  
Professor Keith Hitchins  
Professor Mark Steinberg  
Associate Professor Zsuzsa Gille  
Professor Katherine Verdery, City University of New York

## Abstract

This dissertation integrates a social and cultural history of socialist childhood and citizenship with an ethnography of post-socialist memory regimes. It explores the ideological representations, institutional structures, and remembered experiences of socialist childhood through the lens of Romania's "last socialist generation," an age cohort who was largely born and socialized during Nicolae Ceaușescu's rule (1965-1989) and came of age in the 1990s, after the violent collapse of the regime. Juxtaposing official representations of socialist childhood and nationhood against personal recollections gathered through extensive archival and oral history research, the dissertation investigates the role of children as both objects of state efforts to raise loyal socialist citizens and as agents in their own right.

The focus on children, who are universally envisioned by modern political regimes as citizens in the making, allows me to pose broader theoretical questions about the social formation of socialist subjectivity and the nature of its relation with the socialist state. In the scholarship on state socialism in the Soviet Bloc, the relation between state and society is often represented in dichotomous terms of "resistance" and "conformism" (or "complicity"), while agency tends to be narrowly associated with acts of opposition to the socialist regime. Investigating the multiple meanings and forms of empowerment that children, teachers, and parents generated through their engagement in youth socialization, I aim to revisit these dominant conceptualizations. Socialist citizens, I argue, found self-fulfillment not only by opposing the regime or escaping into alternative life-styles, but also by engaging actively with state institutions and pursuing a set of inextricably linked socialist and national values. My work on children's everyday practices of citizenship can similarly contribute to histories of

nationalism, accounting for how the (socialist) nation was “powerfully realized in practice” and circumventing essentialist treatments of nations as “real” entities. Finally, the field of memory studies can benefit from my examination of the generational dynamics of post-socialist memory practices in the broader context of popular appropriation, diversification, and commodification of social memory in postsocialist Eastern Europe.

To investigate how children grew into socialist citizens - or failed to do so - in Ceaușescu’s Romania, this dissertation proposes a performative approach. Thus conceived, socialist citizenship was not merely something that children acquired through instruction, but something that they *did*, something they *performed* routinely and often inconspicuously in daily life. Deploying this performative approach, individual chapters examine the simultaneously constraining and enabling effects of children’s engagement in state-orchestrated practices of socialist patriotism and internationalism in a wide array of national and transnational sites, be these schools, after school institutions, pioneer camps and expeditions, or international youth exchanges.

## Acknowledgements

This dissertation would not have been possible without the help and support of mentors, colleagues, friends, and family, who sustained and inspired me throughout my long academic journey. I owe my deepest gratitude to Professor Maria Todorova for her academic guidance and friendship as well as her example of solid scholarship. Her engaging classes, generous hosting of many a reading group, and famed Balkan parties made the History department at the University of Illinois a true a home away from home. I am also indebted to Professor Keith Hitchins, whose counsel was always delivered with tremendous kindness and warmth. There was no question over a research paper that was not answered over a cup of coffee at Espresso Royale or a successful trip to his impressive home library.

Others, too, have generously read various drafts of this dissertation and offered their suggestions, helping to clarify and hone its main arguments. I feel grateful to have had Professor Katherine Verdery as an interlocutor in my efforts to address questions of socialist subjectivity and agency as well as the challenges of relying on retrospective recollections and state-authored archival sources in revisiting the socialist past. Bringing his expertise in Russian history to the table, Professor Mark Steinberg encouraged me to explore the implications of my analysis of the twin processes of formation and affirmation of the socialist self for other political and cultural contexts that place a premium on collective belonging. Indeed, many of the broader questions about the character of socialist modernity and subjectivity I ask in this dissertation took shape during my work as an editorial assistant at the *Slavic Review* under the guidance of Mark Steinberg and Jane Hedges. The Eastern European Reading Group at the University of Illinois was also an occasion to make friends and share my research with outstanding scholars. I am

particularly thankful to Rick Ebenshade and Professor Zsuzsa Gille for their insightful comments and comparative perspectives on my research. Zsuzsa also kindly accepted to serve on my dissertation committee, urging me to explore the intersection of theories of nationalism and state socialism.

During my graduate studies at the University of Illinois and the Central European University in Budapest, I benefitted from a diverse community of scholars, whose academic guidance went well beyond my disciplinary and area specialization. From Professor Antoinette Burton at the University of Illinois, I learned to question the very foundations of history as a discipline and think about archives and methodological choices in critical and innovative ways. I am thankful that she continued to be a thought-provoking interlocutor and an inspiring teacher throughout my years in the program. With his anthropological sensibility, Professor Tim Pilbrow from the Russian and Eastern European Center significantly shaped that way I think about national and European identities as well as memory cultures. Professor Mark Micale, who welcomed me into the History program, inspired in me not only a passion for French and cultural history, but also the courage to pursue a research project on the very recent past that does not fit neatly into the disciplinary boundaries of History.

I am also grateful to Professors Francisca de Haan, Suzan Zimmerman, Jasmina Lukic, and Kumkum Sangari in the Gender Department at the Central European University in Budapest for providing an incredibly supportive academic environment for a young female scholar. It was there that I was introduced to the art of interdisciplinary thinking and first contemplated becoming a historian. Special thanks to Professor Hanna Schissler, who became a dear friend and mentor, teaching me the value of both great scholarship and a fulfilling life during our many walks along the Danube. To Wendy Bracewell and Alex Drace-Francis, in whose company I

made the friendliest and tastiest debut in the world of international conferences, I owe thanks for many inspiring conversations, candid friendship, and much cheer over the years.

During my fieldwork in Romania, Alyssa Grossman, Aurelia Vasile, Valentin Săndulescu, Razvan Pârâianu, Cristina Bejan, Chris Davis, and Cristian Vasile shared their intellectual curiosity, archival wisdom, and friendship, turning work into a research pleasure. I am also deeply grateful to those who contributed to this project, engaging in what the French accurately call *travail de mémoire* by offering their time, childhood memorabilia, and life stories.

Various institutions deserve acknowledgement for having generously supported this project. The two years of international research in Romania, London, and Washington, D. C. were made possible by grants from the Social Science Research Council in New York, the New Europe College in Bucharest, the Graduate College at the University of Illinois, as well as the Romanian Cultural Institute and the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington, D.C. In addition, a Mellon-CES Dissertation Completion Fellowship from the Council for European Studies in New York and a graduate fellowship from the Illinois Program for Research in the Humanities at the University of Illinois enabled me to develop and complete this dissertation.

I dedicate this dissertation to my family, both the one back in Romania and the new one across the ocean. Not least because they often urged me on with pleading questions - “when are you going to finish this thesis?” – my parents played a major role in the completion of my dissertation. Without their unwavering trust in my abilities and self-sacrificial support since the early years of my socialist childhood, my academic journey would not have been possible. Finally, my husband, Fedja, was my staunchest supporter in carrying out this project. His love and his patience in hearing out half-baked arguments cheered me to the finish line.

## Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION: CHILDHOOD, SUBJECTIVITY, AND AGENCY IN LATE SOCIALISM.....	1
CHAPTER I: “THE CHILDREN OF THE MOTHERLAND, THE MOST PRECIOUS CAPITAL OF THE PEOPLE:” THE IDEOLOGICAL REPRESENTATIONS AND INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURES OF LATE SOCIALIST CHILDHOOD.....	49
CHAPTER II: THE PEDAGOGY OF SOCIALIST PATRIOTISM: PERFORMATIVITY, RESIGNIFICATION, AND AGENCY.....	96
CHAPTER III: THE SOCIALIST NERD: DISCURSIVE PRACTICES OF SOCIALIST PATRIOTISM.....	145
CHAPTER IV: SMALL COMRADES AS ARCHEOLOGISTS AND ETHNOGRAPHERS: PERFORMING THE SOCIALIST NATION ON PIONEER EXPEDITIONS .....	211
CHAPTER V: INTERNATIONALISM WITHOUT CONTAMINATION? ROMANIAN PIONEERS IN INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN’S CAMPS DURING THE COLD WAR.....	278
CHAPTER VI: PIONEERS INTO BLOGGERS AND PUBLIC INTELLECTUALS: THE POLITICS OF GENERATIONAL MEMORY AND CHILDHOOD NOSTALGIA IN POSTSOCIALIST ROMANIA.....	347
CONCLUSIONS.....	418
APPENDIX.....	428
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	436



## Introduction

### Childhood, Subjectivity, and Agency in Late Socialism

Hailed as the future of the socialist nation in the official rhetoric of Nicolae Ceaușescu's regime (1965-1989), children growing up during the last two decades of Romanian socialism were vernacularly called "Ceaușescu's children" or "children of the decree" by discontent Romanians who had become the subject of increasingly intrusive reproductive policies. Following the fall of communism, print and broadcast media popularized the idea that this young cohort straddled the border between the communist past and the transitional present, constituting a "transition generation" that was old enough to remember communism and young enough to start anew. Given the centrality of this generation to the socialist regime's struggle for legitimacy and the post-communist discourses of moral and democratic renewal, my dissertation examines the ideological representations, institutional structures, and remembered experiences of late socialist childhood.

The larger theoretical thrust of the project is to explore real existing socialism as an alternative experience of modernity fueled by the "Enlightenment dream" of the perfectibility of its citizenry and characterized by distinctive forms of social organization.<sup>1</sup> Not unlike the modern Western state, which has historically derived its strength from exerting a simultaneously "individualizing and totalizing form of power," seeking to produce individuals through highly regulated daily routines while ruling over a polity of citizens, the socialist state exhibited a

---

<sup>1</sup> Katherine Pence and Paul Betts, "Introduction," In *Socialist Modern. East German Everyday Culture and Politics* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008), 1-36; David Hoffmann, *Stalinist Values: The Cultural Norms of Soviet Modernity (1917-1941)* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003); Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991).

comparable “combination of individualization techniques and of totalization procedures.”<sup>2</sup> It is in this spirit that some recent literature reflects on the contradictory impulses of collective integration and individual emancipation informing the Soviet project of creating a “new socialist person,” uncovering a paradoxical Soviet subject, who was “to submit completely to party leadership, cultivate collectivist ethic, and repress individualism, while at the same time becoming an enlightened and independent-minded individual who pursues knowledge and is inquisitive and creative.”<sup>3</sup>

If the totalizing procedures of socialist regimes - their intended homogenization of society, forms of collective life, etc. - have been the subject of much literature on state socialisms, it is fair to argue that most scholarly endeavors deem Soviet-style regimes incompatible with individualism, failing to acknowledge and explore their individualizing techniques. This dissertation aims to account for the productive tension between the totalizing and individualizing techniques of the socialist state, which repeatedly encouraged young people to both mobilize and overcome their resources of individualism, activism, and spontaneity. It starts inquiry from children, who were envisioned as socialist subjects in the making, in order to give insights into the wide range of practices of socialist patriotism they enacted routinely in the process of growing (or failing to grow) into socialist citizens. Juxtaposing official representations of socialist childhood and nationhood against personal recollections, this work investigates the role of children as both objects of state efforts to raise nationally loyal socialist citizens and as

---

<sup>2</sup> On the modern Western state, see Michel Foucault, “Omnes et Singulatim: Towards a Criticism of ‘Political Reason,’” In *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values*, ed. Sterling McMurrin (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1981), 223-254; Michel Foucault, “The Subject and Power,” In *Critical Inquiry* (1982), 782.

<sup>3</sup> Alexei Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 11. See also Juliane Fürst, *Stalin's Last Generation. Soviet Post-War Youth and the Emergence of Mature Socialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 341.

socially constituted agents, whose everyday practices and experiences can illuminate the effects of the socialist project of remaking society.

### **The Politics of Youth and Generation**

Neither natural nor inexorable, generations are, to a great extent, discursive and social constructs. The fact that late socialism was replete with talk of youth and generations indicates that these were important categories contemporaries deployed to make sense of social differences and change. The most widely circulated discourses were certainly those promoted by the party leadership, which invoked children and youth as metaphors for the transformative potential of socialism, the familial solidarity of the nation, and the nurturing ambitions of a strongly paternalist regime that presented itself as the guarantor of its citizens' basic needs.

In contrast to the rhetoric of the 1940s and 1950s, which typically pitted old against new generations shaped by the regime of popular democracy, Ceaușescu inaugurated his rule at the Ninth Congress of the Romanian Communist Party (RCP) in 1965 with a discourse of social harmony, clamoring the party's successful fulfillment of the task of social transformation in his thesis of "social and ethnic homogenization."<sup>4</sup> Reflecting both the regime's political confidence and its anxiety over youth protests throughout much of the (Western) world in 1968, sociological or pedagogical studies in the period typically described Ceaușescu's Romania as a heaven of generational harmony. By contrast to the intergenerational conflicts and "youth crisis" in the West, children and youth in socialist Romania allegedly enjoyed unprecedented opportunities for self-fulfillment and realization, exhibiting optimism in the future and confidence in their

---

<sup>4</sup> Vladimir Tismaneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons: A Political History of Romanian Communism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 197.

country's political leadership.<sup>5</sup> Around the turn of the seventh decade, a related future-oriented discourse on the self-confident “millennial” generation, expected to reach maturity by the symbolic threshold of 2000, emerged in social science publications, being heavily reproduced by children's magazines.<sup>6</sup> Since the present was the test-bed for the communist utopia, child readers were frequently interpolated as maturing citizens of the new millennium, being encouraged to develop an all-round personality and a future-oriented social imagination.<sup>7</sup>

By far the most vocal generational discourse of the period, however, took shape by the mid-1980s, when print and broadcast media abounded in references to “the children of the Golden Age” or the “Ceașescu Generation.” Confirming scholarly views that “generations are part of the way societies organize their time,” requiring decisions “about how to measure the temporal positions of different groups,” the interconnected symbols of youth and generation became favorite epoch-making devices in the 1980s.<sup>8</sup> Portrayed as a historically privileged cohort, the children born and socialized under the auspices of Ceașescu's regime were thus retrospectively endowed in state propaganda with a sense of social coherence in the 1980s. Instrumentalized in the service of Ceașescu's cult of personality, the “Golden Age” generation served the leader's epochal ambitions to make history by measuring his momentous imprint on Romanian history and communist society in generational terms.

Turning official rhetoric on its head, ordinary Romanians referred to the children born after the banning of abortion in 1966 as “Ceașei” (literally, small Ceașescus) or “decreșei”

---

<sup>5</sup> Stanciu Stoian, “Constatari privind profilul social al tineretului nostru,” *Revista de pedagogie*, July 1968. Petre Pânzaru, “Raporturile intre generatii,” *Educatia pioniereasca* 3, 1973, 9.

<sup>6</sup> These studies took the year 2000 as the symbolic threshold of the transition to full-fledged communism, a political order distinguished not only by advanced technological development and egalitarianism, but also by the quality of its citizenry. Pavel Apostol, *Omul anului 2000* (Junimea, 1972); Mircea Malita, *Cronica anului 2000* (Editura politica, 1975).

<sup>7</sup> Chapter three will explore how pioneer magazines engaged children of the “millennial” generation in discursive practices meant to cultivate a future-oriented imagination.

<sup>8</sup> Stephen Lovell, “Introduction,” In *Generations in Twentieth-Century Europe* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) 4.

(little decrees).<sup>9</sup> Initially used only to denote those born in 1967 and 1968, when the unexpected character of the restrictions on abortion resulted in a short-lived baby boom, the terms were later expanded to include any unplanned children born after 1966 as a result of the decree. The socialist regime's definition of reproduction as patriotic duty towards a benevolent paternal state was thus translated in popular parlance as an act of usurpation of reproductive choice and parental authority. Despite their competing intentions, official generational discourses that emphasized epochal changes and vernacular terms that contested the benevolence of the regime's reproductive policies reinforced the perception that children born and raised in late socialism constituted a distinctive generational cohort. The social coherence of this generation was also retrospectively reaffirmed after the collapse of communism, when newspaper articles, documentary films, and scholarly studies advanced the idea that Ceaușescu's regime was toppled by the very generation of "Ceaușei" it had forced into existence.<sup>10</sup>

As the last chapter of the dissertation will discuss at length, the post-communist period revived the rhetoric of generational conflict. Drawing on the youth symbolism of the Revolution of 1989, some of whose most visible actors and victims were young, post-communist media regularly pitted "young" against "old" generations of so-called "dinosaurs," whose full socialization under communism and internalization of communist mentalities allegedly rendered

---

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, the registered use of the terms in interviews on women's experiences of illegal abortion in Gail Kligman, *The Politics of Duplicity: Controlling Reproduction in Ceausescu's Romania* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 185.

<sup>10</sup> Florin Iepan's documentary "Children of the Decree" (2004), which was broadcast on Romanian television, advanced this thesis of historic revenge, suggesting that this cohort was particularly resilient, eventually teaching their parents' conformist generation how to muster the courage to topple Ceaușescu's regime. Some social studies list the large number of "decreței" among the victims of December 1989 in support of this thesis, although they fail to provide the source of the statistics. See Mihaela Friedlmeier and Alin Gavreliuc, "Value orientations and perception of social change in post-communist Romania," In eds. Isabelle Albert and Dieter Ferring, *Intergenerational Relations* (Policy Press, 2013), 124.

them inapt for democracy.<sup>11</sup> Post-communist media envisioned a “transition generation,” who had only limited exposure to communism, being young enough to start anew and, in the process, redeem Romanian society from its recent past. In their association of youth with “a sense of mission and alternative possibility,” post-communist generational discourses echoed a broader European “myth of youthful redemption” that dates back to the nineteenth century, culminating in twentieth century reclamations of youth across the political spectrum.<sup>12</sup> Rooted in perceptions of youth as transcending social divisions and representing a “more moral alternative capable of redeeming contemporary society from its current ills,” the myth is typically invoked under historical conditions of political and social disruption when the political system is seen as incapable of restoring national solidarity.<sup>13</sup>

### **“Generational Location” and the Historical Conjunction of Ceaușescu’s Romania**

Taking “Ceaușescu’s children,” later reclaimed as “the transition generation,” as one of its analytical categories, this dissertation joins a number of studies that examine historical change and continuity in Soviet and Eastern European socialist regimes from the perspective of border generations, i.e. generations strategically located in the historical process to illuminate the dynamics of inception, entrenchment, or collapse characterizing political regimes.<sup>14</sup> While it

---

<sup>11</sup> One of the most prominent international images of the Revolution, for example, was the Paris Match photograph of “Le Gavroche de Bucarest,” the fourteen-year-old Florin Vieru featured draped in the Romanian flag. On the rhetoric of heroism, martyrdom, and innocent youth in commemorations of December 1989 revolutionaries, see Mihaela Grancea, “Retorica mortii in epitaful revolutionarilor din decembrie ‘89,” In ed. Bogdan Murgescu, *Revoluția Română din decembrie 1989: istorie și memorie* (Iași: Polirom, 2007), 45-66.

<sup>12</sup> See Mark Roseman, “Introduction: generation conflict and German history 1770-1986,” In *Generations in Conflict: Youth Revolt and Generation Formation in Germany 1770-1986* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 9. For the emergence and evolution of modern conceptions of youth that informed beliefs in the redemptive power of youth, see also John Gillis, *Youth and History: Tradition and Change in European Age Relations, 1770 to the Present* (New York: Academic Press, 1981).

<sup>13</sup> Roseman, Introduction, 25.

<sup>14</sup> Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever*; Fürst, *Stalin’s Last Generation*; Anna Saunders, *Honecker’s Children: Youth and Patriotism in East(ern) Germany, 1979-2002*. (Manchester, 2007); Donald J. Raleigh, *Russia’s Sputnik Generation. Soviet Baby Boomers Talk about Their Lives* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006).

acknowledges the constitutive power of generational discourses and symbolism, this study thus also approaches generations in Karl Mannheim's terms, as the result of common historical experiences. Drawing an analogy with the class position of an individual in society, Mannheim argues that age can provide generational cohorts with "a common location in the historical dimension of the social process," ensuring a shared perspective on that process.<sup>15</sup> The common experiences of being socialized during a certain period may further contribute to sharing a range of "possible modes of thought, experience, feeling," and "historically relevant actions."<sup>16</sup>

Echoing both the regime's official rhetoric on the "Ceașescu Generation" and the vernacular language of "decreței" or "Ceașei," the terms I use in this dissertation - "Ceașescu's children" and "the last socialist generation" - encompass the cohort of children who were largely born in the 1960s and early 1970s, being socialized in state institutions and youth organizations during the distinctive historical conjuncture of Ceașescu's Romania.<sup>17</sup> As the RCP's declaration of accomplished social homogenization indicated in 1965, members of the last socialist generation were born into a political regime that was already entrenched and largely normalized in the wake of the major social and economic transformations effected in the Stalinist period through political purges, collectivization, industrialization, and urbanization. By comparison to the postwar upheavals that shaped their parents and grandparents' personal and professional trajectories, the last socialist generation experienced a consolidation rather than a major transformation of the socialist system. Family oral histories that explore the intergenerational transmission of memory suggest that the bitter postwar experiences of social

---

<sup>15</sup> Karl Mannheim, "The Problem of Generations," In *From Karl Mannheim*, ed. Kurt H. Wolff (Transaction Publishers, 1993), 365.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 366.

<sup>17</sup> Unlike the more narrowly defined "decreței," "the last socialist generation" includes all those who spent their formative childhood years during the last two decades of communism, whether they were born before or after the banning of abortion, and whether they were planned or unwanted by their parents (an aspect that any researcher would be hard pressed to assess).

dislocation - ranging from collectivization to imprisonment - were largely silenced by parents and grandparents fearful that they might foreclose their children's opportunities for upward social mobility.<sup>18</sup> The socialization of "Ceașescu's children" into socialist practices and values in the 1970s and 1980s was thus not typically challenged by either personal experiences or family memories of prewar social identities and hierarchies.

Judging by statistics of the unprecedented integration of children in schools and youth organizations by the 1970s, this cohort was also exposed to a more homogenous socialization than any other previous generation. While there continued to be significant differences in opportunities for education and social advancement, official statistics indicate that over ninety percent of children between the ages of seven and fourteen attended primary and middle schools and joined the Pioneer Organization in the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>19</sup> Initiated in the immediate postwar period by campaigns to eradicate illiteracy, expand the numbers of schools, introduce mandatory textbooks, and train loyal youth cadres and teachers, the processes of centralization, homogenization, and expansion of education reached their apogee in late socialism.

If late Romanian socialism was, to a great extent, an entrenched and normalized regime that had ceased to either exert or remember the overt terror and violence of the postwar period, it was also the stage of a strong commitment to social engineering. The party leadership's growing ambitions of national greatness and political confidence under Ceașescu colluded with anxieties

---

<sup>18</sup> As my interviews indicate, many of those born in the 1960s and 1970s only learned about their families' silenced experiences of postwar dislocation – whether collectivization or the problematic status as postwar refugees from Bessarabia - after the fall of communism. By contrast, many in the parents' generation, born in rural areas in the 1940s and 1950s, experienced directly transformations such as collectivization, often recollecting their parents' decisions to join the collective as a sacrifice that would ensure their access to education. On this latter aspect, see also Simona Branc, *Generații in schimbare. Modele de educație familială in Banatul secolului XX*, (Iasi: Lumen, 2008).

<sup>19</sup> These changes will be more thoroughly discussed in the second chapter of this dissertation. See ANIC, Fond C.C. al P.C.R. - Propaganda, file 33/1987, Ministerul Educației și Învățământului, "Documentar privind dezvoltarea învățământului în R. S. România," 3; Traian Pop, "Organizația pionierilor într-o nouă etapă a dezvoltării sale," *Revista de pedagogie* 8-9, 1966, 16.



over the moral health of the socialist nation to give Romanian communists new lease on the project of perfecting society. The anxieties over the impact of the declining birth rate and morals of Romanian youth on the socialist labor force and national body first manifested themselves in the state's infamous reproductive legislation and sustained propaganda for "families with many children."<sup>20</sup>

As this dissertation will explore, Ceaușescu's ambitions of national greatness also found expression in reforms of the educational system and of the party's main children's organizations, the Pioneers, which aimed at bolstering the socialization of youth into socialist patriotism. Following the Soviet model, Romanian communists argued that intellectual education and skills training were necessary, but not sufficient for the formation of communist "character" (*personalitate*) or "consciousness" (*conștiința*).<sup>21</sup> It was not only important for children to develop practical skills, but also a socialist work ethic, love of manual labor, and respect for the common good, all of which were essential aspects of communist character. In the same vein, children were not only encouraged to expand their knowledge of the socialist motherland, but also develop a sense of duty to the party or belonging to the socialist collective. In other words, the much-touted "new socialist person" (*omul nou*) was not complete without a solid communist upbringing (the equivalent of the Russian *vospitanie*), which was alternatively referred to as "patriotic-revolutionary," "moral-political," or "civic" education (*educație patriotică și revoluționară, moral-politică, cetățenească/obștească*) under Ceaușescu.<sup>22</sup>

---

<sup>20</sup> For the language of moral decline of the nation's youth and the alleged "legalization of prostitution" blamed on the liberalization of abortion in 1957, see Ceaușescu's own interventions during the 1966 discussions over the new reproductive legislation. ANIC, Fond C.C. al P.C.R. – Cancelarie, file 102/1966, 14-26.

<sup>21</sup> Anatole Chircev & all, "Educarea elevilor in spiritual moralei comuniste," *Pedagogia pentru instituttele pedagogice* (EDP, 1964), 222-331.

<sup>22</sup> On the emphasis on "vospitanie" in Soviet pedagogy, see Catriona Kelly, "Shaping the 'Future Race': Regulating the Daily Life of Children in Early Soviet Russia," *Everyday Life in Early Soviet Russia. Taking the Revolution Inside*, eds. Christina Kiaer and Eric Naiman (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 256-281.

Taking over the traditional role of the family in nurturing moral, cultural, or religious values and modes of behavior, the socialist state charged its youth organization and the reformed socialist school with the task of cultivating children's socialist patriotism and internationalism as part of a broader agenda of moral and political upbringing. While formal and systematic school instruction in subjects such as national history or literature was expected to contribute to the patriotic education of youth, character formation was primarily the task of extracurricular activities monitored by homeroom and regular teachers or pioneer instructors and carried out at the institutional intersection of the Pioneer Organization and the school.

### **Children as Historical Actors and Histories of Childhood**

Focusing on children as historical actors, my project is in dialogue with histories of modern childhood and youth in Europe. Much of the literature on childhood and early adolescence in Eastern Europe and Soviet Russia dwells on totalizing state intentions and disciplining technologies, casting children as passive recipients of masterfully controlled and largely successful campaigns of ideological indoctrination and homogenization.<sup>23</sup> Seeking to overcome the limitations of these studies, my work deploys a diversity of autobiographical sources, whether retrospective accounts (memoirs and oral histories) or discursive child productions contemporary with the events (pioneer expedition travelogues, school compositions, and private teen diaries), in order to account for children's agency even while acknowledging that young people's subjectivities and experiences were socially constituted as well as discursively and institutionally mediated.

---

<sup>23</sup> Katalin Jutteau, *L'enfance Embrigadée Dans La Hongrie Communiste: Le Mouvement Des Pionniers* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2007); Kelly, "Shaping the 'Future Race'"; Ildiko Erdei, "'The Happy Child' as an Icon of Socialist Transformation: Yugoslavia's Pioneer Organization," In *Ideologies and National Identities. The Case of Twentieth-Century Southeastern Europe* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2004), 154-171. Paul Cernat et al. *Explorări în comunismul românesc* (vols 1, 2, 3) (Polirom, 2004, 2005, 2008).

To histories of children and the family in modern Europe, my research contributes an in-depth study of socialist childhood, pointing both to its continuities and breaks with middle class values informing Western conceptions of childhood as a distinctive stage of human development and of the nuclear family as the privileged and natural site for raising children.<sup>24</sup> While socialist reformers recognized childhood as a formative stage, they often held up children as models of “real revolutionaries” for adults to emulate.<sup>25</sup> Despite invoking the family as an essential site of patriotic education in times of nationalization, socialist regimes consistently privileged the collective socialization of youth. My dissertation thus joins a growing body of histories of childhood that emphasize historical change, political variation, and cultural specificity in a diversity of European contexts that range from nineteenth century nationalization in the Bohemian lands, to the Bolshevik Revolution and the Soviet state, and to German occupation and extermination during the Second World War, reminding us that childhood is neither a timeless nor a universal experience.<sup>26</sup>

A few words are in order regarding the specific age boundaries of childhood that will make the subject of this dissertation. Due largely to my efforts to account for children’s active engagement in practices of socialist patriotism and internationalism, this dissertation will focus on the socialization of young people of seven to fourteen, largely bypassing early childhood experiences or pre-school education, and extending into early adolescence. Although there were

---

<sup>24</sup> Carolyn Steedman, *Strange Dislocations: Childhood and the Idea of Human Interiority, 1870-1930* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995); Hugh Cunningham, *Children and Childhood in Western Society Since 1500* (London: Longman, 1995); Harry Hendrick, *Children, Childhood and English Society, 1880-1990* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

<sup>25</sup> Catriona Kelly, *Children's World: Growing Up in Russia, 1890-1991* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007); Ann Livschitz, *Growing up Soviet: Childhood in the Soviet Union, 1918—1958* (PhD Diss., Stanford University, 2007).

<sup>26</sup> Tara Zahra, *Kidnapped Souls: National Indifference and the Battle for Children in the Bohemian Lands, 1900-1948* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008). Anne Gorsuch, *Youth in Revolutionary Russia: Enthusiasts, Bohemians, Delinquents* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000); Kelly, *Children's World*; Lisa Kirschenbaum, *Small Comrades: Revolutionizing Childhood in Soviet Russia, 1917-1932* (New York: Routledge Farmer, 2001). Nicholas Stargardt, *Witnesses of War: Children's Lives Under the Nazis* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2005).

slight changes throughout the socialist period, this age span was institutionally associated by Ceaușescu's regime with membership in the Pioneer Organization and enrollment in "free and mandatory" school education (*școala generală*). As statistics of school enrollment indicate, a steady number of approximately three million pupils attended primary and middle schools annually from 1965 through 1989. Seven to fourteen year olds thus represented more than half of the school population, ranging from kindergartens to higher education, and close to 14% of the total population in Ceaușescu's Romania.<sup>27</sup>

Broadly referred to as "childhood," the age of pioneer membership was institutionally defined as a time when children could be considered mature enough to assume social roles of pioneer leadership and socialist citizenship, but were not yet held up to the standards of maturity and responsibility expected of young people. Pedagogical and psychological literature during socialism warned teachers and pioneer activists that "the notion of the child is extremely broad," distinguishing between early childhood (three to six), associated with kindergarten care, and middle childhood (six to ten) when children abandoned their "secondary and limited role in the family" to assume "an important social status by being engaged in actions of social responsibility and consequence."<sup>28</sup> Overlapping with middle school education, when pupils were expected to choose their professional careers and complete comprehensive "general instruction," puberty or early adolescence (typically set between ten to fourteen or eleven and fifteen) was viewed as the first stage in the transition from childhood to youth, being nevertheless distinguished from proper

---

<sup>27</sup> ANIC, Fond C.C. al P.C.R. - Propaganda, file 33/1987, 3.

<sup>28</sup> Mielu Zlate, "Portretul psihologic al pionierului mic," *Educția pionierească* 2, 1973, 5. With the lowering of the age of induction into the pioneer organization from nine to seven in 1971, and the creation, in 1976, of a mass children's organization, the Motherland's Falcons, for kindergarteners of three to six, the 1970s witnessed sustained attempts to lower the age of social and political responsibility. Chapter one will discuss some of these attempts in more detail.

adolescence (fourteen to eighteen/nineteen).<sup>29</sup> Although pioneers in their early teens were increasingly expected to show more initiative, responsibility, and self-reliance in preparation for their induction in the Communist Youth Union (UTC) at fourteen, they were nevertheless still treated, and often excused, from failure in their performances, as children.

### **Socialist Patriotism**

*Patriotism is not inborn. We should not look for its origins, as some American psychologists do, in “the herd instinct.” The motherland is not a strictly geographical notion (“the place where I saw the light of day”). Patriotism has a profoundly social and historical character, being an essentially moral and political feeling. It is the expression of the joint organic growth of the individual person with the historic past of the people, its progressive traditions, its economic and cultural achievements, and its future aspirations. (Anatole Chircev, “On Pupils’ Education into Socialist Patriotism,” 1957)*

*The notions of motherland and patriotism have a biological nature determined by the general characteristics of the people and a moral, spiritual content expressed in language, culture, arts. They are organic, intrinsic. We think about them, feel them, live them, express them. (Dumitru Almaş, *They Will Forever Be Heroes*, 1975)*

There is overwhelming scholarly consensus that Romania’s socialist regime took a national turn in the post-Stalinist period, a turn inaugurated under Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej in the early 1960s and radicalized by Nicolae Ceauşescu, who embraced national ideology and the ideals of national sovereignty and self-determination as legitimization strategies in both domestic and international policy.<sup>30</sup> “National communism” has been by far the most widely preferred term used to describe the perceived ideological contradictions triggered by the socialist regime’s active appropriation and transformation of prewar intellectual traditions of thinking about the

---

<sup>29</sup> See Ursula Schiopu, “Pubertatea,” In *Psihologia generala si a copilului (manual pentru liceele pedagogice* (EDP, 1982), 274-296. Mielu Zlate, “Portretul psihologic al pionierului mare,” *Educatia pioniereasca* 3, 1973, 10-13.

<sup>30</sup> The early signs of this turn under Dej were the revival of national values, embrace of industrialization in opposition to Soviet economic plans to turn Romania into an agrarian base of the socialist bloc, and international positioning as a mediator of conflicts in the Sino-Soviet split in the early 1960s.

nation in the political culture of Ceaușescu's Romania.<sup>31</sup> My study of the impact that the radicalized turn to national values had on children's "patriotic and revolutionary" education under Ceaușescu will rely on the concept of "socialist patriotism," a term popularized by the regime in the immediate postwar years and employed in pedagogical literature until its collapse. Like "national communism," "socialist patriotism" signals the tension between national and socialist values and their inextricable coexistence by late socialism. As a self-ascribed term, however, it can also give insights into how the ideologues of the regime envisioned and justified the coexistence of seemingly contradictory socialist and national principles.

Applied to Ceaușescu's rule, the term also serves my intention to account for the attempts of the party leadership to keep patriotism "socialist" by conditioning it on loyalty to the party and its leader, emphasizing its compatibility with socialist internationalism, or making it an integral component of the broader agenda of instilling a communist consciousness that did not only require national allegiance, but also a scientific materialist understanding of the natural and social world, a future-oriented imagination, and commitment to the collective. Deploying a term used by the regime throughout its rule, I also hope to gesture towards the continuities in "socialist" pedagogical methods used to socialize children into patriotism and citizenship. As chapter two will examine at length, the pedagogy of socialist citizenship under Ceaușescu continued to be informed by the Soviet "cultural orthodoxies" propagated after the war even as it

---

<sup>31</sup> See, for example, Dragos Petrescu, "Communist Legacies in the 'New Europe': History, Ethnicity, and the Creation of a 'Socialist' Nation in Romania, 1945-1989," In *Conflicted Memories: Europeanizing Contemporary Histories* (Berghahn Books, 2007); Denis Deletant, *Ceaușescu and the Securitate: Coercion and Dissent in Romania, 1965-1989* (M.E. Sharpe, 1995); Lucian Boia, *Istorie și mit în conștiința românească* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2010). Reflecting a related use of the term in Cold War literature to denote nationally specific ways of implementing and reforming the Stalinist model in Eastern Europe, political scientist Vladimir Tismaneanu proposed an analytical distinction between Ceaușescu's "national Stalinism," defined as a reactionary and exclusivist form of rule that played on sentiments of national pride and humiliation, but opposed any attempt at liberalization, and the revisionist potential of "national communism(s)," which were genuinely critical of "Soviet imperialism" and "hegemonic designs," countered "rigid ideological orthodoxy" with intellectual creativity, and accepted political relaxation. *Stalinism for All Seasons*, 32-3.

sought to reconcile these orthodoxies with domestic traditions of child education as well as broadly European and global pedagogical trends.<sup>32</sup>

Popularized throughout the Eastern Bloc in the aftermath of the Second World War, the concept of “socialist” or “revolutionary” patriotism (*patriotism socialist/revoluționar*) was introduced as a progressive alternative to “reactionary nationalism,” disqualified by its associations with fascism during the war.<sup>33</sup> By the time it entered the political lexicon of postwar Eastern Europe, “socialist patriotism” was a well-honed concept that reflected the inherent ambiguities of Marxist-Leninist theorization about the nation.<sup>34</sup> As early as 1931, Stalin famously acknowledged that Marx and Engels had been right that “in the past we didn’t have and could not have had a fatherland,” yet he argued that “now, since we’ve overthrown capitalism and power belongs to the working class, we *have* a fatherland and will defend its independence.”<sup>35</sup> The mid-1930s witnessed a number of campaigns to promote “Soviet patriotism” as boundless love for the proletarian fatherland and work out a “patriotic,” “russocentric,” and “statist” conception of history.<sup>36</sup> By the postwar period, the notion of “Soviet patriotism” promoted by Stalin also included arguments in favor of “national authenticity” and

---

<sup>32</sup> Sheila Fitzpatrick employs the notion of “cultural orthodoxies” to refer to the “cultural authorities whose work or *obiter dicta* became the bases of a system beyond reproach or criticism” under Stalin. See *The Cultural Front: Power and Culture in Revolutionary Russia* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1992), 348-9.

<sup>33</sup> For accounts of the role and meaning of “socialist patriotism” in other Eastern European contexts, see Jutteau, *L'enfance Embrigadée*, and John Rodden, *Textbook Reds: Schoolbooks, Ideology and East German Identity* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 14-5.

<sup>34</sup> I use Marxism-Leninism to denote the complex of ideological interventions on a diversity of topics, including patriotism, developed in Stalinist Russia and adopted in postwar Romania, regardless of their actual indebtedness to Marxist thinking. The scholarship on the philosophical genealogy of Stalinist ideology is rich, with some scholars arguing for the leader’s decisive divagations from Marxist or Leninist thought and others emphasizing Stalin’s distinctive synthesis of and extensive, if unacknowledged, reliance on Western Marxist traditions. In the former category see, for example, Ronald Grigor Suny, “Stalin and his Stalinism: Power and Authority in the Soviet Union, 1930–1953,” In *Stalinism and Nazism: Dictatorships in Comparison*, edited by Ian Kershaw, Moshe Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 26-52. For the latter, see Erik van Ree, *The Political Thought of Joseph Stalin: A Study in Twentieth Century Revolutionary Patriotism* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002).

<sup>35</sup> David Brandenberger, *National Bolshevism: Stalinist Mass Culture and the Formation of Modern Russian National Identity, 1931-1956* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 28.

<sup>36</sup> D. L. Brandenberger and A. M. Dubrovsky, “‘The People Need a Tsar’: the Emergence of National Bolshevism as Stalinist Ideology, 1931-1941,” *Europe-Asia Studies* vol. 50, no. 5 (1998): 871-90.

against “homeless cosmopolitanism,” which carried both anti-Semitic implications and an anti-capitalist message, being envisioned as an effect of the capitalist drive for money and profit.<sup>37</sup>

Evoking the Marxist-Leninist tradition, the Romanian press of 1950s and early 1960s operated within a system of binary oppositions to articulate the distinctive meanings of socialist patriotism. As a manifestation of the historical (r)evolution that marked the elimination of economic exploitation in the new proletarian states in Eastern Europe, “socialist patriotism” had a distinct “socio-economic and political-ideological basis,” being not only different from, but also “superior” to, its capitalist and imperialist counterparts.<sup>38</sup> If “bourgeois nationalism” was defined in Marxist terms as a manifestation of false consciousness that had furthered the interests of the bourgeoisie and the landowning elites by masking class conflicts and exploitation, “socialist patriotism” served the interests of “the people,” understood as the proletariat.<sup>39</sup> Unlike “bourgeois chauvinism,” which was both socially divisive and “biologically” motivated, socialist patriotism was socially progressive and transcended racial or ethnic prejudice, being compatible with “proletarian internationalism.”<sup>40</sup>

Socialist ideologues in postwar Romania also emphasized the superiority of Marxist-Leninist theorization on patriotism. If bourgeois thinkers had fallen prey to essentialism, “irrationality,” and “mysticism,” explaining patriotism in “geographical or biological terms,” socialists viewed patriotism through the lens of dialectical materialism as an evolving social and historical phenomenon, whose forms of manifestations were determined by changing social

---

<sup>37</sup> Erik van Ree, “Stalin as Marxist: the Western Roots of Stalin’s Russification of Marxism,” in *Stalin: A New History*, eds. Sarah Davies and James Harris (Cambridge University Press, 2005), 177, 178.

<sup>38</sup> See Nicolae Marinescu, “Patrie, Patriotism,” in *Gazeta învățământului*, December 26<sup>th</sup>, 1958.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Anatole Chircev & all, “Educarea elevilor in spiritual patriotismului socialist si al internationalismului proletar,” *Pedagogia pentru instituttele pedagogice* (EDP, 1964), 265-271.



relations and economic conditions.<sup>41</sup> Blessed with a rational and scientific understanding of society, socialist ideologues saw their task as debunking chauvinist notions according to which patriotism was “an inborn feeling” or “an instinct,”<sup>42</sup> arguing instead that patriotic allegiance under socialism was “active” and “consciously assumed.” In effect, they promoted a constructivist view of patriotism, attributing a major role to educational institutions:

Bourgeois sociology and historiography in our country identified the motherland with geographical or ethical phenomena closely related to the biological essence of the human being. (...) Bourgeois ideologues claim that patriotism is an inborn feeling. This theory is false. People are not born patriots; they are educated in the spirit of patriotism. And the school is, of course, the most important site for the education of young souls in the spirit of love for the people and the motherland.<sup>43</sup>

It was in this spirit that educational newspapers in the late 1940s urged teachers to distinguish “socialist patriotism” from “bourgeois nationalism,” instructing them on the distinctively novel character of the former:

Socialist education should give a new meaning to the notion of patriotism by teaching children to love their country not only because it is their birthplace, but also because its people are building a new life, a life freed from exploitation, national discrimination, and darkness.<sup>44</sup>

Textbooks of pedagogy reminded those training to become teachers throughout communist rule that socialist patriotism was “an essential component of communist morality and a characteristic personality trait of the ‘new socialist person.’”<sup>45</sup> To be a patriot, countless methodological brochures asserted, was to “feel unbridled love and devotion” for the socialist motherland and the party as well as “undying hatred for the enemies of socialism,” a category that included both internal enemies such as the bourgeoisie and landowning elites of the past and

---

<sup>41</sup> Marinescu, “Patrie, Patriotism;” Ion Iuga, “Patriotism,” *Gazeta învățământului*, January 7, 1966; Ștefan Pascu, “Educația patriotică a tineretului,” *Revista de pedagogie* 11, 1966.

<sup>42</sup> Anatole Chircev, “Câteva aspecte ale educării patriotismului socialist la elevi,” *Gazeta învățământului*, November 29, 1957.

<sup>43</sup> Marinescu, “Patrie, Patriotism.”

<sup>44</sup> Tatiana Bulan, “La crearea primelor organizații de pionieri,” In *Gazeta învățământului*, May 1<sup>st</sup>, 1949.

<sup>45</sup> Chircev, *Pedagogia*, 165.

external enemies such as foreign imperialists.<sup>46</sup> As proof of their patriotism, children were encouraged to study diligently to become worthy socialist citizens, express solidarity with the socialist collective (be this their pioneer unit or the working people), love and perform manual and socially useful work (*munci obștești*), show respect for the common good (*bunul obștească*), exhibit loyalty and gratitude to the workers' party and the achievements of the working class, extend their friendship to other nationalities and brotherly peoples, and learn and admire the progressive traditions of social and class struggle in the country's history.

The conception of socialist patriotism in the 1940s and 1950s was thus not only anti-essentialist and constructivist, emphasizing the formative potential of the educational and social environment, but also focused on the present and the future - the temporal dimensions of the revolutionary task of building socialism - being only cautiously guided towards the progressive traditions of the past. During the 1960s, Gheorghe Gheorghiu Dej's bolder affirmation of national interests and Ceaușescu's speeches on the integration of party and national history in the mid-1960s or his vocal invocation of national independence and sovereignty after the Soviet-led invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 opened the door for the growing reclamation of national history and pre-socialist discourses of the nation. The content of socialist patriotism expanded significantly during Ceaușescu, when the "twice millennial" national past stretched back in time to the ethnonational origins of the Romanians, accommodating new historical landmarks in a statist history of the nation that evolved teleologically from the "centralized Dacian state" of antiquity through the feudal states and the modern national state founded in 1877, to the Union of the Romanian Principalities in 1918, which was no longer condemned as an imperialist act of occupation, but reclaimed as "an objective historical necessity."<sup>47</sup>

---

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Elena Ene et al., "Locul și rolul istoriei în școala," *Metodica predării istoriei României* (EDP, 1981), 5-20.

Fed by prewar discursive traditions of the nation, talk of national origins, national essence, national being, “the physiognomy of the Romanian people,” the perennial existence of the nation, or the “instinctual” and visceral emotions of patriotism echoed primordialist conceptions of the nation and essentialist notions of national identity or patriotic allegiance that coexisted uneasily with the Marxist-Leninist language of class-struggle, social and economic exploitation, and historical materialism.<sup>48</sup> By the late 1970s, even Central Committee discussions over the wording of official guidelines regarding children’s socialization smacked of essentialism. Discussing how best to express the aim of the newly created party organization for kindergarteners, the Motherland’s Falcons, in 1977, for example, the secretary general objected to the proposed formulation:

Nicolae Ceaușescu: What kind of improvement is it when, instead of the old phrasing “they [children] are loyal sons of the people and the party,” you propose the phrasing “they prepare to become loyal sons of the people and the party”?!  
Nicolae Bostina: We changed the wording on the assumption that they are in the process of formation and education in order to become trustworthy sons of the motherland.

Ceaușescu: What do you mean by process of formation? When they were born, were they not born sons of the motherland? Your view is wrong. Aren't they sons of the people? Do they need a training process to become sons of the people? Then, whose sons are they?<sup>49</sup>

The impact of the national turn on children’s socialization was already felt during the reform of education in 1968, when attempts to redress the poor patriotic education of youth proposed revisions to “flawed” curricula of Romanian literature and history that faultily foregrounded “external forces” and “underestimating the internal dynamics of our people.”<sup>50</sup> Despite deploying the Marxist-Leninist language of “objective laws of progress,” class struggle, and teleological evolution, methodological instructions for teachers increasingly made “the

---

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Minutes of the meeting of the Secretariat of the Central Committee (CC) of the R.C.P. on the creation of the Motherland’s Falcons organization for kindergarteners in September 1977. The text was reproduced in *Revista* 22, no 912, 2007.

<sup>50</sup> ANIC, Fond C.C. al P.C.R. – Propagandă, file 40/1966, 67-8. See also the published version “Studiu privind dezvoltarea învățământului de cultura generală,” In *Gazeta învățământului*, February 9, 1968, 2.

struggle for national independence and the defense of the national being” as well as “the uninterrupted continuity, unaltered unity, and millenarian permanence [of the nation] on Romanian territory” the priority of history teaching in the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>51</sup> In keeping with this view, children, routinely called “the grandsons of Dacians and Romans” in print and broadcast media, were encouraged to shift their patriotic allegiance from the narrowly defined “working class” and its revolutionary figures to “the entire people,” whose swelling ranks of national heroes were valued not only for their progressive credentials of class struggle, but also for advancing the cause of national liberation and unity. The new historiographical emphases on national origins, continuity, and unity did not only affect the historical narratives children learned in school, but also the patriotic literature they read, the poems they recited at school celebrations, the historical sites and monuments they visited on school trips and pioneer expeditions, as well as the games they were encouraged to play at home.<sup>52</sup>

### **Performativity and Agency**

Echoing the growing interest in the operations of human agency within structures of domination across the humanities and social sciences since the 1970s, the post-totalitarian scholarship on Soviet and socialist regimes has successfully critiqued the entrenched Cold War notions of state domination, ideological indoctrination, and social atomization and alienation. Revisionist and post-revisionist studies on state socialism have increasingly reinvested the socialist subject with agency, accounting for subjects of upward mobility in contexts of social

---

<sup>51</sup> Ene et al., *Metodica*, 19-20.

<sup>52</sup> Late socialism witnessed the introduction of “patriotic” literature by classic authors in primary school textbooks and the publication of extremely popular series of illustrated historical legends used in kindergartens and schools. The cinematographic production of historical epics and educational history films seconded history education in schools. Starting in 1976, the regime also focused on the role of educational toys and board games in the patriotic education of children, encouraging the production of historical board games such as “The Dacians and the Romans,” which simulated a battle across the Danube on a chess-like board, or “History questions and answers” that tested children on in-depth knowledge of major events and figures in national history.

fluidity,<sup>53</sup> the calculated pursuit of self-interest,<sup>54</sup> acts of dissidence and opposition to socialist regimes,<sup>55</sup> as well as forms of covert resistance or “little tactics of the habitat.”<sup>56</sup> In recognition of this historiographical trend, some scholars have dubbed the 1990s the decade of the “resisting subject,” noting that the narrowly defined category of the dissident - “selfless and long-struggling, his life interrupted by arrests, imprisonment, and exile” - was gradually expanded to include a whole gallery of actors - opportunists, cynics, and careerists - previously deemed too morally questionable to be valorized as resisters.<sup>57</sup>

This scholarship played an important role in complicating the relation between the socialist state and society beyond the narrow registers of state oppression and domination or the conception of individuals as devoid of individuality, alienated from fellow citizens by fear, and subsumed by society. At the same time, in pitting the socialist subject and society against the state, some of these studies portrayed essentially dehistoricized subjects, who seemed free and unencumbered by social and ideological determinations in their calculated or self-serving relation with the socialist regime.<sup>58</sup> The focus on resisting subjects and unofficial cultures thus

---

<sup>53</sup> See, for example, Sheila Fitzpatrick's *Education and Social Mobility in the Soviet Union, 1921-1934* (Cambridge University Press, 1979) and *Tear off the Masks! Identity and Imposture in Twentieth Century Russia* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005).

<sup>54</sup> See Vera Dunham, *In Stalin's Time: Middleclass Values in Soviet Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976).

<sup>55</sup> See, for example, Barbara Falk, *The Dilemmas of Dissidence in East-Central Europe: Citizen Intellectuals and Philosopher Kings* (Budapest: Central European University, 2003); Padraic Kenney, *A Carnival of Revolution: Central Europe 1989* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002); Vladimir Tismaneanu, *Reinventing Politics: Eastern Europe from Stalin to Havel* (Basic Books, 1992); Jan Kubik, *The Power of Symbols Against the Symbols of Power: The Rise of Solidarity and the Fall of State Socialism in Poland* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994).

<sup>56</sup> See, for example, Katherine Verdery, *National Ideology Under Socialism: Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceaușescu's Romania* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991) and *What Was Socialism, and What Comes Next?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

<sup>57</sup> Anna Krylova, “The Tenacious Liberal Subject in Soviet Studies,” In *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 1, 1 (2000): 132, 140-4. Suggestive of the recognition of the historiographical shift, the whole issue of *Kritika* is devoted to the topic subjects of resistance.

<sup>58</sup> The paradigmatic study in Krylova's view is Dunham's *In Stalin's Time*, but the author argues that later works such as Kotkin's *Magnetic Mountain* similarly rely on the category of resistance, “selectively dehistoricizing and silencing the Soviet subject.”

left “the Soviet regime disconnected from society, and society oddly disassociated from the processes that culminated in the foundation of the regime.”<sup>59</sup> Historian Anna Krylova attributed these dehistoricizing accounts to the tenacious liberal model of subjectivity, which has endured in the Anglo-American scholarship on the Soviet period long after the fall from grace of the totalitarian paradigm.<sup>60</sup>

As scholarship in and outside Soviet studies pointed out, the normative liberal model presupposes a voluntarist and autonomous subject free to reinvent herself in a Promethean manner. A range of studies, primarily post-structuralist in orientation, critiqued this model for its essentialism and unquestioned assumptions about the monolithic and unitary character of the self, emphasizing the subject’s dialogicality, contingency, and its socially, culturally, and discursively constructed character.<sup>61</sup> A number of anthropological and historical studies further contended that the normative liberal conception of the self cannot adequately account for what they alternatively described as “illiberal,” “nonliberal,” or “nonsecular” forms of subjectivity and agency.<sup>62</sup>

In proposing a performative approach to socialist childhood that will focus on the “individualizing techniques” deployed by Ceaușescu’s regime to provide subjects in-the-making

---

<sup>59</sup> Peter Fritzsche, “On the Subjects of Resistance,” In *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 1, 1 (2000), 150.

<sup>60</sup> Krylova, *The Tenacious Liberal Subject*.

<sup>61</sup> For a concise formulation of the uncritical reliance on notions of identity, see Richard Handler, “Is ‘Identity’ a Useful Cross-Cultural Concept?” In Gillis, John R. (ed.) *Commemorations. The Politics of National Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994). A wide range of post-structuralist critiques of the unitary Western subject came from gender scholars. See, for example, Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990); Sidonie Smith, “Who’s Talking?/Who’s Talking Back? The Subject of Personal Narrative,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 18, 2 (1993): 393.

<sup>62</sup> For accounts of “nonliberal” subjectivities, see Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005). For a critique of the use of conceptions of liberal subjectivities in attempts to make sense of “illiberal subjects” in Stalin’s Russia, see Jochen Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind: Writing a Diary Under Stalin* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006). Historian Phyllis Mack made similar arguments about the limits of liberal and secular models of individual autonomy in accounting for religious forms of agency, which “implied obedience and ethical responsibility as well as the freedom to make choices and act on them.” See “Introduction,” in *Heart Religion in the British Enlightenment: Gender and Emotion in Early Methodism* (Cambridge University Press, 2008), 9.

with the means of their self-formation, transformation, and affirmation, I take my cue from both post-structuralist studies and accounts of “nonliberal” forms of subjectivity and agency. My emphasis on children’s daily engagement in self-constituting practices of socialist patriotism is rooted in broadly constructivist theories that do not posit the existence of a-priori subjects, but envision subjectivity as the naturalized effect of reiterated enactments of social, moral, or political norms. I include in this category poststructuralist critiques of the voluntary and autonomous subject such as Judith Butler’s theory of the performative construction of gendered bodies and Michel Foucault’s conception of the emergence of the subject as an effect of “technologies of the self,” i.e. a range of operations one is encouraged and enabled to perform on one’s body, behavior, or way of being.<sup>63</sup>

Performative theories of identity formation developed out of conceptions of language which divorce meaning from the speaker’s intentionality, attributing it to shared conventions and contexts, and represent speech acts as productive forces that do not merely reflect, but also act on and transform social reality.<sup>64</sup> Despite the focus on the highly scripted and codified nature of speech acts, scholars like Jacques Derrida argued in a deconstructivist vein that the meaning of any given speech act is not predetermined because new contexts always introduce elements of unpredictability, enabling speech acts to break with context in unanticipated ways.<sup>65</sup> In her study

---

<sup>63</sup> Butler, *Gender Trouble* and *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993); Michel Foucault, “Technologies of the Self,” In *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*, eds. L. H. Martin et al. (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988).

<sup>64</sup> This view was originally formulated by J. L. Austin in his famous distinction between the constative or descriptive dimension of speech acts and their performative force, i.e. the actions they perform in reality. For Austin, typical performative utterances include pledges and oaths, which do not merely describe, but also act on reality (“I do” when uttered in a marriage ceremony). A performative is successful or “felicitous,” irrespective of the speaker’s intention, if uttered in accordance with an accepted conventional procedure and in an appropriate circumstance. J. L. Austin, *How To Do Things With Words* (Oxford University Press, 1962). Austin’s conception was further expounded by Jacques Derrida. Noting that the author’s intention is ultimately irrelevant to the production of meaning because the text can always be detached from the context of its production, Derrida argued that speech acts work as recognizable codes or citations that can be repeated in an infinite number of contexts.

<sup>65</sup> Jacques Derrida, “Signature Event Context,” *Glyph* 1 (1977): 172-197

of the constitution of gendered subjects, Judith Butler has expanded the implications of these discursive studies to embodied and social performances more broadly.<sup>66</sup>

In part because of their critique of autonomous subjectivity and emphasis on structural determinations in subject formation, constructivist theories have been suspected of foreclosing the potential for agency. While it is true that they contest notions of unencumbered agency and self-authoring subjects, performative theories nevertheless acknowledge the potential for agency, defining it in a dialectical relation with the social and historical constraints that constitute and thus enable subjects to emerge in the first place. Although subjects are shaped by the social norms they reproduce and reaffirm with each reiteration, neither the meanings nor the broader social effects of their speech and bodily performances are predetermined. My study of practices of socialist patriotism would benefit, in particular, from Derrida's and Butler's insights into the "performative force" of discursive and embodied acts, i.e. the possibilities of change, resignification, appropriation, or subversion made possible with each reenactment of social norms in new and unpredictable contexts.<sup>67</sup> In this view, the reiterated enactment of speech and bodily acts not only ensures the stability of social norms, but also renders such norms vulnerable, opening them to reappropriation and resignification.

These theories dovetail nicely with critiques of substantialist treatments of nations (and other social groups) as real entities. Rogers Brubaker, in particular, argued that we should attend to the ways in which the reification of the nation is "powerfully realized in practice."<sup>68</sup> Echoing the concern with the socially constructed character of identity as well as the contingent and productive nature of performative enactments, Brubaker encourages "eventful" approaches to

---

<sup>66</sup> Butler, *Bodies That Matter*.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid. Derrida, "Signature Event Context."

<sup>68</sup> Rogers Brubaker, "Rethinking nationhood: nation as institutionalized form, practical category, contingent event," In *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 13-22.



nationhood. In his view, approaching nationhood “as an event, as something that suddenly crystallizes rather than gradually develops, as a contingent, conjuncturally fluctuating, and precarious frame of vision and basis for individual and collective action” would allow scholars to counter the substantialist view of the nation as “a relatively stable product of deep developmental trends in economy, polity, or culture.”<sup>69</sup> Brubaker thus indicates that it is not only individual, but also collective or group identity, that can be interrogated with performative and eventful approaches.

Envisioned in these terms, my performative approach to socialist subjectivity should not be confused with accounts of dissimulative behavior and duplicitous subjects, polarized between an authentic private self and a compliant public persona. Although I share an interest in the social effects of the increasing standardization of ideological form (whether textual, visual, aural, ritual, or behavioral) in late socialism, I do not argue that the hypernormalization of ideology reduced socialist citizens to “actors in masks,”<sup>70</sup> “thinking one thing, saying another, and doing a third.”<sup>71</sup> If I focus on socialist citizens’ engagement in discursive, ritual, or social practices in late socialism, it is not to emphasize the communicative dysfunctions and identity pathologies they allegedly generated, but to explore the meanings, interests, and communities that emerged in the process of actualizing and resignifying hypernormalized ideological forms in a diversity of contexts. The result is not a static picture of subjects and society pit against the socialist regime, but a dynamic account of their mutually transformative relation.

Another body of scholarship that both draws on and expands performative theories, shaping my approach to agency in this dissertation, includes studies of “illiberal” or “nonliberal” forms of subjectivity. My analysis in the following chapters is informed by Jochen Hellbeck’s

---

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>70</sup> The phrase “actors in masks” comes from Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever*, 16-18.

<sup>71</sup> Soviet dissident Andrei Amalrik quoted in Krylova, *The Tenacious Liberal Subject*.

argument that models of liberal subjectivity, which assume self-realization to be universally envisioned as an individualist struggle for uniqueness and singularity, prevent scholars from accounting for the genuine appeal of Soviet propaganda and its role in the creation of “illiberal subjectivities.”<sup>72</sup> For the diarists seeking to align themselves with the Soviet project in Hellbeck’s study, the prospect of joining a collectivity did not annihilate, but “enlarged” the individual self, filling it with a broader sense of historical and social purpose and significance.

Articulating a similar critique of the analytical limits of the conception of subjectivity informing liberal progressive scholarship, Saba Mahmood’s anthropological study of the urban women’s mosque movement in Egypt has similarly encouraged me to look beyond “the agonistic framework” of consolidation and subversion of norms in my accounts of agency.<sup>73</sup> In Mahmood’s view, agency emerges not only in the process of subverting or opposing structures of domination and social norms in pursuit of autonomy and self-interest, but also in the various ways in which dominant norms are “inhabited,” lived, or aspired to.<sup>74</sup> If agency is not exclusively envisioned in terms of freedom from constraints (whether political, social, moral or religious), it can be broadened to encompass a whole range of historically and culturally specific actions that endow subjects with the necessary skills to seek self-realization and accomplishment, including behaviors associated with inertia and passivity such as practices of mentorship or “docility.”<sup>75</sup>

Informed by performative theories and studies of nonliberal modalities of action, the diverse modalities of agency I explore in this dissertation range from instances of evasion of state directives to a range of small and often inconspicuous acts of resignification and

---

<sup>72</sup> Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind*, 9, 13, 18, 86, 96-7, 357-9.

<sup>73</sup> Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, 22.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 22-3.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 29, 153-188.

appropriation of socialist norms enabled by active engagement with socialist structures. Increasingly under pressure to conduct bimonthly classes in “political information” in Ceaușescu’s Romania, for example, homeroom teachers in middle schools found the task of mobilizing ten to fourteen year olds for “dynamic debates” over contemporary political events senseless and self-defeating. Typical responses included either evasion of state directives enabled by perfunctory compliance (i.e. the organization of monthly classes when pupils copied by hand, recited aloud, or simply followed the teacher’s dictation of articles from official newspapers) or resignification, i.e. using the time allocated for “political information” classes in the curriculum to teach “real subjects” such as literature or mathematics.

Most importantly, “agentival capacities” are expanded in this dissertation to include a wide array of moral, political, professional, and technical capacities and skills constituting subjects and enabling them to pursue self-realization and self-affirmation in relation with, rather than in opposition to, the socialist regime.<sup>76</sup> As my analysis in chapters two, three, and four aims to prove, young people’s sense of empowerment and self-realization was often enabled in late Romanian socialism by actions typically dismissed as passive or conformist: the acts of integration in socialist structures and the practices of perfecting skills (such as ideological literacy) or actualizing socialist values of activism, leadership, or collective life. With respect to forms of being and action fostered by communal integration, chapters two and four question the tendency to pit the individual against the collective in scholarship on state socialism, examining the resulting inability to account for the empowering and self-enhancing effects of collective integration or identification with a broader socialist and national community.

Many acts of resignification examined in this dissertation could be analyzed as forms of

---

<sup>76</sup> I borrow the term “agentival capacity,” which gestures towards the range of technical skills or moral behaviors that empower individuals to act or survive in diverse historical and cultural contexts from Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, 15.

(covert) resistance as some scholars have productively done in similar cases. Unlike most accounts of opposition and dissidence, studies of “every day,” “covert,” or “Schweikian” resistance drawing on James Scott’s classic study of “the weapons of the weak” rarely dehistoricize or heroicize the oppositional subject, locating the potential for resistance in the structures of the socialist regime.<sup>77</sup> My choice was to avoid deploying the language of resistance in this dissertation because it tends to obscure the extent to which the teachers’ and children’s acts of resignification of state directives were inscribed in the logic and institutional structures of the socialist regime even as they worked to transform and appropriate them. Because resistance is typically linked to a dissenting or oppositional intention, the use of the term would also misrepresent the nature of many of my informants’ interactions with the socialist regime, which were often premised on shared values, as we will see in the following chapters.

Interviews suggest that teachers, parents, and children resonated with many of the inextricably mixed socialist and national principles actively promoted by Ceaușescu’s regime during the last two decades of communism, among which professional fulfillment and self-realization, the ideal of cultured life, the role of education as an engine of upward social mobility, the centrality of children and youth to family and social life, as well as patriotism, national allegiance, and pride. Although a small number of those I interviewed reclaimed these principles as distinctively socialist, crediting Ceaușescu’s regime with placing a premium on culture or enhancing national pride, the majority saw them as universal human and cultural values that transgressed politics, being merely actualized under communism.<sup>78</sup> This dissociation

---

<sup>77</sup> See James Scott, “Normal Exploitation, Normal Resistance,” In *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Heaven: Yale University Press, 1985), 28-47; See Verdery, *What Was Socialism*, 22-3, 42. Laxity in work discipline under socialism, for example, was not a dissenting action motivated by oppositional intentions, but a strategy of budgeting time and saving effort enabled by the rhythm of labor in communist enterprises, which often stalled because of a scarcity of supplies, but picked up when supplies were at hand.

<sup>78</sup> In this latter view, for example, a prominent teacher of Mathematics, whose after school circles attracted talented students and whose disciples repeatedly won national competitions, is likely to present his activity as proof of

from the communist regime is testimony to the extreme delegitimation of Ceaușescu's rule in the 1980s, and to the subsequent uneasiness of having one's realizations and meaningful life discredited by association with the regime, or even worse, by complicity with it.

There are also indications that self-presentation strategies claiming alienation from the regime are not merely retrospective rationalizations. Not only did socialist subjects resonate selectively with the regime's socialist and national values, but these shared values did not necessarily translate into support for the socialist state. In fact, they often coexisted with critical views - whether entertained passively or expressed in small circles of friends, colleagues, and family - of the failure of Ceaușescu's regime to deliver on its promises of modernization, welfare provisions, and increased standards of living. Secret police reports on "the mood" [*starea de spirit*] of the teaching staff indicate, for example, that it was precisely because teachers in the 1980s embraced the ideal of education as a vehicle of social mobility that they criticized the regime for its dismal realizations in rural areas, where educators like themselves were expected to reside, confessing to their colleagues: "I'd rather take a job as an unskilled worker in a mine or a factory than move to the countryside, where our children would have no future."<sup>79</sup>

While the values socialist citizens shared with the regime did not necessarily entail support for the state, they nevertheless enabled teachers, parents, and children to pursue professional careers, academic excellence, and meaningful lives in state-run and subsidized institutions dedicated to the intellectual, moral, and patriotic education of youth. In the messy process of actualizing state directives in everyday life, teachers and children routinely reinterpreted or transgressed official norms, translating rigid and essentially ambivalent

---

personal and professional fulfillment rather than a form of complicity with the communist regime, which nevertheless popularized, financed, and often rewarded such accomplishments.

<sup>79</sup> Arhiva Consiliului National pentru Studierea Arhivelor Securitatii (ACNSAS), Fond Documentar (fD) 8833, file 39, 410.

ideological scripts into meaningful practices. Ritual performances of induction into the pioneer organization meant to anoint children as ideologically committed young cadres were resignified by teachers, parents, and children as forms of communal recognition of academic achievement and the validation of local hierarchies of value and leadership among children. Pioneer expeditions meant to train early teens in physical education, scientific materialism, life in the collective, attachment to national values, and pride in socialist achievements enabled teachers and children to engage in simultaneously entertaining and educational ventures, pursue genuine interests in history or archeology, advance professional careers, forge enduring friendships, and experience patriotic attachments.

### **Memory and (Oral) History**

Many of the life stories I weave into my history of late socialist childhood come from a set of over forty in-depth interviews I conducted with members of the last socialist generation as well as with their families and educators.<sup>80</sup> My reliance on oral history shares some of the democratizing impetus that has motivated practitioners of the discipline since its emergence in the postwar decades: the prospect of uncovering less explored aspects of social life and giving voice to previously ignored social actors.<sup>81</sup> At the same time, I sought to heed the lessons learned by oral historians over the past decades, when the discipline was transformed by the valorization of memory and subjectivity along post-positivist coordinates, critiques of the notion of historical

---

<sup>80</sup> I began interviewing members of the last socialist generation among the Romanian diaspora in Champaign Urbana in the fall of 2006, when I first articulated my project in a seminar on memory and oral history at the University of Illinois. Following this first set of pilot interviews that helped me refine and develop potential questions, I conducted interviews during a pre-dissertation research trip in Romania in the summer of 2007. Most of the interviews, however, took place in parallel with archival research during an extended research stay - from 2008 through 2010 - in Romania. Since 2010, I have continued to organize follow-up interviews with previous and new respondents either in-person or via Skype. To ensure anonymity, I use initials or pseudonyms for interviewees who did not specifically require to be named in my work.

<sup>81</sup> On the original emancipatory impetus of oral history for scholars of the working class, women and gender, race and ethnicity, see Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past. Oral History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978).

objectivity, insights into the social and political character of autobiographical memory, or concerns with “facile democratization,” i.e. the danger of leaving dominant power structures that shape individual “voices” and memories unexamined by resuming oneself to “letting people speak for themselves.”<sup>82</sup> Along these lines, I aimed to attend to the impact of political power shifts on autobiographical memories in postsocialist Romania, the ethically inflected narrative frameworks structuring individual stories, the dynamics of power informing the interviewing context, and the socially and historically embedded nature of the subjectivities and experiences I sought to retrieve through oral history.

While scholars often acknowledge the selective and potentially distorted or repressed character of memory, they nevertheless argue that witness testimonies offer invaluable historical insights that are qualitatively different from factual evidence. In his early response to critics of the unreliability of memory, Alessandro Portelli contended that “[oral history] tells us less about *events* than about their *meaning*.”<sup>83</sup> Addressing the concerns with accuracy, distortion, and fabrication in Holocaust memoirs, Suleiman argued that, in order to fully appreciate the value of witness testimonies, “we might want to differentiate historical truth from factual detail or introduce distinctions between various kinds of historical truth,” i.e. between truth corresponding to facts and truth that reveals or unveils the larger meaning or impact of historical events.<sup>84</sup>

Informed by these insights, my reliance on oral history served the purpose of documenting domains of historical inquiry – childhood experiences, everyday life in school and

---

<sup>82</sup> For an overview of the major paradigm shifts, see Alistair Thomson, “Four Paradigm Transformations in Oral History,” *The Oral History Review* 34 (2007): 52-3. On “facile democratization” or “populist complacency,” see Luisa Passerini, “Work Ideology and Consensus under Italian Fascism,” *History Workshop* 8 (1979): 82-108. Joan Scott’s critique of social historians’ use of “experience” as a new form of foundation evidence shares some of the same concerns, noting that experiences are discursively constructed. Joan Scott, “The Evidence of Experience,” *Critical Inquiry* 17, 4 (2001): 773-797.

<sup>83</sup> Alessandro Portelli, “What Makes Oral History Different,” In Perks, Robert and Alistair Thomson (eds.) *The Oral History Reader* (London, New York: Routledge, 2006), 32-42.

<sup>84</sup> Susan Rubin Suleiman, “Problems of Memory and Factuality in Recent Holocaust Memoirs: Wilkomirski/Wiesel,” In *Poetics Today*, Vol 21, no 3, (2000): 550.

afterschool institutions, and the diverse range of ritual, discursive, and embodied practices of socialist patriotism – on which official state records in late socialism are silent, sparse, or highly scripted. Read in conjunction with archival documents that speak to the intentions or anxieties of the party leadership over the socialization of youth as well as to the ways – institutional, legislative, propagandistic – in which they aimed to achieve their goals, interviews throw light on the effects of state policies. Giving insights into the diverse perspectives and experiences of ordinary, if not unbiased, social actors who were either charged with implementing measures of social control and transformation or found themselves the subjects of such measures, personal recollections evoke the effects of socialist policies and the range of emotions, behaviors, and modalities of agency they engendered.

As suggested, the great majority of the social actors whose perspectives on late socialism I aimed to gauge in interviews spent their formative childhood and teen years in the 1970s and 1980s. If most of my respondents share a common generational location, they nevertheless come from diverse social backgrounds, including families of urban intellectuals, a wide range of white-collar professions suggestive of the bureaucratic expansion of the socialist state (clerks, office workers, pharmacists, etc.), and factory workers. Examining the socialist regime's project of social transformation and youth socialization as one element in its broader agenda of modernization (industrialization, urbanization, etc.), I focused primarily on urban childhoods, where the impact of state policies and institutions was likely to be both more substantial and visible.<sup>85</sup> Despite this urban bias, my inquiries into various aspects of patriotic upbringing often expanded to include respondents who grew up in rural areas. Notwithstanding important differences in qualified personnel, opportunities for upward mobility, and degree of regime control between rural and urban areas, interviews suggest that the institutional reach of the state

---

<sup>85</sup> These included both major cities like Bucharest, Constanta, or Targu Mures and smaller towns like Mizil.



(via its school and after school institutions) achieved a significant degree of homogenization and standardization of institutionalized childhood by late socialism.

Since the picture of youth socialization would not be complete without the recollections of those charged with the patriotic upbringing of youth, I also interviewed parents and a whole range of educators: kindergarten caretakers, primary and middle school teachers, instructors in after school clubs or institutions, and youth activists. Whenever possible, I sought to anchor interviews ethnographically, approaching educators in institutional settings – former pioneer palaces, schools, and kindergartens – that have been their professional homes both before and after the fall of communism. Although much has changed in the composition of the teaching staff, administrative structure, and mission of these institutions, conducting my interviews in these settings had the advantage of accessing both individual and institutional memory. I could easily schedule interviews and follow-up discussions, rely on the instructors’ networks of colleagues and former students for further interviews, and uncover locally preserved archives that document the work of intermediary actors and institutions in implementing state directives, offering more detailed ethnographic accounts than the central party archives of the R.C.P.<sup>86</sup>

### **Remembering Communism After “the Fall”**

After politely listening to a brief description of my plan to write a history of childhood under communism, an informant from Bucharest asked matter-of-factly: “And what do you want

---

<sup>86</sup> While interviewing former club instructors and youth activists at the National Children’s Palace (former Pioneer Palace) in Bucharest, for example, I accidentally came across a portion of the archival fund of the Pioneer Organization (1966-1985) that I had tried unsuccessfully to locate at the National Archives in Bucharest. Temporarily held in the basement of the National Children’s Palace, this archival fund was consulted by the author courtesy of the institution’s director, Radu Anghel Vasilescu, and will be referred to as Archive of the Romanian Pioneers, hereafter ARP. My travels to interview former participants in pioneer expeditions from Salaj and Baia-Mare similarly uncovered resources preserved in local school archives.

to prove? That it was good or bad?”<sup>87</sup> Adrian’s question evokes the politically charged character of memory work in postsocialist Eastern Europe, where the power shifts triggered by the collapse of socialist regimes led to the reconfiguration and instrumentalization of the past, increasing polarization over its representation, and the predominance of moral assessments of its legacies. The last chapter of this dissertation will address the ethical, political, and generational dynamics of this process, examining the emergence of competing memory discourses in the 1990s and the gradual entrenchment of a normative mode of remembrance rooted in a radical anti-communist stance. This section focuses on the challenges of soliciting and interpreting autobiographical memories in a postsocialist context that both values personal experience as the most credible form of historical evidence and significantly shapes its social and discursive possibilities of expression.<sup>88</sup>

Powerfully advocated in the 1990s, the enhanced truthfulness of subjective experience served to pit victim testimonies against communist propaganda in attempts to correct the historical record. In the conception of civil society groups and public intellectuals or politicians who enjoyed “moral capital” by virtue of their suffering and persecution under communism, memory work was instrumental in restoring both truth and justice. The public injunction to remember communism appropriately was increasingly rooted in the view that the process of coming to terms with a criminal past (and potentially, a past of complicit criminality) was the only guarantee of a democratic present and future.

Paralleling the role of autobiographical genres of self-presentation in the socialist regime’s agenda of social transformation in postwar Eastern Europe, autobiographical narratives

---

<sup>87</sup> Author interview, January 2009. Informant, b. 1962, Bucharest.

<sup>88</sup> For how the dynamics of individual and collective remembering played out in other postsocialist contexts, see for example, Daphne Berdahl, *On the Social Life of Postsocialism: Memory, Consumption, Germany*, Matti Bunzl, ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010).

of life under communism came to serve as highly scripted vehicles of “democratic re-education” in print and broadcast media, institutions of historical research, museum exhibits, or frequent polls commissioned to assess the endurance of communist legacies.<sup>89</sup> In the process of authoring one’s life story, postsocialist citizens were encouraged to adopt one of a limited range of roles – victim, resistor, collaborator, etc. – and represent the moral conundrums at the heart of their relation with the defunct socialist regime in dichotomous terms of either dissidence, resistance, and suffering, or indoctrination, brainwashing, conformity, cynical self-interest, and complicity. Most importantly, the narrative arch of autobiographical recollections was expected to match the historical teleology of a postsocialist public discourse that featured the end of communism as an act of historical revelation and political liberation from dictatorship, marking the dawn of democracy. The successful integration of nationalist or democratic tropes in life narratives thus served as indicators of the narrator’s democratic credentials and “awakening,” i.e. the adoption of a critical attitude to and reformation of one’s communist mentalities.<sup>90</sup>

If memory is notoriously selective, thus, it is not only because it is potentially faulty or necessarily self-serving, but also because it is a social act shaped by communities of memory and

---

<sup>89</sup> On the dimensions of the process of “democratic re-education” in various Central-Eastern European countries, see James Mark, *The Unfinished Revolution: Making Sense of the Communist Past in Central-Eastern Europe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010). For an account of the changing categories and genres of self-presentation in postwar Romania, see Gail Kligman and Katherine Verdery, *Peasants Under Siege: The Collectivization of Romanian Agriculture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011). On the strategies of self-presentation, including the writing of *autobiografiia*, in the socially fluid Soviet 1920s, see Sheila Fitzpatrick, “Making a Self for the Times: Impersonation and Imposture in Twentieth Century Russia, In” *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 2, 3 (2001): 469-87.

<sup>90</sup> Take, for example, a recent oral history study of everyday life under communism, which distinguishes four categories of “biographies” on the basis of the informants’ degree of “awakening” or critical attitude towards the socialist past. If some biographies are categorized as “*normal*, i.e. characterized by an even evolution, uninterrupted by trauma, and late, often incomplete, awakening,” others are “*marked* by suffering or persecutions,” “*perverse*, i.e. characterized by duplicitous evolution and rationalization of one’s advantages in the system,” or “*ambivalent*” in the case of “social actors who are not programmatically duplicitous, being able to recognize the regime’s evil and dysfunctions, yet adopt an attitude of passive compliance and resignation, even idealization of the system.” Adrian Neculau, “Context și practici cotidiene – o rememorare,” In *Viața cotidiană în communism* (Polirom, 2004) 87-109.

collective frameworks of remembering.<sup>91</sup> My informants' recollections of childhood were shot through with moral concerns and cast in the recognizable narrative tropes and frameworks discussed above. Although younger cohorts were largely exempt from the task of making amends for their socialist pasts, my interviews indicate that the normative mode of remembrance as well as the revelations - both private and public - about communist crimes, persecutions, and atrocities had a powerful impact on members of the last socialist generation. As their youth and presumed lack of communist contamination recommended them as agents of democracy, generations coming of age in the 1990s, especially those socialized in urban university centers or summer schools organized by civil society groups, became proficient in the tropes of appropriate remembrance and democratic "awakening." Several respondents in this category, for example, indicated that their perspective on the socialist past was significantly shaped by the violent collapse of the regime and the emerging memory discourses of the 1990s:

I have to say that, what ultimately opened my eyes, besides the Revolution and the new ways of thinking and behaving, was the "Memorial to Suffering" [television documentary series, *Memorialul Durerii*]. That is when I first found out what communism truly was. The Memorial was about the 1950s and I had known nothing of torture, prisons, or political prisoners.<sup>92</sup>

Whether they embraced, negotiated, or contested publicly circulated categories of representation and modes of interpretation, my informants routinely invoked them to justify, assess, or make sense of their childhoods and their families' socialist pasts. Not least because family and personal pasts failed to either fit neatly into these categories or stand up to high standards of moral clarity, most respondents strove to negotiate the terms set by normative

---

<sup>91</sup> I do not review here the rich literature on "collective memory," the term first proposed by Maurice Halbwachs, but my discussion is informed by Berdahl's (2010) emphasis on remembrance as a form of social action, Zerubavel's insights on the role of "mnemonic communities" and "traditions" in orienting individual memory, and Wertsch's comments on the intersections between autobiographical and collective memories. See Eviatar Zerubavel, *Time Maps: Collective Memory and the Social Shape of the Past* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003); James Wertsch, *Voices of Collective Remembering* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

<sup>92</sup> Author interview, September 2008.

modes of remembrance in efforts to resolve autobiographical tensions. Respondents like Otilia (b. 1976, Constanța), for example, found themselves questioning the disturbing sense of normality in their everyday lives under communism, often expressing the fear that they would have turned into complicit citizens of a totalitarian state, attributing their uncritical stance to their parents' lack of courage or their teachers' moral duplicity:

[After the revolution] I had the tendency to condemn my parents for not being...um...open enough, for not explaining things [about communism] to me. I never had a critical attitude towards my position as a pioneer and, when I started high school [in the 1990s], my main fear was that, if it hadn't been for the revolution, I wouldn't have had a critical attitude on joining the Communist Youth Union either. My parents' explanation was that we were living in terror and that they couldn't tell me much without putting both me and themselves in danger; an explanation that has never satisfied me."<sup>93</sup>

Indicating that, much like the history of communism, one's family and personal history is in a constant process of reformulation and reassessment, Otilia returned to this issue in a follow-up interview. In light of her parents' mitigating circumstances - their suffering and discrimination at the hands of the regime - Otilia eventually adjusted her views of morally appropriate behavior under socialism to accommodate her parents' choice:

I do not want to give the impression that my parents were not against the regime. Because they were and they had a lot to suffer, they were significantly affected. They never integrated in a party or regime structure, but they did not flaunt their views in ways that would impact my situation in school.<sup>94</sup>

As the example above suggests, life stories, especially those elaborated in the dialogical process of interviewing, are instrumental in creating a sense of coherent, autonomous, and stable self and thus of presenting a social acceptable persona.<sup>95</sup> With its overwhelming reliance on

---

<sup>93</sup> Author interview, July 2007.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> On the narrative and social demands for coherence, see Charlotte Linde, *Life Stories: The Creation of Coherence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993). On the limits that genres such as biography and autobiography impose on both memory and subjectivity, see Carolyn Steedman, "Forms of History, Histories of Form." In *Past Tenses. Essays on Writing, Autobiography and History* (London: Rivers Oram Press, 1992), 159-170. The author notes perceptively that the genre of biography carries a set of assumptions about the reality, continuity, and wholeness of

narrative tropes of victimization, indoctrination, or conformity that do not easily accommodate agentive selves, the dominant mode of remembrance, however, can undermine the social function of life narratives. Some interviewees responded to these competing social and narrative pressures by presenting their past actions as oppositional or subversive and thus, as recognizably agentival. If most of my respondents articulated socially acceptable and autonomous selves by recalling small acts of subversion or resignification that ranged from showing emotional indifference to pioneer rituals to investing socialist practices with personally relevant meanings, chapter six will examine the role of dissenting autobiographical memories in establishing moral authority in the childhood memoirs of postsocialist public intellectuals.

The normative mode of remembrance also made it difficult to either recall or recognize forms of agency that did not emerge in opposition to or subversion of state domination. Several respondents who recounted a sense of achievement and fulfillment in socialist schools, for example, argued that their recollections will be of no use in documenting socialist history because they were not “representative,” i.e. they did not reflect an experience of suffering or resistance. Others made room for autonomous and dignified selves by contesting socially dominant modes of interpretation such as the assumption that integration in the official structures of the socialist system was necessarily a form of indoctrination or complicity. In some cases, respondents simultaneously affirmed and rejected the possibility of socialist agency. An extremely articulate, college-educated, and professionally accomplished informant, for example, recounted a childhood rich in diverse, active, and creative pursuits as a diligent pupil and pioneer leader only to later dismiss her aspirations to socialist values as evidence of a lack of autonomy and agency: “I swallowed it [propaganda] like a pill, I was easy material [to mold] for the

---

the self, which are reflected in factual claims, the chronological organization of the narrative, and the sense of closure achieved through biographical conclusion.

communists. (...) I have always been, and still am, easy to indoctrinate.”<sup>96</sup> In some cases, thus, socially dominant narratives of the past obscure experiences of empowerment, fulfillment, and achievement, resulting in life stories that both give evidence of socialist agency and tend to contest its authenticity or representativity.

Determined by social communities and collective frameworks of remembrance, life stories and strategies of self-presentation are also shaped by the dynamics of power informing the interviewing process. If oral historians enjoy a privileged position in collecting and ultimately interpreting life narratives, I also found the dynamics of interviewing to be significantly more complex in practice, where a host of factors can skew the balance of power. Not least because age and (professional) experience are markers of authority, older respondents who could boast long careers as educators, for example, often approached me as too young to know what communism truly was and thus, as an interlocutor with a deficit of socialist experience that they had the expertise to redress. At the same time, a great number of respondents saw me as an insider, as one who grew up under late socialism and could thus be expected to understand and share in the culture of socialist childhood, picking up on cultural references. This often made for unthreatening informal exchanges conducive to in-depth interviewing based on a set of questions that addressed broadly envisioned areas of youth socialization – school and afterschool institutions, family life, leisure practices, etc. – but that typically followed the respondents’ lead. The position of insider also had its limitations. It made it harder to assume a stance of neutrality and made probing questions about what should have been self-obvious to an insider seem suspect or easier to ignore (“You know how it was!”).

If the shifts in political, discursive, and memory regimes triggered by the collapse of socialism significantly impacted how respondents recalled their socialist lives, so did the passage

---

<sup>96</sup> Author interview, September 2008.

of time. Because life stories are constantly revised to ensure a coherent sense of self, the stories people told in the 1990s, when memories of economic deprivation and political indignities were considerably fresh and widespread, are likely to have changed twenty years later.<sup>97</sup> There is, for example, an increasing willingness to reclaim socialist values or recall positive identifications with the socialist regime that can be attributed to a change of perspective on the transitional present, which has gradually evolved from “a temporary inconvenience on the road to capitalism to a seemingly permanent discomfort.”<sup>98</sup> Coupled with the increasing remoteness of the socialist past and the recognition that it is “not reversible or restorable,” the dissatisfaction with the present encourages the reclamation of socialist values and experiences in forms that have often been (self)-described or dismissed as nostalgia.<sup>99</sup>

Although deplored by some public authorities, the reclamation of the socialist past is increasingly more common and even socially acceptable. As chapter six will explore, digital communities of memory have turned the internet into a popular public forum to express positive identifications with the socialist past of one’s childhood or youth over the past decade. Similarly, many respondents who worked as educators typically reclaimed socialist values, remembering communism in self-affirming terms that centered on their professional career and pedagogical legacy even as they remained critical of its abuses and failures:

---

<sup>97</sup> Linde, *Life Stories*.

<sup>98</sup> Gerald Creed, “Deconstructing Socialism in Bulgaria,” In *Uncertain Transition: Ethnographies of Change in the Postsocialist World*, eds. Michael Burawoy and Katherine Verdery, (Boston: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1999), 224.

<sup>99</sup> Gerald Creed, “Strange Bedfellows: Socialist Nostalgia and Neoliberalism in Bulgaria,” In *Post-Communist Nostalgia*, eds. Maria Todorova and Zsuzsa Gille (New York: Berghahn, 2010), 37. Some of my interviewees, for example, noted self-reflexively on this change of perspective, indicating that memories of socialism are increasingly criticisms of the present: “I recently had this revelation. I have, so far, lacked the element of time. There was one year since the revolution, five years since the revolution, until I lost the count. Wait a second, I told myself, it has been twenty years since the revolution, almost as long as Ceaușescu was in power. So I [started] counting: the only highway, Ceaușescu, all the hydroelectric plants, Ceaușescu; the same for all the factories, hospitals, schools, houses of culture, cinemas.” Author interview, July 14, 2010. The informant is a doctor, born in 1960 in Baia Mare.



We have nothing to be nostalgic about, but if there was anything good about communism, it was culture. (...) Today, nobody, but absolutely nobody, makes any investment or shows any interest in musical and cultural education. Now, when all these activities should flourish because they are free, only a madman would do something.”<sup>100</sup>

This dissertation thus adopts a critical reliance on oral histories. While it acknowledges and accounts for the political, social, and discursive demands on autobiographical memories, it argues that they can, nevertheless, enrich our understanding of the past.

### **Survey of Chapters**

Deploying the performative approach outlined above, individual dissertation chapters examine how children engaged in discursive, embodied, and broadly social performances of socialist patriotism and internationalism under the guidance of parents, teachers, and youth activists. This study does not aim to provide a systematic and comprehensive account of patriotic education under Ceaușescu. My goal is rather to isolate a number of formative sites that emerged at the institutional intersection of the school and the Pioneer Organization – whether literature classes, circles and clubs in after-school institutions such as Pioneer Palaces, national writing competitions launched by pioneer magazines, instructive leisure activities such as pioneer expeditions and international youth camps, or print and broadcast media – in order to provide insights into the ways in which children and their adult mentors negotiated the terms of their engagement in state-orchestrated and subsidized practices of socialist patriotism.

The dissertation opens with a chapter - “‘The Children of the Motherland, the Most Precious Capital of the People:’ The Ideological Representations and Institutional Structures of Late Socialist Childhood” - that gives an overview of the broader ideological representations and institutional structures informing and shaping children’s experiences of socialist patriotism. The

---

<sup>100</sup> Author interview, March 2009, with I.T., teacher of Romanian, Bucharest.

first section will chart the evolution of official representations of the ideal child in postwar Romania, exploring how the Stalinist view of the child as a docile ward of the state that was embraced after the war came to coexist ambivalently under Ceaușescu with family-centered depictions of children and, increasingly by the late 1970s, with images of children as precocious political activists. The second section focuses on the educational reforms of the Pioneer Organization (1966) and general education (1968, 1978), examining the reclamation of the teaching staff as “the most numerous detachment of the country’s intelligentsia” and their increased role in the moral and political upbringing of youth.

Chapter two - “The Pedagogy of Socialist Patriotism: Performativity, Resignification, and Agency” - will begin by outlining the main tenets and sources of the pedagogy of socialist patriotism, discussing the emphasis on manifest activism and voluntarism as well as the role of collective life, socially useful labor, socialist competitions, and pioneer rituals in the formation of socialist subjects. Focusing on recurrent practices of socialist patriotism that structured children’s daily regimen in schools across the country, the following sections will examine how performative approaches can account for the participants’ (teachers, parents, and children) small and often inconspicuous acts of resignification or appropriation of state-mandated norms. The chapter will conclude with an examination of the modalities of socialist agency, contending that agency was not only entailed in acts of subversion or transgression of structures of domination in late socialism, but also in the very processes of practicing, living, and aspiring to socialist norms.

Entitled “The Socialist Nerd: Discursive Practices of Socialist Patriotism,” the third chapter focuses on the self-selected elite of ambitious children and teens, who did not only become proficient in “ideological literacy,” but also pursued broader agendas of academic achievement and cultured life (experimenting with creative writing, reading voraciously from the

masterpieces of domestic and universal literature, etc.). The section explores the paradoxical nature of typical sites of discursive socialization in late socialism - literature classes, literary competitions launched by children's magazines, literary circles organized by experimental educators in schools and Pioneer Palaces, and national creativity camps led by an emerging generation of (ideologically non-aligned) postmodernist writers – which facilitated the pursuit of genuine commitments to literary culture and creativity despite their declared mission of training loyal socialist youth.

Shifting attention to practices of socialist patriotism that were simultaneously embodied and discursive, the fourth chapter, “Small Comrades as Archeologists and Ethnographers: Performing Socialist Patriotism on National Expeditions,” examines children's socialization in socialist patriotism in summer expeditions as an integral part of the socialist regime's promotion of “purposeful” tourism. This section investigates the multivalent function of pioneer expeditions, which were envisioned by children, schoolteachers, and youth activists both as compelling educational alternatives to formal school environments and as opportunities for entertainment and adventure. Drawing on expedition travelogues and interviews with former participants, the chapter explores how children's performance of expert roles (as team historians, ethnographers, geographers, diarists, cooks, etc.), writing of expedition diaries, and life in self-sufficient collectives engendered meaningful experiences of camaraderie, patriotism, and sense of belonging to a broader collective, defined in inextricably nationalist and socialist/civic terms.

My interest in how the Pioneer Organization reconciled its mission of socializing the young into socialist patriotism with the principles of internationalist solidarity at a time when Ceaușescu's ambitious foreign policy generated a boom in international youth exchanges inspired the fifth chapter. Inquiring into how the Romanian Pioneers envisioned socialist

internationalism for children and how it attempted to translate this vision into practice, “Internationalism Without Contamination: Romanian Pioneers in International Children’s Camps” investigates how child ambassadors performed “socialist Romanianness” for international foreign audiences during youth exchanges with children’s organizations from the Soviet Bloc, and, increasingly since the late 1960s, from Western Europe.

The sixth and last chapter of my dissertation maps the postcommunist memory landscape, tracing the emergence of a hegemonic framework of remembrance of the socialist past back to the contentious climate of public debates and political struggles of the 1990s, and exploring the uneasy relationship between the gradual entrenchment of this discourse and the subsequent democratization, fragmentation, and commodification of memory practices during the past decade in Eastern Europe. Starting inquiry from recollections of socialist childhood under Ceaușescu, “Pioneers into Bloggers and Public Intellectuals: The Politics of Generational Memory and Childhood Nostalgia in Postsocialist Romania” juxtaposes recent memoirs of politically traumatized childhoods published by aspiring public intellectuals against the predominantly nostalgic recollections of “normal” and “working-class” childhoods posted on social media sites (public blogs, Facebook groups) during the past decade. Examining the practices of remembrance orchestrated by members of the “transition generation,” this section also seeks to examine how neoliberal forms of post-socialist connectivity – the emerging book market and the Internet – both facilitate and limit the emergence of communities of memory.

With some exceptions, the case studies of ritual, discursive, and social practices of socialist patriotism that make the object of my analysis in chapters two through five center on a small percentage of children and teens. If these case studies and the life narratives that give them the texture of lived experience are not necessarily numerically representative, they are

nevertheless indicative of larger trends in the patriotic and moral upbringing of youth. They serve as analytical lenses that narrow the scope of inquiry in order to enable us to explore – as if under a magnifying glass - the institutional structures of constraint and possibility engendered by socialist policies, the distinctively socialist technologies of subjectivity, as well as the room for appropriation and resignification of state directives opened by everyday practices of socialist patriotism. Functioning as useful entry points in my analysis of socialist childhood, the formative sites examined in the following chapters have broader implications for an understanding of the moral and patriotic upbringing of youth.<sup>101</sup> The institutional dynamics, sources of agency, and performative potential of resignification they uncover are likely to have informed analogous practices of socialist patriotism that mobilized the majority of socialist youth by late socialism.

If only a small percentage of pioneers participated in historical or ethnographic expeditions, it is no less true that large numbers of schoolchildren across the country engaged in diverse forms of patriotic tourism, experiential learning, or socially useful labor that opened comparable opportunities for self-affirmation, self-realization, and the resignification of official conceptions of collective life or patriotism. The Pioneer Organization’s annual reports on the organization of summer vacations suggest that, by the late 1970s, almost half the children of pioneer age were engaged in touristic activities, attending central and local camps or pioneer forums and participating in county exchanges, so-called “guest tourism” (*drumeție în ospete*), sports ventures, or brief trips and excursions (*excursii și drumeții*).<sup>102</sup> Interviews give evidence of

---

<sup>101</sup> This methodological approach is akin to Carlo Ginzburg’s valorization (via Auerbach’s work) of *Ansatzpunkte*, i.e. starting points, in the writing of microhistory. See Ginzburg, “Latitude, Slaves, and the Bible: An Experiment in Microhistory,” In *Critical Inquiry* 31 (2005): 666.

<sup>102</sup> The latter forms of tourism – trips, excursions, expeditions - were increasingly preferred by late socialism not only because they engaged students in more demanding forms of tourism, but also because the Pioneer organization lacked the facilities to accommodate the growing number of school children, especially after 1970, when a ministerial decision transferred many of its facilities to local enterprises. Archive of the Romanian Pioneers [hereafter ARP], files 7/1967, 171-9; 11/1968, 107-9; 23/1971, 111-6; 13/1977, 23, 27, 51, 113, 174; and 19/1984, 50, 64, 67.

additional school-based touristic initiatives that were not likely to be systematically monitored or recorded in institutional statistics. Short trips to cultural or historical sites were extremely common, being organized by schoolteachers – some of whom worked as professional guides - to mark the ceremony of induction into the Pioneer organization, strengthen the solidarity of their class, or provide a mix of leisure and instruction. Finally, as interviews and photo albums suggest, children also engaged in cultural and historical tourism in the company of their families.

The practice of playing expert roles enabled by pioneer expeditions was similarly more widespread. Schoolchildren, for example, engaged in professional training and experiential learning in a variety of afterschool circles or clubs in natural and social sciences, where they acted as naturalists, chemists, or historians in training. The same can be said about children's performance of civic work, which was not only encouraged on pioneer expeditions or during vacations, but was an integral part of the school regimen. By late socialism, schoolchildren began the academic year with mandatory sessions of "patriotic work" and were encouraged to perform socially useful labor (such as fulfilling recycling quotas) throughout the year.

Although only a small number of diligent children acquired the ideological proficiency and cultural competence rewarded by publications, prizes, awards, or participation in creativity camps, all schoolchildren were engaged in discursive and ritual practices of socialist patriotism. Virtually all children took the pledge of allegiance on joining the Pioneer organization, a great number of rank-and-file pioneers who fulfilled leadership roles at class levels received regular training in ritual practice and ideological literacy, and the great majority of schoolchildren tried their hand – whether successfully or unsuccessfully - at writing patriotic school compositions. Furthermore, judging by interviews as well as digital recollections posted on social media, reading was one of the most widespread practices of "cultured life" under socialism. If the

degree of control and monitoring socialist pedagogues exerted over what or how children read was significantly lower than the socialist regime might have intended, retrospective recollections indicate that a range of socialist bestsellers in the domains of children's literature, historical legends, or adventure novels for teens were both highly popular and influential.

Focusing on an ambassadorial elite of pioneers, practices of (socialist) internationalism enabled by travel to international youth camps and/or encounters with foreign youth were significantly more restricted. Imagined internationalist encounters, by comparison, were much more prevalent, being promoted, for example, in the form of pen pal correspondence, foreign languages study, regular rubrics on foreign youth (from capitalist, developing, or fraternal socialist countries) in children magazines, or performances of multicultural diversity in school and kindergarten celebrations, to mention only a few. These imagined internationalist encounters encouraged a similar emphasis on self-presentation strategies, seeking to strengthen patriotic allegiance and attachments rather than encourage openness to cultural diversity and internationalist understanding.<sup>103</sup>

An additional point to consider is that many of the young people featured in the following chapters stood out by exhibiting extraordinary activism and voluntarism, academic diligence, ideological proficiency, cultural competence, expert performances as ethnographers, historians, and team chroniclers, or ambassadorial qualities. They achieved their exceptional statuses by actualizing and realizing a set of moral and cultural values, behaviors, and skills that, while

---

<sup>103</sup> In the domain of foreign language study, for example, there was a shift away from the western languages and cultures studied (English, French, German, Spanish, etc.) and towards the popularization of Romanian culture and socialist achievements. Reflecting a political climate that prized national self-sufficiency, foreign language textbooks were revised in the 1980s to “eliminate texts inspired from the life, activity, and culture of the people whose language [children] study and introduce texts inspired by the economic, political, and cultural activity of our people.” As a result, a great majority of the newly introduced texts invited schoolchildren to assume the self-directed gaze of tourist guides by showing their imaginary foreign friends around the capital city, playing with them in Romania's international camp at Năvodari, or writing them letters describing national celebrations and folk festivals. See ANIC, Fond C.C. al P.C.R. – Propagandă, file 29/1983, 60, and file 44/1988, 68, 103, 143.

broadly defined as socialist – i.e. derived from Soviet pedagogy and/or promoted by the socialist regime, – also echoed prewar domestic legacies of youth socialization and resonated with late socialist educators, who both embraced and adapted them to their needs in the classroom. Their diverse accomplishments make the young people in the following pages significant, if not necessarily representative, figures in late socialism. Their historical significance lies in the fact that they are uniquely positioned to give insights into the modes of being and action enabled by the realization of socialist values in a historical period typically described in terms of popular cynicism and indifference.

To the extent made possible by interviews and other forms of autobiographical testimony – both retrospective and contemporary with the events - I strove to strike a balance between maintaining the integrity, and even idiosyncrasy, of individual biographies and “scaling them up” by “dissolving” them into an aggregated history of socialist childhood. Not least because “the demands of social history require that we accumulate as many individual experiences as possible to draw firm conclusions about the past,” we tend to assess the historical significance of life stories primarily in terms of their ability to illustrate and reveal broader patterns of historical experience and agency.<sup>104</sup> As my emphasis on individual biographies aims to prove, there is also historical significance and analytical value in zooming in on the details of individual childhood experiences in order to give a more textured sense of how socialist subjects were constituted, of the concrete effects of state policies, and the politically determined possibilities of self-affirmation or forms of action.

---

<sup>104</sup> For a critical discussion of how historians use (biographical) evidence to generalize meaning and the assumptions about “what constitutes the social in social history,” see Christopher J. Lee, “Gender without Groups” Confession, Resistance and Selfhood in the Colonial Archive, *Gender and History* 24, 3 (2012): 701-17.



## Chapter I

### **“The Children of the Motherland, the Most Precious Capital of the People:”**

#### **The Ideological Representations and Institutional Structures of Late Socialist Childhood**

Children and youth provided modern political systems with tremendous symbolic capital. In postwar Romania, youth embodied the socialist regime’s transformative ambitions of creating “new socialist persons,” future-oriented visions of progress, and projected emancipation of oppressed categories (whether women, workers, or youth). Children and youth were thus at the center of the communists’ battle for “the cultural front,” which complemented the struggles for political and economic power fought on the terrains of nationalization, collectivization of agriculture, and industrialization. This section will start with an examination of the changing representations of the ideal socialist child and family in postwar Romania, focusing on the ambivalent representations of children as both small activists and grateful wards of parental or state care under Ceaușescu. It will then discuss the impact of a range of educational reforms implemented in the 1960s and 1970s on the institutional structures of state education and character formation in late socialism.

#### **The Ideal Child: Precocious Activist, Docile Ward of the State, or Patriotic Family Duty?**

By 1965, when Ceaușescu came to power, the Leninist view of children and youth as natural allies of the revolution, the Bolshevik belief in the endlessly malleable nature of childhood, and the Stalinist character of postwar institutions such as the socialist school and the Pioneer Organization were deeply entrenched.<sup>105</sup> The language of social transformation survived

---

<sup>105</sup> For a comprehensive account of the convergence of contemporary psychology with revolutionary need in turning “youth” into a metaphor of revolutionary transformation in the texts of Bolshevik reformers, see Anne Gorsuch,

into late socialism, when it informed public discourses on youth. It is in these terms that emphasized the malleable, educable, and teleological character of youth that members of the Central Committee carried out their discussions over the reforms of the party's children organization in 1966 and of the general program of mandatory education in 1968:

As we build factories, towns, and transportation systems that constitute the infrastructure of tomorrow's society, we should also build the person of tomorrow. This task starts with the foundation of society, with our children, with the pioneers. There is no material more malleable for the architects of tomorrow's man than the child.<sup>106</sup>

While they drew on postwar discursive representations, the ideological parameters of socialist childhood also underwent significant changes in the mid-1960s. During the last two decades of Romanian communism, childhood and youth served not only as metaphors for the transformative potential of socialism, but also as embodiments of the familial solidarity of the nation. Ceaușescu's invocation of children as "the most precious capital of the people" in a speech addressing educators in 1966 recalled the larger context of the regime's nationalist ambitions and economic agendas, both of which shaped the infamous demographic policies centered on the criminalization of abortion and strengthening of the socialist family.<sup>107</sup> In a postwar society that experienced both a steady population decrease and the emergence of a command economy, which depended on the availability of labor force, children were indeed "precious capital." Ceaușescu's regime sought to cultivate this capital by reclaiming traditional values of motherhood, child dependency, and "families with many children" as well as legislating the bearing of children as a patriotic duty to the socialist regime.

---

*Youth in Revolutionary Russia: Enthusiasts, Bohemians, Delinquents* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000).

<sup>106</sup> Miron Nicolescu, president of the Romanian Academy, in ANIC, Fond C.C. al P.C.R. – Cancelarie, file 49/1966, 124.

<sup>107</sup> Nicolae Ceaușescu, Cuvântare la Consfătuirea de constituire a Consiliului Național al Organizației Pionierilor, *Revista de pedagogie*, November 1966, 5-10.

Drawing on contending visions of childhood of both domestic and Soviet inspiration, official representations of the ideal child during Ceaușescu's regime were deeply ambivalent. Children were either envisioned as grateful and docile recipients of parental and state care or, alternatively, as precocious activists and revolutionaries. In the latter view, children appeared to be in a relation of "filiation," dependency, and loyalty with "the socialist motherland" and "the people" that far exceeded the bonds with their natal families.

### ***The Critique of the Soviet Model of Activist Childhood***

In the growing anti-Soviet climate of Ceaușescu's rise to power, discussions over educational reforms and representations of socialist childhood were inextricably tied to the critique of the Soviet model of precocious activism. The former first-secretary of the Workers' Youth Union (UTM, *Uniunea Tineretului Muncitoresc*), the patron organization of the Pioneers, argued at the Central Committee plenary on the reform of the Pioneer Organization in 1966 that the imposition of the Soviet model in the Eastern Bloc promoted failed pedagogies of socialist citizenship, whereby children were entrusted with leadership roles and responsibility that far exceeded their abilities:

We followed mechanically what they were doing in the Soviet Union and in other socialist countries. On many occasions, these methods were inappropriate to our context, yet they were implemented. (...) With respect to the pioneer movement, a number of socialist countries are debating whether it should be teachers who organize and lead the movement or youth and children themselves, and they reach the strange conclusion that they should put children in charge of such a vast organization and activity.<sup>108</sup>

Nicolae Ceaușescu seconded this view in the meeting's concluding remarks, listing the method of (children's) "self-education" (*autoeducatie*) among the mistakes of Soviet inspiration and associating youth with inexperience and immaturity:

---

<sup>108</sup> The speaker was Virgil Trofin, who had filled the position of first-secretary of the Workers' Youth Union until 1964. ANIC, Fond C.C. al P.C.R. – Cancelarie, file 44/1966, 14.

In my opinion, children's education should not be a form of self-education. This might be a pedagogical method, but we can't let children educate themselves, as we did in the pioneer organization, or entrust this task to older children - young people who join the Communist Youth Union at fourteen - and who are usually in charge of pioneer activities during their high school years, until they turn eighteen, twenty.<sup>109</sup>

The majority of participants agreed. Addressing the mission of the organization to train children in the practice of self-government and self-management, for example, many speakers argued that children were not capable of ruling themselves - "Children can't exert authority over other children in educational matters" - and that teachers who were "youthful in spirit" were more suitable for the role of leaders.<sup>110</sup> High-ranking party ideologues such as Leonte Răutu warned that unsupervised children encouraged to assume leadership roles were more likely to morph into anarchic elements than develop spirit of initiative, animating the discussion with real life examples of spontaneously created gangs of children who posed threats to school officials.<sup>111</sup> While others contended that electing adults rather than rank-and-file pioneers as group leaders would threaten the democratic character of the organization, the emerging consensus was that children were in need of adult guidance and expertise best provided by trained and experienced teachers and pedagogues.

Studies on the changing views of youth in the Soviet Union associate the shift in the perception of youth from a revolutionary force to a potential source of political anarchy with the aging and ossification of the party leadership.<sup>112</sup> In the Romanian case, the aging of the "old guard" colluded with patriarchal views of youthful immaturity and the anti-Soviet climate to challenge notions of youth activism. Invoking their domestic experiences as "fathers" and "grandfathers of pioneers" to bolster their political credentials, secretaries of the Youth Union,

---

<sup>109</sup> ANIC, Fond C.C. al P.C.R. – Cancelarie, file 49/1966, 212.

<sup>110</sup> ANIC, Fond C.C. al P.C.R. – Cancelarie, file 44/1966, 5.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 19-20.

<sup>112</sup> Gorsuch, *Youth in Revolutionary Russia*, 22-23, 82.

ministers of education, or members of the Romanian Academy joined Ceaușescu in the 1960s in their insistence that children should be returned to their rightful status of grateful recipients of adult care and expert intervention. In their guise of political *patres familias*, they claimed to reverse a presumably untenable situation that had violated natural and social laws, making children responsible for their own education and political mobilization in the postwar period.

### ***The Stalinist Model: Children as Grateful Wards of the State***

Despite claims to the contrary, the party leadership's commitment to restore the natural order in adult-child relations was not fueled by the presumably alarming state of Romanian children's unsupervised activism. The Soviet model of activist childhood that came under attack in the mid-1960s had been significantly transformed in the 1930s under Stalin, being successfully contained by the postwar period, when it inspired the creation of educational institutions in Romania. Scholars addressing the distinctive character of Soviet conceptions of childhood trace the emergence of revolutionary visions of activist children as independent, rational, and powerful agents of social transformation to the enthusiastic climate of liberation and socially fluidity following the Revolution of 1917 and believed to continue in the sphere of education for much of the 1920s.<sup>113</sup>

During this period, the border between the child and adult spheres was significantly blurred as the most politically conscious among children, the pioneers, were often held up as models for adults to emulate or treated on an equal footing with vanguard grown ups. Political posters, children's literature, and the pioneer press envisioned children as small citizens, emphasizing their "precocity," "accelerated development," "impatience to grow," and eagerness

---

<sup>113</sup> Lisa Kirschenbaum, *Small Comrades: Revolutionizing Childhood in Soviet Russia, 1917-1932* (New York: Routledge Farmer, 2001); Ann Livschitz, *Growing up Soviet: Childhood in the Soviet Union, 1918—1958* (PhD Diss., Stanford University, 2007).

“to rush through childhood as quickly as possible.”<sup>114</sup> Inspired by these propaganda efforts, child activism took many forms. Urban pioneers organized campaigns to raise productivity in factories, recruiting “shock workers” and battling absenteeism, alcoholism, and laziness, and joined the effort to collectivize the agriculture, organizing rural pioneers and enlightening peasants/collective farmers on aspects as diverse as international relations and agricultural issues.<sup>115</sup> More generally, they were encouraged “to participate directly in the political process, handing out election leaflets, making speeches at meetings, and organizing agitational work.”<sup>116</sup>

If the Soviet 1920s were the apogee of the child activist engaged in the state’s industrialization and collectivization efforts, the 1930s narrowed children’s sphere of activity significantly, circumscribing them to the classroom. Although the ideal of activism was briefly resurrected during the Second World War, when children were valued as war combatants and labor force, the postwar years prioritized “normalization” over revolutionary transformation and obedience over activism, sanctioning the view of the child as a dutiful student, grateful to the Soviet state for the unprecedented opportunity to live a happy childhood.<sup>117</sup>

The Soviet institutions of the reformed school and the Pioneers that were popularized in postwar Romania exhibited this distinctively Stalinist character, envisioning the ideal child as a disciplined, docile, and hardworking pupil, whose most important patriotic duty was academic performance and whose most valued qualities were devotion, loyalty, gratitude, and obedience to the regime of popular democracy and the Soviet Union. In fact, any misguided attempt - whether in pedagogical theory, the practice of the organization, or the fictional realm of children’s

---

<sup>114</sup> Catriona Kelly, *Children's World: Growing Up in Russia, 1890-1991* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 76.

<sup>115</sup> Livschitz, *Growing up Soviet*, 129-143.

<sup>116</sup> Kelly, *Children's World*, 77.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 93-129.

literature - to construe the role of pioneers in terms of independent activism during the postwar period was discouraged, if not officially reprobated.

The reformed field of Romanian pedagogy inherited the cultural orthodoxies that had been gradually established in the Soviet Union from the mid-1930s until around 1950. In the sphere of education, the uncontested cultural authority was Anton Makarenko, whose educational theories on the role of work and the collective in shaping communist character received the editorial endorsement of *Pravda* after his death, coming to fill the authority vacuum opened by the denunciation of “pedological distortions” in a 1936 decree.<sup>118</sup> Pedology, the scientific study of children, examined the impact of environmental conditions and inherited traits on children’s mental and physical development.<sup>119</sup> Rehearsing the Soviet critiques of pedology as a pseudo-science that downplayed the role of pedagogy, Romanian publications warned teachers, pioneer instructors, and parents against the dangers of “free education” associated with pedology, arguing instead for the constructive role of adult guidance and authority:

Not long ago, the view that children need, above all, freedom of action, and that any adult intervention in their lives could have disastrous effects on the natural development of their hereditary talents was extremely popular among educators. (...) There is nothing more absurd than the belief that children are naturally endowed with extraordinary gifts, which will inevitably guide them to the rightful path to personal fulfillment. Preaching this point of view, “free education” can lead, as it often did in the repeated experiments with homeless children, to moral and spiritual anarchy.<sup>120</sup>

Romanian psychologists such as Alexandru Roșca, who would go on to have a long career under communism, denounced his pre-war studies for succumbing to “the unscientific and anti-Marxist” theories of pedology. He critiqued pedology for “holding that children’s destiny is

---

<sup>118</sup> Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Cultural Front: Power and Culture in Revolutionary Russia* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1992), 252.

<sup>119</sup> On the emergence of pedology out of medical research on reflexology, the attempts to legitimize it as “a discipline on the border of pedagogy and social psychology,” and the excitement around environmental and behavioral studies in the Soviet Union of the 1920s, see Fitzpatrick, *Education and Social Mobility*, 140-1.

<sup>120</sup> E. A. Arkin, “Igienă vieții sufletești,” In *Gazeta învățământului*, April 9, 1949, 2.

fatally determined by heredity and the social environment, [which was] envisioned as unchangeable,” for “mocking the role of instruction and education,” and for “minimizing the pedagogues’ responsibility in educational work.”<sup>121</sup> By contrast, the postwar Roșca embraced Pavlov’s research, which advocated the importance of adult intervention in child development and education by revealing “the exceptional plasticity and inexhaustible resources of the activity of the superior nervous system” and thus proving that “there is nothing [in that activity] that is not mobile and malleable.”<sup>122</sup>

Given the formative role ascribed to socialist realist fiction, the danger of anarchy implicit in the absence of adult monitoring was also central to discussions of domestic children’s literature.<sup>123</sup> In a 1954 article, for example, philologist Ilie Stanciu welcomed the recent publication of novels inspired by the contemporary realities of Romanian children’s school and family life, including “the role of the pupils’ collective in shaping children’s moral character” and “the educational strategies recommended to parents, teachers, and pioneer instructors.”<sup>124</sup> While he praised the authors for these topical themes of Soviet inspiration, he also criticized them harshly for featuring children as independent decision-makers or anarchic protagonists in unsupervised school environments that threatened to tear the pioneer collective apart. Stanciu’s criticism proved that temporary states of anarchy triggered by the absence of adult authority could not be tolerated:

The novel “Hearty Pioneers” presents us with extremely important and grave events: school children attending science clubs prepare for a school competition. Their preparations are plagued by a major conflict as two of the best pupils disagree, fight with

---

<sup>121</sup> Alexandru Roșca, “Însemnătatea învățaturii lui I. P. Pavlov pentru lichidarea rămășițelor pedologice din psihologie și pedagogie,” In *Revista de pedagogie*, vol. 1, January- March, 1954, 3-20.

<sup>122</sup> Pavlov quoted in Alexandru Roșca, “Însemnătatea,” 10. On the rise of Ivan Pavlov, a late bourgeois physiologist, to the status of cultural authority in the natural sciences under Stalin, see Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Cultural Front*, 238-257.

<sup>123</sup> Ilie Stanciu, “Unele probleme ale literaturii pentru copii,” In *Revista de pedagogie*, vol. 1, January - March, 1954, 32

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.



each other, insult each other's parents, and one of them eventually runs away from school and home. Yet, the author did not find it necessary to feature in her story the character of a teacher, form teacher, or head master, who could run the children's meetings, take attitude towards the incidents, and take measures to redress the situation. Nothing should take place in schools without the active involvement of school teachers, form teachers (*diriginte*), and head masters, who should not only lead and monitor children, but should also work closely with the children's and youth organizations.<sup>125</sup>

Much like the pedagogical theories that valued adult and expert guidance in child education, these literary critiques echoed official Soviet views that increasingly questioned the ideals of youthful independence and spontaneity in postwar socialist realist fiction.<sup>126</sup> They resonated with pedagogical conceptions of children as “blank slates,” which constituted an exceptionally “plastic” and “malleable” material, lending scientific legitimacy to the unprecedented state intervention in child development through the wholesale reform of the educational system and the creation of the Pioneers.

Following the principle of adult authority, Romanian pioneers were organized under the political supervision of pioneer instructors (*instructori de pionieri*) assigned by the Workers' Youth Union, being hardly endowed with leadership roles that would have allowed them to circumvent adult supervision and authority. Pioneers were encouraged to assume traditional roles of adult dependency or attitudes of deference and gratitude towards their elders, embracing learning as their “main duty to the motherland” as well as “admiring and yearning to imitate grown-ups, who were distinguished by their experience and hard-work.”<sup>127</sup> Designed to mobilize children's loyalty in the service of the Republic, the Worker's Party, and the Soviet Union, socialization in pioneer units and troops was conceived as an alternative to the traditional, and

---

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 30-1.

<sup>126</sup> Juliane Fürst, *Stalin's Last Generation. Soviet Post-War Youth and the Emergence of Mature Socialism* (Oxford, 2010), 156-8.

<sup>127</sup> ANIC, Fond C.C. al P.C.R. – Organizatorică, file 32/1950, “Proiect de organizare a pionierilor din R.P.R.,” 12.

presumably reactionary, family education.<sup>128</sup> It is thus fair to argue that the only realm of adult authority that was subverted in the postwar period was that of the children's natal family.

### ***The State and the Family in the Postwar Period***

The socialist regime's usurpation of parental authority over children was rooted in its deep distrust of the traditional institution of the family, whether of peasant or urban/bourgeois origins, which had to undergo a significant process of re-education before it could shoulder its responsibility in the revolutionary upbringing of young generations. In the postwar period, the fledgling regime of popular democracy aimed at mobilizing its recently created youth and women's mass organizations as well as school teachers and kindergarten instructors to combat illiteracy, counter superstitious mentalities, inculcate scientific worldviews, and promote hygiene and health among children and parents alike.<sup>129</sup> Regular columns in pedagogical journals sought to enlighten parents on the principles of socialist education, directing their fire at the bourgeois tradition of pampering children by raising them in the spirit of individualism and selfishness or at the pervading "mysticism" (i.e. religiosity) and ignorance of peasant families.<sup>130</sup> As periodical party reports from the late 1940s indicate, peasant families posed by far the greatest challenge to the regime's efforts, initiated in 1948, to reform education according to Marxist-Leninist principles and secularize state instruction by eliminating religion classes and symbols (icons, prayers) from schools.<sup>131</sup> Singling out women and children as particularly vulnerable categories targeted by reactionary forces (priests, pastors, kulaks, or old regime teachers), reports abounded

---

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> On the role assigned by the party to its mass organizations as well as print and broadcast media, see for example ANIC, Fond C.C. al P.C.R. – Organizatorică, file 157/1949, 13. On the mobilization of educators, see Rustea Viorica, "De vorba cu părinții: Creșele salvează copiii și ajută mamele muncitoare," in *Gazeta învățământului*, March 25, 1949; "Roadele unei ședințe cu părinții," in *Gazeta învățământului*, February 14, 1953.

<sup>130</sup> The Education Gazette (*Gazeta învățământului*) ran a regular rubric, "In Conversation with Parents."

<sup>131</sup> See ANIC, Fond C.C. al P.C.R. – Organizatorică 157/1949, "Atmosfera în jurul desființării orelor de religie, a rugăciunilor și scoaterea icoanelor din școli," 23-8.

in stories of village women who demanded the reintroduction of icons in schools or shed tears over the fact that “our children can no longer study religion in schools, being raised like cattle” even in their roles as party members, members of the UFDR (Union of Democratic Women of Romania), or representatives of the party’s “women’s commissions” in county organizations.<sup>132</sup>

Despite its deep distrust of an institution believed to be the site of backward and reactionary child-rearing practices, however, the state’s endemic lack of resources, basic facilities such as schools and kindergartens, and committed cadres in the postwar decades, prevented it from taking over the socialization of children without the support of the family and prompted it to follow the Stalinist model of cooperation with the family.<sup>133</sup> In this spirit, parents were summoned, for example, to contribute voluntary labor to the building or running of child-care facilities and, when they had the appropriate social class and political credentials, to do their share in raising children in a morally healthy climate.<sup>134</sup> While internal reports reflected a tenuous political situation, where the emerging socialist regime fought reactionary forces with ideologically unfit and poorly trained cadres, official publications strove to present a rosier picture of popular, and parental, support for democratic policies. Proselytizing stories in the pedagogical press featured parents, and mothers in particular, who voluntarily transferred the nurturing and educational authority over to the state in anticipation of their re-education. Interviewed about the role of seasonal kindergartens in 1949, agricultural women workers at the Crevedia Farm allegedly expressed their enthusiasm for state provided care, which did not only emancipate them from the constraints of child-rearing, but also ensured more progressive education for their children:

---

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., 26. See also the monthly reports on “religious activities” among children and parents in villages in the same file.

<sup>133</sup> On the Stalinist cooperation with the family, see Kirschenbaum, *Small Comrades*.

<sup>134</sup> See Maria Grădinescu, “De vorbă cu părinții: Țărănimea muncitoare se interesează de bunul mers al școlii și de educația copiilor lor,” In *Gazeta învățământului*, June 17, 1949.

Our children grow up under more humane conditions. ‘Cause what kind of education or good advice could we give them? We do not only lack the time, but we are also not educated enough to do it. You should hear my little daughters singing and reciting the poems they learned in kindergarten. They learned how to speak properly, keep clean, and behave well.<sup>135</sup>

The regime’s increased authority over the communist upbringing of youth was thus closely linked to the projected absorption of women into the socialist economy. Claiming children as wards of the state by taking over traditional women’s roles such as nurture, caregiving, and education, the socialist state made progress in its projected emancipation of women from their roles in the patriarchal family. In the broader context of social mobility triggered by the accelerating processes of industrialization, urbanization, and collectivization in the postwar period, the absorption of women into the workforce and their increased access to education colluded with legislation that liberalized abortion and made divorce easily accessible in 1957 to weaken the foundations of the traditional family.<sup>136</sup>

### ***Children as Parental Duty to the Socialist Nation Under Ceaușescu***

While the regime of popular democracy usurped parental and religious authority, it nevertheless continued to prioritize adult guidance and monitoring in the socialization of children in the postwar decades. The party leadership denunciations, in the 1960s, of the alleged postwar distortions of children’s natural relations of dependency on adults, can only be understood in the larger context of the regime’s attempts to harness traditional values of motherhood, child dependency, and family in support of its measures of population and reproductive control: the criminalization of abortions and tightening of divorce legislation. Seeking to explain the

---

<sup>135</sup> Vera Derban and I. Ioan, “De vorbă cu părinții: Grădinițele sezoniere,” in *Gazeta învățămîntului*, April 9, 1949, 3.

<sup>136</sup> For a state commissioned study of these developments, see ANIC, Fond C.C. al P.C.R. – Cancelarie, file 101/1966, “Factorii care contribuie la scăderea natalității,” in *Studiu privind situația natalității în RSR*, 9-17.

legislative changes under Ceaușescu, sociologist Gail Kligman argued that the nature of socialist command economies, which relied on the availability of human capital, played an important role in prompting the regime to pursue measures believed to redress the declining birth rate and thus, ensure the reproduction of the labor force.<sup>137</sup> Ceaușescu's large-scale project of social and national transformation was similarly motivated by his political ambitions to emerge as the leader of a great nation and thus a prominent figure in international relations.<sup>138</sup>

At the center of these efforts, there was a reformed vision and mission of the family, which became inextricably linked to the future of the socialist nation. Children were now returned, in the name of patriotic duty rather than parental right, to the nurturing bosom of the family, without whose vital functions of biological reproduction and incipient socialist education, neither the school, nor the Pioneer Organization, nor the broader socialist society would succeed in building the much-anticipated bright future:

The family is the child's first school, the community where the child is prepared for life and work in the spirit of respect for the norms of socialist ethics and equity, of devotion to the people and the motherland, to the socialist cause.<sup>139</sup>

Following the official unveiling of the new reproductive and divorce legislation that sanctioned marriage and maternity as national and socialist duties in 1966, "pronatalism abruptly invaded the dominant discursive space of the newly established regime" and "images of mothers, families, and children became ever more prominent in the public sphere."<sup>140</sup> The party leadership aimed to popularize its politics of reproduction through relentless propaganda campaigns that celebrated the woman as mother, increasingly at the expense of her role as a socio-economic or political actor, and the romanticized village model of "the family with many children" as "the

---

<sup>137</sup> Gail Kligman, "Political Demography and Population Control," In *The Politics of Duplicity: Controlling Reproduction in Ceausescu's Romania* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 8-13.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 120.

<sup>139</sup> The Family Code of 1973, in ANIC, Fond C.C. al P.C.R. – Propaganda, file 34/1973, 9.

<sup>140</sup> Kligman, *Politics of Duplicity*, 120, 123.

nucleus of socialist society.”<sup>141</sup> In this scenario, children did not only emerge as the ultimate fulfillment of women’s natural destiny of motherhood, but also as the catalyzer of harmonious, sexually and biologically healthy, as well as long-lasting marriages.<sup>142</sup> Moreover, children were the main guarantee of their parents’ “communist morality” and national loyalty. Unlike childless couples, assumed to have succumbed to the lure of materialism and selfish individualism, families with many children were praised for being socially selfless and responsible, for being appropriate sites for children’s early socialization into social indebtedness and love of work.<sup>143</sup>

Much like women, whose interests, health, and self-fulfillment through motherhood, the state claimed to protect and support with its pronatalist measures, children warranted state control and intervention under the guise of care and protection. It is no accident that socialist citizenship was modeled on children’s traditional dependency on parental nurture, prompting scholars to address the “infantilization” of socialist citizens and their pervasive representation as “grateful recipients – like small children in a family – of benefits their rulers decided upon for them.”<sup>144</sup> More than any other social category, children and youth lent legitimacy to the paternalist socialist state and its representation of society as a family headed by a “wise Party” or “parent-state” that “made all the family’s allocative decisions as to who should produce what and who should receive what reward.”<sup>145</sup> The party leadership never lost an opportunity to reassert the homology between the nuclear family and the family of the socialist nation. Ceaușescu

---

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., 122-4.

<sup>142</sup> See, for example, the series of articles published in *Femeia* (Woman), the official publication of the Women’s National Council, following the passage of the new reproductive legislation. Mihai Stoian, “Familia” and A. Costin, “Desăvîrșirea biologică prin maternitate,” In *Femeia*, October 1966; Maria Șerban, “Copilul meu, cel mai frumos din lume” and “Bucuria de a avea copii este fără semăn,” In *Femeia*, November 1966; Elisabeta Moraru’s article on a heroine mother, “Ai mei sînt toți,” In *Femeia*, January 1967. By contrast, the absence of children was a sign of unstable relations, not to mention the possibility of infertility, sterility, or frigidity.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> Katherine Verdery, “From Parent-State to Family Patriarchs,” In *What Was Socialism and What Comes Next* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 63.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., 64.

opened his address to pioneers at the national conference of the organization in 1971 with a fatherly comment: “Let me warmly congratulate you in the name of the party leadership, who consider all the children of the motherland their own.”<sup>146</sup> Bringing the family into the fold, the first secretary concluded his speech:

I address the role of the family in the end not because the family is the least important, but because it is the most important and because I want to call on parents to put more efforts in raising the children of our country. Parents should take care of their children as well as other children, as if they were their own, because we are all one family – the family of socialist Romania.<sup>147</sup>

Insinuating itself in family relationships as a wise parent, Ceaușescu’s regime also posed as an advocate of the child, claiming - through its legislative measures and propaganda venues – to protect every child’s right to a happy, nurturing, and loving family. “Children’s rights” were upheld even when they conflicted with the parents’ interests and well being, precisely because they functioned to legitimate the parents’ responsibilities and duties to the state.<sup>148</sup> Assuming the position of child advocates and defenders of the nation’s future, agents of the state as diverse as journalists, doctors, teachers, militia officers, and prosecutors could judge and condemn inadequate parents and families. As print and broadcast media never tired of repeating, children were entitled to loving parents who worked hard and lived in an atmosphere of mutual respect and affection. Divorce, in particular, was not only considered an immoral act in violation of the socialist ethics of social responsibility, but also an “antisocial” act in as much as “broken families” were believed to inflict a terrible psychological trauma on the child and account for the

---

<sup>146</sup> Nicolae Ceaușescu, “Cuvîntare,” [address at the National Conference of the Pioneer Organization], In *Educația pionierească* 11, November 1971, 2.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>148</sup> Courts reported as “successes” instances in which wives who had been threatened with death, battered, raped, and thrown out of the house with their children by their husbands, were “reunited” with their spouse. The justification was children’s right to an unbroken family. See for example the synthesis of cases of divorce that came before the courts in ANIC, Fond C.C. al P.C.R. – Cancelarie, file 8/1968, “Notă în legătură cu aplicarea dispozițiilor legale privitoare la desfacerea căsătoriei,” 81-8.

majority of delinquent youth.<sup>149</sup> Gone were the days when parents were encouraged to acknowledge their ignorance and backwardness and entrust their children's education to the state. Under Ceaușescu, socialist families were no longer exempt from the duty of bearing children and providing them with an incipient patriotic education.

### ***Reclaiming the Child Activist***

Simultaneously envisioned as a nurtured family dependent and as a ward of the state, the ideal child of Ceaușescu's regime emerged in the mid-1960s as the subject of adult care and protection as well as of expert intervention. However, the regime's attitude towards children exhibited the same ambivalence it did towards women or the family. Initially distrusted as the bulwark of reactionary ideology and practices, the institution of the family was revalorized during the pronatalist campaign in attempts to reconcile traditional Romanian values with socialist ethics. Throughout Ceaușescu's rule, women were celebrated both as emancipated socioeconomic or political actors and as mothers, exclusively defined by their ability to reproduce the labor force and the socialist nation. Much in the same way, the disciplined and grateful child in need of adult protection and expert intervention would coexist, throughout Ceaușescu's rule, with the ideal of the activist and revolutionary child who exhibited precocity and impatience with the state of dependency characteristic of childhood. Both visions belonged to the toolkit of legitimate representations of children and childhood, being alternatively invoked by party leaders, youth activists, and journalists.

Rejected by association with the Soviet model in the 1960s, the activist child was ushered back in during the projected revival of revolutionary consciousness and ideological militancy of

---

<sup>149</sup> A 1968 article quoted statistics that indicated 80% of delinquent youth came from broken families. See Petre Pintilie, "Răspunderea actului căsătoriei," *Scînteia*, February 4, 1968.



the early 1970s, when Ceaușescu initiated a set of measures to strengthen the political and ideological education of the masses. Attributed to a series of influential visits by the party leadership to North Korea, North Vietnam, and China (in the wake of Mao Zedong's cultural revolution), the measures were publicly announced by the secretary general in two speeches delivered in 1971 and known as the "July theses" or the "mini-cultural revolution."<sup>150</sup> The seventeen "theses" challenged cultural autonomy and criticized the liberalization of the 1960s, reaffirming "the leading role of the party" in its task of "raising the militant and revolutionary consciousness of the masses" and forming "the new man."<sup>151</sup>

In the sphere of child socialization, the reclamation of the ideal of activist childhood was spurred by two seemingly contradictory developments. On the one hand, the growing political confidence and entrenchment of the socialist regime under Ceaușescu encouraged the mainstreaming of the Pioneers, which became a genuinely "mass" organization, incorporating 70% of school children in 1966 and over 90% in 1971.<sup>152</sup> The unintended consequence of this process, on the other hand, was the naturalization of pioneer activities as routine duties and performances that structured children's daily school regimen and hierarchies. Coupled with the pervasive manifestations of ideological complacency and "formalism" (*manifestări de formalism*) – to quote the party speak for the replication of ritual forms without the internalization of their revolutionary content – the mainstreaming of the organization caused pioneer activities to gradually lose their political edge.

---

<sup>150</sup> Katherine Verdery, *National Ideology Under Socialism: Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceaușescu's Romania*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 101, 107, 113.

<sup>151</sup> Nicolae Ceaușescu, "Propuneri pentru îmbunătățirea activității politico-ideologice," In *România pe drumul construirii societății socialiste multilateral dezvoltate* (Bucharest: Editura politică, 1972), 185-195.

<sup>152</sup> Virgiliu Radulian, "Raportul de activitate al Consiliului National al Organizatiei Pionierilor privind activitatea desfasurata in perioada noiembrie 1966 – octombrie 1971," In *Educația pionierească* 11, November 1971, 15.

The attempts to rekindle child activism, patriotism, and political enthusiasm in the life of state institutions dedicated to the formation of young generations started in 1971, when the age of induction into the Pioneer Organization was lowered from nine to seven, and culminated with the creation of another communist organization, *Șoimii patriei* (the Motherland Falcons), for pre-school and primary school children of four to six in 1976. Around the same time, the party resurrected the principles of pioneer “democracy,” “initiative,” and “self-management” (*auto-conducere*). Only a few months after he announced the intensification of ideological education of the masses in July 1971, the secretary general used the national conference of the Pioneer organization as a pulpit to announce new measures meant “to ensure a more active participation of children in the leadership of the pioneer organization.”<sup>153</sup> “Even though you are only children,” he urged pioneers in the conference hall, “you have to show a sense of responsibility/commitment (*spirit de răspundere*).” The secretary’s main suggestions focused on the creation of new institutional settings and practices – the “pioneer forums” (*forum pionieresc*) and the so-called “pioneer sections” at the National Conferences of the organization, etc. - to stimulate pioneer leadership, initiative, self-management, and political enthusiasm.<sup>154</sup>

Designed primarily as “schools for young cadres” and “political platforms” for the training of youth, pioneer forums followed the consecrated model of pioneer camps, but dedicated a major portion of their program to ideological training in the practice of communist leadership.<sup>155</sup> Under the guidance of adult pioneer instructors, aspiring youth attended meetings and discussion sessions, debating the ways in which the young could translate the ideological programs of the R.C.P. into practice, reporting on the successful activities of their pioneer units,

---

<sup>153</sup> Ceaușescu, “Cuvîntare,” *Educația pionierească* 11, November 1971, 2-8.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>155</sup> Alexandru Ghitera, “Forumurile pionierilor – expresie grăitoare a originalității gândirii creatoare a secretarului general al partidului nostru,” In *Organizația pionierilor: școală a educației comuniste, revoluționare, a copiilor*, (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1986), 117 - 148.

making suggestions for civically oriented patriotic activities likely to be popular with their peers, and electing representatives for the county and the national council of the Romanian Pioneers who were expected to second adult youth activists running the organization.<sup>156</sup> The annual national forums and conferences, which were attended by the president of the Romanian Pioneers and the party's secretary general, provided further opportunities for training in the political practice of attending conference proceedings, giving speeches, participating in pioneer "debates" (*dezbatari*), and electing the adjuncts of the organization's president.<sup>157</sup> Despite the pioneers' largely symbolic role in such leading structures, the process of selection and ideological training for leadership roles among their peers contributed to the creation of a pioneer elite, who embodied the ideal of the pioneer activist and could contemplate successful political careers in the Communist Youth Union or other party structures.

In parallel, a whole range of activities previously restricted to high school youth – civil defense training and political information classes – were expanded to middle school students, redefining the appropriate ages of political and military training. When Ceaușescu first proposed the revival of the patriotic guards meant to coach civilians in military defense in the wake of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968, the training only targeted youth over eighteen.<sup>158</sup> During the national conference of the pioneer organization in 1971, the secretary general proposed the organization of civil defense activities for pioneers, a measure warranted by "the current international climate" and the imperative of preparing children "to defend fearlessly the achievements of the people."<sup>159</sup> Already in 1972, the pioneer organization popularized the

---

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid. Note also the pedagogical focus on "the debate" (*dezbaterea*) as the preferred teaching method employed in pioneer activities in Ghitera, "Scurtă comparație între didactica școlară și metodologia activității pionieresti," In *Organizația pionierilor*, 328-332.

<sup>158</sup> ANIC, Fond C.C. al P.C.R. – Organizatorică, file 54/1968, 1-2.

<sup>159</sup> Ceaușescu, "Cuvîntare," 6.

practice in its educational journals and administered a series of camps and demonstration events with the support of military units and the civilian patriotic guards. Following the secretary's 1971 speech and the organization's measures of popularization, civil defense training, known by its acronym, P.T.A.P., was extended to middle-schools.<sup>160</sup> By 1978, the notion of precocious political activism inspired an additional change in the school curriculum, which came to include bimonthly classes in "political information" meant to keep fifth to eighth graders updated on the socialist party's domestic and international policy.<sup>161</sup>

The developments initiated in the 1970s marked the return of the small citizen ready for political training, activism, and civil defense from the tender age of kindergarten in the political imaginary of the Ceaușescu era. If the secretary general envisioned the child as a precocious activist or militant in narrow political terms, other pedagogical authorities, however, advocated more broadly for the modernization of education, drawing attention to the importance of early education and the need to overcome "paternalist mentalities" and treat children as partners in the process of instruction. This alternative view of child activism was informed by contemporary pedagogical interests in early education and children's active and creative engagement in the educational process. Ceaușescu's regime had sanctioned the broadening of pedagogical horizons in the 1960s, when translations of both classic and contemporary works of pedagogy and psychology increased dramatically, professionals enjoyed more freedom to participate in international conferences and exchanges, and the reform of education was based on comparative studies of education in the United States, western European, and Soviet bloc countries.<sup>162</sup>

---

<sup>160</sup> P.T.A.P. stands for Pregătirea Tinerilor pentru Apărarea Patriei, i.e. "the training of youth for the defense of the motherland."

<sup>161</sup> For the changes introduced in middle school curricula in 1978, see the comparative studies and charts that compared curricula from 1908 through the 1980s in ANIC, Fond C.C. al P.C.R. – Propagandă, file 30/1983, 119-122, 124-5.

<sup>162</sup> For a more thorough account of Romanian professionals' participation in international conferences and research societies (largely under the patronage of UNESCO) and the wide array of pedagogical literature – ranging from Jean

The advocated return to ideological purity in the early 1970s could never completely close these doors. It is in this spirit that the minister of education, Mircea Malița, put forth a broad vision of child activism in his public address in 1971. He balanced the gardening skills of socialist pedagogues and the malleability of youth, who were “educable and adaptable to change,” against the importance of actualizing children’s talents and engaging them as “active co-participants” and “fully developed subjects” in the process of their upbringing:

Modern pedagogy, which gives much credit to tender age, is a good friend to those of us who cultivate young age so that it flourishes and bears fruit. It entitles us to approach pioneers as fully developed subjects and active co-participants despite the fact that children of this age had long been considered passive objects by a pedagogical science dominated by a paternalist mentality. We are not guided [in our activity] by notions of passivity that envision the child as “a wax mold” (*tăblița de ceara*), but by the notion of “active energy.” We know today that the tiny machinery of the human personality begins to work much earlier than it was believed in the past, that tender years are often decisive for the future development of personal aspirations.<sup>163</sup>

Apocryphal stories attribute to Nicolae Ceaușescu a strong personal commitment to pedagogies of child activism, revolutionary youth, and military-like discipline since the early days of his political career as the head of the organizational commission of the Workers’ Party, who was responsible for mass organizations like the Pioneers and the Youth Union. In an interview in the early 1990s, Dumitru Popescu, one of the party’s leading ideologues, portrayed Ceaușescu as “the advocate of a [communist] pedagogy of rigor and exigency,” emphasizing the messianic and didactic character of his interactions with the vanguard youth of the party since the mid-1950s.<sup>164</sup> Indicating that revolutionary and traditional conceptions of childhood had a

---

Piaget’s works to studies by American specialists like B Skinner and J. C Bruner – published during the last decades of communism, see Florin Diac, *O istorie a invatamantului roman modern*, vol II, (Bucharest: Oscar Print, 2004), 226-241.

<sup>163</sup> Mircea Malita, the Minister of education, In *Educația pionierească* 11, November 1971, 37.

<sup>164</sup> Dumitru Popescu, *Am fost și cioplitor de himere, Un fost lider communist se destăinuie* (Editura Expres, 1994), 75-7. As a presidential counselor (consilier prezidențial), Dumitru Popescu was a speech writer for Nicolae Ceausescu and, to a less extent, for his predecessor, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej. From the 1950s through the 1980s, he held a series of other prominent positions in the party administration of the press, culture, and ideological production.

longer history of uneasy coexistence in the party's discourse and policy on youth, Popescu recounted a conflict between Ceaușescu and Leonte Răutu, who was the head of the party's commission for Propaganda and Culture at the time, on the issue of pioneer activism and maturity during a youth union conference in 1956:

Răutu engaged polemically with the rather exaggerated language of the report [on pioneer activity] that approached the child, the pioneer, as an adult, demanding a heightened consciousness, actions that were fully motivated intellectually, and maximal moral rigor of pioneers. Not without humor, Leonte Răutu mocked this pretension, making a witty comment: 'While they are successfully accomplishing these tasks, pioneers should also achieve the goal of no longer whetting their beds.' (...) Ceaușescu then delivered his speech. With everything he said, he urged a terrible, relentless, war on Răutu. (...) He turned this into such a momentous event and drew such shattering conclusions about the danger of making a mockery of the education of children and youth that one had the impression of witnessing the disclosure of a worldwide anticommunist ploy.<sup>165</sup>

In Popescu's recollections, the young Ceaușescu of the 1950s emerges as a father/teacher figure with messianic dreams of shaping a revolutionary generation. It is possible that this view is a reflection of later developments in the leader's standing in the 1970s and 1980s that were retrospectively projected on the 1950s:

Ceaușescu assumed a pedagogical role with a messianic character. Using the nucleus of the youth organization, he intended to transform the mass of Romanian youth into a military force, an army of fearless fighters, a commando troop capable of accomplishing the most dangerous mission, ready to even risk their lives. (...) He imagined that he had to raise the stakes high if he wanted to prepare youth for any eventuality and create a generation capable of realizing the mission he envisioned.<sup>166</sup>

Whether Ceaușescu's pedagogy of child activism, responsibility, military discipline, and self-sacrifice was already germinating in the postwar period or not, the secretary general certainly expressed these views vocally and legislated them systematically from the early 1970s. Indeed, by the 1980s, representations of children and youth became inseparable from the leader's cult of personality and his vision for the country's future of peace and prosperity. Invoking youth

---

<sup>165</sup> Ibid., 78.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid., 78-9.

as “the children of the Golden Age” or “the Ceaușescu Generation,” the epochal discourse of the 1980s achieved a dialectical synthesis of sorts between political activism and loyal dependency. While children were encouraged to show gratitude for the unprecedented living conditions ensured by the party and follow in the footsteps of their worthy predecessors, they were also expected to be ready for political training, activism, and collective work from increasingly tender ages. Their true filiation was the family of the socialist nation headed by the parental figures of Nicolae and Elena Ceaușescu, whom children were taught to cherish as “comrade, friend, and parent” and “mother” respectively.

By the 1980s, when the political culture of “dynastic socialism” or “socialism in one family” was deeply entrenched, the familial discourse found perfect institutional expression in the management of youth organizations.<sup>167</sup> These structures were literally run in the family according to a generational and gendered hierarchy. While the secretary general and his wife headed the ruling party and state structures, their son and daughter-in-law ran the hierarchically subordinate youth organizations. Having been a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Youth Union since 1975, Nicu Ceaușescu, the youngest son of the presidential couple, became an extremely active and influential first secretary of the Union as well as minister of the newly created Ministry of Youth between 1982 and 1987.<sup>168</sup> His wife, Poliana Cristescu, served as the president of the Pioneer and Motherland Falcons organizations, in

---

<sup>167</sup> Vlad Georgescu, “Romania in the 1980s: The Legacy of Dynastic Socialism,” In *Eastern European Politics and Societies 2* (1988): 69-93. See also Vladimir Tismăneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons: A Political History of Romanian Communism* (University of California Press, 2003), 223. The youngest son of the presidential couple, Nicu Ceaușescu, became secretary of the Grand National Assembly in 1979, full member of the Central Committee in 1982, the first secretary of the Communist Youth Union in 1983, and a candidate member of the Executive Committee in 1984. Besides Nicolae, Elena, and Nicu, other members of the extended presidential family were placed in key positions: five of Ceaușescu’s brothers, his sister, and her husband as well as Elena’s brother, Gheorghe Petrescu, who was deputy chairman of the General Union of Trade Unions.

<sup>168</sup> Tismăneanu et al., *Raport final* (Bucharest, 2006), 111, 119, 599. Last accessed March 29, 2014 [http://www.presidency.ro/static/ordine/RAPORT\\_FINAL\\_CPADCR.pdf](http://www.presidency.ro/static/ordine/RAPORT_FINAL_CPADCR.pdf)

addition to being the secretary of the Central Committee of the Youth Union, from 1983 until the collapse of the regime, in 1989.<sup>169</sup>

As the future of a “sovereign” and “self-reliant” socialist nation and as the guarantee of a gradual increase of readily available labor force and economic prosperity, children were the regime’s “most precious capital.” Despite the emphatic revalorization of the family as a site of socialist reproduction and education in the early years of Ceaușescu’s rule, the regime never renounced its claims over the socialization of young generations. If “the family was the child’s first school,” Ceaușescu’s regime made sure to provide the second, expanding the scope of “free and mandatory education” and reforming the Pioneer Organization through a range of reforms, the most consequential of which were those of the late-1960s and 1970s.

### **The Institutional Structures of Patriotic and Moral Education**

In good Soviet tradition, the battle for “the cultural front” in the postwar period opened three directions of action: the enlightenment of the masses (*luminarea/ridicarea nivelului maseilor*), education (*învățământ*), and upbringing or character formation (*educația moral-cetățenească/politică*). While the task of enlightenment was assigned to a wide range of party organizations and state institutions, education and upbringing were entrusted to the school and Pioneer organization respectively. From the early years of the regime of popular democracy, the socialist education of young generations in schools and children’s organizations served both to transform the social fabric by raising youth “in a morally healthy climate” and legitimize the Workers’ Party as a welfare state that satisfied the needs of the working class. The press

---

<sup>169</sup> Ibid. Under Nicu’s leadership, the gendered relation of subordination between spouses translated into the restoration of the Youth Union’s traditional system of patronage over the Pioneers, previously weakened, as we will see, by the 1960s reforms. While throughout much of the 1960s and 1970s, the president of the Pioneer Organization reported directly to the Central Committee, the archives of the organization indicate that by the mid-1980s, the Pioneers send its reports to the Youth Union.



published countless reports on the regime's commitment to obliterate illiteracy (*lichidarea analfabetismului*) and cultural backwardness, build schools, kindergartens, and crèches, provide free textbooks, democratize teaching practices, create revolutionary organizations for children, and provide them with lavish facilities for after school activities and vacations from the gallery of nationalized royal palaces and aristocratic mansions.

### ***The Educational Reforms of 1968 and 1978***

Nicolae Ceaușescu made his debut in the sphere of children's socialization into socialist citizenship with a reform of the Pioneer Organization in 1966, shortly followed by a reform of the system of general education in 1968. First announced during Ceaușescu's inaugural Ninth Congress in 1965, these early policies signaled an attempted reclamation of national traditions and synchronization with broader European and global pedagogical trends. The second law of education passed by Ceaușescu's regime in 1978 codified the gradual return to ideological orthodoxy throughout the 1970s, renewing the emphasis on communist upbringing, ideological education, and the formative role of physical labor. Throughout late socialism, the directions of European inspiration, innovation, and modernization coexisted uneasily with tendencies of national isolationism and ideological control, setting the parameters and institutional structures of patriotic education in late socialism.

To a great extent, the 1968 reform of education recognized and embraced the party's achievements under Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, Ceaușescu's predecessor: the secularization of education, the standardization of instruction ensured by the elaboration of mandatory textbooks and curricula, and the reorganization of major school disciplines along broadly defined Marxist-

Leninist principles.<sup>170</sup> Among the most commonly invoked principles were scientific materialism and atheism in natural sciences, socialist realism in literature, a determinist vision of historical and social evolution driven by class struggle in history, and “polytechnical education” or “education for and through work.”

The reforms in the mid-1960s also benefited from an extensive infrastructure: a nationwide network of schools and kindergartens accommodating the majority of children of school age, a new generation of teachers trained under the socialist regime’s auspices, and a children’s organization that mobilized the majority of nine to fourteen year olds. By 1965, when Ceaușescu came to power, state education had gradually developed to encompass 21,6% of the total population, a number which would grow to 24% (roughly six million) by the early 1980s.<sup>171</sup> Not only had compulsory education been expanded from four to eight years under Dej, but the eight-year program of “free and mandatory” schooling prided itself on socializing the majority of seven to fourteen year olds, who made up over 50% of the total number of youth enrolled in all educational institutions (including high school, vocational schools, and higher education).<sup>172</sup> Furthermore, as Youth Union reports indicated in 1966, over 70% percent of nine to fourteen year olds were members of the Pioneer Organization.<sup>173</sup> Paralleling the expansion of mandatory education and the percentage of school children enrolled in primary and middle schools, the ranks of the organization grew steadily throughout the first decade and a half of its existence,

---

<sup>170</sup> “Studiu privind dezvoltarea învățămîntului de cultură generală,” In *Gazeta învățămîntului*, February 9, 1968.

<sup>171</sup> ANIC, Fond C.C. al P.C.R. – Propagandă, file 33/1987, Ministerul Educației și Învățămîntului, “Documentar privind dezvoltarea învățămîntului in R. S. Romania,” 3.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid. See also ANIC, Fond C.C. al P.C.R. – Propagandă, file 40/1966, 110, for statistics on the rate of enrollment among seven year olds from 1950 through 1965.

<sup>173</sup> Traian Pop, “Organizația pionierilor într-o noua etapă a dezvoltării sale,” *Revista de pedagogie*, August-September 1966, 14.

reporting a robust increase in membership from 100.000 pioneers (10% of school children) in 1950 to 900.000 in 1958 and an approximate two million (70% of school children) in 1965.<sup>174</sup>

The reform of 1968 reaffirmed the regime's traditional insistence on the expansion and democratization of education. It legislated education both as a patriotic duty to the nation, which children would serve by applying themselves assiduously to their studies, and as a state guaranteed right:

The law [of education from 1968] expresses the profoundly democratic character of our party, ensuring every citizen's right to education regardless of nationality, race, gender, or religion and eliminating any constraints that might be construed as a form of discrimination, thus being an expression of our citizens' full equality of rights. (...) Citizens' right to education is further facilitated by the provision of free education for all level of instruction and forms of financial aid.<sup>175</sup>

Begun in earnest under Dej, the expansion of education continued under Ceaușescu, who presided over the extension of compulsory education from eight to ten years in hopes of improving "social productivity and national wealth" by redressing trends which indicated that 40% of school graduates failed to continue their studies beyond the mandatory eight years.<sup>176</sup> Following global trends reflected in UNESCO statistics, this structural change also inspired the lowering of the age of schooling from seven to six, eventually making the year of "preparatory instruction" for five year olds in kindergartens a prerequisite of school enrollment. In addition, the percentage of school children inducted into the Pioneer Organization was just barely short of

---

<sup>174</sup> ANIC, Fond C.C. al P.C.R. – Organizatorică, file 32/1950, "Raport asupra activității organizațiilor de pionieri din iunie 1949 pînă în prezent," 32. Cancelarie, file 25/1958, "Hotărîrea Plenarei a V-a a C.C. al U.T.M cu privire la unele măsuri pentru îmbunătățirea muncii organizației de pionieri," 38.

<sup>175</sup> Ștefan Bălan (Minister of Education), "Expunere la proiectul de lege privind învățămîntul în Republica Socialistă România," In *Gazeta învățămîntului*, May 15, 1968, 1. The minister went on to describe the forms of financial aid and fellowships in his speech.

<sup>176</sup> ANIC, Fond C.C. al P.C.R. – Propagandă, file 40/1966, Studiu privind dezvoltarea învățămîntului în R.S.R.," 17.

100% by the mid 1970s.<sup>177</sup> Building on his predecessor's achievements, Ceaușescu's regime could boast an unprecedented centralization and standardization of education as well as regimentation of citizens state institutions. Only a year after he took office, the secretary general celebrated the widely encompassing potential of the school:

If we take preschool instruction into consideration, it follows that a majority of children enter school at five and only leave it around twenty, when they reach maturity. Our youth learns, lives, and gets educated in school for an average of fifteen years, a crucial time for the formation of fundamental traits of character and the provision of education so that youth would successfully work and live in society.<sup>178</sup>

While they continued postwar trends, the reforms of the mid-1960s were also credited, in both print and broadcast media, to the spirit of social and national rejuvenation inaugurated by Ceaușescu's leadership. The official preambles to the educational reform of 1968 invoked novel principles of change, among which the Romanian school's synchronization with global pedagogical trends, the reclamation of progressive national traditions in children's education, and veiled criticisms of the "mechanical translation" or "uncritical adaptation" of Soviet models under Gheorghe Gheorghiu Dej.<sup>179</sup> Although the first reform of education in 1948 had been previously critiqued and amended under Dej, it came under renewed attacks in the 1960s, when it was charged with having "narrowed [young people's] cultural horizons" and weakened their patriotic upbringing, historical-scientific conception of the world, and even aesthetic education.<sup>180</sup>

---

<sup>177</sup> In 1976, for example, a report of the National Council of the organization listed a percentage of 96.94% of school children as pioneers. See ARP (Archive of the Romanian Pioneers), file 13/1977, "Nota privind efectivul Organizatiei Pionierilor la data de 10 iunie 1976," 49-51.

<sup>178</sup> Ceaușescu, "Cuvântare la Consfătuirea de constituire a Consiliului Național," 7.

<sup>179</sup> ANIC, Fond C.C. al P.C.R. – Propagandă, file 40/1966, 67-8. See also "Studiu privind dezvoltarea învățămîntului de cultură generală," In *Gazeta învățămîntului*, February 9, 1968..

<sup>180</sup> Ibid. Criticisms of the 1948 law of education listed the elimination of important objects of study (literary theory, classical languages, sociology, psychology, and logics), the exaggerated focus on Soviet contributions and downplaying of Romanian and world scientists in the study of science and technology, and the sudden break with the domestic tradition of high school education (in terms of length of study and degree of specialization).

To redress these drawbacks, specialists of the Ministry of Education emphasized the importance of broadening education in the humanities and revising textbooks and curricula of Romanian history and literature. The “underestimation of the internal dynamics of the Romanian people” and the unwarranted emphasis on “external forces” in previous representations of major historical events would, indeed, be corrected in the following years by making national origins, continuity, and unity the organizing principles of historical narratives in school textbooks.<sup>181</sup> Following Ceaușescu’s official reclamation of national history in his speech on the 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the R.C.P. in 1966, history teachers around the country were mobilized to attend courses popularizing the novel historiographical theses that were to be taught in schools.<sup>182</sup> As chapter three will examine, textbooks of Romanian literature were also improved to introduce previously omitted Romanian classics and major literary trends. The party leadership and ministry specialists also addressed the negative impact of postwar measures of Soviet inspiration on the study of “widely used modern foreign languages.”<sup>183</sup> Continuing a policy initiated by Dej in 1963, they advocated for the broadening of the range of languages studied in school, arguing that specialists in English, French and German would serve the needs of Romania’s planned synchronization with global trends. The school year 1965/1966 saw the creation of foreign language high schools in urban centers and the introduction of foreign language labs in schools.<sup>184</sup>

In the years leading to and following the reform, there was also a growing focus on the modernization and improvement of science education, including the study of mathematics,

---

<sup>181</sup> Ibid. On the changes in the teaching of national history, see also Constantin Dinu, “Locul disciplinelor social-politice in planul de învățământ al școlii de 10 ani,” *Revista de pedagogie*, October 1968, 49-54.

<sup>182</sup> In Bucharest, 450 teachers attended a ten-day course with lectures of “the process of formation of the Romanian national state” and “the Union of the Romanian Principalities and the struggle for independence.” See ANIC, Fond C.C. al P.C.R. – Propagandă, file 3/1966, 112.

<sup>183</sup> ANIC, Fond C.C. al P.C.R. – Propagandă, file 40/1966, 8.

<sup>184</sup> Diac, *O istorie a învățământului*, 159. Diac also notes that many foreign language labs in schools were abandoned by 1975 because teachers showed little interest in using them.

physics, chemistry, and biology in middle schools.<sup>185</sup> In 1966, intensive math and physics classes taught by college professors were introduced in major urban high schools, a measure that proved successful in training specialists and, to the delight of party leaders, winners of the international Olympiads in mathematics.<sup>186</sup> In keeping with the Soviet principle of “polytechnical education,” but also with broader modernization trends that had already brought advanced technology in the classrooms of “developed countries,” the party leadership and ministers of education advocated the creation of science laboratories (*laboratoare*), history and geography rooms (*cabinete*), and workshops (*ateliere*) in schools. Physics, chemistry, biology, anatomy, but also history and foreign language labs sprang up in most urban schools in the late 1960s and 1970s. While some school labs were used only sparsely on ceremonial occasions such as party or ministerial inspections, many teachers used labs for regular teaching or afterschool clubs.

Besides expanding mandatory education and revising curricula and textbooks, the reform of 1968 also launched an ambitious campaign to modernize teaching methodologies and practices, mobilizing prominent college professors as well as scientific and professional teachers’ associations. While the campaign might not have transformed teaching practice in schools dramatically, the intense activity in national conferences and symposia as well as international conferences under the aegis of UNESCO throughout the 1960s and 1970s did infuse an innovative spirit in education. Pedagogical journals introduced rubrics in “comparative pedagogy” that kept teachers up to date on publications and directions in their fields.<sup>187</sup> In addition, much emphasis was placed on the need to transform stuffy classrooms into interactive

---

<sup>185</sup> Ibid., 214-225. In the early 1970s, when the mathematician Mircea Malița was the minister of education, the study of mathematics was strengthened and the study of cybernetics introduced in high schools and even, as some of my interviews suggest, in some after school clubs in pioneer palaces.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid., 131. See also ANIC, Fond C.C. al P.C.R. – Cancelarie, file 110/1965, 1-4. One of my interviewees, who attended an intensive math class at the “Nicolae Balcescu” high school in Bucharest in the 1980s noted, for example, the exceptional status accorded to students like her. Not only did students have the privilege of working with prominent college professors, but school authorities also excused them from the annual sessions of productive work.

<sup>187</sup> See the issues of *Revista de pedagogie* in the late 1960s.

environments that encouraged problem-solving and experiential learning, favored practical and applied over theoretical knowledge, stimulated analytical skills, and taught students *how*, not merely *what*, to study.<sup>188</sup> In the teaching of foreign languages, the ministry of education advocated for a shift to “active methods” that prioritized language practice and fluency over theory and relied on the use of games, dramatizations, competitions, and songs.<sup>189</sup> As the interest in providing schools with well-equipped labs suggests, technology was also central to the anticipated modernization of education. This period witnessed the production and popularization of didactic films and the growth of “educational television” (*teleșcoala*), i.e. a series of instructional programs covering a wide range of school subjects, the most popular of which were the foreign languages T.V. shows, continued, with much success, into the 1990s.<sup>190</sup>

To overcome the previous isolationism of Romanian education, specialists from the Ministry of Education compiled a detailed study on educational systems in both socialist (the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia) and western European countries such as France, England, the Federal German Republic, and the United States.<sup>191</sup> Suggestive of the atmosphere of political opening and the imperative of modernization, the study on the United States, for example, showed open signs of admiration for the technologically advanced science labs in schools, the use of films and television in teaching, the “honors programs” for gifted high school students, and the wide range of disciplines covered by college education. This bias would occasionally create tensions between ministry officials, who advocated measures implemented in “developed countries,” and the party leadership, which was primarily concerned with the costs of

---

<sup>188</sup> ANIC, Fond C.C. al P.C.R. – Propagandă, file 10/1967, “Referat asupra unor probleme privind planurile, programele și manualele școlare pentru învățământul de cultură generală, 10-15.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

<sup>190</sup> Diaconescu, *O istorie a învățământului*, 174.

<sup>191</sup> For a comparative synthesis of projected measures, see ANIC, Fond C.C. al P.C.R. – Propagandă, file 10/1967, 2-20. For various parts of the study, including full chapters on the United States, the Soviet Union, France and the Federal German Republic, see Propagandă, file 40/1966, 135-261.

the reform and “the tendency to adopt without discernment educational measures from the west, especially from France.”<sup>192</sup> Overall, however, the party leadership shared the enthusiasm for modernization and synchronization with global educational trends in the 1960s.

By 1978, when the second reform of education was passed, the political climate of late socialism had changed, leading to the condemnation of any tendency, in culture and education, “to bow to what is foreign, especially if it is produced in the West” as a symptom of “lack of national dignity, petite-bourgeois servility, and underestimation of the achievements of [one’s] own people.”<sup>193</sup> The projected return to ideological orthodoxy initiated by the July “theses” resurrected a set of pedagogical principles that, while never abandoned, had been overshadowed in the 1960s: a growing concern with the communist upbringing of youth, an emphasis on “social sciences” or political-ideological education, and the polytechnization of education. Repeatedly formulated and enacted by various measures and decisions throughout the 1970s, these principles found their most comprehensive legal codification in the education law of 1978.

While the law continued to affirm the importance of solid intellectual and scientific education for “the speedy and efficient integration in socialist society,” it also conditioned the success of social integration on the cultivation of the revolutionary communist personality, now envisaged as “multivalent” (*multilaterală*).<sup>194</sup> A key concept of the expanding ideological lexicon of late socialism, the “multivalent development” (*dezvoltare multilaterală*) of the socialist personality denoted a desirable blending of adaptable professional training (*policalificare*), scientific-materialist education, creative and innovative abilities, and political

---

<sup>192</sup> See ANIC, Fond C.C. al P.C.R. – Propagandă, file 10/1967, 40; Cămară, file 110/1965, 1-4.

<sup>193</sup> Nicolae Ceaușescu, “Expunere la consfătuirea activului de partid din domeniul ideologiei” (July 9, 1971),” In *România pe drumul construirii societății socialiste multilateral dezvoltate* (Bucharest: Editura politică, 1972), 222, 682.

<sup>194</sup> For the text of the law, see [http://www.cdep.ro/pls/legis/legis\\_pck.htm\\_act\\_text?id=10480](http://www.cdep.ro/pls/legis/legis_pck.htm_act_text?id=10480). Last accessed March 2, 2014.



consciousness. Character formation had admittedly always been a major concern of the socialist regime, but it became an imperative for political leaders like Ceaușescu, who repeatedly denounced the weakening of communist militancy and revolutionary consciousness, attributing it to the “polluting” influence of Western cultural products (films, music, consumerist and individualist attitudes) and inadequate patriotic and revolutionary education.<sup>195</sup> This is why the most desirable qualities of socialist youth throughout the 1970s and 1980s were (precocious) activism, militancy, consciousness, and “spirit of ideological combativeness,” (spirit de combativitate ideologica), i.e. the ideological vigilance and readiness to redress the perceived lack of patriotism, militancy, or collective spirit.<sup>196</sup>

“Social sciences” – the shorthand for “economic, philosophical, and socio-political subjects” such as political economy, philosophy (Marxism-Leninism), or atheism - were central to educational policy in late socialism because they were envisioned as the educator’s main tools in the formation of communist character. Since “social sciences” were not taught systematically until high school, the task of patriotic and revolutionary education for children of pioneer age was primarily entrusted to traditional disciplines such as Romanian history, geography, or literature. One of the most notable measures taken to increase the role of these disciplines was the revision of the national history curriculum in 1976, when the number of classes taught in schools and high schools increased by three times.<sup>197</sup> To further patriotic and revolutionary education, the law of 1978 also saluted the mobilization of students in after school history, geography, or tourism clubs and literary circles organized under the umbrella of the nationwide festival, *Cântarea României* (The Singing of Romania) which was inaugurated in 1976 to

---

<sup>195</sup> Ceaușescu, “Expunere,” 196-257.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid. Not surprisingly, “combativeness” and “combative” are the single most frequent terms of Ceaușescu’s July theses.

<sup>197</sup> On the specific curricular changes by educational cycle, see Elena Ene et al., “Locul și rolul istoriei în școală,” *Metodica predării istoriei României*, (Bucharest: EDP, 1981), 17.

mobilize citizens of diverse professional backgrounds in broadly defined “cultural and artistic” performances. As indicated in the previous section, the 1970s also witnessed the introduction of “political information” and civil defense classes, previously reserved for high school students, in middle schools.

Signaled by ubiquitous references to “the inextricable link between theory and practice, between school and work,” the polytechnization of education was a Marxist-Leninist principle creatively adapted under Ceaușescu. In a narrow sense, it referred to the formative role of socially useful labor and the cultivation of socialist work ethics. For a party leadership that saw itself battling “intellectualism,” “snobbism,” “ideological complacency” (*automulțumire*), and “social isolationism” in late socialism, the emphasis on work in schools was instrumental in cultivating a “multivalent” communist personality, i.e. one that was equally familiar with intellectual work and physical labor and acknowledged his or her social duties. This view was already present in 1968, when the party leadership worried that the decision of extending mandatory education to ten years might fuel ambitions of upward social mobility and drain the ranks of the working class.<sup>198</sup> At the time, the leaders chose to follow the policies of “developed countries” in hopes of training a “superior,” i.e. theoretically informed, technology savvy, and flexible working class. By 1973, however, Ceaușescu was denouncing the students’ mentality of approaching education as a stepping-stone to a comfortable life as “functionaries,” arguing that young people should be socialized in hard work and physical labor irrespective of their specialization.<sup>199</sup> To this end, both the law of 1978 and previous decisions mandated the focus on “practical activities” in the teaching of all disciplines as well as the organization of sessions of “patriotic work” (i.e. productive labor) in schools, high schools, and colleges. During the

---

<sup>198</sup> ANIC, Fond C.C. al P.C.R. – Cancelarie, file 150/1967, 17-8.

<sup>199</sup> Nicolae Ceaușescu, “Cuvîntare cu privire la dezvoltarea și perfecționarea învățămîntului” (June 18-19, 1973), In *România pe drumul construirii societății socialiste multilateral dezvoltate* (Bucharest: Editura politică, 1973), 634.

economically strained 1980s, pioneers were also expected to engage in recycling campaigns to meet and exceed the economic plan of their unit.

As the following chapters will examine, the education of youth in socialist patriotism under Ceaușescu was shaped by the unresolved tensions between the methodological innovation set in motion by the efforts of modernization and synchronization with global trends in the 1960s and the renewed emphasis on character formation and ideological activism starting with the early 1970s. These tensions as well as the growing pressures on students and teachers to mobilize for political and ideological activities were compounded, in the 1980s, by significant decreases in the financial investments in education. After the percentage of educational investment grew gradually to over 25% of the state budget throughout the 1970s, it dropped drastically in the 1980s, reaching an all-time low of 15% in 1989.<sup>200</sup> The result was an emphasis on the schools' self-financing (*autofinanțare*) through recycling plans or patriotic work of a range of cultural and educational activities previously supported by the state as well as a decrease in the numbers of new schools, labs, works of renovation, and qualified teaching staff at a time when the influx of students triggered by the expansion of mandatory education continued to be relatively high.

### ***The Reform of the Pioneer Organization***

Since its creation in 1949, the Pioneer Organization was defined as “the school’s most precious help in educating children in a communist spirit.”<sup>201</sup> Envisioned as a political force meant to both support and revolutionize the school, the children’s organization was entrusted to the party’s vanguard youth, the Workers’ Youth Union, being administered by special “Pioneer” sections. Selected from the ranks of workers’ youth, some pioneer instructors were young

---

<sup>200</sup> *Anuarul Statistic al României*, 1990, 648-9.

<sup>201</sup> ANIC, Fond C.C. al P.C.R. – Organizatorică, file 32/1950, “Proiect de organizare a pionierilor din R.P.R.,” 12.

teachers, but many others were workers, peasants, engineers, and even senior high school students.<sup>202</sup> As party reports deplored in the 1940s and 1950s, pioneer instructors were often precariously trained ideologically, faultily selected from among “sons of kulaks (chiaburi) or former exploiters,” and lacking in pedagogical expertise and teaching practice.<sup>203</sup>

Representing a source of authority that emanated from outside the educational establishment, instructors were also regularly met with distrust in schools. Early reports denounced the lack of collaboration between teachers and pioneer instructors, criticizing the former for disinterest in pioneer work and the latter for failing to coordinate pioneer activities with educational requirements and school officials.<sup>204</sup> Teachers in counties around the country allegedly refused to support pioneer troops in their schools or volunteer time to help children likely to fail classes on the grounds that they were not paid for extra hours. Freshly inducted pioneers also bore the brunt of teacher dissatisfaction or lack of collaboration between authorities. Reports of the youth organization excoriated teachers who reportedly persecuted pioneers, using low grades as disciplining methods, pulling their ears, or beating them to a bloody pulp.<sup>205</sup>

Throughout the 1940s and 1950s, the deficiencies plaguing U.T.M.’s work with pioneers were blamed on the insufficient absorption of the Soviet model. Since the validity and

---

<sup>202</sup> In some cases, this situation persisted into the mid-1960s. See ANIC, Fond C.C. al P.C.R. – Propagandă, file 3/1966, “Referat privind unele măsuri care se impun a fi luate pentru îmbunătățirea activității mișcării pionierești și a organizațiilor UTC din școli,” 34.

<sup>203</sup> ANIC, Fond C.C. al P.C.R. – Organizatorică, file 32/1950, 35, 41, 45. Party reports insisted that one hundred of one hundred and eighty pioneer instructors had some form of pedagogical expertise and should, therefore, be paid by the Ministry of Education. To match the steep increase in the number of pioneers planned for 1950, the UTM’s training of cadres had to be swift, focusing primarily on familiarizing instructors with the Soviet experience, which was further popularized in the organization’s bulletin, *The Pioneer Instructor*. That year, for example, the county branches of the UTM were instructed to complete in eight months the training of three thousand school pioneer instructors (*instructor superior de pionieri*), who were required to take intensive ten to fifteen-day courses, and fourteen thousand group pioneer instructors (*instructor de detașament*), who were trained in three-day workshops.

<sup>204</sup> ANIC, Fond C.C. al P.C.R. – Organizatorică, file 2/1956, “Informare privind munca organelor și organizațiilor de partid cu U.T.M. în conducerea și îndrumarea organizației de pionieri,” 17-23.

<sup>205</sup> ANIC, Fond C.C. al P.C.R. – Organizatorică, file 32/1950, 35.

educational potential of the model were never doubted, the focus fell on the obstacles to its full implementation: youth activists' failure "to fully commit to the monumental task assigned to them by the party," the disengaged attitude of school teachers who did not support pioneer instructors in their work, the bourgeois mentality of teaching staff from the old regime, the mysticism of both parents and children who succumbed to the unhealthy influence of priests in rural areas, and the endemic lack of material resources or trained pioneer cadres envisioned as "pedagogues with a Marxist training who are members of the party or the Workers' Youth Union."<sup>206</sup> As a former secretary general of the U.T.M., who had presented similar reports on pioneer activities to Dej in the 1950s, Ceaușescu himself must have been all too familiar with these problems. Nevertheless, he presided over the reforms of the mid 1960s as well as the emergence of a new discursive articulation of the problems that located the blame squarely at the heart of the Soviet model, more precisely in its uncritical imposition to the Romanian context.

Envisioned in this spirit, the 1966 reform of the Pioneer Organization centered on three aspects. The Communist Youth Union (UTC, the former UTM), the Pioneers' patron organization, was criticized for its failure to mobilize children successfully, given its young members' lack of maturity and specialist training in working with children. As a consequence, the Pioneer Organization was granted institutional autonomy with respect to the Youth Union and efforts were made to "professionalize" the organization by tightening its administrative ties with the Ministry of Education and assigning pioneer activities and socialist education to schoolteachers. Another important point on the agenda for reform was the open denunciation of the Soviet model, coupled with efforts to infuse pioneer activities with national specificity.

In their attempts to justify these deficiencies in the early years of Ceaușescu's rule, the party leadership argued that UTC members were neither fully interested nor pedagogically

---

<sup>206</sup> Ibid., 22, 41.

prepared for the job of training pioneers. Some Central Committee members noted a general disinterest among youth activists, for whom “the multilateral work among working class, peasant, intellectual and student youth” systematically took precedence over pioneer work.<sup>207</sup>

The prevalent view was put forth by Ceaușescu, who noted during his speech on the reform of the organization in 1966 that youth activists lacked the maturity and scientific expertise required to preside over children’s socialist education, being still in the process of formation:

The task of supervising pioneer activity was entrusted to young people undergoing a dynamic process of cultural, intellectual, and moral development. With all their passion and enthusiasm, UTC members, who had themselves just graduated from the ranks of the pioneers, lacked the necessary competence and experience to ensure the scientific bases of pioneer activity outside the school, to guide this delicate educational process.<sup>208</sup>

### ***School Teachers: From Class Enemies to Loyal Intelligentsia***

Since pioneers represented an age category perceived to be in particular need of adult assistance, the task of socialist education was now to be entrusted to “child experts”:

At no other age, do children require so much guidance and this can only be offered to them by those who, by the very nature of their profession, are educated in the science of the child, experienced pedagogues with a broad scientific horizon, who are intimately familiar with the spiritual universe of the child.<sup>209</sup>

The category of child experts was envisioned broadly in the 1960s, including pedagogical experts, psychologists, youth activists, teachers, and a wide range of cultural authorities - artists, composers, theatre and film directors - and institutions (artists’ unions, theatres, the national television and radio, etc.). The call on experts, among whom schoolteachers represented by far the widest category, did not ring hollow in the climate of general rapprochement between the party and the long suspect category of “intellectuals” in the late 1960s. “Our society, the entire

---

<sup>207</sup> Traian Pop, “Organizația pionierilor,” 17.

<sup>208</sup> Ceaușescu, “Cuvântare la Consfătuirea,” 6.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid., 6-7.

people,” Ceaușescu clamored, “entrusts school teachers, specialists in the arts and culture, our intelligentsia with a social task of great responsibility,” hastening to assure his audience that “Romania has a valuable intelligentsia, who is committed, body and soul, to the aspirations of the people and who is guided by the ideology of the working class party.”<sup>210</sup>

References to the commitment and loyalty of school teachers were indicative of the increased confidence of the socialist leadership in the loyalty of those segments of society which had been shaped under its auspices since the late 1940s, were joining the party in increasing numbers, and enjoyed opportunities for upward social mobility that implicated them in the reproduction of the regime.<sup>211</sup> One of the main political theses put forth by Ceaușescu at the party’s Ninth Congress in 1965 was “the social and ethnic homogenization of the Romanian nation.”<sup>212</sup> Statistical reports presented to the Executive Bureau of the Central Committee of the RCP during the debates over the reform of the Pioneers further supported this thesis, indicating that 40% of current primary and middle school teachers were trained under socialism, 30% of them were party members, and all young teachers were members of the Communist Youth Union.<sup>213</sup> Unlike previous generations of educators suspected for their allegiance to the interwar regime, younger generations of teachers were called upon to participate actively in the task of building the socialist nation during the reform of the Pioneer Organization in 1966:

Given the important role of the school [in the education of children], the party considers that teachers should be entrusted with the guidance and organization of pioneer activity. Today, it is possible to achieve this goal given the tremendous changes undergone by our society: the obliteration of the exploiting classes, the coexistence of two friendly classes

---

<sup>210</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>211</sup> See ANIC, Fond C.C. al P.C.R. – Propagandă, file 9/1965, “Referat cu privire la îmbunătățirea activității organizației de pionieri”, 33-37.

<sup>212</sup> Tismăneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons*, 197.

<sup>213</sup> The report was presented to the Executive Bureau of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party (April 7, 1966) and discussed in the plenary meeting of the Central Committee of the RCP (April 12-13, 1966). See ANIC, Fond C.C. al P.C.R. – Cancelarie, file 44/1966, 5-21, 29-40 and file 49/1966, vol. I, 44-49, 74-223; vol. II, 159-160.

[workers and peasants] with the intellectuals that have grown out of their ranks, and their coalescence in strong unity around the party.<sup>214</sup>

Resorting to symbolic modes of control, the socialist regime thus conferred on educators the flattering status of child experts and intellectuals, entrusting them with the national mission of raising children in the spirit of socialist patriotism. In the wake of the educational reforms of the 1960s, the press celebrated “the teaching staff” as “the strongest contingent of our intelligentsia,” noting, with pride, the steady increase of its ranks from 55,000 in 1939 to almost 200,000 in 1969.<sup>215</sup> By contrast to the postwar press, which had denounced old-school teachers for backward mentalities, the press of the 1960s featured countless profile stories of successful teachers around the country who commanded the respect and gratitude of their students. Some of the educators who started their career in urban centers in the early 1970s remarked on the sense of social dynamism and professional recognition and dignity they experienced:

There was a continuous flow, you know. There was industry; there were factories. There was a lot of work to be done and lots of jobs. And there was a lot of preoccupation with education. We were much more appreciated and parents respected us! Now you are merely a *baby-sitter*!<sup>216</sup>

Although the opportunities for professional self-realization and upward mobility affected differentially teachers in rural and urban areas, being also severely curbed by the 1980s, interviews indicate that they played an important role in energizing educators to invest time and efforts in the organization of diverse practices of socialist patriotism.<sup>217</sup>

Ceaușescu’s appeal to teachers, as child experts and a loyal social category, was a far cry from the regime’s postwar campaigns to purge “the old teaching staff, afflicted by all the sins of

---

<sup>214</sup> Ceaușescu, “Cuvântare la Consfătuirea,” 7.

<sup>215</sup> “Corpul didactic – puternic detașament al intelectualității,” *Gazeta învățămîntului*, January 10, 1969.

<sup>216</sup> Author interview with V.O., March 19, 2009.

<sup>217</sup> By the 1980s, the general dissatisfaction of the teaching staff with crowded classrooms, increased patriotic duties, and low salaries was compounded by the transitory nature of job positions and the toll of daily commutes to rural areas. Recognizing the problem, the secret police saw it fit to monitor “the mood” (*starea de spirit*) of the teaching staff in regular reports.



past political regimes,” and education ministries of class and ideological enemies.<sup>218</sup> Summing up the goals of “the cultural revolution” a year after the 1948 reform of education, Iosif Chişinevschi, the head of the Agitation and Propaganda section of the party, pitted old-school teachers against “new generations,” emphasizing the need to either re-educate teachers in the spirit of Marxist-Leninism or expel the unreformed class enemies from the socialist school:

We set out on the path to cultural revolution with the mission to obliterate illiteracy and cultural backwardness, spread culture to the masses, fashion a new intellectuality from the ranks of the working class and the poor peasantry, re-educate members of the teaching staff in the spirit of Marxist Leninism and cleanse the ministry and educational institutions of inimical elements whose presence in our schools is ruining an entire generation.<sup>219</sup>

In the early iconography of a regime that pitted the old against the new, the reactionary bourgeois against the progressive proletarian, children and youth enjoyed the benefits of ideological innocence, being set in stark contrast to teachers who had served under the prewar regime. It was in this spirit that *Gazeta învăţămîntului*, the official publication of the Ministry of Public Education and the Teaching Staff Union, featured countless caricatures of children terrorized by old-school pedagogues accused of using physical punishment as a disciplining method, perpetuating superstition and old mentalities in science classes, missing classes, and demanding bribes or labor services for passing grades, thus revealing their backward and reactionary mentality as well as their provenance from the ranks of kulaks and the bourgeoisie.

It was not until the late 1950s that the party leadership could contemplate a transfer of authority over ideological and patriotic education from the Workers' Youth Union to the school. In 1958, the paid positions of pioneer instructors filled by youth activists (*instructor superiori*) irrespective of their professional background were replaced with unpaid responsibilities for

---

<sup>218</sup> ANIC, Fond C.C. al P.C.R. – Organizatorică, file 153/1949, 23.

<sup>219</sup> Iosif Chişinevschi's intervention during the meeting of the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the Romanian Workers' Party on January 31st, 1949. Quoted in Cristina Deac, “Reformarea şcolii, lumini şi umbre,” In *Jurnalul Naţional*, September 18, 2007.

school teachers who were primarily selected from among party members or candidates for party membership.<sup>220</sup> Despite these changes, party reports in the mid 1960s continued to warn that “Activities are largely entrusted to pioneer instructors often selected from the ranks of young and less pedagogically experienced teachers as well as pupils, young workers, technicians, and engineers,”<sup>221</sup> concluding that “appointing youth from factories and other institutions outside the school or pupils from advanced classes as pioneer instructors has proven to be inefficient.”<sup>222</sup>

The reform of 1966 echoed the policies implemented in the late 1950s, but represented a further-reaching attempt to solve the twin problems of scarcity of competent cadres and funds in light of the growing expansion of the Pioneer Organization, which was to encompass almost all school children of ages nine to fourteen (seven to fourteen since 1971). Much like the Central Committee debates on reproductive legislation, the discussions over the political training of pioneers evidenced the regime’s tendency to appeal to symbolic-ideological strategies at the expense of material incentives. Invoking the recurrent concern with “manifestations of formalism,” a few participants in the discussion recommended that teachers should either be relieved of some of their teaching responsibilities or be monetarily compensated for their added duties as pioneer instructors.<sup>223</sup> In the absence of stimulation, they warned, pioneer activities would be plagued by the same routinization and lack of enthusiasm characteristic of previous decades. The majority of party leaders, however, insisted that the state could not afford to increase teachers’ salaries, arguing that pioneer instruction should have “a voluntary and non-

---

<sup>220</sup> ANIC, Fond C.C. al P.C.R. – Cancelarie, file 25/1958, 45-9. The decision included provisions to award trimestral bonuses to 30% of the teachers who distinguished themselves for exemplary work with pioneers. Positions for pioneer instructors were to be maintained only in schools where enrollment exceeded five hundred students.

<sup>221</sup> ANIC, Fond C.C. al P.C.R. – Propagandă, file 9/1965, “Referat cu privire la îmbunătățirea activității organizației de pionieri,” 34.

<sup>222</sup> ANIC, Fond C.C. al P.C.R. – Cancelarie, file 44/1966, “Referat cu privire la îmbunătățirea activității organizațiilor de pionieri,” 31.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid., 9, 11, 13, 18,.

remunerative” character since it was, in fact, the teachers’ patriotic duty.<sup>224</sup> As a result, the organization of pioneer rituals and activities became a mandatory and largely uncompensated task for all primary school teachers and form teachers in charge of fifth to eighth grade classes in middle school (*diriginți*).

While the imposition of additional tasks was partially offset by the general salary raises of 1969, teachers were likely to resent the augmented number of working hours.<sup>225</sup> Only a year before, when the party considered increasing the teaching norm from eighteen to twenty-one hours per week, middle and high school teachers as well as officials of the Ministry of Education had voiced their disagreement. A number of archived statements made by educators during consultations with the teaching staff show that the majority felt overworked, reminding leaders that the prewar teaching norm was only fifteen hours per week, and detailing their time-consuming tasks: class preparation, grading, after school activities, homeroom teaching responsibilities, and the effort to keep up to date with developments in their fields.<sup>226</sup> The sense of exhaustion described by a teacher of mathematics, who had worked for twenty years, was not uncommon:

The teacher, as any intellectual, needs a systematic and substantial process of preparation, and the increase of 2-3 hours weekly will significantly affect this process. (...) I am also often solicited to participate in extracurricular activities: conferences, proceedings of the Mathematics Society, reports for pedagogical circles. Year after year, the physical and intellectual exhaustion take their toll on me, impacting the quality of my lessons.<sup>227</sup>

If the 1960s added uncompensated pioneer activities to this busy schedule, the range of practices of socialist patriotism assigned to teachers further increased by 1978, when the law of

---

<sup>224</sup> Ibid., 10, 14, 17, 20.

<sup>225</sup> Ceaușescu announced the average raise of 19% for teachers at the Teaching Staff Conference in 1969. See *Gazeta învățământului*, February 9, 1969.

<sup>226</sup> ANIC, Fond C.C. al P.C.R. – Propagandă, file 9/1965, “Nota cu privire la normarea activitatii personalului didactic,” 19-56.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid., 56.

education made the cultivation of the “multivalent” communist personality “the fundamental social and ethical duty of the teaching staff.”<sup>228</sup> Aside from pioneer activities, homeroom teachers were now under increased pressure to attend political education meetings, ensure their students’ ideological literacy, and organize civil defense training, “patriotic work” sessions, recycling campaigns, and participation in mass festivals or rallies.

### ***The Bifurcated Structure of Authority over Patriotic Education***

Aside from assigning pioneer activities to schoolteachers, the 1966 reform of the Pioneers also proclaimed the “autonomy” of the organization vis-à-vis the Youth Union, making provisions for the creation of a separate bureaucratic structure that came under the direct supervision of the Central Committee of the R.C.P.<sup>229</sup> This nationwide structure was hierarchically coordinated by a central bureau, the National Council in Bucharest, and represented locally by county and town councils. The bureaucratic separation of the Pioneer Organization from the Youth Union generated new institutional space for lower rank party activists, who were needed to staff the recently founded councils of the Pioneers and their respective commissions for sciences and technology, arts and culture, sports and tourism, or press and propaganda. The role of this enlarged bureaucracy of pioneer activists shifted from *organizing* pioneer activities on the ground to *guiding and monitoring the implementation of state policies* by primary and middle school teachers.<sup>230</sup> According to its statutes, for example, the National Council was entrusted with “guiding all pioneer activities in the Socialist Republic

---

<sup>228</sup> See [http://www.cdep.ro/pls/legis/legis\\_pck.htm?act\\_text?id=10480](http://www.cdep.ro/pls/legis/legis_pck.htm?act_text?id=10480). Last accessed March 2, 2014.

<sup>229</sup> ANIC, Fond C.C. al P.C.R. – Cancelarie, file 44/1966, “Referat cu privire la îmbunătățirea activității organizațiilor de pionieri,” 37.

<sup>230</sup> The work of monitoring was carried out by representatives of the organization who filled the positions of adjuncts to the headmaster in each school, by regular school inspections, or youth activists who filled positions in the commissions patronizing extracurricular activities in diverse fields (arts and culture, sports and tourism, science and technology, etc.).

of Romania,” “selecting, promoting, and stimulating teachers who work with pioneers,” “elaborating training programs that would improve teachers’ work,” “awarding distinctions and diplomas to pioneers, teachers, and pioneer units who distinguish themselves in pioneer work,” and “allocating material bonuses to teaching staff who fill the positions of class and school pioneer leaders.”<sup>231</sup>

The rich literature on socialist regimes as “weak states” rests on the arguments that power in socialist states is *dispersed* and mitigated by the center’s *dependency* on mid-level units or cadres: “Policies may be *made* at the center, but they are *implemented* in local settings, where those entrusted with them may ignore, corrupt, overexecute, or otherwise adulterate them.”<sup>232</sup> To the extent that the reform of 1966 led to the proliferation of the party bureaucracy, it also significantly “weakened” the center’s power to enact policies. Despite the fact that the intention of the party leadership was to tighten its control over the education of youth, the institutional changes it introduced ended up swelling the ranks of intermediaries charged with the implementation of state policies. In fact, the reform institutionalized a bifurcated structure of responsibility and authority over children’s patriotic or moral education. While youth activists were assigned the task of monitoring regular teachers’ performance, interacting only rarely with children on highly festive and scripted occasions, teachers were in charge of organizing pioneer activities on a daily basis.

Despite the fact that youth activists and teachers fulfilled different functions, it is important to point out that the border between “teachers” and “activists” was often blurred.<sup>233</sup> In

---

<sup>231</sup> “The Statutes of the Councils of the Pioneer Organization of the Socialist Republic of Romania,” In *Gazeta învățământului*, December 2, 1966.

<sup>232</sup> Verdery, “Weak States and the Mode of Control,” *National Ideology*, 84.

<sup>233</sup> On the use of “activist” to point to a role or function rather than people, see the extensive discussion of the categories of “cadres” and “activists,” in Kligman and Verdery, *Peasants Under Siege*, 152-5. The ability “to move in and out of ‘activist’ status as called upon” that the authors identify in the postwar period served many individuals

order to staff its nationwide network of councils in wake of the reform, the Pioneer Organization recruited over six hundred local activists from the ranks of schoolteachers and inspectors, making room for increased professional mobility and opportunities. The institutional creation of a position of adjunct to the school principal for an instructor responsible for pioneer activities led to the promotion of teachers in schools around the country. A young college graduate who worked as a primary school teacher at a school in Bucharest in the 1980s recalled that she was recruited by the local council of the Pioneer Organization to become an activist and accepted because the council could pull the necessary strings to make her otherwise unrealizable dreams - a full-time position as a history teacher and an apartment in Bucharest – reality.<sup>234</sup> The great majority of schoolteachers who did not get promoted to positions of youth activists in local councils or adjuncts of the school principal bore the brunt of this reform. While their salaries remained unchanged, their job obligations increased to include pioneer activities and a whole range of practices of socialist patriotism besides their regular educational requirements.

The bifurcated nature of responsibility over patriotic education was further enhanced by the 1978 law of education, which translated the principle of “the leading role of the party” into an even more expansive administrative structure. To ensure a closer supervision of educational activity by the party, the law mandated that school councils (*consilii de conducere*) should include representatives of the R.C.P., workers’ unions, children’s organizations, and local state councils, besides the school principal and representatives of the teaching staff.<sup>235</sup> In addition, the law provided for the creation of so-called “Councils of Education and Instruction” (*consilii de educație și învățămînt*) at local, county, municipal, and national levels in charge of “guiding,

---

well after the collapse of communism, when former “activists” relied on their professional specialization to maintain their positions.

<sup>234</sup> Author interview with L.C., March 2010.

<sup>235</sup> See [http://www.cdep.ro/pls/legis/legis\\_pck.htm?act\\_text?id=10480](http://www.cdep.ro/pls/legis/legis_pck.htm?act_text?id=10480). Last accessed March 2, 2014.

coordinating, and controlling” educational, patriotic, and ideological activity.<sup>236</sup> Domestic accounts of the impact of the 1978 law indicate that these councils had “a purely formal function,” but they nevertheless “suffocated” school life, requiring an endless number of syllabi, reports, and paperwork from teachers as proofs of their successful activity.<sup>237</sup> While they did not necessarily accomplish the task of closely supervising political and ideological activity, the councils and their school representatives had to justify their existence to hierarchically superior party structures, encouraging, to this end, formal manifestations of compliance.

As we will see in the following chapters, no matter how porous, the division of labor between teachers and school authorities, youth activists, and party representatives legislated by the reforms of the 1960s and 1970s had important consequences on the daily organization and signification of practices of socialist patriotism in schools. Paralleling other contexts characterized by the mainstreaming of pioneer organizations, whose main tasks were carried out by teachers in elementary and middle schools, the pioneer system in socialist Romania came to “operate more like a school-based youth group focused on ... patriotism, school spirit, and social service, than a system for turning young children into communist ideologues.”<sup>238</sup> While they typically documented political tasks on paper, regular schoolteachers turned pioneer activities, rituals, and hierarchies of leadership as well as broadly political and ideological practices into effective strategies of classroom management by employing them to secure discipline or academic excellence rather than to raise political consciousness.

---

<sup>236</sup> Ibid.

<sup>237</sup> Diac, *O istorie a învățămîntului*, 212, 254, 258.

<sup>238</sup> T. E. Woronov, “Performing the Nation: China’s Children as Little Red Pioneers,” *Anthropological Quarterly* 80 (2007): 661.

## Chapter II

### **The Pedagogy of Socialist Patriotism: Performativity, Resignification, and Agency**

During Nicolae Ceaușescu's rule, schoolchildren were routinely engaged in performances of socialist patriotism meant to constitute them as the national subjects of a socialist state. Practices of socialist patriotism ranged from taking the pioneer pledge, pursuing academic excellence in school and after school institutions, to engaging in forms of collective solidarity, socially useful work, trips and expeditions to historic sites, and recitals of patriotic songs and poetry on national celebrations. Institutionally joined at the hip, the Pioneer Organization and the school provided the sites and ground rules for ritual, discursive, and embodied practices of socialist patriotism. In order to successfully manage these diverse practices, educators - whether teachers, pioneer activists, or school authorities - were armed with a set of theoretical principles and practical tools that cohered into a pedagogy of socialist patriotism.

This chapter will begin by outlining the main tenets and sources of the pedagogy of socialist patriotism, discussing the role of collective life, socially useful labor, socialist competitions, and pioneer rituals in the formation of socialist subjects. It will then address the corollary emphases on manifest activism and voluntarism that gave socialist pedagogies an individualizing drive that has yet to be explored by scholars of state socialism. In light of this analysis, the focus on children's discursive and social performances in this dissertation is not merely a methodology of choice, but an analytical effort to capture the philosophy of manifest activism and voluntarism at the heart of the socialist pedagogy of subjectivity.

The remaining three sections of this chapter will explore several directions of theoretical analysis opened by the focus on children's practices of socialist patriotism that will be further



developed in the dissertation. The second section will address the impact of the institutional reforms of general education and the Pioneer Organization on practices of socialist patriotism, arguing that ground-up, rather than top-down, analyses of the dynamics of power can better account for the *effects* of socialist policies. Examining recurrent practices of socialist patriotism that structured children's daily regimen in schools across the country - pioneer rituals, activities, and hierarchies - as both constraining and enabling effects of power relations, the third section seeks to explore how teachers, parents, and children engaged in small and often inconspicuous acts of resignification or appropriation of state-mandated norms. The chapter will conclude with an examination of the modalities of socialist agency, contending that agency was not only entailed in acts of subversion, transgression, or symbolic resignification of structures of domination in late socialism, but also in the very processes of practicing, living, and aspiring to socialist norms.

### **The Pedagogy of Socialist Patriotism**

*How does a child grow, with time, to feel love for his motherland? How does he raise from the narrow understanding that he is a member of his family to the realization that he is the son of his motherland? And then, from this realization to the undying devotion that drives him to fight for the cause of his people, defend its achievements, and, if need be, sacrifice his life when the motherland is in danger. (Anatole Chircev, 1957)<sup>239</sup>*

Party leaders like Ceaușescu, who presided over the shift from broadly constructivist to brazenly primordialist and essentialist conceptions of national identity, might have insisted that children were *born* rather than *formed* as “sons of the motherland.” Teachers around the country, however, never ceased to be systematically trained in the art of raising dedicated socialist citizens. Questions such as those asked by social psychologist Anatole Chircev about the

---

<sup>239</sup> Anatole Chircev, “Cîteva aspecte ale educării patriotismului socialist la elevi,” *Gazeta învățămîntului*, November 29, 1957.

methods best suited to cultivate communal belonging, revolutionary consciousness, and communist personality were supposed to animate educators in their daily activity.<sup>240</sup> Pedagogical literature and state directives typically answered these questions by invoking a set of principles rooted in Soviet pedagogical orthodoxies, which were not only inherited by Romanian communists after the war, but also strongly reaffirmed in the 1970s, surviving in adapted or diluted forms into the late 1980s. The process of adaptation was complex, being spurred by the attempted harmonization with global pedagogical trends in the 1960s, by both acknowledged and unacknowledged continuities with prewar traditions, and by the vagaries of teaching practice.

The formative role of the collective was a central tenet of the pedagogy of socialist patriotism. Echoing Anton Makarenko's theories even at a time when his name was no longer ritualistically invoked, most practices of socialist patriotism - whether pioneer expeditions, international youth camps, or children's daily school activities as members of pioneer units - were expected to ensure children's integration in well-organized and, at least in theory, self-governing collectives throughout the last two decades of communism.<sup>241</sup> Although new cohorts

---

<sup>240</sup> Anatole Chircev (1914-1990, b. in Bessarabia) was a Romanian psychologist and a professor at the Babes-Bolyai University in Cluj. During his long postwar career, Chircev was instrumental in popularizing Soviet pedagogical principles to the Romanian public, publishing widely in the domains of child and pedagogical psychology, and (co)-authoring numerous methodological volumes used in the training of primary and middle school teachers. Current histories of Romanian psychology focus on Chircev's prewar study of social attitudes regarding tradition and progress, nationalism and internationalism, and the church in Romania during the Second World War (*Psihologia atitudinilor sociale, cu privire speciala la romani*, 1941), which was deeply steeped in American social psychology, particularly the studies of Gordon Allport, William Thomas, Robert Park, and Ellsworth Faris. See, for example, Septimiu Chelcea, *Un secol de cercetări psihosociologice (1897-1997)*, (Polirom, 2002), 66.

<sup>241</sup> In 1949, educational journals began popularizing Romanian editions of Makarenko's work and familiarized teachers with the author's pedagogical theories, which would be referenced and discussed as cultural orthodoxies in pedagogical literature into the 1960s. Articles focused on Makarenko's conception of the collective as "a live social organism" distinguished by "[distinct] organs/functions, a leadership, responsibilities" as well as "a correlation, an interdependence between the parts" without which it would be "merely a gathering." They emphasized the importance of "organization" and "self-governance" in shaping socialist collectives as well as the role of the collective in forming the character traits of the new man: spirit of organization, consciously assumed discipline, will and character, action. See, for example, Ion Prodan, "Doi mari pedagogi rusi: Nadejda Crupscaia si Anton Macarenco," *Gazeta invatamantului*, November 4, 1949; For later discussions of the distinctive characteristics of Makarenko's collective, see Stanciu Stoian, "Pionieria si integrarea sociala a tinerei generatii," In *Educatia pioniereasca* 1, 1968, 11.

of teachers were no longer socialized into Makarenko's arguments about the distinctive characteristics and stages of evolution of the Soviet *kollektiv* by the late 1960s, practices of socialist patriotism continued to encourage children to envision themselves as integral parts of a broader collective, embracing their assigned roles in the group, developing a spirit of cooperation towards common goals, and a sense of discipline, initiative, and responsibility for the collective.<sup>242</sup> The party leadership's efforts to implement new institutions and practices of *democrație pionierească* (pioneer democracy) and *autoconducere* (self-management) such as pioneer forums in the 1970s similarly reaffirmed the formative role of the collective.

Under Ceaușescu, the socialist collective also acquired increasingly ethnic and national characteristics as pedagogical journals began the work of excavating “organically grown traditions” of collective life in the 1960s.<sup>243</sup> A range of domestic children's organizations, among which the late nineteenth century *Micii dorobanți* (known by its French name, “Les Petits Dorobants,” i.e. “Young Infantrymen”) and the twentieth century Boy scouts, *Cercetășia*, were featured in pedagogical journals for their successful mobilization of children in the service of progressive collective causes, whether the struggle for state independence in 1878 or the Great Union of 1918.<sup>244</sup> Denounced as “reactionary and fascist educational methods employed by the bourgeoisie and the landowning elite” in the postwar period,<sup>245</sup> scouting activities and rituals were now reclaimed for affirming children's “innate need to belong to a group or collective” and giving them “opportunities to participate in collective life and activities, integrate in a disciplined

---

<sup>242</sup> On Makarenko's pedagogy of the socialist *kollektiv*, see Oleg Kharkhordin, *The Collective and the Individual in Russia: A Study of Practices* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 90-109.

<sup>243</sup> This process came in the wake of the 1966 reform of the Pioneer Organization and should be seen as an integral part of the larger process of rewriting the history of the RCP in a manner that legitimated the national character of the party and its youth organizations.

<sup>244</sup> See, for example, Mircea Ștefan's series of articles in the journal *Educația pionierească*: “Micii dorobanți” (no 4, 1968), “Cercetășia” (no 12, 1969 and no 9, 1970).

<sup>245</sup> ANIC, Fond C.C. al P.C.R. – Organizatorică, file 32/1950, “Proiect de organizare a Pionierilor din R.P.R.,” 9.

daily regimen, practice mutual help and solidarity, and develop unforgettable friendships.”<sup>246</sup>

Historians and pedagogues prompted teachers to draw inspiration from scouting practices, which deployed forms of collective life to train individuals in national consciousness, social responsibility, honor and dignity, solidarity, altruism, and patriotism. As the third and fourth chapters of this dissertation will examine, the imperative of aligning the self with the simultaneously socialist and national collective drew on these diverse pedagogical traditions, shaping both social and discursive practices of socialist patriotism.

Pedagogical instructions also encouraged educators to organize practices of socialist patriotism and internationalism as “socialist competitions,” which were envisioned as alternatives to market driven capitalist competitions and valued for their ability to mobilize adult workers in factories or cooperative farms to increase production as well as train team spirit and cooperation. Scholars of Soviet and Eastern European regimes have explored the role of socialist competitions as important pedagogies of knowledge production and social transformation or techniques of political recruitment and social differentiation.<sup>247</sup> Aside from their much-touted ability to mobilize citizens for action and strengthen the cohesion of socialist collectives, their seeming conformity with the natural laws of child play also recommended socialist contests as effective methods of youth socialization: “One does not need subtle psychological and pedagogical arguments to prove that all children like to compete. (...) Competition [is] a natural manifestation of children.”<sup>248</sup> The proliferation of contests (*concursuri*) in late socialism was not only indebted to the Soviet pedagogy of altruistic mobilization, but also to the modernizing drive

---

<sup>246</sup> Ștefan, “Cercetășia,” in *Educația pionierească* 9, 1970, 60.

<sup>247</sup> For the former aspect, see Gail Kligman and Katherine Verdery, *Peasants Under Siege: The Collectivization of Romanian Agriculture, 1949-1962*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 245-8. For the latter approach, see Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 90-1, 204-5.

<sup>248</sup> Ilie Traian, “Șarjele spiritului de competiție,” In *Educația pionierească* 9, 1968, 31.

of the 1960s. In this view, contests were interactive methods that satisfied both the children's age specificities and their individual idiosyncrasies by assigning them appropriate roles to play in their respective teams. During late socialism, children and early teens were thus mobilized in a wide range of socialist competitions: literary contests launched by pioneer magazines, sports and artistic competitions organized in international youth camps in the Soviet Bloc, or pioneer expeditions that encouraged teams from around the country to compete collegially in scientific rigor and ideological proficiency.

Suggestively termed “patriotic work” (*muncă patriotică*) under Ceaușescu, a great number of practices of socialist patriotism - whether recycling campaigns, civic works in urban areas, or participation in science and technology after school clubs - were informed by the Soviet principle of polytechnical education. Historian Sheila Fitzpatrick noted that the ambiguous concept of “polytechnical” education in Marxist thought engendered diverse interpretations in the Soviet 1920s and 1930s. While some Soviet educators equated it with the mandatory introduction of early vocational training, the term was also deployed by progressive pedagogues, in light of Marx's criticisms of the dehumanizing effects of rigid professional specialization, as an argument for the emancipation of the individual through broad education.<sup>249</sup> Drawing on the works of pedagogical authorities such as Krupskaya and Makarenko, polytechnical education in postwar Romania accommodated many of these meanings in addition to an emphasis on the formative potential of physical labor in shaping moral character.

As noted in the previous chapter, the party leadership propelled the “polytechnical” principle back into public discussion and practice in the 1970s and 1980s, urging schools and the Pioneer Organization to strengthen the link between theory and practice, between school and

---

<sup>249</sup> Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Education and Social Mobility in the Soviet Union, 1921-1934* (Cambridge University Press, 1979), 5-8.

productive labor. By this time, however, pedagogical literature had enriched the concept with various prewar precedents. Readers of educational journals learned, for example, that Romanian scouts had engaged in activities of social and national utility, planting trees, helping peasants with field work, caring for the sick, or acting as couriers during the First World War. Major interwar projects of sociological research and activism such as Dimitrie Gusti's monographic school, which mobilized college students of diverse disciplines in the twin works of studying and improving village life, were similarly rediscovered as forms of civic duty and voluntary collective action.<sup>250</sup> Furthermore, from the 1960s on, the socialist imperative of instilling work ethic in children dovetailed with modern pedagogical interests in experiential learning, problem-solving approaches to scientific study, and the integration of technology in the classroom even in the views of the party's most dogmatic leaders. During his meeting with the Ideological Commission in 1976, for example, Ceaușescu's guidelines for the implementation of the polytechnical principle often shifted from comments on the importance of familiarizing children with physical labor from an early age to passionate pleas for learning by doing:

Let us teach children to work since kindergarten. In schools, we should have practical activities for freshmen. In middle school, we should have workshops, and when they complete high schools, after twelve or ten years, they should get a job. Let everybody know that they have to learn to be apt for work in the socialist society. (...) Physics should be taught in the Physics lab. History should be taught with maps and figures. Let us emphasize work and practice in our teaching. The lab and the workshop should be the foundation of teaching. We need to help people better understand [science].<sup>251</sup>

In late socialism, thus, polytechnical education was an ambivalent concept either narrowly conceived in terms of socially useful labor and socialist ethics of work or more broadly envisioned in terms of scientific and technological education, or practical and experiential

---

<sup>250</sup> Ovidiu Bădina and Octavian Neamțu, "Experiența Școlii monografice de la București," in *Revista de pedagogie*, November 1966, 30-31.

<sup>251</sup> ANIC, Fond C.C. al P.C.R. – Propagandă, file 38/1976, "Stenograma ședinței Biroului Comisiei pentru problemele ideologice ale activității politice, culturale și de educație socialistă," 43.

learning. Chapter four of this dissertation, for example, will explore the intersection of socialist views on the formative role of civic work, prewar scouting and sociological research traditions, and emerging pedagogical concerns with experiential learning in the social and natural sciences.

Finally, an overview of curricula for moral and patriotic education from kindergarten through middle school indicates that children's ceremonial affirmation of pioneer pledges or their recitals of patriotic poetry and songs during rituals, national celebrations, and school festivities constituted an important method of instilling love of the socialist motherland and the party. With the notable exception of pedagogical literature that emphasized the need to appeal to emotions rather than intellectual representations of patriotism in young children, the assumption that music and poetic rhyme would stimulate children's emotions of patriotic attachment and devotion went unquestioned and unjustified by the 1960s. The roots of this unarticulated assumption lay, at least in part, in Krupskaya's theorization of the role of ritual in pioneer life in the 1920s, when she was actively advocating the critical appropriation of the rituals, symbols, and educational methods of the recently disbanded Russian scouting movement.<sup>252</sup> Critiquing the Komsomol for promoting "the childish aping of grown-ups" in their work with youth, Krupskaya argued that youth activists could learn how to appeal to adolescents from scouting methods.<sup>253</sup> In her view, the elements of ceremony, colorfulness, symbolism, and play made rituals an effective way to work on children's emotions, facilitating their subjective appropriation of ideological truths.<sup>254</sup> The pledge of allegiance on induction into the organization, for example, would enable

---

<sup>252</sup> James Riordan, *Sport in Soviet Society: Development of Sport and Physical Education in Russia and the USSR* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 71-2.

<sup>253</sup> *Ibid.* The age of Soviet Pioneers in the 1920s was ten to fourteen.

<sup>254</sup> Susan Reid, "Khrushchev's Children's Paradise: The Pioneer Palace, Moscow, 1958-1962," In eds. David Crowley and Susan Reid, *Socialist Spaces: Sites of Everyday Life in the Eastern Bloc* (New York: Berg, 2002), 148-9.

“moral norms to become inner convictions.”<sup>255</sup> As scholars have noted, music was similarly envisioned as “a means to organize children into collective action and emotion.”<sup>256</sup>

Arguments about the formative role of rituals and ceremonies, collective life, and socially useful labor echoed domestic precedents, some of which were publicly reclaimed in late socialism. Such notions and practices could resonate with prominent cultural personalities – college professors and researchers in history, archeology, sociology, or ethnology - who had been members of youth organizations like *Cercetășia* or of Gusti’s monographic school in the prewar period, and some of whom were restored to positions of institutional authority from which they could impact educational projects for youth in late socialism.<sup>257</sup> At the same time, pedagogies of socialist patriotism were also likely to appeal to the large number of Romanian educators who had activated in more radical youth organizations such as *Straja Țării* (The Sentinel of the Motherland), founded by Carol II of Romania in 1934 to counteract the growing influence of the right-wing Legionary Movement and disbanded on his abdication in 1940.<sup>258</sup> Encompassing all youth between the ages of seven to twenty-one (including forcibly incorporated members of the dissolved *Cercetășia*), *Străjeria* was a mandatory state organization which drew on the symbolism and methodologies of the Scout and Hitler Youth movements to mobilize children for ceremonies and ritual pledges of devotion to the monarchy and Christian Orthodox Church, physical education, gymnastics, and socially useful work.<sup>259</sup>

---

<sup>255</sup> Krupskaya quoted in *Ibid.*

<sup>256</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>257</sup> Articles on *Cercetășia* from the 1960s, for example, listed among the organization’s first members major personalities such as historians Constantin C. Giurescu, Aurelian Sacerdoțeanu, and Radu Vulpe, whose social and national service in the prewar period was acknowledged only a decade after they had been imprisoned or demoted. Among the members of the jury of the national competition of pioneer expeditions, *Expeditiile Cutezătorii*, there were specialists like Gheorghe Focșa, the director of the village museum in Bucharest. A former student of Dimitrie Gusti and an active participant in his monographic teams, Focșa promoted the educational value of children's engagement in ethnographic research in a manner akin to Gusti's notion of militant sociology.

<sup>258</sup> I. Manolescu, C. Nedelcu, și Teofil Sidorovici, “*Straja Țării*,” In *Enciclopedia României*, vol 1, 1938, 483-489.

<sup>259</sup> Dinu C. Giurescu, compiler, *Istoria României în date* (Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică, 2003).



While *Străjeria* was never publicly reclaimed by Ceaușescu's regime, which continued to consider it a "reactionary" organization, it most closely resembled the Pioneers in its mobilization of schoolteachers as instructors and of the school as the site of its weekly rituals and activities.<sup>260</sup> The sheer scope of the organization's membership and degree of institutionalization ensured that it had a more lasting impact than its more progressive predecessor, *Cercetășia*, which attracted an elite membership. A teacher from Bessarabia (b. 1921), who attended the pedagogical secondary school in Chișinău in the 1930s and went on to work as a primary school teacher in Craiova until the late 1970s, recalled fondly during our interview the creation of *Străjeria* and its "useful, educational, and instructive activities:" "Scouts were from richer families. King Michael, who is my age, was a scout, but *Străjeria* was created for everybody."<sup>261</sup> Anticipating postwar pioneer activities, sentinels like herself participated in ceremonies and rituals, wearing uniforms, raising the flag, and singing "Long live the king" or trained in sports and gymnastics, putting up shows attended by the royal family. Much like pioneers, sentinels also engaged in practical activities and civic labor, planting trees, weaving baskets, helping with agricultural work in villages, or knitting gloves for soldiers.<sup>262</sup>

The pedagogy of socialist patriotism thus emerged at the intersection of Soviet cultural orthodoxies, domestic legacies, and attempts of synchronization with broader European trends. If these pedagogies continued to shape everyday activities in Romanian school and afterschool institutions into the 1980s, it was not simply because they were forcibly imposed by the socialist regime. Ensured in part by their resonance with presocialist educational legacies, the endurance of the principles discussed above can also be explained, as the following sections will explore, by the fact that educators and students appropriated and resignified them in everyday practice.

---

<sup>260</sup> See ANIC, Fond C.C. al P.C.R. – Propagandă, file 30/1983, 119-122, 124-5.

<sup>261</sup> Author interview, February 26, 2010.

<sup>262</sup> Ibid.

### ***A Pedagogy of Deeds, Actions, and Manifest Activism***

*The Promethean myth of action, of the hero who stole fire for the benefit of humankind and lit our way to knowledge, is extremely appealing for those whose aspirations materialize in actions. Always ready for action, pioneers are the symbol of the Promethean ideal in our society. They participate actively in civic works, in the preparation of national celebrations, in a diversity of contests.”* (Pațița Silvestru, 1971)

In its emphasis on collective action, competition, and civic labor, socialist pedagogy aimed to shape every child of pioneer age into a modern Prometheus. Echoing the “ideology of action” – i.e. the confidence in the boundless possibilities of historical and social transformation attendant on human will - that characterized the momentous Soviet project of building a new world and a new person, the ultimate goal of socialist education in postwar Romania was the creation of “a man of action (*om al faptelor*), an active and dynamic youth ready to build a new life.”<sup>263</sup> It is thus hardly surprising that the emphasis on actions, deeds, and manifest activism also informed discussions of the cultivation of socialist patriotism.

Postwar pedagogical literature approached the topic of socialist patriotism from a variety of perspectives. It focused extensively, for example, on intellectual education, training teachers to enlarge the system of notions and representations of the motherland by instructing children about the natural beauties and riches of their country in geography and natural science classes, the progressive character of Romanian literature in literature classes, and the heroic struggle for social and national liberation in history classes. At the same time, pedagogical experts regularly warned teachers about the dangers of approaching patriotic education exclusively as an intellectual ability, as a process of acquisition of knowledge. Social psychologists like Anatole Chircev, for example, drew attention to the psychological coordinates of patriotic emotions:

---

<sup>263</sup> Anatole Chircev et al., *Pedagogia* (manual pentru institutetele pedagogice), 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (EDP, 1964), 240. On the Bolshevik “ideology of action” and its function as a pedagogy of self-transformation in the diaries of ordinary people, who urged themselves to “live in action, not in contemplation,” see Jochen Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind: Writing a Diary Under Stalin* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006), 32, 362.

The teacher can, for example, expound on the achievements of our democratic and popular regime. There is no guarantee, however, that the pupils listening to him will experience the feeling of national pride for such achievements even if they can intellectually comprehend them.<sup>264</sup>

To cultivate deep and abiding sentiments of love for the motherland and identification with the people that would incite youth to conscious civic action, teachers were instructed to “enrich the spectrum of emotional experiences of a patriotic nature in children.” In particular, educators were encouraged to “occasion those particular *psychological situations* that engendered positive feelings for the motherland.”<sup>265</sup> Story telling, envisioned as the art of recounting feats of heroism in a warm and engaging tone during literature or history classes, for example, was widely believed to put children in the psychological situation of “subjectively reliving the (patriotic) feats of fictional characters and historical figures.”<sup>266</sup> This process would, in turn, encourage mimesis, energizing youth to imitate the deeds of positive heroes.

Above all, however, the process of activating patriotic feelings required *action*. The educational literature typically listed the “active and creative” character of socialist patriotism alongside its social and historical nature.<sup>267</sup> Socialist pedagogues routinely reminded teachers that patriotic education should not be confined to “intellectual instruction,” being only accomplished in “the translation of acquired knowledge into practice.”<sup>268</sup> Chircev advised teachers “It is very important that schoolchildren be put in the situation of taking an active patriotic stand, of performing patriotic deeds and actions.”<sup>269</sup> Most importantly, performances of socialist patriotism did not have to be extraordinary deeds. Socialist pedagogy, in fact,

---

<sup>264</sup> Chircev, “Cîteva aspecte.”

<sup>265</sup> Ibid.

<sup>266</sup> Ibid. See also Ministerul Învățămîntului, *Metodica predării istoriei în școala de 8 ani*, (EDP, 1962), 114.

<sup>267</sup> Clara Chiosa, “Din experiența educării patriotismului socialist la elevii claselor V-VII,” In *Revista de pedagogie* 3, 1954, 79-94; Ion Dragomirescu, “Contribuția istoriei la realizarea și întărirea educației patriotice în școală,” *Revista de pedagogie* 7, 1958, 1-11.

<sup>268</sup> Ibid.

<sup>269</sup> Chircev, “Cîteva aspecte.”

emphasized the everydayness and mundanity of patriotic actions, instructing teachers on the virtues of daily reiteration in developing both a sense of patriotic duty and patriotic behaviors:

These attitudes, deeds, and actions do not have to be exceptional. We have to look for them in children's everyday life and, first of all, in their school work. The teacher has to train the student to fulfill all his school duties, helping him understand and feel that these constitute patriotic duties.<sup>270</sup>

To this end, methodological textbooks listed “practice/exercise” (*exercițiul*), i.e. “the conscious and systematic iteration of certain actions in order to create and strengthen habits and behaviors,” alongside “emulation” (*exemplul*) and “persuasion” (*convingerea*) among the methods recommended for character formation.<sup>271</sup>

Like the Bolsheviks, who saw class and national identities as “socially and culturally constructed attributes,” but were prone to “lapsing into primordialism” and essentialism, Romanian pedagogues oscillated between envisioning practices of socialist patriotism as the very acts through which patriotic subjects were constituted and interpreting these practices as the genuine expression of *a priori* subjects.<sup>272</sup> Pedagogical guidelines suggested, for example, that routinely manifested patriotic and moral behavior was not merely the *manifestation of* inner convictions, but also *constitutive of* patriotic emotions and subjects: “An individual's moral notions and convictions are not only expressed through his deeds, but also constituted in practical activity, in educational and everyday practice.”<sup>273</sup> Some authors solved the contradiction by restricting this constructivist view to younger children, who were not fully formed as subjects. They argued, for example, that primary schoolers who were systematically engaged in patriotic deeds such as doing their homework or performing civic work “experienced

---

<sup>270</sup> Ibid.

<sup>271</sup> Chircev et al., *Pedagogia*, 250-264.

<sup>272</sup> Sheila Fitzpatrick, “Making a Self for the Times: Impersonation and Imposture in Twentieth Century Russia” in *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 2(3): 474.

<sup>273</sup> Chircev et al., *Pedagogia*, 243.

genuine feelings of joy and moral satisfaction for having performed good and solid work, for having contributed – no matter how modestly – to the collective good.”<sup>274</sup> These feelings of moral satisfaction further strengthened their commitment to study and work hard, cohering, in older students, in the conviction that assiduous study and civic work were their patriotic duties. Once fully formed, convictions functioned as “principles of action,” i.e. as strong inner motivations that fueled conscious behavior. Socialist patriotism thus emerged in action, it was further constituted and strengthened through repeated patriotic behavior, and it was ultimately assessed by its potential to mobilize youth for purposeful civic action.

At the same time, the countless warnings that teachers should not condone perfunctory practices of patriotism betrayed a belief that such practices were “animated” by pre-existing subjects and their success depended on whether they were “formal” or “genuine” expressions of the respective subjects’ emotions and convictions. The older the students, the stronger the expectation that their actions should be fueled by genuine patriotic emotions and convictions:

Do we even have to remind our readers that, unfortunately, such actions often take a purely formal character? (...) The preparations to honor [national and international] celebrations - taking the pioneer pledge, adorning the classrooms, practicing shows - must be animated by a deep *psychological motivation*, unfold in a festive atmosphere, and engender genuine and memorable feelings of happiness. They should not become a “chore” that pupils are forced to perform despite their overwhelming boredom.<sup>275</sup>

The distinction between “formal” and “genuine” manifestations of patriotism, between “chores” and actions “animated by a deep psychological motivation,” came up time and again in pedagogical literature, being mapped on an opposition between human interiority and exteriority. In works of self-described “materialist psychology,” the tension between an intangible inner world and its visible manifestations revealed a certain uneasiness with the elusive character of

---

<sup>274</sup> Ibid., 283.

<sup>275</sup> Chircev, “Cîteva aspecte.”

moral and political sentiments like socialist patriotism, with the difficulty of assessing their genuineness, just orientation, endurance, or depth:

How can a teacher assess his efforts of educating students in the spirit of socialist patriotism? What children tell us about themselves can give us a measure of their intellectual abilities. However, children can have a very clear representation of true patriotism and yet fail to prove themselves patriots in their deeds and actions.<sup>276</sup>

Faced with this uncertainty, educators were encouraged to focus their attention on observable deeds, actions, behaviors, and reactions, which were the only tangible and, in the words of specialists, “objectively” measurable manifestations of an otherwise intimate and invisible inner world. Deeds and actions were valued for their potential to make elusive patriotic emotions *manifest* to the trained eye of vigilant educators. Teachers were urged to “study” or “observe” children’s emotional reactions and attitudes - whether positive, neutral, or negative - towards concrete aspects of socialist patriotism for “cues” that would help them establish if students felt, as they should have, “respect and admiration for the working people, friendship towards other peoples, and relentless hatred and contempt towards the enemies of the motherland.”<sup>277</sup> Most importantly, in order to determine if patriotic emotions were “strong, playing a stimulating role, or if they [were] unstable, diffuse, or passive,” requiring reinforcement, teachers had to examine whether children’s patriotic feelings and representations were systematically born out by patriotic deeds and actions.<sup>278</sup>

The pedagogy of socialist patriotism thus rested on an ambivalent philosophy of action and manifest activism. Echoing the regime’s broader “ideology of action” and the perception of children as malleable material, practices of socialist patriotism were encouraged in and outside schools because they promised to constitute, through daily reiteration, the much-anticipated

---

<sup>276</sup> Ibid.

<sup>277</sup> Chircev et al., *Pedagogia*, 284-5.

<sup>278</sup> Ibid.

“new socialist person” in the shape of activists or “men of action.” Alternatively, practices of socialist patriotism were valued for their alleged ability to render intangible patriotic emotions and convictions visible, serving regular teachers, as we will see in the following sections, as forms of political reassurance in their encounters with school or party authorities.

### ***Activism, Voluntarism, and Technologies of Individuation***

The socialist regime’s ideology of action was not merely a call to daily deeds animated by strong patriotic emotions, but also an appeal to the catalyzing power of human *will* to transformative action, i.e. an appeal to activism as well as voluntarism. By contrast to the liberal notion of free will, which revolves around the absence of coercion and constraint (whether political, social, religious, etc.), the voluntarism implicit in the ideology of action did not advocate the freedom to do as one wants. Best captured in pedagogical lingo by the notions of “voluntary discipline” (*disciplină liber consimțită*) or “conscious discipline” (*disciplină conștientă*), voluntarism denoted a politically trained will that came to act in synch with the principles of socialist society.<sup>279</sup> In socialist pedagogy, voluntarism marked the integration of “individual and social consciousness,” the subject’s maturation from a state of conformity to externally imposed norms in early childhood to the “internalization” of norms or regulations based on an understanding of their social necessity.<sup>280</sup> As they coalesced into “internal exigencies” in the mature subject, socialist norms came to function as “voluntary principles of action,” enabling modes of being and activity, rather than being defined in negative terms of constraint.

---

<sup>279</sup> See, for example, Gheorghita Fleancu and Virgil Radulian, *Disciplina conștientă și educarea ei în școala medie mixtă* (EDP, 1962).

<sup>280</sup> Anatole Chircev, *Educația moral-politică a tineretului școlar* (Bucharest: EDP, 1974), 7-9.

In its increasing calls on pioneers in the 1970s and 1980s to realize activism and voluntarism in everyday practice – i.e. to assume roles of leadership and responsibility in the collective, exhibit initiative and creativity, and work actively on their moral character and behavior - socialist pedagogy betrayed an individualizing drive that has not been significantly acknowledged or explored by scholars. This individualizing drive should not be understood in terms of the liberation of the individual from social or political constraints, but, in Foucault’s terms, as the fashioning of a set of socialist “technologies of the self” that permitted individuals to effect “a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality.”<sup>281</sup> The pedagogy of socialist subjectivity provided the technologies - pioneer rituals, hierarchies of leadership, pioneer camps and forums, socially useful labor, socialist competitions, etc. - that enabled young people to act upon themselves, constituting themselves as particular kinds of subjects, as “strong-willed,” “active,” “creative,” “purposeful,” “combative,” or “enthusiastic.” Focusing on the individualizing drive of the pedagogy of socialist patriotism, the last section of this chapter will explore the modalities of agency engendered by the imperatives of youthful activism, voluntarism, and militancy in late socialism.

### **Practices and Performances: Towards an “Ascending” Analysis of Power**

#### *What is the Pioneer Organization?*

The Pioneer Organization is when the school organizes us, children, to go to the cinema sometimes. (Daniel Cățaru, 9 years old, 1970s)<sup>282</sup>

---

<sup>281</sup> Michel Foucault, “Technologies of the Self,” In *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*, eds. L. H. Martin et al. (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), 18.

<sup>282</sup> Personal archive of Dorel Zaica. A painter and teacher of drawing, Dorel Zaica initiated an informal experiment in child creativity that engaged primary and middle school children in several schools in Bucharest in both verbal and artistic expression during their regular drawing classes throughout the 1970s and 1980s. Convinced that children



We have no shortage of organizational structures, we only have a shortage of activity. (Elena Ceaușescu, 1982)<sup>283</sup>

Having outlined the main tenets of the pedagogy of socialist patriotism, this section will examine the institutional constraints and possibilities that came to structure the teachers' task of character formation and patriotic education in the wake of the educational reforms of the 1960s and 1970s. I will preface my analysis with a brief discussion of the analytical limits of current scholarship on the topic. Studies of socialist regimes typically view practices prescribed by the pedagogy of socialist patriotism (i.e. pioneer rituals, patriotic work, etc.) as state-orchestrated efforts of regimentation, regulation, and surveillance of children's daily lives, representing them as "forms of externally imposed discipline" or "means of control."<sup>284</sup> In this view, (state) power is endowed with a singular intentionality, being exerted against individuals or collectives from a center or position of sovereignty "reconstituted 'above' society as a supplementary structure."<sup>285</sup>

This presumption also informs the view that the mainstreaming of pioneer organizations in the socialist bloc, which led to the proliferation of pioneer rituals and the expansion of hierarchies of leadership, increased the state's control and ideologization of youth socialization.<sup>286</sup> There is, indeed, little doubt that the Romanian party leadership, which authorized lowering the children's age of induction into the Pioneers from nine to seven in 1971,

---

harbor endless resources of creativity and imagination that should be activated in their process of making sense of the world, Zaica used his drawing classes to approach children with unconventional questions, a small number of which either addressed political aspects or yielded unintentionally "political" answers. Zaica documented children's answers for more than two decades, publishing some of these archived responses in several volumes.

<sup>283</sup> ANIC, Fond C.C. al P.C.R. – Propagandă, file 2/1982, 10.

<sup>284</sup> See, for example, Catriona Kelly, "Shaping the 'Future Race': Regulating the Daily Life of Children in Early Soviet Russia," *Everyday Life in Early Soviet Russia. Taking the Revolution Inside*, eds. Christina Kiaer and Eric Naiman (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006). Mary Fulbrook, *The People's State: East German Society from Hitler to Honecker* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 2005). Angela Brock, "Producing the 'Socialist Personality'? Socialisation, Education, and the Emergence of New Patterns of Behavior," In *Power and Society in the GDR, 1961-1979 The 'Normalization of Rule'?* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2009), 220-254.

<sup>285</sup> Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power," In *Critical Inquiry* (1982), 791.

<sup>286</sup> Katalin Jutteau, *L'enfance Embrigadée Dans La Hongrie Communiste: Le Mouvement Des Pionniers* (Paris, 2007); Paul Cernat, Ion Manolescu, Angelo Mitchievici, and Ioan Stanomir, *Explorări în comunismul românesc* (vols I, II, III) (Polirom, 2004, 2005, 2008).

created the Motherland Falcons to encompass kindergarteners and primary schoolers of four to seven in 1976, and appointed Nicolae Ceaușescu's own son and daughter-in-law to run the youth and children's organizations respectively, envisioned the early and full integration of school children in mass party structures as a condition of its firm control over the formation youth. Informed that the percentage of schoolchildren inducted in the Romanian Pioneers was 98.7% during a meeting with the representatives of the party's youth organizations in 1982, Ceaușescu reiterated the imperative of full integration: "[All children] should participate in pioneer activity. Some might not receive the pioneer scarf or badge, but they all have to participate in the entire activity because, if we don't look after them, others certainly will!"<sup>287</sup>

Starting inquiry from the perspective of discursive, ritual, and embodied practices, my analysis in this section and the dissertation as a whole seeks to take us beyond an assessment of the totalitarian *intentions* informing the Romanian regime's educational measures to a discussion of the *effects* – both intended and unintended, both constraining and enabling - of state policies. It will attempt, in Foucault's terms, an "ascending" or "ground-up" analysis of the "infinitesimal mechanisms" of power.<sup>288</sup> If "power relations are rooted deep in the social nexus" rather than exclusively possessed and deployed by the state, we would be better served by examining how the integration of pioneer activities into school life both shaped behaviors and subjectivities and lead to the domestication, appropriation, and resignification of such activities.<sup>289</sup>

Following the reforms of the mid-1960s, which institutionalized a bifurcated structure of authority over children's upbringing or character formation, regular teachers found themselves increasingly charged with the task of organizing pioneer activities and broadly political, patriotic,

---

<sup>287</sup> ANIC, Fond C.C. al P.C.R. – Propagandă, file 2/1982, "Stenograma sesiunii de lucru cu unele probleme privind îmbunătățirea activității organizațiilor de tineret (...)," 11-12.

<sup>288</sup> Michel Foucault, "Two Lectures," In *Power/knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings 1972-1977*, ed. C. Gordon (Pantheon Books, 1980), 99.

<sup>289</sup> Foucault, "The Subject and Power," 791.

and moral education, while youth activists, school principals, and inspectors from the Ministry of Education monitored and supervised this grassroots activity. Teachers responded in diverse ways to the task of implementing mandatory and largely uncompensated practices of socialist patriotism. A common reaction among educators was to engage in behaviors that resembled those of other socialist citizens, particularly workers in enterprises or factories – i.e. idleness or poor work discipline, appropriation of institutional time and resources, and theft of public property – and which have been described as strategies of survival, negotiation, sabotage, or covert resistance.<sup>290</sup> Drawing up weekly syllabi of pioneer activities, ensuring that children carried neat textbooks of “political information” lectures, securing receipts that documented the school’s fictitious fulfillment of recycling plans, or trumping up discussion of pioneer activities in staff meetings attended by youth activists or ministerial inspectors were all strategies of “mimetic reassurance” or formal compliance with state directives that enabled teachers to minimize time and effort spent on performances of socialist patriotism that often remained inaccessible to young children.<sup>291</sup>

To the extent that they facilitated the circulation of state directives from the authorities to the teachers and then back to state authorities, school plans, programs, syllabi, curricula, notebooks, reports, pioneer rituals and festivities, and so-called “open/model lessons” [*lectii deschise*] organized for official inspections, functioned as strategies of “mimetic reassurance,”

---

<sup>290</sup> See Katherine Verdery, *What Was Socialism, and What Comes Next?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 42; Elzbieta Firlit and Jerzy Chlopecki, “When Theft Is Not Theft,” in *The Unplanned Society: Poland During and After Communism*, ed. J. Wedel (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992, 95-109. For similar takes on this question, see also Daniela Koleva, ed. *Negotiating Normality: Everyday Lives in Socialist Institutions* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2012).

<sup>291</sup> On the strategic of “mimetic reassurance,” see my discussion in the Introduction and Michel David-Fox, “The Fellow Travelers Revisited: The “Cultured West” through Soviet Eyes,” *The Journal of Modern History* 75 (June 2003): 313.

speaking the language of the state back to a whole range of mid-level bureaucrats.<sup>292</sup> It is in this spirit that a primary school teacher from Bucharest reflected on the mutually reassuring nature of the unwritten contract between teachers and school or ministerial authorities, indicating that formal compliance opened room for maneuver in negotiating state directives in the process of selecting and organizing pioneer activities in the 1980s:

Each teacher was *required to design a weekly syllabus of pioneer activities*. There was a diversity of pioneer activities to choose from and nobody asked you what you did. We could go to the circus, plant flowers in the parks... My school was right next to the Circus Park and I have to tell you that we planted flowers there until I got sick of it. We always listed the show that children put up at the end of the school year (*serbare școlară*) as a pioneer activity. The choice of activities was up to the teacher. I was free to sweep the parks, go to a museum, but *these had to be documented on paper*. (...) As a rule, any extracurricular activity was listed as pioneer activity. The degree of formalism and association with party matters depended on the teacher. If you were open-minded, you could include visits to the swimming pool under the umbrella of pioneer activities. There were also imposed tasks such as the recycling plan, mandatory themes concerning civic education and national celebrations with a pro-party tendency, the ritual of induction into the organization, pioneer rituals at school level that involved raising the flag and standing to attention, the Union on January 24<sup>th</sup>, the Comrade's birthday, when *you had to organize something*.<sup>293</sup>

Designing a syllabus, documenting tasks on paper, and “organizing something” were all forms of formal compliance that enabled the teacher to continue their activity with the knowledge that “nobody asked you what you did.” The selection of extracurricular activities included, in this case, time efficient and socially useful practices – museum visits, planting flowers, sweeping the parks – occasionally stretching the meaning of political education to include events likely to be popular with children such as visits to the swimming pool, going to the circus, or school celebrations. In her opposition of “open-minded” teachers who resignified the meaning of patriotic education to teachers who exhibited a high degree of “formalism and

---

<sup>292</sup> On the use of this strategy in another official genre - travel reports – in the Soviet Union, see Michel David-Fox, “The Fellow Travelers Revisited: The “Cultured West” through Soviet Eyes,” *The Journal of Modern History* 75 (June 2003): 313; Anne Gorsuch, *All This is Your World: Soviet Tourism At Home and Abroad After Stalin* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 123.

<sup>293</sup> Author interview with L.C., primary school teacher in Bucharest in the 1980s, March 4, 2010.

association with party matters,” the respondent echoes other interviewees. Former students and teachers typically distinguish “normal” or “commonsensical” teachers, who sought to adapt state directives to their needs and professional interests, from “zealots,” who insisted on implementing them to the letter.

In the hands of “commonsensical” teachers primarily concerned with managing classrooms effectively and earning a reputation as good educators, pioneer rituals, school ceremonies, cultural activities, or works of social utility were naturalized as disciplining strategies or stimulants for academic performance, loosening their strict ideological meanings as forms of political consciousness raising. To account for the enabling effects of practices of socialist patriotism, I rely on Foucault’s critique of the dominant representation of power in terms of domination and oppression. In his view, power operates not only as a prohibiting or constraining force, but also as a positive, i.e. productive, energy: “What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn’t only weight on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse.”<sup>294</sup> Indeed, teachers and students in socialist Romania engaged in prescribed performances of socialist patriotism not only because they were coerced by school authorities or feared official reprimands, but also because some of these practices enabled them to pursue professional interests and careers or actualize widely embraced social, civic, and patriotic values. Although they invested socialist and patriotic principles with different meanings, the socialist state and teachers, parents, and children found common ground in prizing patriotism and national dignity, sociability and cultured behavior, academic excellence, or professional self-realization. As a result, socialist and patriotic norms functioned less as state-imposed means of control and

---

<sup>294</sup> Foucault, “Two Lectures,” 99.

discipline, and more as a set of shared normative values that permeated school life, being reproduced and reinterpreted by teachers as well as guiding and informing individual behavior.

### **School Time: Pioneer Rituals, Activities, and Hierarchies**

“It is good to make all children pioneers so that all mothers can be happy.”  
(Daniela Săvescu, 6 years old, 1970s)<sup>295</sup>

A great number of the normative practices of socialist patriotism permeating school life in late socialism took the form of pioneer rituals, hierarchies, and activities, which were designed by the state leadership to ensure a direct form of integration in the party. This section will examine how teachers, students, and parents resignified the performance of pioneer rituals and activities in daily school life. It will start by exploring the most widespread pioneer ritual, i.e. children’s induction into the Pioneer Organization, which was both a highly scripted, state-mandated practice, and a generally memorable and meaningful experience for participants. It will then expand the analysis to the appropriation and reinterpretation of pioneer rituals, insignia, hierarchies, and activities in school life.

Not only did the ritual, in the words of one teacher, “resemble, in a nutshell, the ritual of induction into the Party,” but in the view of the party leadership, it marked an important stage in children’s socialization into socialist patriotism: their anointment as ideologically committed young cadres. By the early 1970s, virtually every primary schooler took a pioneer oath at the tender age of seven, swearing “I, [name], on joining the ranks of the Pioneer Organization, pledge to love the motherland, learn assiduously, be hardworking and disciplined, and honor the red pioneer scarf with the three colors of the flag” - during a “solemn ceremony typically organized at monuments, historical sites, museums, memorial houses, or the parents’

---

<sup>295</sup> Dorel Zaica, *Experimental Zaica* (Bucharest: Editura Meridiane, 2000), 13.

workplace.”<sup>296</sup> The most accomplished pioneers in middle school would often relive their original induction experience, when they “made” their younger colleagues “pioneers” (*să facă pionieri*), symbolically welcoming them into the organization. Starting with 1976, pioneers were required to reaffirm the pledge - both orally and in writing, with a signature - in the fifth grade (at ten or eleven) with the presumed maturity of early adolescence, thus “marking the transition to a superior stage in pioneer activity” characterized by increased responsibilities and spirit of initiative: “I pledge to work and study to become a worthy son of my motherland, the Socialist Romanian Republic, and to be loyal to the people and the Romanian Communist Party; to steadfastly obey the duties of the pioneer.”<sup>297</sup>

As suggested in my discussion of the pedagogy of socialist citizenship, socialist educators vacillated between essentialism and constructivism in their conception of the subject, envisioning the ritual induction into the Pioneers either as the genuine expression of patriotism of a pre-existing self or, alternatively, as the very enactment of the anticipated socialist subjectivity and morality. The party leadership, youth activists, and pedagogues, for example, regularly critiqued the “formalism” and “routine” plaguing pioneer activities, the teachers’ lack of political enthusiasm or the children’s perfunctory participation. They implied that self-authoring and voluntary subjects pre-existed discursive and ritualized acts, in which they engaged in either a sincere manner (i.e. one that accorded with their privately held beliefs) or a dissimulative one (i.e. one that jarred with their authentic self and values).

At the same time, pedagogical experts and activists often framed the ritual induction into the organization in performative terms, along the lines of Nadezhda Krupskaya’s theorization of the role of ritual. They attributed the speech and bodily acts - reciting the oath, singing uplifting

---

<sup>296</sup> *Ghidul Pionierului* (Bucharest: Intreprinderea Poligrafica “Bucurestii Noi,” 1985), 37-42.

<sup>297</sup> *Ibid.*

patriotic songs, wearing the uniform and insignia, receiving the scarf, holding the flag, or marching in unison - a constitutive power in the formation of the socialist subject and the consolidation of moral character. Pedagogical journals, for example, noted the irresistible appeal that the “forms” and “external appearances” of pioneer life - uniforms, distinctions and insignia, ceremonies, camp fires, marches, flags, trumpets, and drums” – exerted on children of seven or nine, whose desire to become pioneers could not yet be “motivated by convictions.”<sup>298</sup> Coupled with “guidance” from teachers, who were expected to explain the meaning of the pledge or the rights and duties attendant on the pioneer status, the systematic engagement in pioneer rituals was guaranteed to overcome children’s initially “spontaneous” attachment to the organization, generating deep moral convictions and active political behavior.<sup>299</sup> The same reasoning informed methodological instructions which recommended that children whose academic work or moral behavior fell short of the organization’s standards should nevertheless be inducted and given the opportunity to change in the process of performing pioneer activities.

The emphasis on the correct replication of ideological form rather than persuasive explication of meaning was further enhanced by the imperative of “mimetic reassurance” governing the relation between teachers and the school authorities or pioneer activists charged with monitoring the successful fulfillment of state directives. Most teachers learned that it was the faithful replication of form – reflected in the selection of appropriate venues for the ceremony, the solemn tone deployed for the recital of the pledge, or children’s correct posture and uniform - rather than the prospective pioneers’ effective internalization of ideological meaning that would ultimately be the measure of their successful implementation of state directives. The efficacy of children’s appropriation of ideological truths was rarely questioned,

---

<sup>298</sup> Nicolae Constantinescu, “Pregătirea școlărilor pentru a deveni pionieri,” *Educația pionierească* 6, 1968, 27.

<sup>299</sup> Ibid.



being merely inferred from young people's faithful replication of form. Judging by the correspondence between the Pioneer Organization and the Central Committee of the R.C.P., the party leadership generally assessed the success of children's integration in the organization on the basis of annual statistics regarding the numbers of inducted pupils. Periodic reports by the presidents of the organization indicate that the only alarming instances interpreted as a failure of ideological education were the rare cases when children refused to take the pioneer pledge, typically on religious grounds.<sup>300</sup> If school authorities, youth activists, and even secret police officers were mobilized to conduct "persuasion work" with the tens of children impacted by "the backward mentalities of parents fallen under the influence of religious sects," the presumed efficacy of the pioneer rituals performed by hundreds of thousands of children inducted annually in the organization was rarely the subject of discussion or concern.<sup>301</sup>

The effect of this focus on the replication of ideological form, I argue, "decentered" and "destabilized" ideological meaning, rendering it irrelevant for participants in pioneer rituals or activities, and enabling them to invest performative acts with alternative meanings in diverse contexts. To treat pioneer rituals as performatives is, thus, to acknowledge that the meanings such speech and bodily acts acquired for participants were not pre-determined by the constative dimension of the ideological texts of the pledge or patriotic lyrics, but were context-dependent and thus open to resignification.

Judging by the recollections of my interviewees, which are often replete with emotional and sensory memories, the induction ceremony generally constituted an experientially rich and memorable event that was not primarily associated with its strict ideological meaning. Many participants saw the ceremony as a ritual threshold that marked a new stage in the children's

---

<sup>300</sup> ARP, file 14/ 1977, Constantin Boștină, "Raport cu privire la organizarea și desfășurarea Legământului pionierului," 135.

<sup>301</sup> Ibid.

process of maturation, but not necessarily one measured in terms of increased political consciousness and ideological activism. The expansion of pioneer membership meant that virtually all children would eventually join the organization in the second grade, a moment that came to symbolize for many a shift from the freshman status represented by the kindergarten uniform of the Motherland Falcons to that of older and more responsible pupils epitomized by the pioneer uniform and the red scarf:

Having an older brother, I craved wearing a [pioneer] uniform like his. I was beginning to feel ashamed of my Motherland Flacons uniform. I felt this [the induction ceremony] is somehow related to growing up and will bring an important change in my life.<sup>302</sup>

Being seamlessly integrated in school life, the ceremony also reaffirmed the value of academic excellence, enhancing formal class and school hierarchies. The mainstreaming of the organization by the 1970s led to a conflation of political commitment with academic performance as well as excellence in a diversity of domains promoted by the state, among which sports, arts, science and technology for the majority of rank and file pioneers. Students who participated successfully in county or national Olympiads in Mathematics, Physics, Romanian language and literature and various other disciplines, for example, received “diplomas of pioneer merit” during solemn ceremonies organized by local pioneer palaces. This enabled teachers, children, and parents to associate pioneer membership and distinctions with successful performance in these domains rather than narrowly defined political activism. Many of my respondents similarly framed their induction into the Pioneers in terms of a sense of collective recognition of their school performance that generated strong feelings of pride and self-importance:

D: *Can you remember when you became a pioneer?*

L: Yees, that was a moment of great pride in my family because I was part of the advanced group. The overlap of values was so intense. They made you a pioneer, but you

---

<sup>302</sup> Author interview, Irina (b. 1975, Bucharest), September 5, 2008.

were also the best student in your class. So I don't really know if, when they made us pioneers, any of us was thinking "I'll be the country's communist!" or that our parents saw it this way. All parents were really proud. I can still remember the parents energized, talking around us. There was a distinctive atmosphere. At least as a child you could feel it because the parents participated, your teacher gave a speech, and you wanted to become a pioneer in the first group. (...) I loved to shout out "We are marching on!" We shouted this out when they made us pioneers and we sang that song "March On, Proud Pioneers" [begins humming the song].<sup>303</sup>

Confirming Krupskaya's recommendations that pioneer rituals should be organized as uplifting ceremonies that deployed music, marches, and oaths to organize children for collective action and emotion, Laura (b. 1974, Bucharest) emphasized the ritual speeches, ceremonial formulas, patriotic music, and "distinctive atmosphere" or "energy" characterizing the event. Although the ritual of induction was in many ways scripted, it was also resignified as shared acknowledgement of academic excellence in the community of parents and educators most intimately relevant to the child's emerging sense of self-worth. Laura's account is also an indication that personal memories engage, either explicitly or implicitly, with dominant modes of remembrance. Arguing that pioneer rituals were not primarily experienced as acts of political commitment to the party, Laura aims to contest the notion, extremely popular after the collapse of communism, that the mandatory participation in the increasingly large number of political rituals in the 1980s were forms of ideological indoctrination.

Many other recollections confirm the fact that the act of receiving the red pioneer scarf became meaningful by analogy with other school practices that contributed to the creation of a formalized rank order such as the official ceremonies organized at the end of every school year to feature the best students in each class as "first prize," "second prize," and "third prize" winners who wore flower crowns and received books as gifts. The analogy was first made by teachers, who adapted the formal requirement that only a maximum of ten children should be

---

<sup>303</sup> Author interview, Laura (b. 1974, Bucharest), October 7, 2006.

welcomed into the Pioneer Organization on each ritual performance, dividing the typically large classes of approximately thirty students in the 1970s and 1980s into three groups on the basis of school performance. As one teacher noted, this was an “unwritten law” or school practice, which enabled educators to use the promise of being inducted in the “first/best” group as a strategy to stimulate academic competition or encourage discipline.<sup>304</sup>

Parents, too, seemed to read the ritual induction into the organization as an academic stimulant and recognition of their children’s achievements. They sometimes pled with teachers who excluded their meritorious children from the advanced group for disciplinary reasons. Out of a sense of pride in their children’s accomplishments, parents also accompanied them on the induction trip to one of a series of canonized historical sites, often socializing with the teachers, looking after other students during the trip, preparing and serving cookies, and thus contributing to the creation of a sense of familial community:

D: *Do you remember how Dana [M.I.’s daughter] became a pioneer?*

M.I.: Yeees, of course, it was [when Dana was] in the second grade, at Nicolae Iorga’s memorial house in Prahova. They did not make the whole class pioneers because they were not all very good. It was very moving and Dana was very moved and excited to become a pioneer. I think she also viewed this as a recompense for her hard work.

D: *Why did you join the group on the trip?*

M.I.: I had a “first-prize” daughter [*premiantă*] and I wanted to be a “first-prize” mother.<sup>305</sup>

The sense of community was just as important as the recognition of personal achievement in making the ritual ceremony a meaningful event. Led by their primary school teacher, holding their best friend by the hand, and sometimes accompanied by their parents, children often felt like “ducklings following the mother duck.” The communal spirit was further strengthened by the fact that, according to the official guidelines, new members were to be welcomed into the organization by older pioneers in the third or fourth grades who made brief oral characterizations

---

<sup>304</sup> Author interview with L.C., March 2010.

<sup>305</sup> Author interview, February 9, 2009.

of the seven-year-old candidates. While most teachers tended to either “skip this stage” or script it by “training” children what to say, some pioneers seemed to take their task seriously, making candid and deeply felt characterizations of their younger colleagues who were often also their neighbors, siblings, cousins, or friends:

Older colleagues had to say a few words about them [pupils to be inducted]: ‘He is good in school, got an A in reading class, was a first-prize winner, etc. Some would say things like ‘he’s my neighbor and helps me with grocery shopping, I can see how he helps his mother clean carpets.’<sup>306</sup>

When she was in the fourth grade, for example, Andrea recommended her cousin on the latter’s induction into the Pioneers during what turned out to be an enjoyable and light-hearted ceremony organized on a ship in Constanta, where the adult officers on board joined the ceremony to the amusement and surprise of the crowd of freshly minted pioneers.

To enhance the sense of familial community and occasion sentiments of patriotism by giving children a first-hand experience of national history, the majority of teachers also organized the ritual of induction as a day trip to historical sites or museums. While the official guidelines recommended that the ritual be organized in “a festive atmosphere,” visits to “historical sites, museums, monuments, or memorial houses” were elective in the 1970s and 1980s. Because the decision to organize group visits remained largely dependent on the teacher’s initiative and the parents’ willingness to sponsor the trip, it can serve as a measure of the sense of importance the ceremony of induction acquired for participants. As the content of socialist patriotism had broadened significantly under Ceaușescu, leading to an increase in the number of historical sites deemed appropriate for the ritual induction, the choice of venue was also at the discretion of the teacher. While some continued to visit symbolic loci of party history, among which the Doftana prison in Prahova held pride of place, schools from Bucharest, for example,

---

<sup>306</sup> Author interview with L.C., March 2010.

would often take their students to city parks, history museums, or day trips to the Royal Court in Târgoviște or the site of Michael the Brave's victory against the Ottomans at Călugăreni.

Not all participants resignified the performances of socialist Romanianness occasioned by the ritual induction in positive or meaningful terms. While most of my respondents remember their induction as a meaningful experience, quite a few insisted that they failed "to live the moment to the full" despite the fact that the ideological text of the oath of allegiance they recited was the same. What differed was the context of its actualization: some children were excluded from the advanced group of acknowledged good students, others failed to take the much anticipated trip to a historical or ceremonial site, could not experience the solemnity of the ritual because a spell of bad weather forced them to rush through the ceremony, or they missed the sense of community because their teacher or parents could not join them on the trip.

*D: How did you become a pioneer?*

O: It wasn't a special occasion. They took us to a museum. What does this mean for a child? If they had taken us on a class trip, it might have been special. Not to mention that it was a dark and rainy day. And that our teacher could not join us because she had just given birth. It was somewhat alienating.<sup>307</sup>

From the perspective of the party leadership, however, both children who experienced emotions of pride and patriotism and those who felt alienated or rushed through the oath to shelter themselves from the rain were successfully anointed as loyal communists as long as they recited faithfully the pioneer oath. For participants, the meaning of the ritual induction was neither exclusively determined by the constative dimension of the oath, nor by their intentionality, being dependent on the context of performance, which enabled text to break with context in unpredictable ways.

The same processes of resignification informing exceptional events such as the ceremonies of induction or pledge-taking were at work in children's daily school regimen which

---

<sup>307</sup> Author interview, July 2007.

were structured by pioneer rituals and hierarchies of pioneer leadership. Educators deployed pioneer insignia and status to both constrain and enable proper behaviors and subjectivities that were not conceived in strictly ideological terms. Most teachers in elementary school and kindergarten educators, for example, instrumentalized the markers of pioneer or falcon status – uniforms, scarves, insignia - to teach children both leadership skills and lessons in sociability. Some of the kindergarten educators I interviewed welcomed the creation of the Motherland’s Falcons precisely because the organization provided them with additional means (i.e. rituals and uniforms) to either discipline the misbehaved or encourage shy children to socialize and take initiative as group leaders:

The [creation of the] Motherland Falcons was such a good thing. I managed to lift up (*să ridic*), so to say, a lot of shy children, so that they could have trust in their own abilities. I would assign them the position of leaders. A lot of timid girls, who were so overwhelmed by such events [falcon rituals].<sup>308</sup>

For educators aiming to teach children “not to lie, not to steal, be polite and behave nicely towards their peers,” “respect and help their colleagues,” being “a falcon” was synonymous with being “a big boy/girl.”<sup>309</sup>

Similarly, primary school teachers in the 1970s and 1980s routinely used the threat of taking away unruly students’ red scarves, thus temporarily suspending pioneer memberships. Such practices were specifically discouraged in pedagogical literature in the 1940s and 1950s both because the teachers’ loyalty to the socialist regime was still suspect and because pioneer membership was envisioned as a primarily ideological and political status:

The red scarf is not a didactic award or recompense like the pictures of angels and santa clauses of the past. It is not given by the teacher, but accorded, after long and serious

---

<sup>308</sup> Author interview with M.P. kindergarten educator, March 19, 2009.

<sup>309</sup> Author interview with V.O. kindergarten educator, March 19, 2009.

consideration, by the youth organization, which is the only authority that can have it withdrawn if the pioneer makes grave mistakes.<sup>310</sup>

By late socialism, the removal of the scarf had become a commonplace strategy for primary school teachers. While it was still possible for such disciplining acts to take on a narrow ideological meaning (as happened in cases when pioneers had their scarves removed for attending church), the threat was typically deployed to discourage schoolyard scuffles, excessive number of absences, or poor grades. For most children, it represented a form of temporary marginalization in the class collective, rather than a questioning of their ideological credentials.

Teachers did not only deploy pioneer insignia to prohibit or constrain behavior, but also to performatively enable desirable character traits or modalities of action, among which self-responsibility, self-assertion, or diligent study. Andrei (b. 1974, Bucharest), who failed to convince his classmates to vote him either group or class leader, remembers how his teacher resorted to a trick, assigning him a role that was not actually stipulated in the pioneer code, i.e. the role of “medical expert,” in order to give him a sense of purpose and much needed encouragement:

There was an embarrassing moment related to the election because the teacher saw that I was sad, so she decided to assign me a role and came up with the idea to make me a ‘medical expert.’ That was basically a travesty. It was just so that she can give me a position. I had a sense of mission and that was important.<sup>311</sup>

Neither the role the teacher assigned, nor the insignia she provided (a white cord usually reserved for the school’s adult pioneer instructor) followed the rigorous instructions in the pioneer code, being strategically deployed by the teacher. That the teacher’s decision was a minimal act of resignification became evident when school authorities enforced the insignia’s strict ideological meaning: “When the party lady [the school’s pioneer instructor] ran into me

---

<sup>310</sup> Ilie Stanciu, “Rolul organizatiilor de pionieri in activitatea instructive-educativa,” *Gazeta invatamantului*, May 27, 1949.

<sup>311</sup> Author interview, July 2006.



while wearing it [the white cord], she thundered “What is this all about?” and I [replied] “Well, I am a medical expert.” She took it away, of course, because it had been awarded abusively.”<sup>312</sup>

Aside from being appropriated as disciplining strategies by teachers, pioneer insignia and status, like the ritual induction, were also resignified as forms of academic recognition in daily school life. Academic excellence played a decisive role not only in children’s early induction into the organization, but also in their “election” as group and class pioneer leaders at the suggestion of their primary school or homeroom teachers. So entrenched was the practice of using pioneer insignia to stimulate or acknowledge academic achievement that children who could brag high grades, but lacked leadership skills, being too timid or withdrawn to successfully fulfill their roles in public ceremonies, were nevertheless repeatedly voted class or school leaders.<sup>313</sup> By comparison, children who either lacked academic credentials or were particularly ill-behaved, like Andrei above, had little chance of securing leadership positions even if they actually exhibited activism, eagerly “lobbying” their colleagues:

I wanted to be the best, hold the flag, and be a pioneer leader. It was like an election campaign, although somewhat rigged by the teacher. It was ridiculous how invested I was in this, but my lobbying never worked because nobody liked me. I was always fighting with my colleagues and I think they could sense how power thirsty I was.<sup>314</sup>

The pioneer hierarchy included a class leader (*comandant de detașament*), seconded by three group leaders (*comandant de grupă*), each of which was in charge of one of the three rows of desks typically adorning Romanian classrooms in the 1970s and 1980s. The hierarchy was reaffirmed in daily school practice by the performance of simplified versions of the pioneer ritual, which consisted of standing to attention while class and group leaders gave terse reports

---

<sup>312</sup> Ibid.

<sup>313</sup> Author interviews. Both Dan (b. 1977, Buzau) and Ana (b. 1974, Târgu-Mureș, grew up in the village of Acăș) were repeatedly elected class leaders despite being too timid to perform adequately in public ceremonies and lacking, as Ana, pointed out “leadership skills.”

<sup>314</sup> Author interview, July 2006.

on general attendance and readiness for “action” [i.e. beginning classes] to the teacher. Leadership positions were not merely symbolic, endowing those playing such roles with authority and enabling performatively the training of leadership skills and the cultivation of self-confidence. As suggested, pioneer roles were often the object of acerbic competition among students, especially those in the “prize winning” category, who derived a sense of self-importance from their responsibilities vis-à-vis their colleagues and from participating in large school ceremonies. Depending on the degree of authority invested by individual teachers in elect pioneers and the students’ actual popularity, class and group leaders could be in charge of checking their colleagues’ homework, reporting unruly or absent students, or enforcing daily chores assigned to students on duty by rotation (wiping the blackboard, ensuring that teachers have the resources needed: pieces of chalk, maps, etc., keeping the classroom clean). The structures of leadership at class level allowed children to carry out, largely without adult guidance, a significant number of school chores, whose successful fulfillment was considered a patriotic duty.

It was the performative force of speech and bodily acts, paradoxically enabled by the excessive focus on the faithful citation of form, that enabled participants to invest pioneer rituals and activities with alternative meanings in diverse contexts. While strategies of formal compliance with or evasion of state directives can adequately be described as forms of covert resistance, I chose not to refer to the processes of appropriation as acts of resistance or subversion of state structures. In their small acts of resignification, the former teachers and students I interviewed seemed primarily motivated by the prospect of successful professional careers and academic accomplishment than by oppositional intentions. Furthermore, with the exception of religious objections, the meanings pioneer rituals, hierarchies, and activities

acquired for participants in various contexts were neither in opposition to the socialist values of education, patriotism, and collective life promoted by the state, nor fully determined by them.

Many of the educators I interviewed, for example, emphasized their commitment to patriotic education, distinguishing, perhaps with some element of retrospective self-justification, between “genuine” and “clamorous”/“ostentatious” (*patriotard*) patriotism, between “enduring historical values” and “party” patriotism:

There were two forms of patriotism: there was obedience to the communist party and there was an acknowledgement of enduring historical values. When you talked to children about Stephen the Great or Michael the Brave, you educated them in the spirit of patriotism without any connection to Ceaușescu.<sup>315</sup>

Interviews with former teachers and students also indicate that educators valued and sought to instill in children a soft version of collective belonging, sometimes appealing to falcon or pioneer insignia and distinctions as forms of disciplining. While few teachers subscribed to the orthodox view of the *kollektiv* as a self-managing, organized team, purposefully working towards a socially useful goal, they nevertheless prized discipline, politeness, mutual help, friendship, and sociability in their *class collective* (*colectivul clasei*). The educators’ commitment to the values of sociability that ensured harmonious collectives often exceeded the boundaries of formal educational environments. Children whose parents were teachers often found themselves emboldened to participate in collective ventures in order to “toughen up” or “learn to be sociable” by interacting with peers beyond the comforting boundaries of the family even if the proposed activities were physically demanding or lacked parental supervision like the sessions of patriotic work, or pioneer camps and expeditions.

---

<sup>315</sup> Author interview with L.C., March 2010.

## **Beyond Conformists and Resisters: Rethinking the Modalities of Socialist Agency**

*“Pioneer membership [pionieria]<sup>316</sup> was a venue of self-affirmation. I am a naturally enthusiastic person, whose first impulse is to identify [with a cause], and the reason I embraced these ideals is because they spoke to me and created an environment in which I could assert myself.”* (Camelia, b. 1964, author interview 2011)

Much of my analysis of children’s performances of socialist patriotism in and out of school has so far focused on the processes of appropriation and resignification of state-promoted norms. Inspired by personal recollections of practices that do not fit easily into the dichotomous paradigm of either consolidation or resignification and transgression of official norms, this section asks a different set of questions: What are we to make of youth who not only took the pioneer pledge, but also meant it, and even found it self-affirming? How should we account for children who participated enthusiastically in pioneer activities, pursued academic or artistic interests in school and organizational structures, advanced in the pioneer hierarchy, and found themselves empowered or self-fulfilled by socialist values and skills in the process?

Answering these questions, I argue, requires a recalibration of the notion of agency in socialist studies. If the post-totalitarian scholarship on socialist regimes in the Soviet bloc has successfully critiqued politically charged notions of indoctrination, atomization, and alienation, reinvesting the socialist subject with agency, it is fair to argue that it has overwhelmingly conceptualized agency in terms of dissidence and resistance to the socialist system. Built on the assumption that socialist citizens – whether dissidents or opportunists - could only pursue individualism, autonomy, and self-interest in opposition to the socialist regime, this scholarship maps agency on a dichotomous logic of subordination and resistance.

Replicating conceptualizations of adult socialist citizens, the relation of children and youth to moral and political norms or institutional structures is similarly understood in

---

<sup>316</sup> “Pionieria” is a broader term than pioneer membership, encompassing all activities, rituals, insignia, systems of distinctions, hierarchies, opportunities, etc. related to the pioneer organization.

antonymous terms of compliance and resistance.<sup>317</sup> While studies of childhood occasionally invoke the notion of indoctrination, scholarship published in the last decades typically foregoes the discredited conceptual tools of the totalitarian paradigm, seeking to account for citizens' relations with the state in more dynamic terms that allow for the pursuit of self-interest, detestation or avoidance of social regulations, and resistance. Studies of the socialization of children and teens are thus populated by "conformist youth," who either participated actively in official practices or complied unenthusiastically with state imposed moral norms, and "discontent youth" who engaged in "nonconformity, dissent, and opposition."<sup>318</sup> In this view, teens who chose to participate actively in political debates in state-administered sites such as pioneer camps can be dismissed as "enthusiastic conformists," while children who ate chocolates offered by Western visitors or watched Western television appear engaged in acts of dissent, opposition to, and rejection of socialist ideals.<sup>319</sup>

This section and following chapters aim to question the assumption, implicit in these studies, that agency resides only in acts that challenge and subvert political norms, in the capacity to realize one's self-interest against social or political constraints, or in practices that pursue individualism at the expense of communal belonging or integration. Making the case for a reevaluation of the normative liberal tendency to locate agency in acts of resistance to domination, Saba Mahmood argues convincingly that "norms are not only consolidated and/or subverted, but

---

<sup>317</sup> See, for example, Kelly, "Shaping the 'Future Race'" and "'The School Waltz': The Everyday Life of the Post-Stalinist Soviet Classroom," In *Forum for Anthropology and Culture*, no 1 (2004): 108-58; Anna Saunders, *Honecker's Children: Youth and Patriotism in East(ern) Germany, 1979-2002* (Manchester, 2007); Mary Fulbrook, *The People's State*. For a work that both relies on this dichotomy and seeks to complicate it, see Juliane Fürst, *Stalin's Last Generation. Soviet Post-War Youth and the Emergence of Mature Socialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

<sup>318</sup> See, for example, Catherine J. Plum, "Summer Camp for Socialists: Conformity and Escapism at Camp Mitschurin in East Germany," In *Socialist Escapes: Breaking Away from Ideology and Everyday Routine in Eastern Europe, 1945-1989*, eds. Cathleen Giustino et al. (Berghahn Books, 2013), 98-126.

<sup>319</sup> Ibid.

performed, inhabited, and experienced in a variety of ways.”<sup>320</sup> As a result, “agentival capacity is entailed not only in those acts that resist norms but also in the multiple ways in which one inhabits norms.”<sup>321</sup> This section thus turns its attention to practices of socialist patriotism that “lived and inhabited, aspired to, reached for, and consummated” socialist norms, in order to examine the modalities of socialist agency “whose operations escape the logic of resistance and subversion of norms.”<sup>322</sup>

Recollections that evoke the empowering character of socialist values and practices come up time and again in interviews, but for the purpose of this section I will focus on two life narratives in which the enactment, rather than evasion or subversion of socialist norms, is the dominant organizing trope. Consider the example of Irina, who was born in Bucharest in 1976 to a family of urban intellectuals, and who was an enthusiastic and active pioneer in primary and middle school, although she never advanced in the pioneer hierarchy beyond the level of class leader. Her parents, both of whom were music teachers at a major arts high school in Bucharest, seemed to exhibit a moderate degree of political disengagement and distrust: they chose not to join the party (R.C.P.), listened frequently to Radio Free Europe, and complained about the debilitating impact of economic scarcity throughout the 1980s.

Although there was little in her family background to predispose her for political activism, Irina echoes other respondents in her warm memories of pioneer ceremonies and activities. Reflecting on her affirmation of the pioneer pledge at the National Museum of History in Bucharest, when she was eleven, Irina recalls in vivid detail the celebratory atmosphere and sensory experiences: the pioneer songs, the feel of the uniform, the flag, etc. In part because she

---

<sup>320</sup> Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 22.

<sup>321</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>322</sup> *Ibid.*, 5, 23.

became a devout Christian Orthodox in the 1990s, she compares the oath-taking ceremony with the “sublime” and “solemn” atmosphere of “a ritual of joining a convent” or “the religious profession of a nun.” Integrated in a life narrative that revolves around Irina’s identification with higher causes (whether social and political or religious), the pioneer pledge of early adolescence seemed to occasion all the politically correct emotions intended by party activists, including deep feelings of patriotic devotion and readiness to sacrifice for the country:

When I took the pioneer pledge, I felt deeply in my heart how important I was for the country. I was holding my hand on the flag and I remember, to this day, the feeling of silk between my fingers and the yellow edging, and I was swearing to defend my country, defend the party, and serve the president. How did I see this? I immediately conjured up a war situation and I felt ready to sacrifice myself for my country. I was very small, but in that moment, I felt very mature. I felt I was chosen because I had studied well and this was a sign of recognition by my school and society for being [a] good [student]. But I also felt really important, and although I was a deeply loved child in my family, I felt this [i.e. the ceremony] gave me a sense of importance that I had never felt at home.<sup>323</sup>

Like the recollections examined in previous sections, Irina’s vivid memories give insights into the daily practices that constituted socialist and patriotic subjects. In Irina’s account of how she was “overcome by nationhood,” i.e. by the sense of collective belonging and responsibility, during the ceremony, nationhood appears as an event, “as something that suddenly crystallizes rather than gradually develops.”<sup>324</sup> The interview suggests that this act of crystallization was enabled by a national frame of vision cultivated both in school and in the family. It is unlikely that conscientious students like Irina could have actualized patriotic and civic values or conjured up simultaneously self-sacrificial and self-centered scenarios of patriotic devotion in the process of taking the pledge, had she not been engaged in various forms of patriotic education. When she described the atmosphere in her school, the first aspect Irina pointed out was “the strong dose of patriotism” systematically reinforced in history classes, where “Romania always ruled,” but also

---

<sup>323</sup> Author interview, Irina (b. 1975, Bucharest), September 5, 2008.

<sup>324</sup> Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 18-9.

in her readings of historical legends or trips to historical sites. When she was only seven, Irina was inducted into the Pioneer Organization at Călugăreni, the place where one of her childhood heroes, Michael the Brave, had defeated the Ottomans in medieval times.

Much like other socialist teens, Irina associated the sense of collective belonging experienced during the affirmation of the pledge with the recognition of her academic achievement and her immediate school community. Unlike most students, however, the teen's consciousness of belonging to a larger collective expanded to the recognition that she fulfilled a larger social purpose that transgressed the limits of private life and the family. Because Irina's recollections emphasize the alignment of the self with the collective, domestic studies would dismiss her experience on taking the pioneer pledge as "false consciousness," while recent scholarship on socialist youth would likely categorize it as an act of "enthusiastic conformism." Lurking behind these conceptualizations are assumptions about the inevitable annihilation of the self in the collective, about the erasure of autonomy and individualism. The tendency to pit the collective against the individual is rooted in liberal conceptions of subjectivity, whereby self-realization is universally envisioned as an individualist struggle for self-mastery, uniqueness, and singularity against social or political domination.

I want to propose an alternative approach, arguing that remembered experiences such as Irina's are not merely indicative of childish ideological naiveté or predisposition for conformity, but also of the agentive capacities available to ambitious youth in a school climate suffused with values of academic excellence, patriotism, civic spirit, and sociability. While the norms of socialist and patriotic behavior undoubtedly foreclosed certain ways of being and possibilities of self-expression, they also opened other venues of individual and collective affirmation. Note that Irina's recollections of the pledge-taking ceremony link the sense of communal belonging to one



of individual affirmation, recognition, pride, and self-importance. The national and social mission Irina intimated in the pledge “created an enlarged sense of individual self, filled with purpose, significance, and moral value.”<sup>325</sup> Premised on the notion that relations between the individual and the collective are necessarily antonymous, the categories of resistance and conformity cannot account for the empowering and self-affirming potential of the collective, i.e. the forms of being and action enabled by collective integration.<sup>326</sup>

Another drawback of the notion of conformity (and its implicit flipside, i.e. the absence of agency or resistance) is that it represents students like Irina as submissive objects of socialist and patriotic education, passively absorbing and complying with imposed moral norms. To allege the absence of agency in such cases is, however, tantamount to rendering invisible the sheer amount of effort and exertion that many children and teens performed daily in attempts to perfect ideological, intellectual, and artistic skills or align the self with models and standards of socialist patriotism, morality, and academic achievement.

Irina, for example, worked keenly to fashion an ethical, active, and creative socialist self in early adolescence in ways that are not altogether different from her efforts to live a moral life as a practicing Christian Orthodox after the collapse of communism. Taking her status of pioneer leader seriously, she heeded school rules of moral conduct, making sure she never had her red scarf removed from misbehavior. She also studied diligently and exerted herself in playing the piano. In part because such literature appealed to her, she consumed a large quantity of early

---

<sup>325</sup> Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind*, 18.

<sup>326</sup> Note, for example, the analytical impossibility of holding the self and the collective together in the following reading of an east German pioneer’s account of his participation in the role of a Second World War partisan fighter in a scouting game during a summer camp in the 1980s. Although historian Catherine Plum acknowledges that “such activities [i.e. collective activities based on role-playing] could provide children with a sense of their own power and independence,” she concludes by attributing the sense of empowerment to the pioneer’s ultimate failure to adopt a “collective identity” and to his embrace of “the individualism prevalent among youth in the 1980s.” The possibility that it is precisely the act of performing a role of responsibility as part of a collective and in (virtual) defense of the country that endowed pioneers with a sense of “power and independence” is inconceivable.

socialist literature for youth that emphasized both the duties of hard work and the centrality of youth to socialist life: “I grew up on magazines from the 1950s, which lay around in my grandma’s attic. I found those stories extremely moral, stories that taught us how to work and to create. I believed [emphatically] these things, I believed I was made to contribute to the flourishing of the state.”<sup>327</sup> Irina also volunteered to perform in school shows, where she excelled at humorous skits or sang youth songs. She was also an enthusiastic participant in theatre productions, acting in satiric plays that featured socialist values such as work and responsibility in local theatres, and enjoying the sense of importance and recognition that her talent and enthusiasm generated among teachers and colleagues. Finally, Irina’s life narrative reveals a particularly “productive,” i.e. enabling, technology of the self that was widely encouraged by socialist regimes: the emulation of socialist and national models. If Michael the Brave seems to have stirred Irina’s sense of patriotic courage and devotion, authoritative female models of socialist morality such as the school pioneer leader, who was Irina’s “idol” because she was “beautiful, smart, and morally upright,” inspired the teen to compete with other colleagues for positions of pioneer leadership in her class and in school.<sup>328</sup>

As Irina’s recollections suggest, the work on the self entailed in becoming an accomplished pioneer required not only the cultivation of patriotic sentiments and moral convictions, but also a sustained training in various ideological, intellectual, or artistic skills. Young people’s labor of perfecting these skills in socialist educational institutions has been associated with inaction, passivity, and political inertia, being typically captured by the dichotomous notions of internalization (or even indoctrination) through socialization or coerced compliance. Much less attention has been paid to the sense of effort and achievement involved in

---

<sup>327</sup> Author interview, September 5, 2008.

<sup>328</sup> Ibid.

children's learning of these techniques or to the agentival capacities enabled by the mastery of various skills. I will focus here briefly on another life narrative to examine the modalities of agency engendered by children's early training in ideological literacy, a topic that will be explored at length in chapters three and four.

Camelia (b.1964, Bucharest), whose parents were unskilled workers and showed no political enthusiasm for the regime, was an ambitious pioneer of modest, if "healthy," social origins.<sup>329</sup> Although her family background was in many ways different from Irina's, Camelia's life narrative uncovers similar structures of possibility and agency engendered by her pursuit of socialist values and the perfection of academic and ideological proficiency. Echoing the language of youth activists, Camelia recalled that her teachers and pioneer instructors often praised her for being "combative" (*combativă*), having "a commanding presence," and "running her mouth like a pro" (*le dădeam bine din gură*), skills which ensured her speedy advance in the pioneer hierarchy while she attended middle school in Bucharest in the late 1970s.<sup>330</sup> Camelia's recollections further indicate that ideological proficiency was measured not only in terms of discursive skills, but also of social or political dispositions such as "enthusiasm:" "They liked the fact that I was articulate, that I was enthusiastic."

Camelia's training in ideological literacy, public speaking techniques, and politically coded predispositions for enthusiasm and activism occurred in a diversity of contexts. One of the most memorable and effective sites was the school's history circle, which the teen joined at eleven, and where she honed her research, writing, and public speaking skills. As a club member, Camelia went on trips to historical sites, read widely, consulting specialty journals such as the *Magazin istoric*, and conducted research. Testimony to the degree of freedom that club members

---

<sup>329</sup> Camelia grew up in Bucharest, her mother was a cleaning lady and her father a plumber.

<sup>330</sup> Author interview, July 2011.

enjoyed in pursuing topics of choice, Camelia's research interests did not center on the usual suspects of the nationalist imaginary of late socialism, but on two Wallachian voivodes - Matei Basarab and Constantin Brâncoveanu – who impressed her “with their passion for culture, cultivation, and refinement.” Producing a research paper (*referat*) on Constantin Brâncoveanu was one of Camelia's most memorable discursive achievements in the history circle, meeting with the approval and praise of her mentor. The sense of accomplishment was further buttressed by the opportunity to present her research paper in front of an audience of peers and outside guests at the “symposia,” “conferences,” or “organized scientific sessions” that her teacher planned annually for circle members.

At twelve, a year after she joined the history circle, Camelia's discursive talents were further harnessed and cultivated, this time in the direction of ideological literacy. In the wake of a typical pioneer activity meant to familiarize youth with the social value of labor, a class visit to the textile factory in the school's neighborhood, the homeroom teacher assigned Camelia the task of writing a reportage (*reportaj*). “I remember it took me about two seconds to write it and my homeroom teacher almost had an orgasm when she read it. I was afraid she wanted to admonish me, but she said it was the most superb creation she had ever read in her life.” Although a different genre than her research paper on Constantin Brâncoveanu, the reportage was similarly well received and publicized by being posted in the school's wall gazette (*gazeta de perete*), one of the many forms of “visual propaganda” promoted by the regime's July theses.<sup>331</sup>

By the late 1970s, promising pioneers like Camelia had increasing opportunities to perfect their skills in ideological literacy. Starting with 1972, the party leadership's revival of the ideal of the precocious and activist child found expression in so-called “pioneer forums,” a series

---

<sup>331</sup> On the centrality of visual propaganda to the projected intensification of ideological education, see Nicolae Ceaușescu, “Propuneri pentru îmbunătățirea activității politice-ideologice,” In *România pe drumul construirii societății socialiste multilateral dezvoltate* (Bucharest, Editura politică, 1972), 185-195.

of county, municipal, or national camps and conferences which gathered thousands of high-ranking pioneers annually for training in leadership skills, political debates, as well as an ideal mixture of initiative and consciously assumed discipline.<sup>332</sup> In 1978, Camelia attended the municipal forum for Bucharest pioneer leaders, which combined regular camp activities such as games, sports, songs, and campfires with coaching in ideological proficiency and political leadership. During the usually weeklong retreat, Camelia and other pioneer trained to participate in “a sort of public space” by posting written contributions to the camp’s wall-gazette to “keep each other updated on activities, take initiatives, and exchange ideas.” In addition, pioneers nominated and elected their city’s representatives for the republican stage, and attended debates and conferences: “I remember that I debated so hard that my mouth hurt. I think they [pioneer activists] liked me because I could assert myself (*mă impuneam*).”

That Camelia had cultivated the self-confidence to voice her “initiatives” was revealed by an unexpected incident that occurred during the national pioneer conference presided by Constantin Boștină, the head of the organization in 1978. In recognition of her ideological proficiency, the pioneer activists of her district selected Camelia for a televised interview, but made the mistake of beckoning her to leave the conference hall during the president’s speech. Because she stood up abruptly, the members of the presidium thought she intended to take the floor and asked if she had any suggestions. Summoned rather unexpectedly to speak in a large conference hall that might have intimidated many a thirteen year old, the teen’s first instinct was not to break the political decorum. Inspired by her genuine interests in history, Camelia thus took the opportunity to put forth a genuinely felt proposal in the manner she had practiced in pioneer

---

<sup>332</sup> Envisioned as nurseries of party cadres, forums attracted a mix of nomenklatura prodigies and ambitious youth of modest social backgrounds like Camelia. When she attended the municipal pioneer forum organized at Pustnicu, a wooded area in the proximity of Bucharest, in 1978, Camelia befriended the son and daughter of George Macovescu, a long time communist who was the minister of foreign affairs at the time.

forms: “I think we should organize pioneer ceremonies at the Plumbuita monastery, where the history of our country has been preserved!” For Camelia, the episode is memorable in retrospect because her perception of the monastery as a “patriotic space” and thus as a desirable setting for pioneer ceremonies unwittingly violated the ideological orthodoxy of pioneer conferences. The teen had visited the monastery on a trip organized by the history club and was impressed at the numerous portraits of famous Romanian rulers that decorated the building’s walls, being sculpted in stone by the archimandrite, Simeon Tatu. Even though inappropriate to the political context, Camelia’s proposal is nevertheless indicative of the teen’s mastery of political skills (the ease of public speaking, the recognition that pioneer activities are supposed to cultivate patriotism, etc.) and of the fact that ideological proficiency did not necessarily preempt the expression of genuine personal interests.

Camelia’s participation in history circles and pioneer forums was premised on a certain disponibility to be trained that involved submission to disciplining practices and strict regimens, being often associated in scholarship with positions of passivity, compliance, and repression of agency. Interviews with pioneer leaders published in the pioneer press indicate that the wall-gazettes, debates, and conferences that Camelia described were, indeed, instrumental in shaping a “disciplined spontaneity.”<sup>333</sup> They did so by training both the pioneers’ self-confidence to assert and implement their “initiatives” and their abilities to distinguish acceptable from unacceptable proposals and thus frame their interventions in ideologically appropriate ways. The disponibility to be trained further involved subordination to structures of authority and mentorship. Like Irina, Camelia invokes the stimulating potential of emulation, attributing her

---

<sup>333</sup> See “Forum ’73,” In *Cutezătorii*, July 19, 1973; “In jurul mesei rotunde: cei 16 pionieri-loctiitori ai președintelui CNOP,” In *Cutezătorii*, September 6, 1973; “În actualitate: activitatea forumurilor județene,” In *Cutezătorii*, January 29, 1976.

passion for history to her fascination with the history teacher, who served as a model of professional commitment, strength, ambition, and idealism for some of her students:

Mrs. C., whom I admire, hold in high esteem, and will never forget, was a strong and extraordinary woman. Americans are clamoring today: “We want feminine models!” Well, C. was, and I think I had a bit of a crush on her ... she was a strong, ambitious, and idealist woman. (...) My parents also respected her enormously. Of all my teachers, she certainly met the highest intellectual and moral standards.

In her discussion of the notions of “docility” or “teachability” of the subject, Saba Mahmood questions the narrow association of docility with the abandonment of agency, arguing that our analysis of agency should also account for contexts “where submission to certain forms of (external) authority is a condition for achieving the subject's potentiality.”<sup>334</sup> The emulation of respected mentors and submission to weeks of coaching in ideological proficiency through participation in debates and conferences was an active and dynamic process that ultimately endowed Camelia with agentival capacities. It earned the teen the praise of school authorities, enabled her to attend the national pioneer conference and voice her proposal in plenum, and won her a much-craved participation in an international youth camp as a trusted ambassador of the regime the same year. Wetting the teen's appetite for reading and strengthening her self-confidence to engage with increasingly demanding historical and philosophical material, the training in ideological literacy was not incompatible with active engagement and critical thinking. Camelia, for example, showed an eclectic interest in historical and “Marxist works” - “books about the life of Marx and a lot of nonsense by Engels” – which culminated in a failed attempt to check out Marx's *Capital* from the school library. Although none of these readings were either required or recommended by pioneer instructors or school librarians, Camelia was certainly encouraged in her pursuits by the emphasis on active curiosity and initiative in institutions of “pioneer democracy.” The same curiosity and initiative fueled a shift in

---

<sup>334</sup> Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, 29, 166.

philosophical interests to less ideologically appropriate readings such as Plato and Sartre in high school. Seen in the larger context of Camelia's post-socialist career as a college professor in both Romania and the United States, the agential capacities engendered by her early training in philosophical and historical reading, debate and conference participation, as well as public speaking seem to enjoy a successful afterlife.

Life narratives of precocious pioneer activism such as Irina's and Camelia's served to illustrate the argument that agency is not only entailed in acts of resistance to or transgression of political constraints, but also in the diverse ways in which the principles that were at the center of the pedagogy of socialist patriotism - activism and voluntarism - were lived and consummated in daily practice. To make these modalities of socialist agency visible, I argued, we have to question liberal notions of autonomous and self-willed subjectivity, acknowledging the self-affirming power of collective belonging and identification. We similarly have to account for the sense of investment, commitment, and achievement entailed by the labor of perfecting required skills and fashioning a socialist self. The following chapters will put more flesh on the theoretical bones of this argument, introducing the reader to young people who derived a sense of empowerment and self-realization out of engagement in discursive or social practices of socialist patriotism, realization of socialist values, and proficient mastery in required skills in late Romanian socialism.



## Chapter III

### The Socialist Nerd: Discursive Practices of Socialist Patriotism

*There are talented students in schools, even among pioneers, (...) who must create works that will enrich our culture. Eminescu started writing when he was young, comrades! We should not wait for somebody to grow a beard, before he becomes a good poet or artist. (Nicolae Ceaușescu, 1971)*<sup>335</sup>

Children submitting poems and short prose for publication in the pioneer press in the wake of Nicolae Ceaușescu's rise to power, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, were likely to be disappointed by editorial responses that questioned the quality of their patriotic celebrations of the party and the socialist motherland, generally privileging aesthetic skill over patriotic zeal or thematic propriety. Middle school pupils writing to "The Literary Workshop" of the recently launched pioneer magazine, *Cutezătorii* [*The Daring*] (1967), for example, learned that "You cannot celebrate your country by merely stringing together a set of common places" or were discouraged from pursuing poetry for similar reasons: "It is not enough to mention the 23<sup>rd</sup> of August, a truly historic day, to create a publishable poem."<sup>336</sup> Teachers who sent their students' works for publication were also admonished for encouraging and likely lending a hand in polishing patriotic creations such as "Proud and Blessed Country," a poem dismissed by the editors as "artificial," "plethoric," "an avalanche of words," and "a verbal grandiloquence that sounds strange coming from a child."<sup>337</sup>

Challenging "the reduction of [patriotic] poetry to a set of worn out models and patterns,"<sup>338</sup> these critiques reflected the sense of ideological relaxation, possibility, and renewal as well as of symbolic instability triggered by the discursive shift towards national symbols and

---

<sup>335</sup> Address to the National Conference of the Pioneer Organization, In *Educatia pioniereasca* 11, 1971, 7.

<sup>336</sup> "Atelier literar," *Cutezătorii*, no 9 and 12, 1970.

<sup>337</sup> "Atelier literar," *Cutezătorii*, no 5, 1972.

<sup>338</sup> Ibid.

idioms initiated in the early 1960s and radicalized by Nicolae Ceaușescu, who “presided over the moment when the Marxist discourse was disrupted by that of the Nation,”<sup>339</sup> after his election as secretary general of the R.C.P. in 1965. As a new discursive regime premised on the validation of prewar idioms of the nation and their harmonization with the discourse of Marxism-Leninism was taking shape, the range of acceptable patriotic productions expanded beyond consecrated patterns that typically relied on socialist symbols of the party, the working class, and youthful pioneer devotion to include lyrical reflections on millennial history, past national heroes and historic events, literary personalities, or nationalized nature in keeping with the revamped mission of the pioneer press to feature “the historic moments and remarkable personalities of Romanian history, science and culture,” alongside “the people’s progress in the building of socialism.”<sup>340</sup>

Not only did patriotic expression expand to include national symbols, but it coexisted in the printed media for children in this period with a comparatively larger number of ideologically neutral and age-characteristic works by early teens on subjects as diverse as nature, family, friendship, childhood games, favorite pets, or emotions such as love and longing.<sup>341</sup> From the late 1960s on, pupils who showed a particular talent for writing were increasingly encouraged to contribute to the pioneer press, join literary circles (*cenacluri literare*), and edit school journals (*reviste școlare*), practices whose proliferation is seen by some domestic scholars as a welcome

---

<sup>339</sup> Katherine Verdery, *National Ideology Under Socialism: Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceaușescu’s Romania*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 124.

<sup>340</sup> ANIC, Fond C.C. al P.C.R. – Cancelarie, file 82/1967, “Referat cu privire la îmbunătățirea presei destinată pionierilor și scolarilor,” 2. When it was launched in 1967, the new magazine *Cutezătorii* replaced two pioneer publications, the weekly *Scanteia pionierului* and the monthly *Cravata rosie*.

<sup>341</sup> See, for examples, the first anthologies of child poetry from the late 1960s, which feature a few patriotic poems vaguely dedicated to the country and the party in the opening and closing sections of the volumes, but are otherwise full of age-specific poetic creations. *Copii-poeti*, ed. Tudor Opris, (Editura tineretului, 1969) and *Dintre sute de catarge* (Consiliul Municipiului București al Organizației Pionierilor, 1969).

revival of prewar literary traditions.<sup>342</sup> The regime's new cultural imperative to "revaluate the past cultural legacy" (*valorificarea moștenirii culturale*) also sanctioned young people's access to a wide range of canonical works of Romanian literature, some of which had been previously banned and censored.<sup>343</sup> Paralleling the Stalinist concessions to traditional middle class values and behaviors - denoted by the concept of *kulturnost* ("culturedness" or "educatedness") - in the spheres of education, consumption, and leisure in the Soviet Union, the Romanian communists' militant language of "cultural revolution" had given way, by the 1960s, to a concern with cultured behavior of which reading was an essential ingredient.<sup>344</sup> In this spirit, the growing publication and official recommendation of masterpieces of universal literature, particularly in the 1960s and 1970s, further broadened the reading horizons of late socialist youth.

Following this brief period of symbolic openness and instability, the party leadership reaffirmed "the leading role of the party" in its task of "raising the militant and revolutionary consciousness of the masses" and forming "the new man" in the series of speeches known as the July "theses."<sup>345</sup> Coupled with the subsequent creation of institutions charged with the translation of these strict ideological guidelines into practice by the mid-1970s, the "July theses" marked an attempted return to ideological conformity that both signaled and facilitated the maturation of a discursive regime premised on the integration of national and Marxist-Leninist symbols. They also inaugurated the party leadership's increased reliance on symbolic-ideological modes of

---

<sup>342</sup> Tudor Opreș, the leader of a major high school literary circle in Bucharest during and after the collapse of communism, sees the proliferation of "cenacluri literare" and "reviste scolare" in the late 1960s as an effect of ideological relaxation and the "death of ideological dogmatism." *Istoria debutului literar al scriitorilor romani in timpul scolii (1820-2000)*, (Bucharest: Aramis, 2002), 161, 177-8.

<sup>343</sup> This expectation that children should have access to the complete works of the classics continued to be voiced by prominent cultural personalities in the pages of pioneer magazines into the late 1980s. See, for example, Serban Cioculescu, "Copiii și cartea," *Cutezătorii*, no 1, 1986.

<sup>344</sup> On the meaning and evolution of "kulturnost" as the complex of everyday practices fostered by the Stalinist regime's civilizing policies in the mid and late 1930s, see Vadim Volkov, "The Concept of 'Kul'turnost': Notes on the Stalinist Civilizing Process," In *Stalinism: New Directions*, Sheila Fitzpatrick (ed.) (London, New York: Routledge, 2000), 210-30.

<sup>345</sup> Nicolae Ceaușescu, *Propuneri de măsuri pentru îmbunătățirea activității politico-ideologice, de educare marxist-leninistă a membrilor de partid, a tuturor oamenilor muncii - 6 iulie 1971* (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1971).

control deployed at the expense of remunerative strategies, and, throughout the 1980s, in combination with coercive modes of domination.<sup>346</sup> The Ideological Commission of the Central Committee established in 1967, the Council for Socialist Education and Culture (CCES) founded in 1971, and restructured in 1977 to take over some of the attributes of former institutions of censorship,<sup>347</sup> as well as the nationwide festival, *Cântarea României*, were among the most consequential institutions meant to monitor and streamline cultural production. The CCES and Ideological Commission, for example, supervised the revision of school textbooks and elaborated “thematic plans” to ensure that publications for children prioritized “works with patriotic, humanistic, democratic, and militant message” from the “treasure trove of domestic literature.”<sup>348</sup> Similarly, literary circles in schools and pioneer palaces or popular literary contests with nationwide participation such as *Tinere condeie* (Young masters of the pen) launched in the late 1960s and early 1970s were increasingly organized as competitions under the umbrella of the *Cântarea României* festival after 1977. Reflecting the injunction that all cultural production was to have a socio-political role and patriotic-revolutionary message, discursive expressions of socialist patriotism for and by children did not only begin to dominate school textbooks, the pioneer press, or anthologies of young writers by the late 1970s, but they also crystallized into “strings of common places” characterized by “verbal grandiloquence,” being indicative of a degree of standardization that permitted little experimentation or deviation.

The ideological hardening of the authoritative discourse reflected in the discursive socialization of children and youth, in the attempts to guide and control their reading and writing

---

<sup>346</sup> Verdery, “Weak States and the Mode of Control,” *National Ideology*, 83-7.

<sup>347</sup> Consiliul Culturii și Educației Socialiste took over the attributes of the official institution of censorship, Comitetul pentru Presa și Tipărituri [the Press and Publications Committee] disbanded in 1977.

<sup>348</sup> ANIC, Fond C.C. al P.C.R. – Cancelarie, file 15/1975, “Cartea pentru copii și tineret” and “Valorificarea mostenirii culturale,” in *Nota cu privire la îndeplinirea planului editorial pe anul 1974 și asupra proiectului de plan editorial pe anul 1975*, 11-12. The editorial plan was elaborated by the CCES and debated in the Ideological Commission of the Central Committee of the RCP.

practices.<sup>349</sup> Not only were school textbooks revised to increase the percentage of readings on the historical past of the nation throughout the 1970s and 1980s, but primary and middle schoolers were routinely required to draw on “patriotic” and “militant” literature to profess their devotion to the socialist nation in compositions on a wide range of topics – whether love of the motherland, past national heroes or feats of glory, contemporary socialist achievements, or pioneer ethics - from the increasingly predictable repertoire of socialist patriotic themes. Although child letters, poems, or compositions had been showcased in socialist media as expressions of gratitude for the socialist regime since the late 1940s, the phenomenon grew significantly in scale in late socialism, when patriotic creations were regularly solicited for national contests and heavily featured in children’s magazines or anthologies of aspiring writers.<sup>350</sup> By the late 1970s, the intensification of the nationalist discourse and cult of personality colluded with the ambition to turn artistic expression into a mass phenomenon and the emphatic invocation of youth in the official rhetoric of Ceaușescu’s pronatalist regime to facilitate the emergence of a veritable cult of the child-poet or child-writer assumed to embody “the creative genius” of the Romanian people.

The widely promoted postwar theses of Soviet inspiration on the educational role of art in general and of Socialist Realist literature in particular also made reading essential to the

---

<sup>349</sup> To denote the fact that the official rhetoric of Ceausescu’s regime developed into a calcified structure or “special script” that cohered around “a single meaning” or dogma of the socialist nation, I will refer to it as an “authoritative discourse” in the Bakhtinian sense of the concept. Like other authoritative discourses – whether religious dogma, scientific truth, moral authority, etc. – it did not have to be internally persuasive to act as a hegemonic representation, exhibiting a semantic structure that appeared static, unified, fully complete and thus not open to change or interpretation. Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogical Imagination: Four Essays by Mikhail Bakhtin*, ed. Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994), 342-6.

<sup>350</sup> Throughout the 1940s and 1950s, these took the form of letters to Stalin or accounts of pioneer activity. Under Ceausescu, child literature was published in school or literary circle journals, pioneer palace collections, county magazines, and numerous national anthologies.

“revolutionary and patriotic” education of small socialist citizens under socialism.<sup>351</sup> Although Socialist Realism was repudiated during the ideological thaw of the late 1960s as an expression of “vulgar sociology” or “dogmatism” in the larger literary world, mainstream methodological guidelines for teachers continued to reinforce the injunction that literature should serve the social and political education of the masses in the wake of the July theses.<sup>352</sup> Progressive literature, pedagogical treatises argued, would generate revolutionary patterns of cognition and action, ways of seeing, interpreting, and acting in the world.<sup>353</sup> Both the positive heroes that children were encouraged to emulate and the canonical resolution of narrative plots, which communicated strategies of interpretation of life situations, were instrumental in achieving this goal.<sup>354</sup> In keeping with this view, the socialist state expended significant efforts to circulate progressive and patriotic literature for children and popularize ideologically appropriate ways of reading.

In the immediate postwar years, the regime took measures to “cleanse school libraries of reactionary, chauvinistic, and mystical literature,”<sup>355</sup> published Soviet classics of children’s literature, encouraged Romanian authors to write revolutionary literature for youth, and launched pioneer magazines geared towards children’s ethical and political education.<sup>356</sup> Under

---

<sup>351</sup> Throughout the 1950s, literary gazettes and methodological studies affirmed the political and revolutionary role of party-minded (*partinică*) literature that found inspiration in the social reality of class struggle, featured the new socialist world and positive characters likely to inspire emulation, and conveyed an optimistic message accessible to the masses. See, for example, “Rolul educativ al literaturii,” *Gazeta literară*, no. 14, April 7, 1955, 1 and Ministerul Invățământului Public, *Limba română: manual unic pentru clasa a VIII-a medie (notiuni de teoria literarii)*, (Editura de stat, 1949), 11, 40-1.

<sup>352</sup> On the role of the national conference of the Writers’ Union in 1965 in these critiques, see Monica Lovinescu, *Unde scurte*, vol I (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1990), 144.

<sup>353</sup> See, Ion Berca, “Importanța lecturii în instruirea și educarea comunistă a elevilor,” *Metodica predării limbii române* (Bucharest: EDP, 1971), 261-275. Eugen Blideanu, “Lecțiile de citire în viziunea problematicii educației morale,” *Orientari noi în metodologia studierii limbii române la ciclul primar* (Bucharest: EDP, 1981), 201-215.

<sup>354</sup> On the positive hero in general and its dramatization in the “new” children’s literature by Soviet and Romanian authors, see Ilie Stanciu, “Unele probleme ale literaturii pentru copii,” In *Revista de pedagogie*, vol. 1, January - March, 1954, 22.

<sup>355</sup> Egon Weigl, “Literatura pentru copii,” In *Gazeta învățământului*, April, 1949.

<sup>356</sup> By 1954, libraries and publishing houses for children and youth offered Soviet classics such as Fadeev’s *The Young Guard*, Arkadii Gaidar’s *Timur and His Team*, *Distant Countries* (1932), *School* (1930), Lev Kassil’s *The Street of the Younger Son* (1949), Valentina Oseeva’s *Vasek Trubachev and His Comrades*, and works by domestic

Ceaușescu, the agenda of patriotic education became inextricably tied to “the revaluation of the past cultural legacy”, i.e. the rehabilitation of an increasingly wide range of previously banned domestic authors and works of literature, and the immersion of youth in “the militant and patriotic literature of the predecessors.”<sup>357</sup> The focus on “disciplined” rather than leisure or pleasure-reading also survived into late socialism, when teachers and librarians were encouraged to work as “cultural activists,” monitoring their students’ reading habits and orienting their preferences towards the literature of socialist ethics and patriotic valences.<sup>358</sup> Children’s magazines similarly featured classic and contemporary works of literature considered desirable for young audiences, interviews or round table discussions with popular authors of children’s literature, and regular advice columns or surveys (*anchetă*) - “When, What, and How Do We Read?” - that set the parameters of appropriate reading texts and habits.

Drawing on scholarship that investigates the centrality of language and ideology in the projected creation of “new socialist persons” in socialist regimes of Soviet inspiration, this chapter explores the impact that the crystallization of the authoritative discourse of socialist patriotism under Ceaușescu had on children’s discursive socialization, on their reading and writing practices.<sup>359</sup> It claims that children and teens were familiarized with the authoritative discourse from an early age, learning to “speak Bolshevik” by consuming and (re)producing discursive genres of socialist patriotism - whether patriotic poetry, Socialist Realist prose,

---

writers for children like Nina Cassian or Gica Iutes. See V. Andrei, “Pentru micii cititori,” *Gazeta învățământului*, December 12, 1953 and Stanciu, “Unele probleme,” 22-23.

<sup>357</sup> ANIC, Fond C.C. al P.C.R. – Cancelarie, file 15/1975, *Nota cu privire la indeplinirea planului editorial*.

<sup>358</sup> Teachers were expected to provide children with recommended lists of mandatory “supplementary readings” (*lecturi suplimentare*) for vacations and free time. Besides the recommended books, school curricula also included indications regarding the number of hours students were expected to devote to after-school reading every week, while teaching methodologies instructed teachers on strategies to guide and monitor leisure readings. See Cecilia Caroni, “Lectura în afara clasei în școala generală,” *Metodica predării limbii și literaturii române* (Bucharest: EDP, 1967), 114, 117. Guiding and monitoring students’ readings was the single most discussed topic in pedagogical journals such as *Educatia pionierească* and *Revista de pedagogie*.

<sup>359</sup> Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Gail Kligman and Katherine Verdery, *Peasants Under Siege: The Collectivization of Romanian Agriculture, 1949-1962*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011).

morality tales with pioneers, or the vaguely defined “patriotic” and “militant” literature of the predecessors - in a diversity of sites that ranged from public arenas such as schools, pioneer palaces, or children’s magazines, to private realms such as the reading room or the personal diary. Inspired by historical studies that revisited the traditional approach to Soviet ideology as “a given, fixed, and monologic textual corpus,” attending instead to the actualization and negotiation of official ideology in everyday discursive practices by ordinary people,<sup>360</sup> this chapter examines a number of sites central to the discursive socialization of Romanian children in primary and middle schools: writing assignments for literature classes, literary contests hosted by pioneer magazines, literary circles, and national creativity camps. It focuses on the elite of industrious and talented children and adolescents who excelled at discursive practices of socialist patriotism, receiving public recognition, good grades, and awards in order to examine how young people were trained in the production of standardized expressions of socialist patriotism through the practice of “citationality” in a range of first-person compositions.

The final section draws on interviews and published memoirs to explore the meanings and significance that such practices acquired for socialist youth, arguing that their “ideological literacy,” i.e. the technical skill of reproducing authoritative discourse, should not be unproblematically read as a sign of successful ideological indoctrination or political regimentation.<sup>361</sup> The analysis is inspired by anthropological scholarship on the paradoxical “hypernormalization” of form and resulting “indeterminacy” of meaning characteristic of the discursive regimes of late socialism. It draws on Alexei Yurchak’s analysis of the Soviet context and his observation that Stalin’s death triggered the disappearance of an external canon of

---

<sup>360</sup> Jochen Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind. Writing a Diary Under Stalin* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006), 12. Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*; Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Tear off the Masks. Identity and Imposture in Twentieth Century Russia*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

<sup>361</sup> I borrow the term “ideological literacy” from Alexei Yurchak’s study “Hegemony of Form,” In *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 48.



Marxist-Leninist dogma against which authoritative discourse was previously measured for ideological accuracy and precision.<sup>362</sup> By comparison, ideological consistency in the post-Stalinist period was no longer measured against an external canon, knowledge of which was possessed by a master-like figure, but by the faithful reproduction of ritual, textual, visual, or aural ideological forms. Yurchak shares with other scholars of late socialism an interest in how the process of standardization of ideological language was enabled by the centralized and hierarchical system of ideological reproduction in state socialist regimes. In her study of the politics of reproduction, Gail Kligman noted, for example, the “highly fetishized,” “formulaic,” or “redundant” character of propaganda, which was “reproduced homologously throughout the system at all institutional levels” under Ceaușescu in part because all state institutions had propaganda sections that organized ideological dissemination through forums, pamphlets, campaigns, or mass-media.<sup>363</sup>

The main consequence of the crystallization of authoritative discourse was that faithful performances of ideological form became more important than either the correct interpretation or internalization of ideological message.<sup>364</sup> The final section of this chapter explores how the privileging of the performative over the constative dimension of authoritative discourse destabilized ideological meaning, which came to depend on the diverse contexts and actors of its actualization. In part because the cultural possibilities - the broadening of reading choices and literary culture, the traditional interest in “culturedness,” the recognition of literary creativity in circles and contests, etc. - opened to socialist youth and their adult mentors during the period of ideological relaxation could not be completely curbed, I argue that young people’s faithful

---

<sup>362</sup> Ibid., 36-76.

<sup>363</sup> Gail Kligman, *The Politics of Duplicity: Controlling Reproduction in Ceausescu's Romania* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 116, 118.

<sup>364</sup> Yurchak, 18-26, 74-6.

replication of authoritative discourse should be examined in the broader contexts of their pursuit of academic excellence, cultured life, and genuine interests in literary culture and creativity in diverse schools and after school institutions.

### **On Historical Actors: Socialist Nerds**

Despite the concerted efforts of the regime, not all children schooled in the 1970s and 1980s became proficient in the authoritative discourse of socialist patriotism. Most of my sources - interviews, published memoirs, five school notebooks preserved in private archives, published patriotic compositions, and the private diary of an early teen - come from the self-selected elite of (mostly urban) children and teens who came to excel in discursive practices, acing their school assignments, being selected to participate in literary competitions at the county or national level known under the name of Olympiads, submitting poems for publication in children's magazines, attending literary circles or national creativity camps, or simply engaging in poetic experiments or reading in the privacy of their reading room. Although they approximated the regime's vision of the child-writer as instantiations of "the creative genius" of the Romanian people, youth in this category were not so much distinguished by their deeply felt patriotism as by their diligence, ambition to do well in school, and passionate engagement with literature, belonging to a category that I will tentatively describe here as socialist nerds. Judging by my interviews as well as recently published childhood memoirs by emerging public intellectuals, which are discussed at length in the final chapter of this thesis, many socialist childhoods were lived in the isolation of the reading room driven by an absorbing fascination with fictional universes, creative writing, or the ambition to perfect writing techniques.

Socialist nerds are at the center of this chapter because they responded to the regime's increasing demands – in schools, after school institutions, or children's publications - for patriotic productions and can thus reflect retrospectively on the discursive principles and adult expectations that informed the acts of reading and writing in late socialism. Loosely defined as industrious children and teens who pursued an absorbing passion for literature in both public and private venues, socialist nerds were, to a great extent, an effect of the socialist regime's rhetorical emphasis on the centrality of youth in socialist society and its agenda of democratization. Demographic studies commissioned by the party leadership in the mid-1960s in preparation for its pronatalist legislation indicate that the democratization of education, in concert with the regime's overall agenda of modernization - industrialization, urbanization, and absorption of women into the workforce - enabled many young people to move to cities for high school or college education, vocational training, and white collar or factory jobs in the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>365</sup> Entertaining hopes of higher living standards, these young people embraced the ideal of the modern family with fewer children.<sup>366</sup> Published memoirs of socialist childhood and interviews suggest that this ideal led many middle-class and increasing numbers of working class and peasant families to also embrace an ethos of "children first" or "everything for the children."

This ethos took diverse forms, but it focused, particularly in middle class or intellectual families, on access to good education. The role of education as a vehicle of upward social mobility has a long national tradition with roots in the precommunist period, when the emergence of the nation-state and the subsequent expansion of education encouraged villagers to pursue higher education in order to join the state bureaucracy, secure regular employment, and

---

<sup>365</sup> ANIC, Fond C.C. al P.C.R. – Cancelarie, file 101/1966, "Factorii care contribuie la scăderea natalității," in *Studiu privind situația natalității în RSR*, 9-17.

<sup>366</sup> Ibid. See also Kligman, *The Politics of Duplicity*. The author notes that the ideal of the modern family translated into the cultural norm of families with two children.

become “gentlemen.”<sup>367</sup> The civilizing mission of the socialist regime, reflected in policies to expand “free and mandatory” schooling and increase access to higher education, made the ideal of social mobility through education accessible to progressively larger sectors of the population. To the extent that it foreclosed any alternative venues, pace the state and party bureaucracy, for social advance, the socialist regime also made the prewar tradition of investment in children’s education a necessity. Reflecting on how the dynamics of modernization set in motion by the socialist regime played out in his modest family in Botoșani in the 1970s and 1980s, Romanian writer and sociologist Dan Lungu singled out the focus on children’s education:

Many of our parents’ generation came from villages, having already experienced upward mobility, and wanted their children to enjoy a higher social status. Since the most certain, if not the only, means was a school diploma, parents were extremely invested in their children’s education. This was a rather widespread ideology in the period, especially among families of modest means.<sup>368</sup>

If the socialist state sought to instrumentalize education to create a well-trained labor force and a politically loyal citizenry, while parents (and teachers) envisioned it as a vehicle of social advance and cultured life, they nevertheless shared the ideal of industrious youth who embraced study with passion and dedication. Print and broadcast media, for example, actively promoted the image of diligent and broadly cultivated students or featured science, literary, and artistic prodigies as successfully integrated, sociable, and thus desirable models for children to emulate. In the 1970s and 1980s, various magazines for children, youth, and teachers also encouraged public discussions on the topic of the “tocilar” (dork), a slang term used pejoratively to tease studious children.<sup>369</sup> Derived from the verb “a toci,” the term means “to learn

---

<sup>367</sup> Kligman and Verdery, *Peasants Under Siege*, 302-3. So entrenched was this practice that threats to expel children from school were successfully employed by party cadres to “persuade” villagers to join collective farms during the collectivization campaign.

<sup>368</sup> Carmen Constantin, “Interviu cu Dan Lungu,” *Adevărul*, March 2012.

<sup>369</sup> Iorgu Iordan, “A fi sau a nu fi tocilar” [To Be or Not to Be a Nerd], *Gazeta învățământului*, March 20, 1970. The prominent linguist and philologist Iorgu Iordan defined the term “tocilar” and traced the history of the notion to the

mechanically or by heart” with the implication that one learns purely to score high grades. The pioneer magazine *Cutezătorii*, which was distributed weekly in schools, published roundtable conversations with middle school students in an attempt to disambiguate the term, discouraging mechanical learning, but also reinforcing the model of the dedicated and hardworking pupil unfairly teased as “tocilar.” While many child participants, including a number of self-declared jocks (*sportivi*), in the surveys predictably spoke against “tocilari,” quite a few pupils emphasized the positive traits - diligence, perseverance, self-discipline, and strong will - that made “tocilari” preferable to lazy, disinterested, or time wasting students.<sup>370</sup> In the official socialist view, thus, nerdiness or “the capacity to spend long hours at your desk or in the library while others wasted their time at the cinema or roaming the streets,” was held in high esteem.<sup>371</sup>

The absorbing passion for science, literature, or the arts could render the socialist nerd a loner who appeared boringly studious in the eyes of his or her peers, being teased as a “tocilar” or marginalized in the informal world of youth subcultures, which developed around interests in sports, music, or access to foreign products in middle and high school. The recluse socialist teen, however, was rarely subject to the extreme bullying or social ostracism which have been the markers of the nerd in American culture and media. Not only was cultured behavior and academic excellence a widely respected value among children, parents, and teachers, but a number of socialist institutions – ranging from formal hierarchies of pioneer leadership to official contests in diverse disciplines, after school circles, or print and broadcast media – publicly rewarded studious children with praise, recognition, prizes, and good grades. Children

---

term “bucher” of the interwar period, appealing to teachers to promote active learning rather than the mechanic reproduction that encouraged students to become “tocilari.”

<sup>370</sup> Ileana Pita, “Ancheta noastră despre tocilari,” In *Cutezătorii*, October 2, 1969.

<sup>371</sup> Ibid.

and teens who developed early interests in literature, the sciences, or the arts would thus often find themselves supported in their endeavor by parents, teachers, and socialist rhetoric.

### **The Genres and Generative Principles of Discursive Productions of Socialist Patriotism**

Marked by the uneasy coexistence of symbols of the nation and the master signifiers of the Marxist-Leninist discourse, the authoritative discourse of socialist patriotism took a diversity of forms under Ceaușescu, ranging from political speeches that aimed to integrate party and national history, standardized articles on socialist achievements and national sovereignty in the official press, to the pervasive patriotic poetry that eulogized the socialist nation and its leader.<sup>372</sup> Late socialist youth grew up in a climate saturated by national and socialist symbols, but children of pioneer age were more likely to encounter authoritative discourse in their school textbooks and pioneer magazines than in political speeches or the socialist press. The majority of children only experienced consistent training in discursive practices of socialist patriotism in literature classes in school, but more ambitious and talented pupils also wrote in response to literary contests hosted by pioneer magazines or attended literary circles and camps whose most promising members were featured in anthologies of young writers.

This section draws on recently published memoirs of socialist childhood by emerging intellectuals, interviews on reading and writing practices with sixteen former students who attended primary and middle school in urban areas during the last two decades of Romanian communism, and a set of patriotic compositions, both published and preserved in personal archives. It examines some of the most common discursive genres that children were encouraged to pen in late socialism - compositions on love of country, historical events, and heroes, morality

---

<sup>372</sup> On the generative principles of patriotic poetry, including specific phraseology, stylistic devices, and genres, see Eugen Negrici, "Mitul patriei primejduite," *Miturile comunismului românesc*, ed. Lucian Boia (Nemira, 1988), 220-6.

tales with pioneers, and future-oriented scenarios of socialist transformation - in order to uncover the generative principles informing discursive productions of socialist patriotism by children: “dialogicality,” “citationality,” and the autobiographical voice.

### ***Dialogicality***

Memoirists of late socialism often identify the highly patterned articulation of school compositions, which relied on the gradual familiarization with a set of “generative principles of production,” as a memorable experience of socialist childhood. Reflecting self-ironically on the practice of penning patriotic compositions, writer Angelo Mitchievici remembers himself as “a mercenary of [writing] fervor” who made efforts to perfect his writing technique in middle school by appropriating “hyperbolic” and “readily available metaphorical language.”<sup>373</sup> Successful discursive productions of socialist patriotism that were rewarded with good grades, Mitchievici suggests, did not so much require genuine patriotic emotions as technical skills:

We all wrote the same composition as if we were transcribing an episode from the lives of the saints, which admit no variation. (...) I wrote heart-breaking pages. The enumeration, personification, epithet, metaphor, and hyperbole - this royal quintet of middle school stylistics - served all my needs. The sense of abundance, for example, was expressed by enumeration. The fire burnt in the hearts of peasants, workers, and heroes in sufficient quantities to fuel the incendiary lyricism of the metaphor. Towards the end of my composition, I took myself so seriously that I almost choked with emotion and wiped my tears on the sleeves of my coat. These rhetorical summersaults had squeezed the life out of me and I lay exhausted by the written page like a swimmer who had barely made it to the shore. I would invariably receive a good grade; to any silliness, its just reward.<sup>374</sup>

Children’s discursive productions of socialist patriotism were as highly patterned as episodes in the lives of saints because they functioned as “dialogical” or “double-voiced” discourses in the Bakhtinian sense of the concept. They did not only refer to the actual historical events, heroes, or the patriotic feelings of the child writer, but also to another speech, relying on

---

<sup>373</sup> Angelo Mitchievici, *O lume dispărută: patru istorii personale*, (Bucharest: Polirom, 2004), 191-5.

<sup>374</sup> Ibid.

and being oriented towards the highly standardized ideological discourse of the socialist nation.<sup>375</sup> At a time when public discourse was saturated with talk of the socialist nation and “the valorization of the cultural legacy” was high on the regime’s agenda, children were trained in the practice of appropriating “ideologically saturated” language that was “overpopulated with the intentions of others” to express their devotion to the socialist nation.<sup>376</sup>

A look at the periodically revised textbooks of Romanian literature and pioneer magazines can illustrate the diverse sources of “ideologically saturated” language that children were encouraged to appropriate and use in their patriotic compositions. In the late 1960s, for example, textbooks of Romanian literature were revised to exclude Soviet authors and topics and increase the category of “readings inspired from the historical past of our people’s struggles,” thus enlarging the range of pre-socialist discursive traditions of the nation deemed acceptable.<sup>377</sup>

Like history, Romanian literature was charged by party ideologues overseeing the educational process with the task of familiarizing children with major aspects of the nation’s heroic past and, implicitly, with the overarching narratives of communist historiography: the myth(s) of ethnogenesis, the millennial continuity of the Romanian people, the dream of national unity and its historical fulfillment, the underlying class conflict that informed national history, and the teleological drive of the nation from ancient times to its full flourishing under socialism.<sup>378</sup>

Before children were initiated in the scientific, i.e. “systematic, chronologic, and unitary,” study

---

<sup>375</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, Ed. Caryl Emerson, (Minneapolis, 1984), 185.

<sup>376</sup> Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, 293-4.

<sup>377</sup> The textbooks entered in use in the late 1940 included reading materials on Soviet leaders (Lenin, Stalin) and realities (“The Bright Moscow”) as well as texts by Russian and Soviet writers and pedagogues: Lev Tolstoy, Chekov, Mayakovski, Sergey Mikhalkov, Arkady Gaidar, or Nadezhda Krupskaya. ANIC, Fond C.C. al P.C.R. – Propagandă, file 19/1983, “Limba română: principalele modificari aduse manualelor,” 9-11.

<sup>378</sup> Textbooks were first approved by the disciplinary commissions (comisii de specialitate) of the Ministry of Education and then submitted for “analysis and approval” to the Ideological commission of the Central Committee. See, for example, ANIC, Fond C.C. al P.C.R. – Propagandă, file 44/1988, 6.



of Romanian history in the fourth grade,<sup>379</sup> it was literary texts that gave them their first history lessons and language of patriotic devotion: essays on the myth of ethnogenesis that attributed the “birth of the Romanian nation” to the union of the ancient Dacians and Romans, nineteenth century historical legends and ballads singing the praises of famous haidouks or medieval voievods, poems about the exploited and rebellious peasantry of the past, reportage style or lyrical descriptions of national landscape in prose or verse (the so-called *lirica peisagistă*), and short stories on feats of glory against foreign invaders, be these the ancient Romans, the Ottomans of the medieval period, or the fascists of the Second World War.

The patriotic literature in primary and middle school textbooks was predominantly written by the nineteenth century bards of national liberation and social justice, many of whom had already passed the test of ideological conformity in the earlier manuals of the postwar period. In the late 1960s, however, the ranks of ideologically acceptable authors expanded to interwar writers such as Tudor Arghezi, Lucian Blaga, Octavian Goga, Nicolae Iorga, or Vasile Voiculescu, who had been previously banned, demoted, fired, or imprisoned for decadent, reactionary, mystical literature or involvement in interwar politics.<sup>380</sup> The interwar authors’ entry into school textbooks coincided with that of the 1960s generation of writers (*șazeciști*) – poets such as Nichita Stănescu, Marin Sorescu, Ana Blandiana, Ioan Alexandru, and Adrian Păunescu or prose writers like Marin Preda – who epitomized, especially in poetry, the transition from the dogmatic imposition of Socialist Realism in postwar years to “the resurrection of lyricism” and “the free affirmation of subjectivity.”<sup>381</sup>

---

<sup>379</sup> ANIC, Fond C.C. al P.C.R. – Propagandă, file 30/1983, “Predarea cunostintelor de istorie la învățământul primar,” 46.

<sup>380</sup> Ion Simut, “Canonul literar proletcultist, In *Romania literară*, July 2008. See also Vladimir Tismăneanu, *Stalinism for all Seasons: A Political History of Romanian Communism*. (Berkeley, 2003), 183.

<sup>381</sup> Alex Ștefănescu, “Primăvara de la București,” *Istoria literaturii române contemporane, 1941-2000* (Bucharest, Mașina de scris, 2005), 362-3.

The “new,” i.e. postwar, literature, which ranged from odes to the party and its leaders, to texts on contemporary socialist society, and to pioneer fables on communist ethics remained an essential ingredient in the socialist upbringing of small citizens in late socialism, constituting another discursive tradition of the socialist nation available to children.<sup>382</sup> The lessons on contemporary socialist realities included either non-literary texts composed in the language of the socialist press<sup>383</sup> or Socialist Realist literature from contemporary writers like Fănuș Neagu, Zaharia Stancu, Cezar Petrescu, or Geo Bogza. Textbooks also featured morality tales for pioneers that illustrated various ethical dimensions of socialist patriotism: diligence in study, love and respect of manual work, enthusiastic participation in patriotic and civic work, life in the collective, friendship and camaraderie, honesty and loyalty, pioneer rituals and their significance, and more rarely aspects of civic ecology, ethnic or racial tolerance, global peace, and a spirit of internationalism. On the whole, however, textbooks privileged canonized authors, leaving the job of popularizing pioneer literature to children’s magazines.

Much effort was expended by textbook authors to harmonize prewar national idioms with the Marxist-Leninist discourse to ensure that presocialist literature was not charged with incompatible ideological intentions. What was at stake was the integration of ideologically heterogeneous discursive traditions of the nation that ranged from the militant and Romantic nineteenth century literature of national emancipation, to the “peasantist,” idyllic, mystical, or modernist strands of interwar literature previously discredited as reactionary or decadent, to the socialist realist prose of the postwar years, party poetry, and morality tales for pioneers.

---

<sup>382</sup> ANIC, Fond C.C. al P.C.R. – Propagandă, file 5/1984, Ion Teoreanu, “Nota privind îmbunătățirile aduse programelor de limba română pentru clasele I-IV,” 122; file 19/1983, “Limba română: principalele modificări aduse manualelor,” 9-11.

<sup>383</sup> Some examples from primary school textbooks include the anonymous “At the Bread Factory,” “At the Printing House,” “The Construction Site,” “The Story of the *Fatherland Falcon’s* Magazine,” or “Bucharest, the Heart of the Country.”

According to guidelines jointly elaborated by the Ideological Commission of the Central Committee and the CCES in the wake of the July theses in the mid-1970s, “the synthesis of patriotic and revolutionary thinking of the predecessors” featured in didactic publications had to be carefully framed for consumption by “the critical interpretation of the texts in the spirit of Marxist-Leninist principles,” a process that also entailed “the appraisal of the ideological vision of the [revalued] writers.”<sup>384</sup> Reclaimed for its patriotic valences in late socialist textbooks, prewar literature was typically cleansed of ideological improprieties, interpreted in a Marxist key that privileged the principle of class struggle, or thematically harmonized with socialist emphases on the working class, cult of work, construction, solidarity, and popular enthusiasm.<sup>385</sup>

Thus reframed, classic and contemporary socialist literature in school textbooks and pioneer magazines did not only provide knowledge of major historical events and personalities or examples of patriotic courage, heroism, and sacrifice for children to emulate, but also a language of national belonging, devotion, or celebration, a repertoire of national symbols, and recyclable plots of patriotic sacrifice or socialist transformation. Centered on the study of carefully selected literary works, discursive exercises were specifically designed for children to practice ideologically correct readings as well as appropriate national idioms, socialist stock phrases, and forms of emplotment. The discursive skills that children acquired gradually through exercises such as copying literary texts by hand, learning poems by heart, retelling a story, or analyzing stylistic devices were mobilized in the production of patriotic compositions.

---

<sup>384</sup> ANIC, Fond C.C. al P.C.R. – Cancelarie, file 15/1975, *Nota cu privire la indeplinirea planului editorial*, 11-12.

<sup>385</sup> Late socialist textbooks resorted to strategies pioneered in the postwar period - the *censorship* of classic works or the *retrospective projection of Marxist-Leninist principles* - to reclaim consecrated national authors and their patriotic literature as socially progressive. Works by classics of the nineteenth century such as poet Mihai Eminescu, short story writer Ion Creanga, and playwright Ioan Luca Caragiale, for example, were reproduced in textbooks in truncated or edited form and (mis)read as progressive works that served the proletarian goals of social justice. A number of interwar writers and politicians with questionable progressive credentials, among whom poet Octavian Goga or historian Nicolae Iorga, underwent a significant makeover in late socialist textbooks, which either omitted or reinterpreted sensitive biographical or ideological aspects of their life and work. For the postwar period, see Ștefanescu, “Falsificarea literaturii clasice,” *Istoria literaturii*, 46-48.

## *Citationality*

The practice of writing school compositions taught children that authoritative discourse – whether the patriotic and militant literature of the predecessors or the new literature of contemporary socialist realities and pioneer morality - could be approached as a source of quotable material - blocks of language, stylistic devices, narrative patterns, and typical characters - which functioned as interchangeable parts of a unified and collectively owned authoritative discourse of the socialist nation. Students were encouraged to write their compositions with another’s discourse, picking and choosing between diverse national idioms, which were both *authorized* by inclusion in textbooks and *authoritative*, i.e. sanctioning individual compositions.

Echoing Bakhtin’s notion of “double-voiced speech,” Alexei Yurchak argues that such practices of “citationality,” whereby the structures of textual, visual, or ritual propaganda were replicated virtually unchanged from one context to the next, became a pervasive phenomenon in the post-Stalinist period.<sup>386</sup> A result of the standardization of ideological form, “ideological literacy” in the post-Stalinist period involved “the technical skill of reproducing the precise passages and structures of [Soviet authoritative discourse]:” the complex nominalizations, the limited repertoire of modifiers arranged in fixed strings, the minimization of authorial agency, and the narrative circularity that enabled ideological discourse to cohere around three master signifiers - Lenin, the Party, and Communism.<sup>387</sup> In part because the authoritative discourse of late Romanian socialism was premised on the integration of diverse and often competing discursive traditions of the nation, this chapter will explore how children were trained in ideological fluency through various forms of citationality, ranging from the reproduction of

---

<sup>386</sup> Yurchak, “Late Socialism: An Eternal State” and “Hegemony of Form: Stalin’s Uncanny Paradigm Shift,” In *Everything Was Forever*, 1-76.

<sup>387</sup> Yurchak, 40-73.

national idioms of either pre or postwar provenance in school compositions, to the replication of narrative patterns and character types from the new literature on communist ethics.

Most children learned citationality in school from teachers who recommended sources of authoritative discourse suitable for diverse school compositions, corrected inappropriate language and phrasing, or marked the glaring absence of patriotic lyrics in compositions. Judging by recollections of writing practices in memoirs and interviews, children whose parents were themselves low level ideological (re)producers, working, for example, as literature teachers or running party meetings at work, could also learn the practice of citationality at home. Parents who were well versed in the authoritative discourse recommended sources of inspiration (literary pieces in school textbooks, volumes of patriotic poetry, historical treatises) and even edited or dictated their children's compositions.<sup>388</sup>

If teachers and parents failed in impressing the importance of citationality on children, school textbooks actively encouraged the practice, training pupils to memorize, anthologize, and reproduce various strands of the authoritative discourse of socialist patriotism in order to elaborate their own compositions throughout the 1970s and 1980s. The seventh grade textbook for children of twelve to thirteen, for example, recommended compositions on the topic "Why We Love Our Motherland and People," including a detailed outline that listed the recognizable themes of socialist patriotism: "the happiness of the first school days," "the richness and originality of popular art," "the creative geniuses of the people," "the new life in socialist

---

<sup>388</sup> Most of my interviewees remember that their parents, three of whom were teachers, would regularly help with their writing assignment and suggest sources of inspiration from school textbooks. Memoirist Gabriel Decuble recalls his initiation into the practice of citationality by his father, who insisted on dictating his patriotic compositions for school and drew on historical studies he often used for his party meetings for appropriate phraseology. Gabriel Decuble, "Parintii au mancat agurida, iar copiilor li s-au strepezit dintii," *Cartea roz a comunismului romanesc*, (Iasi: Versus, 2004), 208-9.

Romania,” and “the love and respect for the Communist Party.”<sup>389</sup> Most importantly, the textbook provided no less than four pages of quotable literary excerpts from works previously studied by students. Despite the distinct historical and ideological inflections of the texts, the motley of quotes from both classic and contemporary, both conservative and progressive authors, were presented to students as interchangeable voices in a unified and monologic national discourse.

Commenting on the process of elaborating patriotic texts in middle school, writer and museographer Cosmin Manolache (b. 1973), who grew up in the small town of Mizil, distinguished between creative school compositions that gave pupils the freedom “to invent or recount real life experiences” and “compositions on politicized themes that gave you a headache.”<sup>390</sup> Like most diligent and ambitious students, Cosmin resorted to the generative principle of citationality to tackle the production of “politicized” compositions:

I basically turned into a DJ because I would take a pile of books, mostly but not only poetry, that addressed the respective theme and cut out passages from prefaces, combining them. The result was a sauce of sorts. I intuited the teacher’s disinterest in this theme, but this was precisely what motivated me to show off, playing at stitching these diverse texts into a bricolage.<sup>391</sup>

Employing the musical metaphor of a DJ, Cosmin envisioned citationality as an act of improvisation rather than mere reproduction. Ultimately, patriotic compositions represented a challenge to prove his writing talent by approaching authoritative discourse creatively. Cosmin learned that excelling at discursive performances of socialist patriotism did not involve primarily the imaginative power of invention or the authenticity of speaking from experience, but the skill of bricolage, of cutting out blocks of authoritative discourse and integrating diverse discursive

---

<sup>389</sup> “Comunere: Pentru ce ne iubim patria si poporul,” *Limba romana, lecturi literare*, (Bucharest: EDP, 1977), 29-33.

<sup>390</sup> Author interview (June 2013).

<sup>391</sup> *Ibid.*

traditions. What he hoped his teacher would appreciate was not his original expression of deeply felt patriotism, but his creative work of stitching national idioms together.

A look at the composition Cosmin wrote in response to the writing assignment in the seventh grade textbook, “Love of Country,” indicates that he followed the suggested outline, language, and anthologized quotes, opening with assertions of patriotism as “a noble feeling that defines the relationship between an individual and his motherland” (text I).<sup>392</sup> The twelve year old integrated both unacknowledged excerpts from nineteenth century historian and politician Mihail Kogalniceanu on the universal character of patriotism as a sense of kinship and acknowledged quotes from the prolific writer Mihail Sadoveanu - “You do not serve your country with love declaration, but with honest hard work and sacrifice, if need be.” Similarly, lyrics from the nineteenth century militant poetry of Dimitrie Bolintineanu were referenced for an elevating conclusion since they conveniently echoed the late socialist language and future-oriented vision of Romania’s “rise to peaks of glory” in “a golden future.” The main body of Cosmin’s composition moved between the suggested textbook topics, developing descriptions of natural national beauty and socialist achievements epitomized by man-made canals and hydroelectric plants in the stock phrases and superlative language of contemporary progress popularized by school textbooks as well as the pioneer and socialist press:

The Bicz Canyon, the Danube-Black Sea Canal, the hydroelectric plants at the Iron Gates I and II as well as the many thermal power stations on the country’s rivers are only *the Romanian people’s aspiration to work and build*. Romania has *developed so much* that *today’s Romania* is much different from the picturesque one of Vlahuta.

Otilia (b. 1977), who grew up in Constanta on the Black Sea coast, also penned school compositions, rehearsing similar themes of socialist patriotism - natural beauties and riches, hard working people, national heroes, etc. – in primary and middle school. Her fourth grade notebook

---

<sup>392</sup> All the “texts” referenced in this chapter are included in the Appendix.

from 1987, for example, includes a composition entitled “How Beautiful and Rich You Are, My Country!” that is highly polished by comparison to some of her other writing assignments, employing excessively elaborate and lyrical language as well as stylistic devices (text II). Judging by Otilia’s recollections of how she usually tackled school compositions, the fourth grader drew inspiration from her school readings and benefitted from substantial help from her mother, who was a teacher of Romanian and often lent a hand in writing assignments. Before transcribing the most polished version in her homework notebook, Otilia typically worked on several [unavailable] drafts. Written in the first-person and structured around a set of rhetorical invitations to visit Romania: “My country is the most beautiful! You ask why? Come with me to cross the enchanting Carpathians,” the final draft of the composition relied on the principle of citationality, integrating a diverse number of patriotic discourses that ranged from classical to “new” literature, to texts of contemporary popular culture, and the official language of socialist media. The student’s opening paragraph alluded to the *șaițecist* poet Ana Blandiana’s lyrical description in prose of the Făgăraș Mountains - “the Făgăraș Mountains are the Romanian lands closest to the skies”<sup>393</sup> - and quoted, without naming the author, the famous lines by nineteenth century poet George Coșbuc that represent the Ceahlău Mountains as “a giant with a sunny forehead” standing guard to the country.

Like Cosmin, Otilia made use of recurrent block phrases on contemporary socialist achievements such as “the necklace of hydroelectric plants adorning the rivers” (*salba de hidrocentrale*) or “fertile crops” (*holde mănoase*) that were pervasive in textbooks and socialist media. Indicating an increasing awareness of the canonized repertoire of modifiers with which the authoritative discourse operated, she occasionally corrected her language at the suggestion of

---

<sup>393</sup> Otilia would have studied the text in the third grade: Ana Blandiana, Făgărașul, In *Manual de citire*, clasa a III-a, 1987, 146.



her teacher and mother, replacing, for example, the adjective “rich” (*bogate*) with “fertile” (*mănoase*) in her description of the crops (*holde*). The growing familiarity with the stock phrases of socialist rhetoric is also visible in Otilia’s process of writing other patriotic compositions on contemporary realities. After completing a text with the title “My City,” for example, the fourth grader edited it, adding the phrase “in the Golden Age,” typically used in the 1980s to denote Ceaușescu’s rule, both to the title and various paragraphs in the composition (text III).

Otilia’s composition on love of country also illustrates a somewhat atypical strategy of citationality. The fourth grader quoted - without indicating the source - lyrics from a famous song launched and performed during the *Flame Festival* [Festivalul Flacăra], the widely attended mass-meetings and concerts organized by the “court poet” Adrian Păunescu from 1973 until 1985: “In my beloved country, ‘men bear the names of leaves and look like laboring deities. They often marry flowers, whom they call women.’” Although not a national idiom learned in school, this folk-style patriotic romance was characteristic of the popular youth culture developed around the festival in the 1970s and 1980s, being accessible to Otilia through her older cousin, who frequented the festival and often played these popular tunes on guitar. It is unclear if her schoolteacher would have sanctioned the use of these lyrics. What matters is that Otilia approached the practice of citationality creatively, in the DJ-like fashion invoked by Cosmin, resorting even to unorthodox sources such as popular lyrics, which resonated with the authoritative discourse of socialist patriotism that she studied and practiced in school.

In the following years, when she increasingly engaged in attempts at creative writing, Otilia took the practice of citationality beyond the mere stitching together of effective quotes, using literary works as generative patterns likely to inspire personal creations. Echoing a discursive climate saturated with talk of the nation, the personal diary Otilia began writing

consistently in the sixth grade shows an occasional interest in the poetic language of the nation. It also indicates that, by middle school, the teen mastered the technical skill of writing patriotic compositions without much help from parents or teachers. Inspired by the numerous examples of patriotic literature in her school textbooks, but indicating a preference for the *șaisevist* poet Nichita Stănescu, the twelve year old tried her hand at descriptions of national landscape and versifications on patriotic themes in her diary, playing with words on the pervasive symbol of “the motherland” and eventually generating a full page of potential metaphors (text IV).

Like Otilia’s school notebooks and personal diary, memoirs of socialist childhood indicate that ambitious and talented teens could often become proficient in the authoritative discourse of socialist patriotism by mastering the generative principle of citationality. In an autobiographical piece, writer and medievalist Gabriel Decuble (b. 1968, Iași) reflects on the ease with which he penned patriotic poetry by reviving readily available discursive clichés. The recollection focuses on the author’s joint venture to write publishable, i.e. standardized, party poetry for the local newspaper in the hope of being remunerated:

Uneasy at the prospect of greeting spring without a new pair of shoes, my best high school friend and I schemed to write poetry “about the Party” (cu Partidul) that we never doubted would be published and remunerated. We put on our school uniforms and red scarves, sat ceremoniously at the desk, and took out our Chinese pens. The lyrics flowed with ease. I don’t know how many clichés we revived or how inventive we were, but we had three poems down in less than an hour.<sup>394</sup>

### *Narrative Citationality*

The practice of citationality was not restricted to the reproduction of discursive traditions of the nation of either presocialist or socialist provenance. Applied to the contemporary literature on communist ethics and pioneer morality, whose primary goal was patriotic education of a civic

---

<sup>394</sup> Decuble, *Cartea roz*, 216-7.

nature, the principle of citationality was instrumental in generating typical characters or reusable plot structures of socialist transformation. Inspired by Soviet literature for children, the themes, heroes, and narrative patterns of pioneer fables were introduced in Romanian literature immediately after the war and popularized through translations of Soviet classics – whether canonical texts of Socialist Realism such as Alexander Fadeev’s *The Young Guard* (1945) or classics of Soviet children’s literature such as Arkady Gaidar’s *Timur and His Team* (1940) - as well as domestic appropriations of the Soviet master plot reproduced in textbooks and children’s magazines.<sup>395</sup> Reflecting the socialist regime’s efforts of social and economic transformation in the postwar years, one the main goals of children’s literature was “to contribute to the task of building the New Person, the communist” by encouraging the emulation of positive heroes and “portraying the struggle between the positive and negative aspects of reality, and the ultimate victory of the new and positive over the old and negative aspects.”<sup>396</sup>

The pioneer tale was a variation of the master narrative of the Socialist Realist novel, providing “a ritualized account of the Marxist-Leninist idea of historical progress” structured not only by the dialectic of old/new, positive/negative, but also, as Katerina Clark noted, by that of “spontaneity/consciousness.”<sup>397</sup> Much like the Soviet novel, the pioneer fable developed its plot around the child hero’s rite of passage to “*social integration* and *collective* rather than *individual* identity.”<sup>398</sup> The pioneer hero was “to resolve within himself the tension between ‘spontaneity’ and ‘consciousness,’” between “anarchic,” “self-willed, arbitrary” impulses and those “controlled, disciplined, and guided by politically aware bodies”<sup>399</sup> such as the school or the

---

<sup>395</sup> On Gaidar’s status as the “founder” of Soviet children’s literature, see Evgheny Dobrenko, “The Entire Real World of Children”: The School Tale and “Our Happy Childhood,” In *The Slavic and East European Journal*, 49 (2): 225-248.

<sup>396</sup> Stanciu, “Unele probleme,” 21-22.

<sup>397</sup> Katerina Clark, *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual*, (Indiana UP, 2000), 15.

<sup>398</sup> Ibid., “The Plot as A Rite of Passage,” 167.

<sup>399</sup> Ibid., 15, 162, 167.

pioneer unit.<sup>400</sup> Pedagogical treatises in postwar Romania discussed the educational potential of child heroes in strikingly similar terms, arguing that positive characters should not be static, but engaged in an acerbic “inner struggle” that essentially enabled them to embody the possibilities of social renewal and change:

Whether a character is positive or negative is revealed in the unfolding of his inner struggle. It is not the schematic presence of positive qualities that makes a child character positive, but the ardor with which he strives to correspond to a social and moral ideal.<sup>401</sup>

As a result, postwar pioneer literature - whether short stories published in pioneer magazines or full-fledged novels - favored narratives of revolutionary transformation, featuring a gallery of negative child heroes who experienced radical changes of outlook and behavior in a two-fold process of separation from old traditions and mentalities (often represented by reactionary forces such as the family) and integration in the socialist collective, whether this was represented by school colleagues, the pioneer unit, or summer camp fellows.<sup>402</sup>

By the late 1960s, pedagogical works on children’s literature claimed that the schematic repetition of narrative conflicts between the old and the new as well as their inevitable resolution in favor of the latter rendered morality tales too rigid and artificial.<sup>403</sup> Throughout late socialism, narratives of radical transformation in pioneer literature gave way to reassuring self-presentations characteristic of an increasingly inclusionary regime, which trumpeted its successful accomplishment of the task of social transformation, and whose Pioneer Organization

---

<sup>400</sup> Socialist pedagogy defined this ideal state as “disciplina constienta” or “disciplina liber consimtită” [freely consented/accepted discipline]. See Anatolie Chircev, “Cateva aspect ale educarii sentimentului patriotismului socialist la elevi,” *Gazeta invatamantului*, November 29, 1957.

<sup>401</sup> Ilie Stanciu, “Problema realizarii personajului copil in literatura,” In *Literatura pentru copii si indrumarea lecturii copiilor*, (Bucharest: Editura de stat, 1957), 78.

<sup>402</sup> Stanciu, for example, reviews three novels by Romanian authors: Petre Luscalov’s *Nufarul rosu*, Gica Iutes’ *Inimosii*, and Octav Pancu-Iasi’s *Mica batalie de la Iazul mic* in this category. *Ibid.*, 29-32. As will be further explored in chapter III of this dissertation, a great number of short stories in children’s magazines took the form of fictional diaries of summer camp experiences, associating character transformation with a journey of initiation in collective life and separation from the family.

<sup>403</sup> Ilie Stanciu, *Literatura pentru copii*, (Bucharest: EDP, 1968), 188.

was proud to report the integration of over 90% of the school population of seven to fourteen during the last two decades of the regime.<sup>404</sup> The aim of morality tales was still that of perfecting socialist youth, but character and behavioral flaws (laziness, lying, bragging, wasting time, skipping classes, etc.) were no longer portrayed as ominous symptoms of a reactionary family or society, but as correctable shortcomings that often made the subject of humorous sketches written in parodic or satiric registers.<sup>405</sup> In addition to satirical sketches, pioneer literature also responded to the political imperative of reflecting “social optimism” by offering reassuring portrayals of socialist society and youth as already transformed and modernized.<sup>406</sup> This contradictory goal of improving an already revolutionized society generated a certain anxiety with negative characters, which translated into the narrative absence of an “inner struggle” or passage from “spontaneity” to “consciousness” that rendered child characters flat in late socialist pioneer literature. Featuring exemplary child heroes of everyday life, the plot was instead structured by an incremental transition from lesser to greater “consciousness” as young protagonists gained more experience, maturity, and understanding of the need to subordinate individual initiative to the collective. Consequently, a great number of short stories in school textbooks and the pioneer press featured unambiguously positive characters engaged in collegial competitions of good deeds to either improve themselves (*autodepășire*) or outperform others.

---

<sup>404</sup> Kenneth Jowitt argued that, following the stages of transformation and consolidation, socialist regimes entered a stage of “inclusion,” marked by the attempts to absorb a majority of citizens in its institutional structures (schools) and organizations (children’s and youth organizations). Kenneth Jowitt, *Inclusion and Mobilization in European Leninist Regimes*, In “World Politics”, vol. 28, no 1, October 1975, 69-96.

<sup>405</sup> The most prominent representative of this trend was writer Mircea Santimbreanu, who assumed the narrative voice of “the older brother, wise and playful, forgiving, but also stern” in his best-selling collections of sketches built around caricatural portraits of the slacking pupil.

For an analysis of the impact of his work, see Paul Cernat, ‘Moralitati pentru cutezatori,’ In *Explorari*, 229.

<sup>406</sup> In his speech to the Eleventh Congress of 1974, Nicolae Ceausescu reiterated the imperative first articulated in the July theses that “writers (...) should create valuable works of art informed by revolutionary humanism, [and] a robust social optimism.” Nicolae Ceausescu, *Raport la cel de-al XI-lea Congres al Partidului Comunist Roman*, (Editura politica, 1974), 95.

Pioneer magazines in particular seemed increasingly committed to a pedagogy of real-life examples of child heroes. Not only could “quotidian child heroes” serve as proofs of the tremendous social progress under Ceaușescu, but they could also be “more pedagogically effective in educating courage, devotion, and self-sacrifice than the numerous but commonplace bookish examples.”<sup>407</sup> In 1970, for example, the pioneer magazine *Cutezătorii* launched the rubric “The Daring Among Us” to popularize widespread acts of child heroism in response to the perceived “indifference,” “formalism,” and “clerkish mentality” of local authorities who failed to acknowledge children’s “extraordinary bravery and even heroism.”<sup>408</sup>

Continuing the trend, *Cutezătorii* also orchestrated a national writing competition, *The Golden Pen*, which combined the goal of mobilizing children in the “careful observation of [social] reality” with that of “enhancing their passion for literary creation” in 1980. Young readers were encouraged to act as reporters of socialist life by sending stories of “extraordinary deeds” they witnessed in genres that blurred the border between fiction and journalism: stories, sketches, interviews, or literary reportages.<sup>409</sup> Despite the editors’ emphasis on the journalistic skill of “careful observation” or the authenticity and spontaneity of the stories and their protagonists, the competition further contributed to hardening canonical narrative patterns and heroes. Not only did the editors choose to publish (and very likely edit) standardized narratives as models of successful reader reports, but they also provided a moral typology of the “socialist hero of the everyday,” soliciting stories that illustrated “the defining traits of the contemporary person: love of work and study, unwavering will, spirit of devotion and self-sacrifice, honesty, perseverance, audacity, kindness (*omenie*), exceptional behavior in an unexpected situation.”<sup>410</sup>

---

<sup>407</sup> Ilie Traian, “Ce facem cu micii nostri eroi?”, *Educatia pioniereasca*, March 1970, 38.

<sup>408</sup> Ibid.

<sup>409</sup> Concursul “Cutezătorii printre noi – Pana de aur,” *Cutezătorii*, no 15, 1980.

<sup>410</sup> Ibid.

Judging by the published sketches and interviews, child-reporters responded to the call in the conventionalized narrative patterns and character types popularized by the “numerous and commonplace bookish examples” they learned from textbooks or the socialist press. A pupil from the county of Arges, for example, is featured with an interview of a humble and dedicated railway traffic controller who saw his exceptional deeds as a duty, not as a merit.<sup>411</sup> A similarly conventionalized narrative is provided by a sixth grader’s short story, “The Grandsons,” about a civically-minded group of children who selflessly abandoned bob sleighing to help an old neighbor carry his groceries, remove the snow, and break firewood. In keeping with the character typology of the late socialist pioneer fable, the protagonists are already positive heroes - diligent students who only play after they finish their homework – before they encounter obstacles on their path to greater social integration. By overcoming their self-indulgent desire to play, however, the pioneers further grow in experience, maturity, and collective consciousness.<sup>412</sup>

Like literary competitions orchestrated by pioneer magazines, school readings and writing assignments also aimed to teach patriotic dedication and civic responsibility by encouraging pupils to emulate “quotidian heroes” and envision themselves discursively as the main characters of standardized plots of self-improvement. Morality tales like Mircea Sântimbreanu’s “A Difficult Homework,” included in the fourth grade textbook, for example, familiarized primary schoolers throughout the 1970s and 1980s with the story of two young friends who agonize over the assigned school task of describing “their outstanding deeds.”<sup>413</sup> Sântimbreanu’s story echoed the larger interest in promoting child heroes of the everyday in its insistence that pioneer deeds are not the occasional adventures that glorify the individual, but the often unnoticed, seemingly mundane, everyday efforts to help the local community. Like many

---

<sup>411</sup> Gabriel Tudor (Costesti, county of Arges), “Eroii sint printre noi,” *Cutezătorii*, no 19/20, 1980.

<sup>412</sup> Ibid.

<sup>413</sup> Mircea Sântimbreanu, “O tema grea,” *Citire* (fourth grade) (Bucharest: EDP, 1987), 6205.

of the sketches in the pioneer press, this short story also provided socialist fourth graders with models of positive characters – altruistic, outgoing, and hardworking pioneers – and plots of socialist self-improvement or revelation. Homework assignments trained students in the practice of narrative citationality, encouraging them to follow the example of the two characters and reflect on their own civic performances in first person compositions entitled “A Pioneer Deed.”

In her fourth grade notebook from 1980, for example, Andrea (b. 1971, Bucharest), wrote a composition in response to this assignment that showed not only an understanding of the civic lesson, but also a significant command of the plot structure and character typology of morality tales. Helped by her parents, who often oversaw and corrected her writing assignments, Andrea also relied on the narrative model provided by the pioneer fables and texts on cooperative farming and socialist realities that she often read for class. Appropriately narrated in the collective first person “we,” the composition featured Andrea and her classmates as lead protagonists in a story of enthusiastic participation in agricultural work in support of the local cooperative farms. In a typical narrative of self-improvement, rather than one of radical transformation, Andrea and her classmates respond to an emergency - a spell of bad weather threatening the crops - deciding to help cooperative peasants. “Singing” and “joking” on the bus trip to the cooperative farm, the young helpers also prove their enthusiasm and harmonious life in the collective. The climatic point features the children’s efforts as they compete collegially with each other under the guidance of adults and older colleagues. Hard work ultimately builds both individual character and a stronger collective as primary schoolers return to town on “the happiness bus,” “singing, joking, and laughing even louder, proud of our diligence.”

Partly inspired by the real experiences of her older colleagues in middle school, who attended sessions of patriotic work, this story line was also developed by analogy with the



narrative arch of socialist transformation characteristic of pioneer literature. Another proof of the high degree of citationality of both character types and plot structures of self-betterment is the fact that Andrea deployed the same scenario and character typology with only minor variations for two other school compositions in the fourth grade: one entitled “You Are Good For Nothing, If You Are Only Good for Yourself” and another on the topic “Man must overcome any obstacle” inspired by a textbook short story on communist ethics. It is likely that Andrea, who was an industrious and ambitious student, chose to further polish her first composition rather than develop alternative storylines of socialist altruism because school teachers often rewarded ideological proficiency reflected in part in highly standardized narrative patterns.

Although he does not remember receiving any adult help in writing his compositions, Cosmin, too, showed a significant command of both the plot structures and character types popularized by pioneer literature. Written in the first-person, the composition *In the Mountains* [La Babele], which he penned in the seventh grade in the late 1980s, was both modeled after morality tales encountered in school textbooks or pioneer magazines and inspired by personal experiences such as a recent trip to the mountains (text V):

I chose to set it [the story] in the mountains because I had just returned from a camp in Bușteni. I was practically revisiting those places mentally and, knowing that this was required, I followed the model of comic strip stories from the magazine *Cutezătorii*.<sup>414</sup>

While it exhibits a less well-paced plot structure and lacks the narrative arch of socialist transformation, Cosmin’s composition does feature the recurrent themes and positive character types - hardworking and civically minded pioneers full of initiative - of children’s literature. Opening with an exposition that describes the mountain setting and main characters - Cosmin and his friends, - the sequence of events is set in motion by the children’s lucky encounter with a group of kids who learned “to love the environment” at an early age from their parents and

---

<sup>414</sup> Author interview (June 2013).

grandparents, being responsible for many civic actions: cleaning up tourist litter, caring for wounded deer, planting trees, etc. Predictably, Cosmin and his friends decide to join the environmentally conscious children in their efforts. Echoing the superlative language of meeting and exceeding “production” plans in the pioneer magazines of the time, the composition concludes with an overview of the overly ambitious summer agenda of the pioneers, worthy of the mission of a socialist Captain Planet:

In the three weeks, that we spent, together with those children we created a nursery of fir trees and pines, we fought against pollution, we restored the natural equilibrium wherever necessary, and we also started to feel in our hearts this love of nature, this wish to breathe the cleanest air and listen to the waves of crystal clear and ice cold waters.

### *Autobiographical Voice and Collective Subjectivity*

Whether they penned historical compositions and morality tales, performed the pioneer oath, or recited poetry, children were encouraged to express their identification with the socialist nation in the first-person. Discursive practices of socialist patriotism can thus be read as evidence of a pedagogy of socialist citizenship that elicited practices of aligned socialist subjectivity, being instrumental in realigning the self with a collective defined in simultaneously national and socialist terms. Affirming the self, even if as an integral part of the national and socialist collective, such practices seem to run counter to “the anonymity of authorial voice”<sup>415</sup> or the absence of “indexes of individualization” such as the pronoun “I”<sup>416</sup> characteristic of the hypernomalized discourse of late socialism. Signaling “the transformation of the author’s voice into the voice of a mediator of knowledge, rather than a creator of knowledge,” the anonymity of authorial voice was achieved through discursive strategies such as complex nominalizations, the

---

<sup>415</sup> Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever*, 60.

<sup>416</sup> Rodica Zafiu, *Limba și politica* (Bucharest: Editura Universității din București, 2007), 37.

elimination of verbs, or the use of impersonal and passive constructions.<sup>417</sup> If children were encouraged to practice distinctively autobiographical genres of authoritative discourse, it was because they were envisioned as subjects in the making, being expected to routinely perform their identification with the socialist nation and thus make it a reality.

The oath of loyalty sworn by children on induction in the Pioneer Organization was certainly the most widespread autobiographical practice, encouraging ritual performances of allegiance to the cause of the working class, the party, and the socialist nation. Children's magazines, which prided themselves on being co-authored by their young readers, further seconded the school in popularizing a range of autobiographical genres that called upon children to make their selves into the objects of discursive articulation and transformation. Whether promoted by schools, children's magazines, literary circles or competitions, autobiographical genres included letter-writing (real or imaginary correspondence), first person compositions encouraging children to envision themselves as descendants of brave national ancestors or full-fledged socialist citizens of the future "communist order", morality tales inviting self-transformation along the ethical coordinates of the ideal socialist personality, or poetical creations invariably articulated in a collective voice ("we, the pioneers," "the Romanians").

Children's autobiographical compositions can be categorized along the temporal dimension of the author's identification with the national and socialist collective. If, as illustrated above, the conflation of the narrator with the main character in the genre of the pioneer fable gave children the narrative tools to affirm their present identification with the socialist collective, future-oriented scenarios of self-transformation and growth into socialist citizenship were meant to cultivate the millenarian imagination of socialist youth. Similarly, first-person compositions on the historical past or heroes were instrumental in articulating the child's identification with

---

<sup>417</sup> Yurchak, 67-8. For the use of impersonal and passive constructions, see also Zafiu, 36.

national ancestors and aligning individual biography with the teleological movement of collective history towards its full flourishing under socialism.

First person compositions on historical themes were invariably written as confessions of deep devotion to the motherland and thirst for historical knowledge. Consistent with the representation of youth as national subjects in the making, children and adolescents typically assumed the narrative voice of respectful and admiring witnesses of the past who experienced a surging sense of national pride and belonging in the process of relieving the past. Deploying the Romantic topos of the writer's contemplation of nature or historical ruins as an evocation of the past, such compositions were typically set in temple-like *lieux de memoire* - nationalized landscapes, historical sites, museums, etc., - which mediated the relation with the past and invariably generated a sense of awe. The genre is amply illustrated by the anthology of young writers, *Children Sing the Country* (1979), which features a mix of patriotic poetry and historical evocations. The opening and closing passages of a composition on the Bran Fortress written by a fourteen year old in 1971, for example, are characteristic of the confessional mode, narrative voice, and transformative experience enabled by historical settings in this type of compositions:

I stepped into the castle in silence, with questioning eyes and a timid smile. My steps echoed strangely on the cold slabs and I was gripped by emotion. With my mind's eyes, I could see the ghosts of people who, for centuries, forged the history of this castle. (...) Then I felt rich, my soul transformed into a treasure trove of unsuspected beauty.<sup>418</sup>

Widely promoted in published anthologies and the pioneer press, the model of discursive alignment of the self with the collective of national ancestors was also regularly practiced in compositions for literature classes by primary and middle schoolers. In 1988, when she was a seventh grader, Monica (b. 1976, Bucharest) penned a similar composition in preparation for a county competition in Romanian literature (*olimpiada pe judet*) to celebrate the seventieth

---

<sup>418</sup> Delia Golcea (Brad, 14 years old), "Cetatea Bran," In *Copiii cânta România* (Bucharest: EDP, 1979), 230-1.

anniversary of the Great Union of 1918. Drawing on her impressions of an actual museum visit in Alba-Iulia, the historical site of the Union, where she remembers collecting informative brochures as memory-triggers, the twelve-year-old framed the composition in narrative terms strikingly similar to those featured by the published composition discussed above. Not only was the setting an appropriately awe-inspiring repository of history and memory, the National Museum of the Union, but Monica also adopted the confessional mood characteristic of child productions of socialist patriotism, assuming a narrative voice that exuded with exhilaration at the prospect of encountering the past. The radical transformation of the child protagonist, whose encounter with the past results in a significant growth in historical consciousness and national pride, is here openly affirmed and marked by exclamation signs:

I stepped with great emotion into the Hall of the Union. In the grand silence of the museum, you could only hear the timid whispers of small visitors like me. Curious like me. The exhibited documents – photographs, signed lists, the flags and emblems of the delegates sent to the Great Assembly from all corners of Ardeal – the guide’s information, helped me see with my mind’s eyes the struggles for the union made by generation after generation, by Romanians everywhere.

I understood how stormy the destiny of my people was! How much strength in battle..., how much faith in the power of the union have the heroes of my people proven, preserving [added later: as they would a holy relic] the desire for national unity.<sup>419</sup>

Since the composition was written in preparation for a literary competition on the historic anniversary of the Union, Monica also used it to display her broad literary culture, referencing a great number of classic works she had studied in school.<sup>420</sup> To Monica’s recollection, the composition in her notebook was a polished draft, the result of her work in response to the comments and suggestions made by her teacher of Romanian. The composition also features

---

<sup>419</sup> The text was included in Monica’s homework notebook.

<sup>420</sup> The texts referenced in Monica’s composition include Nicolae Balcescu’s portrait of Michael the Brave, the medieval ruler credited with forging the first political union of the Romanian provinces, Ion Creanga’s short stories of Uncle Ion Roata, Vasile Alecsandri’s famous poem, “Hora Unirii,” dedicated to the union, writer Ion Agarbiceanu’s short story of a simple villager who sacrifices his only source of income to support the soldiers fighting in the War of Independence of 1877, and statements on the realization of the historical dream of the union by historian Nicolae Iorga.

several interventions made by the teacher, who did not only correct phrasing, but also added specific dates and entire sentences to ensure historical accuracy and give the narrative a sense of historical progression and teleological drive. Among other contributions, the teacher added a concluding passage that celebrated the fulfillment of the historic dream of the Union and invoked a national community of past heroes and their proud descendants: “Similarly, today, on the seventieth anniversary of the Union, all of us Romanians evoke with gratitude all the heroes, known and unknown, who made it a reality.” The teacher’s addition constituted a lesson in the discursive alignment of the self with the national collective along the temporal coordinates of historical progress that Monica was expected to reproduce in official competitions.

If late socialist youth were encouraged to employ the narrative strategies of the historical composition to project individual biography into the immemorial times of collective destiny, they were also urged to envision themselves through the lens of the regime’s millenarian imagination as full-fledged socialist citizens of a flourishing communist future. The future-oriented vision of society and the symbolic investment in children as the embodiment of “the future of the nation” had been characteristic of Romania’s socialist regime since its entrenchment in the late 1940s. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, however, children’s publications began to articulate a futuristic vision centered on the year 2000 as a landmark of radical transformation that marked symbolically the final realization of the communist order.<sup>421</sup> At the center of this transformation, the pioneer press argued, was the “privileged” generation of the millennials, of pioneers and school children who would have the historic “opportunity to cross the threshold of

---

<sup>421</sup> It is likely that the pioneer press echoed a number of scientific studies in futurology (*viitorologie*) published at the time, many of which focused on the role of youth and education in future change. Sociologist Pavel Apostol, for example, reflected on the disjuncture between retarded educational systems responding too slowly to change and rapidly changing societal environments in *Omul anului 2000 [The Man of the Year 2000]* (1972), while Mircea, the minister of education between 1970 and 1972, explored the anticipated technological transformation of the year 2000 in his *Cronica anului 2000 [Chronicle of the Year 2000]* (1969 and 1975).

the new millennium” as “full-fledged adults.”<sup>422</sup> Children’s magazines encouraged youth to envision themselves as the perfect(ible) Supermen of the future who would “approximate the classic ideal, being beautiful, generous, balanced, and well-educated” and inhabit a world that would have realized the wildest dreams of their contemporaries: “the end of all wars, the achievement of good life for all, the healing of every disease, the opening of communication with the most distant corners of the universe.”<sup>423</sup> The realization of this future, however, depended on the education and training of contemporary youth, an essential component of which was increasingly considered to be a future-oriented social imagination.<sup>424</sup>

Since the mid 1950s, youth magazines cultivated the future-oriented imagination of children and their passion for science through publications as well as literary competitions soliciting reader contributions in the science fiction genre. Used primarily as a vehicle for popularizing scientific knowledge throughout the 1950s, Romanian science fiction literature experienced a significant shift in the 1960s, when writers began to increasingly deploy the narrative formula of the utopia to anticipate the communist society of the future and the profile of the new socialist person.<sup>425</sup> Statistics compiled in the 1980s indicate that the genre was particularly popular with adolescents, as middle and high school students made up more than half of its readership and increasing fandom.<sup>426</sup> The popularity of science fiction literature with adolescents dovetailed with the growing preoccupation with the millennials as school

---

<sup>422</sup> Ovidiu Zotta, “Cine esti tu, prietene din anul 2000?” [Who are you, my friend of the year 2000?], *Cutezătorii*, no 52-53, 1970.

<sup>423</sup> Ibid.

<sup>424</sup> Mihai C. Botez (Mathematician, director of the Laboratory of Prospective Research of the University of Bucharest), “Viitorul și tainele lui” [The Future and Its Mysteries], *Cutezătorii*, no 23, 1971.

<sup>425</sup> For the historical evolution of science fiction literature in communist Romania and its deployment in the education of children and youth, see Eugen Stancu, “Science Fiction in Communist Romania, 1955-1989” (PhD diss., Central European University, 2010).

<sup>426</sup> Florin Manolescu, *Literatura S.F.*, (Bucharest: Univers, 1980), 261. In his pioneering work on Romanian science fiction literature, the literary critic examined over three thousand letters sent to the *Colectia de Povestiri Stiintifico Fantastice*, the major publication in the field, determining that over 54% of the readers were middle and high school pupils, 10% students, 11% workers, 5.5% technical workers and 8.5% teachers. 11% of the received letters were anonymous.

assignments or literary contests launched by youth magazines required children and teens not only to conjure up utopian (communist) futures, but also to envision themselves as citizens of such possible worlds in first-person narratives.

One of the first literary competitions that aimed to mobilize the future-oriented fantasy of early teens in the service of self and social transformation bore the title “I in the Year 2000” and was initiated by *Cutezătorii* in 1969 for ten to fourteen year olds, requiring contributions “about [them] and [their] aspirations” in genres as diverse as “science fiction stories, illustrated stories, reportages, newspaper articles, or letters to the children of the world.”<sup>427</sup> Selected from over three hundred reader contributions, the winning pieces – first-person short stories, a reportage, a poem, a comic strip by the future writer Matei Vişniec, and several drawings - were featured in an issue almost entirely based on child productions.<sup>428</sup> Written by middle schoolers from around the country, all pieces deployed the self as the organizing principle of narratives of socialist transformation built with the recognizable tools of the science fiction adventure: time and space travel, technological fantasy, and encounters with alternative worlds and forms of life.

The editors’ selection was clearly meant to promote works that illustrated “the self-confidence of this generation,” who “envisioned themselves as famous professors and renowned scientists” and who did not merely conjure up future worlds, but communist utopias of fully transformed civilizations and selves.<sup>429</sup> Echoing the main themes in science fiction literature at the time, featured time travelers imagined themselves on virtual trips to civilizations of cosmic proportions that knew no division by country and no conflict or war, being solely animated by the peaceful desire for progress, or to a futuristic Romania that sported high-speed electric trains

---

<sup>427</sup> “Competitie cu premii, ‘Eu in anul 2000,’” [Prize-winning competition, “I in the Year 2000”], In *Cutezătorii*, 27, 1969.

<sup>428</sup> *Cutezătorii*, no 37, 1969.

<sup>429</sup> Eugenia Tudor, “Copiii, tehnica, si florile,” In *Cutezătorii*, 37, 1969.



on suspended rails and underwater cities in the Black Sea as evidence of the technological, economic, and ultimately ideological victory of Romanian socialism over “the renowned capitalist industries that cannot catch up with us.”<sup>430</sup> At the same time, the published child productions, likely guided and amended by parents and editorial staff, are not easily reducible to ideological stereotypes, exhibiting a certain degree of humor, playfulness, and creativity that warrants their reading as fantasies of alternative or possible worlds rather than mere predictions of the realizable future of their adulthood. The eleven-year-old winner of the first prize, for example, envisioned herself in a distant and technologically advanced future neither as an adult nor as a girl, but as a twelve year old boy who, inspired by his reading of *The Little Prince*, dreamt of cultivating flowers on an asteroid.<sup>431</sup> Even tongue-in-cheek recollections of typical child responses to science fictional writing assignments in the 1980s, such as that of writer Paul Cernat (b. 1972), remark on the engaging nature of future-oriented fantasy:

In “Composition” classes, we were required to write homework on topics such as “We in the Year 2000, When We Will No Longer Be Children.” All of us imagined spaceships, robots, miraculous inventions, and the colonization of the galaxy. Forget Gagarin or Dumitru Prunariu (the pride of socialist Romania, the first Romanian in space)! A few more skeptical souls mocked the assignment with counterfactual scenarios: “What if they drop the nuclear bomb?”<sup>432</sup>

The early 1970s witnessed another project for the millennials that similarly urged young readers to contemplate their potential for growth and transformation as members of a privileged socialist generation, who would cross the symbolic threshold of a new world in 2000. Pioneers reading the magazine *Cutezătorii* in 1971 and 1973 would have found a detachable page entitled “Form for the Year 2000” that included a number of questions addressing both the young readers’ future prospects and the present accomplishments that warranted such ambitious

---

<sup>430</sup> Dinu Tutu (Bihor), “Reportaj din anul 2000” [Reportage from the Year 2000], *Cutezătorii*, 37, 1969.

<sup>431</sup> Daniela Andreica (sixth grade, Turda), “Poveste despre Micul Prinț,” *Cutezătorii*, 37, 1969.

<sup>432</sup> Paul Cernat, “Supraviețuirea sub un clopot de sticlă,” *O lume disparută*, 51.

aspirations: “What do you want to be in the year 2000?,” “Who is your model in life?,” “In what domains have you excelled so far?,” or “Have you received any prizes, awards, or distinctions in the past two years?”<sup>433</sup> Requiring them to think big – “What contribution would you like to make to the welfare of humankind?” – and repeatedly measure their present achievements against an ideal future persona, the act of answering the questionnaire was meant to engage young readers in discursive practices of both self-presentation and self-transformation (texts VI and VII). Entitled “The Golden Archive,” the project deployed the questionnaire to incite readers to think ambitiously and responsibly about the future as well as to create a record of their young readers’ dreams and aspirations that was archived at the Academy Library in Bucharest in 1973.

Unlike literary competitions, this project generated succinct answers that lacked the elaborate science fictional settings and scenarios of previous contests. Unexpectedly, many of the selected responses, likely tweaked by teachers, parents, and magazine editors, confirmed the official image of socialist youth as diligent, ambitious, and dedicated to the cause of the party. Most children envisioned their “contribution to the welfare of humankind” in the standardized language of the political speeches and socialist press of the time: “I would put an end to the exploitation of man by man everywhere in the world,” “I would ban capitalism everywhere,” “I would preserve peace on Terra forever,” or “I would end the war in Vietnam.”<sup>434</sup> The majority of featured responders also chose acceptable future professions such as engineers, astronomers, ship captains, airplane builders, steel workers, or folk singers and opted for inspirational life models such as prominent Romanian and foreign scientists (Henri Coanda or Marie Curie), domestic cultural personalities (poet Mihai Eminescu or historian Nicolae Iorga), famous athletes, their parents and teachers, or commendable fictional characters from children’s adventure novels.

---

<sup>433</sup> “Arhiva de aur: Fisa pentru anul 2000” [The Golden Archive: Form for the Year 2000], *Cutezatorii*, 23, 1971; Fisa pentru anul 2000,” *Cutezatorii*, 1 and 12, 1973.

<sup>434</sup> For published reader responses, see issues 35, 39, 40, 44 of *Cutezatorii*, 1969.

Given the rather enthusiastic reader-response, amounting to ten thousand completed questionnaires by 1973, and the few, less ideologically charged answers, it is likely that children did take the exercise in self-contemplation and future-oriented imagination proposed by the magazine seriously. Some responders, for example, admitted that they had neither chosen a future profession, nor made any distinctive accomplishments yet. Others confessed that their only future ambition was to grow up to be “happy” or suggested, to the dismay of the editors, that their models in life were famous Western actors and singers like Allain Delon, Roger Moore, or Elvis Presley. Likely featured because they exhibited the innovative and optimistic spirit required of the young generation of a socialist regime, some children nevertheless framed their contribution to humankind in less standardized or edited discursive forms: “I would make more and better medicine to fight every disease,” “I would sing folk songs to make people happy and good,” or “I would design a machine that can prevent earthquakes.”<sup>435</sup>

Children’s magazines for primary schoolers such as *Luminița* followed the same model, soliciting future-oriented scenarios designed to help children chose an ideal profession and contemplate a life of productive adult work. In 1976, for example, the magazine opened a rubric under the already consecrated title “I in the year 2000,” encouraging child readers to imagine themselves as full-grown adults and compose, from the perspective of their accomplished future selves, letters to their primary school teachers.<sup>436</sup> Reflecting the growing ideological conformity of the mid-1970s, the texts published in *Luminita* lacked the element of fantasy that characterized works published in *Cutezatorii* only a few years earlier, depicting a one-dimensional world where self-fulfillment was synonymous with work and progress was primarily measured by technological advance. Fourth graders envisioned themselves as

---

<sup>435</sup> Ibid.

<sup>436</sup> “Eu in anul 2000” [I in the Year 2000], *Luminita*, no 4 through 6, 1976.

architects building cities on the moon, teachers instructing their pupils from a distance with the help of video and radio transmission, inventors who grew larger fruit, vegetables, or poultry, fruit growers who designed trees that bore fruit three times a year, as well as miners or construction and steel workers who completed formerly exacting jobs with the mere push of a button.

By the 1980s, discursive exercises in future-oriented imagination encouraged by children's magazines and televised festivals such as *Cântarea României* were increasingly subordinated to the cult of personality, taking the form of ritualized affirmations of gratitude to the leader for the unprecedented conditions of a happy childhood and the prospect of a fulfilled future.<sup>437</sup> In keeping with the revived image of the activist child, young writers authoring standardized statements of self-transformation often invoked an impatience with growing up to serve their country as mature and productive socialist citizens. Echoing the stock phrases of the 1980s, child contributions such as the one signed by an eighth grader from Bucharest in the pages of *Cutezatorii* were regularly featured in the pioneer press:

Living in a miraculous epoch, when the entire country flourishes under our eyes, any child of the happy pioneer age feels increasingly the wish to grow up faster to contribute to the grand achievements of our people.<sup>438</sup>

Informed by the rhetoric of the “Ceausescu Epoch” or “Golden Age”, the millenarian imagination in child productions also lost its original connection with fictional fantasies of technologically, socially, and civilizationally alternative futures. Rarely contaminated by the science fiction genre, discursive practices focused more narrowly on the near future of productive adulthood, losing sight of the possible futures conjured up in earlier practices.<sup>439</sup>

---

<sup>437</sup> See, for example, Ionel Socobeanu (Bucharest), “Noi in anul 2000” [We in the Year 2000], *Cutezatorii*, 37, 1980.

<sup>438</sup> Ileana Craciunescu (Bucharest), “Lumea in care cresc” [The World Where I Grow Up], *Cutezatorii*, 36, 1980.

<sup>439</sup> The disappearance of the science fictional element from future-oriented discursive productions paralleled the gradual shift of this popular genre, which was actively promoted by the regime from the 1950s to the mid-1970s, but ceased to be an ideological priority in the late 1970s and 1980s. On the proliferation of science fiction literary clubs in the period and their paradoxical relation with the regime, see Stancu, *Engineering the Human Soul*, 169-206.

## The Sites and Meanings of Discursive Practices of Socialist Patriotism

What does the increased “ideological literacy,” reflected in the successful reproduction of authoritative discourse by diligent and ambitious schoolchildren, ultimately reveal about the socialization of young people in late socialism? Domestic studies of socialist childhood and youth under Ceaușescu interpret the standardization of form in children’s discursive productions - visible, for example, in collections of patriotic poetry and prose - as signs of effective ideological indoctrination, political regimentation, or precocious, but conscious complicity with the socialist regime.<sup>440</sup> Children’s discursive socialization under socialism is also the subject of a number of studies that investigate the propagandistic content and intent of children’s literature and textbooks in the Soviet Bloc, an overwhelming majority of which work on the assumption that propaganda targeting small citizens proved relentless in instilling state-controlled messages.<sup>441</sup> Although they do not make children’s discursive productions their main focus, some historical analyses of the disciplining strategies deployed by socialist regimes to monitor and regulate the daily life of children rely on sources as diverse as the pioneer oath, children’s letters to political leaders, school compositions on future communist utopias, or essays on pioneer activities as evidence of children’s internalization of or resistance to political imperatives.<sup>442</sup>

---

<sup>440</sup> “Tinere condeie in epoca de lumină,” *Explorări in comunismul romanesc*, 315-334.

<sup>441</sup> Ion Manolescu, “Clisee tematice ale manualelor comuniste de clase primare,” *Explorări* (II), 289-314; Angelo Mitchievici, “Povesti, legend, utopii: Dumitru Almas la scoala istoriei,” *Explorări* (II), 335-372. Radina Vučetić, “ABC Textbooks and Ideological Indoctrination of Children: ‘Socialism Tailor-Made for Man’ or ‘Child Tailor-Made for Socialism’?” in *Childhood in South East-Europe: Historical Perspectives on Growing Up in the 19th and 20th Century*, eds. Slobodan Naumović and Miroslav Jovanović (Belgrade and Graz, 2001), 249–65.

<sup>442</sup> Catriona Kelly, “Shaping the ‘Future Race’: Regulating the Daily Life of Children in Early Soviet Russia,” *Everyday Life in Early Soviet Russia. Taking the Revolution Inside*, eds. Christina Kiaer and Eric Naiman (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 257-281; Catriona Kelly, *Children’s World: Growing Up in Russia, 1890-1991* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 68, 529-30. Ildiko Erdei, “‘The Happy Child’ as an Icon of Socialist Transformation: Yugoslavia’s Pioneer Organization,” *Ideologies and National Identities. The Case of Twentieth-Century Southeastern Europe*, eds. John Lampe and Mark Mazower (Budapest: Central European University, 2004), 154-179.

While most of these studies acknowledge that published child productions were subject to complex processes of adult editing and censoring, they nevertheless share an emphasis on the constative (true or false descriptions of reality) or literal meaning of discursive practices, reading them as expressions of children's actions or beliefs. Performative theories of the functioning of state ideology in late socialism, however, draw attention to the fact that most ideological (re)producers in the post-Stalinist period focused on performance, i.e. the technical skill of faithful replication, paying little attention to the literal meaning of ideology, which became increasingly unanchored, indeterminate, and even irrelevant.<sup>443</sup> The phenomenon of performative engagement with ideology is similarly described by memoirists of socialist childhood in Ceaușescu's Romania, whose accounts of writing patriotic compositions focus on discursive technique - "rhetorical summersaults", revival of discursive clichés, or the skill of textual *bricolage* - rather than on the absence or presence of patriotic sentiments.

To make sense of what discursive and ritual performances meant for Soviet people in late socialism, Yurchak argues, we have to move beyond the constative dimension to attend to the alternative meanings participants invested in such performances in various state-affiliated contexts: Komsomol organizations, research institutes, Pioneer Palace clubs, etc.<sup>444</sup> This section takes a similar approach, seeking to attend to the meanings and significance that the successful actualization of the authoritative discourse of socialist patriotism acquired for children and teens in diverse contexts: schools, literary contests, pioneer magazines, literary circles, or national creativity camps. It further examines how state institutions and sites charged with the circulation of authoritative discourse both facilitated the discursive socialization of youth and enabled young people and their adult mentors to pursue genuine interests in literary culture and creativity.

---

<sup>443</sup> Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever*, 74-76.

<sup>444</sup> *Ibid.*, 126-157.

Young people who engaged in performances of authoritative discourse by penning patriotic compositions, morality tales with pioneers, or science fictional narratives of socialist transformation were invested with symbolic power through a process Bourdieu describes as “delegation” of authority.<sup>445</sup> As the discussion in the previous section on the deployment of the autobiographical voice as a conduit of collective subjectivity suggests, children and teens who (re)produced the authoritative discourse of socialist patriotism did not speak in their own name, but on behalf of a group subsumable to the people and the party, i.e. in the name of a “collective” - be this “the pioneers of our school,” “the generation of the Golden Age,” “the Romanian people,” or, by virtue of the universalization of childhood, “the children of the world.” In Bourdieu’s terms, the “delegate” invested with the authority of representation engages in a process of “double-dealing,” linguistically marked by “the permanent shift from I to we,” whereby “the individual personality, the ego, abolishes itself in favor of a transcendent moral person (I give myself to France).”<sup>446</sup> By the same token, the process of suspending one’s individuality in discursive performances enabled Romanian youth to stand *metonymically* for the whole of which they were a representative part, i.e. the socialist nation, and speak on her behalf.<sup>447</sup> Understanding how the mechanism of delegated authority functioned in late socialism enables us to explore not only the possibilities of self-expression that official ideology constrained, but also the opportunities of self-affirmation it enabled.

Children and teens in late socialism did not only engage in the reproduction of authoritative discourse out of fear of reprimands such as poor grades or demotions in the pioneer hierarchy in a context of institutional regimentation, but also because the process of delegating

---

<sup>445</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, “Delegation and Political Fetishism,” In *Language and Symbolic Power*, (Polity Press, 1991), 203-219.

<sup>446</sup> *Ibid.*, 211, 213.

<sup>447</sup> *Ibid.*, 206.

authority endowed them with various forms of symbolic power that enhanced their self-esteem, facilitating public success and visibility. Many youth in this category enjoyed the reputation of talented writers in their school or county, received good grades, were awarded prizes, distinctions, and awards in numerous competitions, contests, and festivals, or benefitted from appointments to higher positions of pioneer leadership, etc. Members of literary circles were published in anthologies of aspiring young writers, while winners of literary competitions launched by pioneer magazines had their works and names featured prominently, sometimes making the cover page. Some, like the first-prize winner of a literary contest organized by *Cutezătorii* for stories of brave feats of glory by national heroes, went on to become professional writers.<sup>448</sup> Prominent child prodigies like the poet Vasile Poenaru, who debuted in the pioneer press in the late 1960, were also promoted nationally and internationally by the Pioneer Organization, which subsidized their individual volumes and participation in international youth camps, where they represented their country in writing activities or contests.<sup>449</sup>

For the majority of children, these forms of symbolic power acquired value and significance in the mundane and familiar contexts of their school, in the company of colleagues, teachers, and parents that seemed removed from the arenas of party politics. Take the example of Otilia, who grew up in Constanta throughout the 1970s and 1980, and whose patriotic compositions we analyzed in the previous section. Much like other youth her age, Otilia was a diligent and ambitious student who penned numerous compositions on historic events, real and imagined patriotic deeds, or love of country for school assignments, tried her hand at patriotic

---

<sup>448</sup> See, for example, the rubric “Galeria Cutezătorilor” (*Cutezătorii*, no 2, 1976) that features Gheorghe Truta as the competition’s winner. The author is currently a writer and a member of the Writer’s Union in Craiova.

<sup>449</sup> A member of the Romanian Writers’ Union, Vasile Poenaru is a poet, writer of children’s books, editor and translator. The National Council of the Pioneer Organization published his first volume, *Nasterea mea in poezie*, in 1970. Following his participation in an international youth exchange in 1970, Poenaru appears featured with the poem “First Impressions of Danbury Park” in the camp anthology of the British youth organization, the Woodcraft Folk. YMA/WF FH42 International Camps, “Canvas Anthology.”



poems and essays in her private diary, and was routinely selected to recite patriotic poems by nineteenth century poets for official school ceremonies in the 1980s.<sup>450</sup> In the spring of 1989, Otilia's passion for literature and ideological proficiency enabled her to win the city and county competitions in Romanian literature, accomplishments that enhanced her school's reputation and brought the twelve year old praise in school, a position of leadership as the adjunct to the school's pioneer leader, a diploma of pioneer merit awarded ceremoniously at the Pioneer Park in Constanta, and even the honor of being featured in an article in the local newspaper, forms of recognition that she has preserved with pride to this day. On the day she received news of winning the first prize in the county Olympiad and qualifying for the national competition, Otilia described with palpable enthusiasm in her diary how she became the center of attention both in school and at home, noting the congratulatory remarks of the significant adults in her life as well as her colleagues' recognition, all of which enhanced her sense of self-worth:

THE GREAT NEWS – THE FIRST PRIZE IN THE COUNTY OLYMPIAD. Comrade headmaster was excited, happy, and imposing in the haste with which he congratulated me. Comrade teacher of Romanian language happy, crying, wished me hard and successful work in the future. Comrade [teacher] of English, who always spreads around calm, knowledge, and youth, kissed me meaningfully. The entire school, the children, were whispering. In the evening, at home, mother was beyond herself. Father told me “If you write daily in your diary, you will get the first prize in the national Olympiad!”<sup>451</sup>

Furthermore, for children and teens who reproduced the authoritative discourse in various contexts in literature classes, official school celebrations, literary competitions, etc., such practices rarely stood alone. Encouraged by parents, teachers, school authorities, prominent cultural personalities, and the party leadership to study well, develop writing skills, and read broadly from classic and contemporary Romanian and universal literature, socialist nerds in particular viewed discursive practices of socialist patriotism as an integral part of a broader

---

<sup>450</sup> Author interview (July 2007).

<sup>451</sup> Entry of March 9, 1989.

preoccupation with achieving academic excellence, leading a cultured life, or pursuing their passion for literature. Sanctioned during the short-lived period of ideological relaxation, the ethos of cultured life, the broad familiarization with the masterpieces of domestic and universal literature, as well as the pursuit of literary culture, expression, and creativity were values that continued to be invoked even after the July “theses” although not as loudly as those of patriotic and progressive education. Many of the literature teachers who mentored socialist youth also envisioned their educational mission broadly as the cultivation of their students’ literary culture, taste, and creativity.<sup>452</sup> For teachers whose professional reputation (and sources of additional income from private tutoring) depended on their pupils’ success in annual Olympiads in Romanian literature or high school entrance examinations, the training in discursive practices of socialist patriotism was thus an integral part of a broader cultural agenda, focused on developing their students’ literary culture and erudition. Judging by recollections of family attitudes towards education in late socialism, many parents and teachers also encouraged reading and writing as habits of cultured life that ensured the acquisition of *cultura generala* (“culturedness”) and *educatie* (“educatedness”), rather than as a mere conduit of patriotic education.

Cosmin, who wrote his share of compositions on love of country and civic pioneer deeds, remembers that he developed an early passion for reading and writing. He attributes his interest in literature to his grandfather, who was a gifted storyteller, as well as to his teacher of Romanian, a “demanding” and erudite pedagogue, whose middle school pupils were fascinated by his remarkable knowledge of French, German, Russian, and Latin or by his experiments in

---

<sup>452</sup> Author interviews: I.T. (August 2007), teacher of Romanian in Bucharest and neighboring villages in the 1970s and 1980s. Former students similarly recalled primary and middle school teachers who broadened their literary culture and emboldened them to experiment with creative writing and participate in literary competitions. The few studies based on experimental research in the cultivation of literary culture, receptivity, taste, and creativity indicate that many teachers in urban schools were preoccupied with the conflation of aesthetic with moral or patriotic education, exploring ways to develop literary culture and creativity more broadly: Bianca Bratu, *Literatura si educatia estetica a preadolescentului*, (Bucuresti: EDP, 1970).

creative writing.<sup>453</sup> Cosmin remembers, for example, that his teacher would break the class monotony by taking kids out for a walk to train their skill of observation and attention to seemingly irrelevant details in preparation for descriptive compositions, a method that Cosmin cultivates in his own writing to this day. For Cosmin, the discursive practices of socialist patriotism constituted primarily an effort at perfecting his writing technique, adding the skill of bricolage to his writer's repertoire. Besides strictly "politicized" compositions, however, the middle schooler also penned a number of descriptive and creative pieces in the 1980s and read widely from the list of recommended readings provided by his teacher for summer breaks.

Similarly, Otilia engaged eagerly in discursive productions of socialist patriotism because she was an avid reader, who experimented with writing, as well as a dedicated student, who participated successfully in competitions in Romanian literature or city contests in history. The practice of citationality she employed in the production of patriotic compositions required, in fact, a close familiarity with the literary works, topoi, and stylistic devices in classics of Romanian literature, and thus a broad literary culture. Much like other middle school teens, Otilia's passion for reading and writing was cultivated by teachers who mentored her, supported her participation in annual literary competitions, and encouraged her to attend sponsored lecture tours by writers and literary critics such as Ana Blandiana or Zoe Dumitrescu Busulenga at the House of Culture in Constanta. The habits of cultured life were further nurtured in the privacy of the family and home. As first-generation college graduates, Otilia's parents saw education as an engine of social mobility and shared the ethos of "everything for the children." They routinely helped Otilia with her homework and encouraged her to read Romanian and foreign classics easily accessible from the family's rich bookshelves. At the recommendation of her father, Otilia

---

<sup>453</sup> Author interview (June 2013).

also kept a diary, using it consistently in her early teens in the 1980s to document her everyday life, reflect on readings, and experiment with creative writing.

The diary entries indicate that, although Otilia was introduced to a number of classic and contemporary authors primarily through their narrowly construed patriotic creation in school textbooks and literature classes, her burgeoning literary culture exceeded the limits of middle school textbooks. The two most heavily quoted and invoked domestic writers in Otilia's diary were Mihai Eminescu, widely regarded as the Romanians' greatest poet, and Nichita Stanescu, considered by many of his contemporaries "the greatest poet since Eminescu."<sup>454</sup> Familiarized with Nichita Stanescu in school through patriotic poems such as "Motherland," Otilia used the volumes in her family's bookshelves to explore his work more broadly, appropriating and personalizing his lyrical work in ways that resonated with her literary pursuits and adolescent experiences. The teen often transcribed in the diary her favorite Nichita poems on love, happiness, and youthful enthusiasm that echoed her interest, romantic passions, impatience with the monotony of school life, and reflections on the transition from childhood to adolescence.

The figure of the nineteenth century Romantic poet, Mihai Eminescu, loomed even larger in Otilia's diary. It is hard to imagine the intensity of the teen's engagement with Eminescu's poetry outside the cultural politics of the 1970s and 1980s, when the poet's imposing cultural stature led to his genealogical appropriation by competing camps of public intellectuals. School textbooks in the last decades of communism, for example, taught pupils that "Eminescu is our greatest poet" because he "celebrated the people's patriotism and criticized social injustice."<sup>455</sup> Otilia echoed the hyperbolic language around the poet, describing Eminescu in her diary as "the genius of the Romanian people" and writing a three page entry on the commemoration of the

---

<sup>454</sup> Ștefanescu, *Istoria literaturii*, 357.

<sup>455</sup> Mihai Eminescu, *Limba romana, lecturi literare*, (Bucharest: EDP, 1977), 40.

poet's death in vaguely metaphorical language: "I love Eminescu, this smile born from the suffering of the Romanian people."<sup>456</sup> At the same time, Otilia's view of Eminescu did not conform to the textbook image of the champion of the wretched, reflecting the more widespread popular perception of the poet as a misunderstood and (socially) isolated genius. Otilia identified with the secluded poetic genius, often quoting and commenting on Eminescu's lyrical reflections on love, loneliness, nature, artistic creation, or the tragic destiny of the poetic genius.

While she often turned to favorite domestic poets for lyrical inspiration, the teen also read voraciously from Romanian and foreign authors. During the summer break of 1989, when she was twelve, for example, she made notes in her diary about Jules Verne's *The Mysterious Island*, Victor Hugo's *Notre Dame de Paris*, Henryk Sienkiewicz's *The Teutonic Knights*, Ethel Voynich's *The Gadfly*, canonical domestic works likely recommended for school such as Mihail Sadoveanu's historical novel, *Fratii Jderi*, the classic Romanian novel of transition from childhood and adolescence, Ionel Teodoreanu's *La Medeleni*, and his story of tragic young love, *Lorelai*. While some novels, like *Fratii Jderi*, made little impression on the eager reader - "an interesting book, but it does not surpass *The Teutonic Knights*"<sup>457</sup> - Otilia engaged more thoroughly with others. She identified with the "sweet, warm, positive characters" in *La Medeleni* because they were "of my own age, with the same hopes, ideals, ideas, feelings that 'trouble' me."<sup>458</sup> In *The Gadfly*, Otilia found "complex characters with unbelievably suggestive inner lives (*trairi sufletesti*)," describing the novel's tragic Romantic hero with the characteristic effusion of adolescence: "Suffering, Pain, Love, Humiliation, all the sentiments that a man can feel were experienced by Arthur's heart and body."<sup>459</sup>

---

<sup>456</sup> Entries of April 6 and June 15, 1989.

<sup>457</sup> Entry of August 6, 1989.

<sup>458</sup> Entry of July 7, 1989.

<sup>459</sup> Entry of September 17, 1989.

In her passion for Alexandre Dumas, whose d'Artagnan romances constituted the single most influential reading of her early teens, Otilia echoed other adolescents, who turned to Dumas for “tales of honesty, honor, and chivalry.”<sup>460</sup> On the day she finished the last volume of the trilogy, the teen confessed to crying over the death of her “dear characters from the times of Ludovic XIII,” noting their distinctive characteristics in the diary: “Athos’ nobility and generosity, Porthos’ strength and naiveté, Aramis’ shrewdness and delicacy.”<sup>461</sup> Otilia found Dumas’ fictional world of nobility of spirit and Romantic love so engrossing that she often read reality in fictional terms: “Today – father is not Athos, maybe Porthos, definitely not Aramis.”<sup>462</sup> Characters such as the Vicomte of Bargelonne, who was “flawlessly beautiful (in both body and soul),” also served Otilia’s penchant for mystery in the diary, coding her romantic interest in one of her classmates. It was against these fictional characters that Otilia read reality, noting that she has not yet met a teen who resembled her most favorite Romantic heroes “to discuss the essential problems of adolescence,” and musing precociously on the compensatory function of fiction: “Until then, I read and I have imaginary conversations with these characters.”<sup>463</sup>

To a great extent, Otilia was an ideal socialist reader, who did not merely “gulp down” literature for entertainment, but perused formative books pencil in hand, reflecting on the moral character of fictional protagonists, and followed reading suggestions appropriate for the transition from childhood to adolescence, when socialist youth were expected to “dream of grand feats, lofty sentiments, and extraordinary adventures.”<sup>464</sup> However, Otilia, like most urban children and youth from middle class or intellectual families, did not prioritize the literature of

---

<sup>460</sup> An eighth grader from Bucharest confessed his passion for Alexander Dumas and Victor Hugo in a small-scale survey quoted in the article “Fascinatia cartii,” *Cutezătorii*, no 41, 1970.

<sup>461</sup> Entry of January 5, 1988.

<sup>462</sup> Entry of January 12, 1988.

<sup>463</sup> Entry of September 15, 1989.

<sup>464</sup> Specialists in child literature characterized the age span from ten to fourteen as “an age of unleashed romanticism.” Ilie Stanciu, “Particularitățile de varsta ale copiilor,” In *Literatura pentru copii*, 18-19.

patriotic and militant education so widely popularized by pioneer magazines. Their leisure habits echoed the socialist regime's rhetoric of reading as a form of cultured behavior (in the sense of *kulturnost*) mean "to enlarge young people's knowledge horizons" and "introduce them to the masterpieces of universal thought."<sup>465</sup> Even while educators were trained to monitor children's readings, they often advocated the image of cultivated socialist youth who read passionately and broadly, "adding, with each new book, another brick to the edifice of their future culture."<sup>466</sup> In late socialism, pedagogical journals and children's magazines typically favored reading over "time-wasting" habits - watching television, listening to the radio, going to the cinema - as a superior leisure practice devoted to the cultivation of the mind.<sup>467</sup>

Regularly published surveys (*anchete*) of reading preferences in pioneer magazines indicate that young people's cultural horizons had expanded significantly beyond narrowly construed progressive literature in late socialism. Much like Otilia, the socialist children and teens featured in magazines gorged on "valuable works of universal literature" that ranged from fairy tales, to adventure and travel novels for youth (Jules Verne, Mark Twain, Jack London, Daniel Defoe, Jonathan Swift, Rudyard Kipling, Robert Louis Stevenson, François Rabelais, or Lewis Carol), to literature on childhood and child heroes (Maxim Gorki, Charles Dickens), to nineteenth century classics like Alexander Dumas, Victor Hugo, Stendhal, or Honore de Balzac, and even poets like Walt Whitman, Reiner Maria Rilke, or T. S. Eliot.<sup>468</sup> Similarly, domestic authors - whether classic or contemporary, poets or novelists - were heavily represented in young people's preferences for children's adventure novels like Constantin Chirita's *Ciresarii*,

---

<sup>465</sup> Caroni, "Lectura in afara clasei," 115-8.

<sup>466</sup> Stanciu, *Literatura pentru copii*, 136.

<sup>467</sup> See, for example, "Cititul – principalul mijloc de munca intelectuala; Cartea – principalul factor de cultura," *Educatia pioniereasca*, June 1970, 9-15; Ion Fica, Mihai Mircescu, "Lectura si timpul liber al copiilor (9-12 ani)," *Educatia pioniereasca*, June 1971, 13-16; "Ce, cat, cum sa citim?" *Cutezătorii*, no 42, 1970; Serban Cioculescu, "Copiii si cartea," *Cutezătorii*, no 41, 1986.

<sup>468</sup> "A citi: cand, cum, ce?" *Cutezătorii*, no 10, 1967; "Fascinatia cartii," *Cutezătorii*, no 41, 1970; "Ce citim? Ancheta noastra," *Cutezătorii*, no 46, 1971; Elena Manescu, "Ce, cat, cand, cum citim?" *Cutezătorii*, no 12, 1986.

Teodoreanu's novels of adolescence, historical novels, contemporary best-sellers like Marin Preda's *Morometii* or Zaharia Stancu's *Descult*, and the literature of contemporary socialist realities.<sup>469</sup> Even if these survey answers did not thoroughly reflect actual reading preferences, being likely handpicked, they can nevertheless be seen as an indication of the wide range of domestic and universal literature that was considered suitable for socialist youth. With the notable exception of the contemporary literature of socialist realities, these reading preferences are largely confirmed by recent memoirs of socialist childhood.<sup>470</sup>

Fueled by the regime's rhetoric of cultural enlightenment, the broader interests in reading, literary culture, and creativity that often informed discursive productions of socialist patriotism were not only pursued in the privacy of one's reading room and leisure time, being similarly nurtured and enabled by the very state institutions envisioned by the regime as central sites in the circulation of authoritative discourse: pioneer magazines, literary circles and contests, or national anthologies of promising child writers. Charged by the regime with the patriotic education of socialist youth, these official institutions often enabled young people and their adult mentors to pursue genuine literary interests, artistic creativity, and activities that were not determined by the ideological strictures of the regime. Reflecting the paradoxes of late socialism similarly explored in studies of discursive regimes and education in the Soviet Union, these institutions did not only facilitate the instrumentalization of child productions in the service of

---

<sup>469</sup> Ibid.

<sup>470</sup> Paul Cernat and Ioan Stanomir, *O lume dispăruta*, 14, 35, 352-3. Children who grew up in rural areas in the 1970s and 1980s had an eclectic array of readings mainly because they rarely had access to age-appropriate books, mixing fairy tales and animal stories with novels by Esenin, Zola, Balzac, Tolstoy, and Flaubert or "trivial literature from the 'rotten' West" such as West German "Jerry Cotton" novels, romances, or western fiction. For accounts of rural childhoods and reading practices in late socialism, see Michael Astner and Mariana Codrut, In *Cartea roz*, 39, 40, 60-62.



the regime, but also created a climate conducive to the artistic affirmation and creative pursuits of talented young writers.<sup>471</sup>

Many writers, cultural, and political figures of the late and post-communist period, including some who would be at odds with the regime in the 1980s, attended literary circles in middle and high school, debuted in the pioneer press or anthologies of young writers, participated in annual creativity camps (*tabere de creație*) funded and monitored by the Pioneer and Communist Youth organizations, or won awards in the national literary contest, *Tinere condeie*, launched in 1971 and organized, from 1977 through 1988, under the umbrella of the nationwide festival *Cântarea României*. In his account of the role of these institutions during late socialism, Tudor Opreș, the mentor of a major literary circle in Bucharest, singled out tens of contemporary cultural personalities, out of the thousands of socialist youth attending literary clubs and camps, who spent their literary novitiate in such institutions or benefitted from the financial subsidies and forms of prestige associated with them.<sup>472</sup> Some of the most prominent include, for example, poet and university professor Monica Pillat, whose father had been a political prisoner in the 1950s, but who was also a talented member of the literary circle of the Pioneer Palace and was featured as a promising young poet and writer of children's literature in the pioneer press in the late 1960s.<sup>473</sup> Similarly, the poet, essayist, and art historian, Magda Cârneli, was active in literary circles and national creativity camps for pioneers since the late 1960s, later debuting in high school literary journals and being promoted in anthologies of young

---

<sup>471</sup> Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever*, explores the cultural domain and discursive regimes more broadly. For a discussion of education in particular, see Catriona Kelly, 'The School Waltz: The Everyday Life of the Post-Stalinist Soviet Classroom,' In *Forum for Anthropology and Culture*, no 1 (2004): 133. The author notes that, despite the increasing control and formalization of school life, late socialism witnessed a considerable amount of "voluntarist work with children" that depended on "the sacrifice and dedication of class teachers."

<sup>472</sup> Opreș, *Istoria debutului literar*.

<sup>473</sup> *Ibid.*, 169. See also "Carti, autori, si premii," *Cutezătorii*, 30, 1968.

writers.<sup>474</sup> Writer Matei Vișniec made his national poetic debut in the pages of the pioneer magazine, *Cutezătorii*, in 1972 with a set of eight abstract poems of self-introspection, which were praised by the reviewer for their “modernism” rather than their expression of patriotic devotion.<sup>475</sup> Anniversary anthologies such as *Children Sing the Country* (1979), which celebrated ten years of activity in literary pioneer circles, published not only numerous standardized patriotic compositions dedicated to the socialist motherland and the party, but also promising young writers such as Mircea Dinescu, featured with a poem on the Romanian-born sculptor Constantin Brancuși, or Magda Cârneci, with an essay on the painted Moldovan churches as the “essence of a strong people.”

The children and teens whose work was published in anthologies and journals subsidized by youth organizations were often initiated in literary culture and creativity at prominent literary circles such as the high school *Cenaclul Săgetătorul* run by Tudor Oprea in Bucharest. A poet and former political prisoner eventually reclaimed by the regime, Oprea also acted as the director of many national camps in literary creativity and presided over the selection of award winners in the *Tinere Condeie* contest. Exploring the activity of high school literary circles such as *Săgetătorul*, post-communist studies emphasize its paradoxical role in serving the political regime with literary creations that legitimized its rule while at the same time “promoting numerous young writers of talent over time” and being home to “the majority of Bucharest writers that have distinguished themselves over the past thirty years,” including some of the famous “*optzeciști*” (literally, the generation of writers debuting in the 1980s).<sup>476</sup> Former

---

<sup>474</sup> Ibid., 190-1.

<sup>475</sup> “Atelier Literar,” no 15, 1972. The one poem included because it ostensibly evoked the authoritative discourse of socialist patriotism, “Country,” would make any reader wonder what the connection between the lyrics and the title is. In the 1980s, Vișniec was a founding member of *Cenaclul de luni* (the Monday Literary Circle), which was briefly discussed in chapter I. During this decade, his plays would be systematically denied publication, prompting the author to immigrate to France in 1987.

<sup>476</sup> Cernat, “Tinere condeie,” 318-320.

members who attended the literary circle in the 1970s, like the poet and essayist Doina Uricariu, or younger generations who joined the circle in the 1980s and often debuted after the collapse of the communist regime, such as the poets and journalists Dan Mircea Cipariu, Sorin Gherguț, or Dan Pleșa, credit Opreș' mentorship and the engaging climate of the circle, where they found an audience for their works, with nurturing their literary talent, introducing them to the groundbreaking work of emerging postmodernist writers like Mircea Cărtărescu, and cultivating their enduring friendships.<sup>477</sup>

Although less prominent, literary circles in schools and Pioneer Palaces also attracted talented students and experimental educators who welcomed the more informal and potentially creative teaching environment. D.N., who led the literary circle at the Pioneer Palace in Bucharest in the 1970s and 1980s, recalls that she enjoyed significant freedom in organizing meaningful activities despite being expected to comply with various ideological requirements.<sup>478</sup> D.N., for example, had to draw up curricula that featured “political sessions, including themes about the motherland or about Ceaușescu and his activity” and teach several “model classes” on “political themes” for official inspections in the 1980s. To minimize mandatory ideological requirements such as the production of standardized patriotic compositions for national anthologies, D.N. had to resorted to various tricks or mobilizing strategies:

The volumes we published had to feature introductory chapters on the comrade [Nicolae Ceausescu], the she-comrade [Elena Ceausescu], and the motherland. Children found it easy to write poems about the motherland, but it was harder to write in the first two categories. So I would have them write a poem about a hero and one about their mother and then we would add a few words and a title for this section, but the rest of the volume included valuable works.<sup>479</sup>

---

<sup>477</sup> See, for example, Sorin Gherghut, “In apararea timpului pierdut,” *Observatorul cultural* (74) July 2001.

<sup>478</sup> Author interview (March 2012).

<sup>479</sup> Ibid.

For instructors like D.N., the formal compliance with such requirements enabled meaningful work with children. While official curricula satisfied supervisors and potential inspections, club activities rarely focused on rigid and age-inaccessible political themes in part because attendance was elective and ideological themes would have driven members away.

State-subsidized after school institutions like pioneer palaces offered significant advantages for experimental educators like D.N. In contrast to the crowded socialist classroom that accommodated over thirty students, club instructors typically worked with small groups of ten to fifteen students and experimented with various age dynamics by mixing high school with middle and primary school pupils so that younger members could learn from their older peers rather than gravitate around the instructor as the sole source of authority. For some former members, the opportunity of befriending older or more talented students was particularly appealing.<sup>480</sup> In the 1980s, when the new headquarters of the Pioneer Palace in Bucharest were opened for activity, D.N. was also consulted about the design of the classroom and opted for a round table format that minimized the intimidating set-up of the socialist classroom, where the teacher's desk was set on a slightly elevated platform, towering over the pupils' desks. Most importantly, club instructors could make the stimulation of literary creativity and critical spirit their priority since they were not constrained by the standardized content of school textbooks or formal school examinations that privileged literary erudition over creativity. As D.N. and former participants recall, the circle was typically dedicated to readings from personal compositions followed by feedback from fellow members. Sessions for younger participants included lessons in the quality of "literariness" that distinguished literary texts from other forms of communication and round table conversations on themes likely to be popular with children: children's games, nature, relations with parents, etc. Practical exercises ranged from attempts to

---

<sup>480</sup> Author interview with Adina, Bucharest (June 2013).

turn a piece of news into a sketch, compare literary and scientific descriptions of various objects, or use word associations and classical music as triggers for writing sessions. Former club members like Adina, who attended the literary club for several years, both before and after the collapse of the communist regime, saw in D.N. “an ideal mentor,” whose comments combined “a sharp critical spirit with a certain warmth that allowed you to make mistakes,” stimulating her students to write “valuable literature.”<sup>481</sup>

Besides the free instruction in palace clubs that served both children of intellectual families and those of modest means from working class backgrounds,<sup>482</sup> D.N. singled out two other state sponsored institutions that were instrumental in rewarding and mobilizing children for cultural activities in late socialism: the literary competition *Tinere condeie* and the national camps of literary creativity. Both these forms of discursive socialization for youth continued to be organized after the collapse of the socialist regime with the support of the Ministry of Education and the Writers’ Union, whose newly-elected president, writer Mircea Dinescu, was a former participant. Much like the late Soviet institutions - whether Pioneer Palace circles, local Komsomol organizations, research institutes, or boiler rooms - that Alexei Yurchak explored in his ethnography of post-Stalinism, the literary circles and creativity camps in late socialist Romania functioned as “deterritorialized spaces.”<sup>483</sup> Although made possible and subsidized by the socialist state, such sites were neither fully determined by the regime nor constituted themselves in opposition to it.

Organized under the auspices of youth organizations to provide children and teens who won the *Tinere condeie* contest with patriotic education on state sponsored vacations, the

---

<sup>481</sup> Ibid.

<sup>482</sup> The new Pioneer Palace inaugurated in the early 1980s, for example, was located in the vicinity of IMGB (Intreprinderea de masini grele), a major factory of heavy equipment in Bucharest, so that many of D.N.’s students came from working class families in the neighborhood.

<sup>483</sup> Yurchak, “Living ‘Vnye’: Deterritorialized Milieus,” *Everything Was Forever*, 126-157.

national camps of literary creativity, for example, enabled the emergence of alternative interests and communities that were not fully circumscribed by the regime, taking the form of milieus based on friendships, relations of mentorships with an emerging generation of postmodern writers who challenged the literary establishment, and literary creativity and experimentation. In a collaborative essay entitled “Adieu, dear camp!” and published in a volume of collective memories of childhood and adolescence under communism, writers Dan Lungu (b. 1969) and Robert Serban (b. 1970) reminisce about their experiences in the national camps in the late 1980s.<sup>484</sup> Although the literary camps of their recollections targeted primarily high school students, who were a few years older than the main actors of my dissertation, the writers’ experience is nevertheless indicative of the alternative possibilities and interests engendered by state-supported institutions.<sup>485</sup> For high school teens, the creativity camps of the 1980s epitomized the paradoxes of late socialism: while they were subsidized by youth organizations, participating youth experienced an unexpected degree of cultural freedom and literary creativity:

I participated in three editions of this camp and I cannot remember ever submitting “patriotic” poetry that followed “the party line” to ensure my selection, although the prospect of a free camp was extremely appealing for a high school student from a modest family. (...) Although “communist,” the camp represented for me – a young boy from Botosani – an unexpected opportunity to get acquainted with the latest literary trends of the time. As a high school student, I also experienced an indescribable sense of freedom, one that was hard to imagine in a totalitarian regime turned “dogmatic” in the 1980s.<sup>486</sup>

Administered by high-ranking youth activists who showed an appreciation for new literature and the Western musical hits of the time, the intensive camp activity – lectures on “Hi Fi Poetry” or “Poetry and Ghostliness,”<sup>487</sup> readings from Romanian and Western postmodernists, Dadaist experiments in creative writing, and sessions of literary criticism - unfolded under the

---

<sup>484</sup> Lungu and Serban, “Adio, tabara draga!” *Cartea roz*, 323-343.

<sup>485</sup> This is all the more so since both writers participated in local literary circles and the contest *Tinere Condeie* since middle school, crediting their mentors in such institutions with the early cultivation of their literary passion.

<sup>486</sup> *Ibid.*, 323, 325-6.

<sup>487</sup> The former was taught by poet Florin Iaru and the latter, “Poezie si fantomatica,” by Mircea Cărtărescu.

guidance of the *avant-garde* of Romanian literature at the time, the prominent poets, prose writers, and literary critics of the *optzeciști* or “jeans generation,” among which Mircea Cărtărescu, Florin Iaru, Mircea Nedelciu, or Ion Bogdan Lefter. Widely credited with revolutionizing Romanian literature with their anti-canonical attitude and harmonizing domestic literature with Western trends by adopting the self-referential, ironic, and eclectic modes of postmodernism, the *optzecisti* frequented student literary circles in major college towns.<sup>488</sup> The heart of the generation was *Cenaclul de luni* (Bucharest), which was led by the prominent literary critic Nicolae Manolescu, since its foundation in 1977 until 1983, when it was banned for “subversion” by the party secretariat of the University of Bucharest. The members of the circle attribute both the ban and their literary fame to the sustained criticisms of the group in *The Week*, a cultural magazine with nationwide distribution and one of the main proponents of protochronism.<sup>489</sup> By the time they came to mentor high school students in creativity camps, these writers had debuted with individual and self-sponsored collective volumes, but remained marginal – both institutionally and stylistically – in the literary establishment of the 1980s.<sup>490</sup> Under the mentorship of the *optzeciști*, most of whom were recent college graduates in their thirties, the creative and permissive climate of the camp for adolescent writers was conducive to

---

<sup>488</sup> One of the first generational portraits of the *optzecisti* as a poetically ground-breaking generation was articulated by their mentor, Nicolae Manolescu in the preface to a self-funded collective volume of poetry authored by four of the already consecrated members of the literary circle: Mircea Cărtărescu, Traian T. Coșovei, Florin Iaru, Ion Stratan, *Aer cu diamante* (Editura Litera, 1982). There followed, after 1989, a number of studies by the members of the generation such as Ion Bogdan Lefter, *Postmodernism. Din dosarul unei “bătălii” culturale* (Editura Paralela 45, 2002).

<sup>489</sup> See, for example, Mircea Cărtărescu, “Catre postmodernism. Generatia '80,” In *Postmodernismul romanesc* (Humanitas, 1999), 142-165.

<sup>490</sup> *Ibid.*, 143. Cărtărescu notes the extreme social marginality of the generation: no positions in colleges or literary journals were available, publication was difficult, and large cities were closed to young college graduates, who often commuted to rural areas. It was this sense of marginality that led some members of the circle to conceive of themselves as “outsiders” rather than “dissidents” of the regime in a manner reminiscent of the “deterritorialization” of late Soviet culture that was neither defined by communist activism nor outright dissidence. In a recent article, a former member of *Cenaclul de luni* lays out “the political poetics” of his generation under the motto “Neither Ceausescu, Nor Noica” to suggest the ambivalent position of those who were neither party loyalists, nor dissidents. See Bogdan Ghiu, “Cenaclul de luni, Republica literelor: pentru o democratie estetica,” in *LiterNet*, November 23, 2008.

literary activity both in organized lectures, writing, or discussion sessions and spontaneous groups who discussed poetry late into the night, striking enduring friendships:

This is how it went down: in the morning there were group discussions (poetry, prose) and/or conferences. I was an avid frequenter of Mircea Nedelciu's courses, but I also stopped by [Florin] Iaru's classes or a conference by Cărtărescu. In the afternoon, there were literary circles on previously announced readings that sometimes stretched well into the night. Very often, ad-hoc literary circles would spring up in the dorms at night, sometimes in parallel [with the formal circles] so you could easily move from one group to another. Discos also fired up at night and lasted until dawn. You had a chat on literature in a random room, you walked out for a dance, and so on.<sup>491</sup>

Conceived in principle as "communist" institutions meant to educate loyal youth, the national camps of the Youth Union enabled in practice forms of socialization, mentorship, friendship, and authentic creativity that were neither in line with nor, with the notable exception of Westernizing libertinism (unprincipled flirtations, late night drinking and dancing on Western hits), opposed to state intentions. The fervent experience of the camp often stimulated aspiring teenage authors to devour the literature of their mentors, write and seek publishing opportunities, and continue to correspond with their camp instructors on aspects of literary creation on their return home.<sup>492</sup> Close friendships often endured long after the conclusion of the camps, as alumni would recognize the work of former fellows published in literary magazines or see themselves published in collective volumes. The courses, conferences, and literary circles familiarized promising young writers with the latest literary trends of 1980s, among which postmodernism, and revolutionized their understanding of the possibilities of artistic creation, helping them expand their cultural horizons "beyond school literary culture."<sup>493</sup>

---

<sup>491</sup> Lungu and Serban, "Adio, tabara draga!" *Cartea roz*, 332.

<sup>492</sup> *Ibid.*, 339-40.

<sup>493</sup> *Ibid.*



## Conclusions

This chapter began by discussing how the ideological crystallization of the authoritative discourse impacted children's discursive socialization under Ceaușescu. Starting inquiry from a range of sites that were central to the circulation of official ideology and the discursive socialization of youth - literature classes, literary contests organized by pioneer magazines, literary circles in schools and pioneer palaces - the first section explored the generative principles of production of authoritative discourse that industrious children and teens penning compositions on love of country, pioneer morality tales, or science fictional fantasies of the communist future, typically mastered by middle or high school. Under the guidance of teachers, parents, or instructors in literary circles, socialist nerds became ideologically proficient, learning to align the self with the socialist and national collective by deploying an autobiographical voice, and appropriate stylistically and ideologically heterogeneous national idioms and forms of emplotment through the practice of "citationality."

Approaching young people's (re)production of authoritative discourse as a form of ideological competence rather than a sign of ideological indoctrination or complicity with the regime, the concluding section of this chapter examined the significance that discursive practices of socialist patriotism acquired for children and teens in the broader context of their pursuit of academic excellence and cultured life. It argues that children and teens did not only engage in discursive practices of socialist patriotism out of fear of reprimands in a context of political regimentation, but also because the performative engagement with ideology generated forms of symbolic power and possibilities of self-affirmation. To the extent that ideological competence depended on broad familiarity with canonical works of Romanian literature, it was envisioned as an integral part of larger agendas of "educatedness" and "culturedness" by children, parents, and

teachers who saw education as the key to social mobility. In state-subsidized institutions such as literary circles or creativity camps that emerged as “deterritorialized spaces,” being neither fully determined by the regime’s ideological agenda, nor constituting themselves in opposition to it, the formal compliance with ideological requirements also enabled young people and their adult mentors to pursue meaningful work and genuine interests in literary education and creativity.

## Chapter IV

### Small Comrades as Archeologists and Ethnographers:

#### Performing the Socialist Nation on Pioneer Expeditions

*“We do not only learn history by consulting documents, chronicles, and books, but also by foot. Seeing, researching, touching the vestiges of the past, we are overwhelmed by that lofty feeling of respect for everything useful, good, and beautiful that our predecessors have accomplished. We get a fuller understanding of the past, we prepare for the efforts demanded of us in the present, we strengthen our hope for the future, and we are fired up with love for the motherland (patria).” (Dumitru Almaş, 1973)<sup>494</sup>*

*“You should not only engage in exploration for your own pleasure, but also for the benefit of society. The goal of scouting is to initiate you in the truth and beauty that reside in nature itself, not in the pages of a book. (...) If you have enthusiasm, spirit of observation, as well as social and national conscience, you can collect folk songs and stories or unearth some of the old traditions of the people in every corner of the country. Work with enthusiasm but also with the care, delicacy, and piety owed to such old and holy remains.” (Nicolae Iorga, 1916, as quoted in *Educatia pionereasca*, 1969)<sup>495</sup>*

The ideal of raising “men of action” required that lofty protestations of patriotism be backed by civic actions and patriotic deeds to ensure an effective socialization of youth under Ceauşescu. Deeds and actions took diverse forms, ranging from sessions of socially useful labor, to participation in science and technology clubs, class visits to historical monuments, or numerous competitions in sports, civics, or national history. This chapter will focus on a pedagogically multivalent practice of late socialism – the pioneer expedition – which was simultaneously a form of patriotic, scientific and physical education, engaging children in both discursive and embodied practices of socialist patriotism.

At a time when the appeal of youthful activism and patriotism promoted by Scout organizations had waned in the west, thousands of Romanian pioneers ventured on steep mountain routes in the Carpathian Mountains in search of adventure, exploration, autonomy, and

---

<sup>494</sup> Dumitru Almaş, Ioan Scurtu, *Turism cu manualul de istorie*, (Bucharest: Editura pentru turism, 1973), 5.

<sup>495</sup> Nicolae Iorga, *Cercetaşii şi monumentele noastre de istorie şi artă* (Bucharest: Jockey Club, 1919), 7, 13.

friendship. Aged ten to fourteen, these budding archeologists, historians, ethnographers, and diary writers joined numerous pioneer teams organized by schoolteachers around the country in response to a state-sponsored campaign to promote “purposeful” and “patriotic” tourism for youth in the late 1960s. Among the educational programs spurred by this initiative was *Expedițiile Cutezătorii* (The Expeditions of the Daring), a nationwide pioneer competition that aimed to cultivate patriotism, collective spirit, initiative, self-reliance, and a “scientific materialist” worldview by mobilizing urban and rural youth on ambitious summer expeditions from 1969 through 1989. Decades after the collapse of Nicolae Ceaușescu’s widely-resented socialist regime, former teachers not only remember their involvement in the competition fondly, but also work to continue the tradition of patriotic youth mobilization by adapting it to the postsocialist context. Similarly, former child participants still recall their collective experiences with palpable enthusiasm. This is how Emil, a consummate mountaineer, who was thirteen when he played the role of geologist on his school’s team in 1978, recounted the impact of the expedition:

[The expedition] had the effect of a drug. After we returned, our gang (*gașcă*) would often get together in the summer break. We would meet in the evenings or in the afternoons and tell the same stories over and over again. We practically relived the expedition for the rest of our summer break and we stayed friends.<sup>496</sup>

*Expedițiile Cutezătorii* emerged at the intersection of renewed interests in patriotic education of domestic inspiration, teaching methods focused on active learning, and the promotion of tourism as both entertaining adventure and rigorous instruction. Echoing the radical ideological shift to national discourses, the institutional reform of the Pioneer Organization prompted youth activists and educators to find ways to overcome the “mechanical imitation” of the Soviet model and explore domestic traditions of patriotic education such as *Cercetășia*, the

---

<sup>496</sup> Author interview (December 2009).

Romanian Boy Scouts of the prewar period. The educational reforms of the mid-1960s further occasioned a wave of criticisms of pioneer and school activities perceived to be too rigid, formal, or age inappropriate, thus making room for teaching methods likely to enhance children's natural tendency to learn through experience or to learn by doing. Often justified as an expression of "scientific materialism," the interest in experiential learning dovetailed with a national campaign to promote purposeful and patriotic tourism, which targeted teachers and pupils, sponsoring school trips and expeditions, providing camping material, or encouraging the creation of tourism clubs in schools.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, pioneer expeditions aimed at instilling love of the motherland and developing a spirit of camaraderie by turning early teens into "purposeful tourists" who fulfilled the roles of historians and archeologists of their country's past, ethnographers of peasant life and folk art, and researchers of Romania's geography, geology, botany, entomology, or ecology. Unlike other practices of socialist patriotism - political rallies, artistic festivals, rituals and celebrations, - similarly initiated by the Pioneer Organization, *Expedițiile Cutezătorii* proved to be extremely popular with pioneers and schoolteachers, some of whom continued to organize expeditions after the collapse of the regime. Official statistics published annually by the major pioneer journal, *Cutezătorii*, indicate that the number of teams, typically including ten to fifteen pioneers between the ages of ten and fourteen, increased from a mere 100 to 200 teams in the early 1970s to an average of 1,500 to 2,500 teams in the late 1970s and the 1980s.<sup>497</sup> A retrospective volume on the evolution of the "republican competition" over its two decades of existence, concluded in 1988 that it had successfully become "a mass social phenomenon," "mobilizing approximately 30,000 teams and over half a million pioneers to

---

<sup>497</sup> "Rezultatele concursului *Expedițiile Cutezătorii*" In *Cutezătorii*, November 13, 1975; "Apel pentru *Expedițiile Cutezătorii*" In *Cutezătorii*, January 31, 1985; "*Expedițiile Cutezătorii*: Rezultatele celei de-a XVI-a editie," In *Cutezătorii*, January 30, 1986.

date.”<sup>498</sup> While the competition was hardly the mass phenomenon clamored by the official press, the fact that it engaged approximately 10% of schoolchildren over two decades, without being a mandatory pioneer activity, is nevertheless indicative of its popularity.

My interest in this practice was partly motivated by the intriguing match between the self-congratulatory language of the pioneer press regarding the appeal of pioneer expeditions and the genuine enthusiasm of former participants. These diverse actors also generated a wide array of resources, ranging from contemporary materials such as collective diaries, photo albums, and research collections produced by pioneer teams to retrospective sources such as interviews or published memoirs and monographs. In addition to state archival funds and children’s magazines, this chapter draws on a set of twenty expedition diaries, typically written by an appointed team diarist, ranging from fifty to two hundred pages in length, and illustrated by pictures or photo albums, two recently published monographs by organizing teachers, and fifteen individual and group interviews with former expedition members from urban and rural areas around the country.<sup>499</sup>

Elaborated collectively by child diarists and their teachers at a time of increasing ideological normalization, expedition diaries or travelogues are an intriguing and problematic source, but one that can nevertheless give insights into the nature and effects of discursive practices of socialist patriotism. Many expedition diaries were allegedly destroyed as exemplars of widely resented communist ideology in December 1989.<sup>500</sup> Covering much of the period from

---

<sup>498</sup> Ion Vlăduțiu, “Argument,” In *Expedițiile Cutezătorii, școală a iubirii de patrie* [Expedițiile Cutezătorii, the school of love for the motherland], (Bucharest, 1988), 12.

<sup>499</sup> Most of my other sources come from the archival fund of the Romanian Communist Party from the National State Archives in Bucharest (ANIC, Fond C.C. al P.C.R.) and the archival fund of its major children’s organization, the Romanian Pioneers, which is temporarily held in the basement of the former Pioneer Palace (currently the National Children’s Palace) in Bucharest.

<sup>500</sup> The former Pioneer Palace in Bucharest was the official headquarters of the competition, where expedition documents were sent for selection and evaluation by a national jury. In his quality of secretary of the national jury, Victor Constantinescu, the director of the Sports and Tourism club preserved the diaries and photo albums of award-

the early 1970s to 1989, the diaries I consulted at the former Pioneer Palace in Bucharest or collected during a field trip to Baia-Mare, Cluj, and villages in Sălaj were “salvaged” by teachers and preserved as testimonies of their professional legacy in personal, school, and pioneer palace archives.<sup>501</sup> Many were produced by teams which engaged in a record number of ethnographic and historical expeditions, and whose organizing teachers proved eager to share their memories of the expedition and locate former students for interviews. The interviews thus focused on teams whose expedition travelogues I could consult to allow for comparisons between contemporaneously recorded and recollected experiences.<sup>502</sup> Most of the twenty diaries were written by award-winning teams and thus constitute only a small sample of the tens of thousands of travelogues likely produced during the competition. While they might not be representative of the experience of the average team, they can however throw light on the constraints and possibilities of discursive production during late socialism.

Examining the emergence of socialist identity in the very process of social action and interaction, this chapter is rooted in an essentially performative approach. Inspired by anthropological studies of nationalist upbringing under socialist regimes, it explores how children lived and experienced the nation in reiterated practices and ritualized acts, sharing Woronov’s insight on contemporary China that “nationalism is understood as something children *do*, not something they *acquire*.”<sup>503</sup> In its attempts to produce children as nationalist-*cum-*

---

winning team. He provided me with fourteen diaries, indicating that these are the few he managed to “salvage” from protesters who took the Pioneer Palace by assault in December 1989.

<sup>501</sup> My research started with the set of fourteen diaries at the Pioneer Palace in Bucharest and branched off to locate former participants. During my attempts to contact the members of a team from Baia-Mare whose diary was still in the Bucharest archive, I came across two monographs of expedition ventures by two village school teachers from Salaj, who kept a rich local archive, where I eventually collected an additional set of fifteen diaries.

<sup>502</sup> Not all interviews followed this rule. In some cases, I conducted phone interviews with former participants who posted recollections of pioneer expeditions on private or public blogs of amateur hikers or alpinists, but could not locate the organizing teachers or the expedition diary.

<sup>503</sup> T. E. Woronov, “Performing the Nation: China’s Children as Little Red Pioneers,” *Anthropological Quarterly* 80 (2007): 655. Emphasis in the original.

socialist subjects, Ceaușescu's regime similarly engaged youth in embodied and discursive practices of socialist patriotism. Whether they covered a nationalized landscape by foot, lived life in the collective, played expert roles of historians, archeologists, and ethnographers of the nation's origins, or trained in discursive expressions of national community and patriotic sentiment, early teens participated in diverse performances of socialist patriotism on pioneer expeditions.

This case study further enables me to illuminate how state institutions such as the Pioneer Organization drew on both socialist pedagogies and nationalist traditions of youth socialization to cast practices of socialist patriotism as forms of leisure and instruction that appealed to teachers and their pupils. I argue that pioneer expeditions and the performances of socialist patriotism they enabled were neither mandatory, nor experienced as forms of coercion. Not only were certain modalities of agency enabled by the pedagogy of activism and voluntarism, which found expression in expedition requirements (such as playing expert roles of historians and ethnographers), but children's discursive and embodied performances opened regime visions of patriotism, community, and collective life to reinterpretation rather than merely reproducing them.

Focusing on *Expedițiile Cutezătorii* as a form of patriotic tourism in late socialism, my work is also in dialogue with recent histories of Russia and Eastern Europe, which examine similarities and differences between “the distinctive contribution of tourism to building socialist societies and creating socialist citizens” and its crucial role in broader projects of nation building and nationalization in Europe since the nineteenth century.<sup>504</sup> Emerging at a time when the Romanian Pioneers was actively recuperating domestic precedents of patriotic education,

---

<sup>504</sup> Anne Gorsuch and Diane Koenker, *Turizm: the Russian and East European Tourist Under Capitalism and Socialism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 8.



*Expedițiile Cutezătorii* drew on pre-socialist legacies of the role of youth as national agents and the centrality of tourism in the nationalization of space, revealing important continuities between the socialist promotion of purposeful tourism and the deployment of patriotic tourism in the service of nation building in the first half of the twentieth century. Furthermore, practices such as pioneer expeditions can help rethink histories of “turizm” in the Soviet Bloc, which single out late socialism as the period when distinctions between purposeful tourism and consumption or leisure-oriented tourism began to disappear.<sup>505</sup> By contrast, pioneer expeditions in socialist Romania did not only continue to affirm this distinction throughout the 1970s and 1980s, but also to prioritize “the consumption of experiences rather than things” in their emphasis on the opportunities for scientific exploration, patriotic feeling, and collective bonding.<sup>506</sup>

### ***Expedițiile Cutezătorii: National Tradition or Soviet Model?***

The Pioneer Organization, which initiated, administered, and monitored *Expedițiile Cutezătorii* was not singular in its efforts to shape strong bodies, inquisitive minds, unwavering wills, and loyal hearts through physical exertion, expert training, and exposure to natural beauty and historical heritage. Modern youth organizations, most famously the Boy Scouts and the Soviet Pioneers, experimented with pedagogies designed to link self-improvement with social and national utility since the beginning of the twentieth century. In part because of their internationalist aspirations, whether of an imperialist or socialist sort, and global following, both the Scouts and the Soviet Pioneers served as sources of inspiration for the Romanian Pioneers. Distinguished by their projects of remaking socialist, national, or imperial selves, youth

---

<sup>505</sup> Ibid.

<sup>506</sup> Ibid., 6.

organizations shared the focus on “youthful bodies – strong enough for hardy tourism and mountaineering, emotionally enthusiastic, and still moldable.”<sup>507</sup>

Interviews and the pioneer press indicate that the initiative to launch *Expedițiile Cutezători* in 1969 was a response to suggestions from teachers and pioneer instructors who had previously administered trips and camps and found them effective strategies to mobilize children of school age. In the political climate of national reaffirmation of the 1960s, leaders of the Pioneer Organization often encouraged teachers to openly share their successful experiences in pioneer work as a way to overcome the “mechanic imitation” of Soviet models. This rhetorical move was an attempt to own socialist values and practices by freeing them of association with Soviet hegemony and claiming them as “national traditions” of progressive education.

In practice, not only had many of the pioneer activities – camps, trips, etc. – that likely inspired the creation of *Expedițiile Cutezători* developed under the careful guidance of Soviet experts in the postwar period, but they also reflected a set of recognizably Soviet conceptions of childhood and life in the collective. As historians noted, “the camp was *the* fundamental site for Pioneer ritual and symbolic meaning” in the consecrated Soviet model, functioning as an initiation journey by displacing children from their home and quotidian environment:

Far from home and parental influence, amidst beautiful natural surroundings, the routines of family life were replaced by the Pioneers’ own routines. (...) The actual distance travelled mattered less than the preparation and dislocation from home it entailed. (...) Camps were to inculcate discipline, to improve the health of Pioneers and to accustom them to the life of the soldiers in the field.<sup>508</sup>

---

<sup>507</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>508</sup> Susan Reid, “Khrushchev’s Children’s Paradise: the Pioneer Palace, Moscow, 1958-1962,” *Socialist Spaces: Sites of Everyday Life in the Eastern Bloc*, eds. Susan E. Reid and David Crowley (Oxford, New York: Berg, 2002), 144.

In this view, camps had the potential to actualize Soviet theories of child rearing in well-organized and self-governing collectives developed by pedagogues like Makarenko and Krupskaja and Bolshevik conceptions of children as activists, leaders, and real revolutionaries.<sup>509</sup>

Much in the same way, *Expedițiile Cutezătorii* aimed at disciplining children's bodies and wills through exposure to nature and rigorous regimes, the rules of the competition set the duration of the expeditions at minimum ten days during the summer vacation and indicated that expedition routes were supposed to be at an altitude of at least 1700 feet and were to be covered by foot. Although mountain routes were preferred, expeditions in the Danube Delta or along rivers were also permitted. In addition, teams were expected to camp in tents, use mountain cabins for accommodation exclusively under extreme weather conditions, and operate as self-managing collectives in all spheres of camp life. Official regulations also stimulated a set of practices meant to strengthen the cohesion of the collective and the sense of belonging: choosing the team name, creating a badge to represent it, wearing team T-shirts, or practicing self-government by electing the team leader. In the intention of their organizers, pioneer expeditions aimed at building strong community bonds by removing children of ages ten to fourteen from family environments, and shifting their allegiance from their natal families to the Romanian Pioneers and the socialist regime.<sup>510</sup>

The search for domestic traditions of progressive education was not restricted to successfully transplanted (rather than mechanically imitated) socialist practices of Soviet inspiration. In the late 1960s, the Romanian Pioneers began considering its pedagogical and

---

<sup>509</sup> For accounts of the role played by theories developed by Anton Makarenko and Nadezhda Krupskaja in the socialization of children, see Catriona Kelly, *Children's World: Growing Up in Russia, 1890-1991* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007). On how these theories related to broader notions regarding the malleability of childhood and youth according to socialist principles, see Anne Gorsuch, *Youth in Revolutionary Russia: Enthusiasts, Bohemians, Delinquents* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000).

<sup>510</sup> The guidelines for the organization of the expedition were published annually in *Cutezătorii*. See, for example, the first set of rules in the journal's issue of May 15, 1969 and slight additions and changes in later regulations in the issue of April 10, 1975.

ideological affinities with *Cercetășia* of the early twentieth century in an effort to rewrite the history of the organization. This act of retrieval was likely enabled by an underlying affinity of pedagogical principle and methodology between pioneer and scouting movements. Not least because the Soviet Pioneers emerged out of the ruins of the banned Russian Boy Scouts in 1922, integrating some of its methods and leaders, Pioneer organizations and Scout movements in Eastern Europe shared a number of pedagogical principles, rituals, and activities, including the wearing of badges or uniforms and the deployment of marches and songs, military training, rough camping life, and closeness to nature.<sup>511</sup>

Published in 1969 in the same pedagogical journal that popularized *Expedițiile Cutezătorii* to a specialized audience of teachers and youth activists, the first article on *Cercetășia* openly encouraged educators to learn from scout activities the distinctive combination of physical education (building healthy and strong bodies), tourism (organizing mountain hikes or camping), cultural instruction (visiting museums and monuments), and intuitive or experiential learning by direct engagement in natural, historical, and ethnographic research.<sup>512</sup> In particular, socialist teachers were familiarized with a set of scouting principles that closely anticipated those informing *Expedițiile Cutezătorii*. If scouting was successful and worthy of imitation, historians of the Pioneer Organization argued, it was because it “satisfied children’s natural attraction for travel and discovery” and their “spirit of exploration and thirst for knowledge,” as well as because it responded to the children’s innate need “to belong to a

---

<sup>511</sup> Ann Livschitz, “Growing up Soviet: Childhood in the Soviet Union, 1918—1958” (PhD diss, Stanford University, 2007), 97-98. As the author argues, the Soviet Pioneers would also periodically return to scouting traditions in the 1930s and the 1950s in various attempts to revamp a “floundering organization.”

<sup>512</sup> Mircea Stefan, “Asociația Cercetășii României (I),” *Educația pionierască*, no 12, December 1969, 52-58.

group, offering opportunities for collective life and activities, integration in a disciplined daily regimen, practice of mutual help and solidarity, and unforgettable friendships.”<sup>513</sup>

Most importantly, the reclamation of *Cercetășia* provided socialist activists with a nationalist idiom of pre-socialist provenance. Articles on *Cercetășia* centered on the role played by prominent cultural authorities such as historian Nicolae Iorga in channeling scouting efforts towards the national cause by refashioned scouting trips as “disciplined roamings” and casting boy scouts as trained historians and archeologists of national vestiges or ethnographers of peasant life. Pioneers were urged to heed Nicolae Iorga’s call to young scouts in 1916 to serve as the vanguard of historical and archeological discoveries, paving the way for adult specialists.<sup>514</sup> Like the fourteen to eighteen male boy scouts in Iorga’s audience fifty years before, the much younger pioneers were to follow the historians’ detailed guidelines on how to train their spirit of observation, how to approach villagers with humility and curiosity, hiding their learned superiority as urban youth, how to distinguish local legend from historical fact, and how to keep a written record of their discoveries: “Every time you come across ruins, beckoning you from a distance, draw closer, take your pen and sketch them, mark their location, take all the measures if you have the necessary tools, and collect all the stories local folk tell about those remains.”<sup>515</sup> Pioneers would learn that expert training in historical and ethnographic practice as well as stenography, sketching, photographing, or musical note taking were not the only skills required of them. They were to heed Iorga’s advice to show patriotic passion and duty, approaching national treasures “with the piety and respect commanded by old and holy remains.”<sup>516</sup>

---

<sup>513</sup> Mircea Stefan, “Asociatia Cercetasii Romaniei (II),” *Educatia pioniereasca*, no 9, September 1970, 60.

<sup>514</sup> Stefan, “Asociatia Cercetasii Romaniei (I),” 58.

<sup>515</sup> Nicolae Iorga quoted in *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>516</sup> *Ibid.*

Detecting significant affinities between their newly articulated mission of patriotic education and *Cercetășia*'s contribution to "the people's struggle for national unity" and "economic and political independence" before, during, and after the First World War, pioneer activists found the historical conjuncture of Iorga's appeal to Romanian Scouts in 1916 comparable to that of the 1960s.<sup>517</sup> Iorga delivered his lecture in March 1916, on the eve of Romania's engagement in the First World War, in a climate of national demands for recognition of Romanian rights over Transylvania. Reflecting the prospects of national unity, Iorga considered imperative both the role of *Cercetășia* in seasoning male youth for "those stormy times that afflict all nations, but small nations in particular" and that of the *cercetaș* (scout) in scouting the yet unmapped and unexplored national landscape for historical vestiges of national relevance.<sup>518</sup> In pressing the national and social duty of the Romanian scout, Iorga reminded his audience that theirs was a small and besieged country, whose historical treasures were not gathered in the museums and palaces of major cities (as was the case in France, Germany, Italy, or Britain), but lay spread and hidden throughout the country in villages and village churches.<sup>519</sup> Were it not for the scouts' spirit of adventure and exploration mobilized in the service of the nation, the heroic past of the people would likely remain buried and unacknowledged.

In its reclamation of *Cercetășia*, the Pioneer Organization connected with a long (Eastern) European tradition of employing tourism for the young as a nation-building project, integrating it into its broader agenda of realigning the self with the socialist and national collective.<sup>520</sup> In particular, Iorga's reframing of the "scout ethos of social commitment, moral

---

<sup>517</sup> Ibid., 56, 58.

<sup>518</sup> Iorga, *Cercetășii*, 8.

<sup>519</sup> Ibid., 8-10.

<sup>520</sup> Since the nineteenth century, actors as diverse as German nationalist leagues in late imperial Austria, nascent tourist associations in turn-of-the-century Hungary, or authoritarian states in interwar Latvia, relied on tourism to forge or reinforce national identities. See the articles by Vari, Sobe, and Purs in Gorsuch and Koenker, *Turizm*.

uprightness, and stoicism” in terms of national duty had tremendous appeal for pioneer activists in the 1960s.<sup>521</sup> Educators readily embraced the notion of children and youth as national activists engaged in works of both social utility and educational value. They also welcomed the prospect of activities that encouraged child initiative and adventure while simultaneously recognizing the crucial role of adult guidance. Echoing Iorga’s concerns, pioneer activists as well as the prominent experts – historians, archeologists, ethnographers, etc. - who served on the national jury of *Expedițiile Cutezătorii* in the 1960s envisioned a national landscape still rich in undiscovered historical treasures. Much like the scouts’ “disciplined roamings,” pioneer expeditions would map the nation through purposeful tourism, “to uncover Dacian times, Roman remains, century-old fortresses, and the monuments of an ancient culture.”<sup>522</sup>

It is conceivable that Romanian pioneers might have engaged in historical, archeological, and ethnographic expeditions even without the noble example of their scout predecessors. The precedent, however, reinforced patriotic values and shaped pioneer activities in the 1960s, strengthening the focus on expert training in pioneer expeditions. *Expedițiile Cutezătorii* thus took shape at the intersection of pioneer and scouting traditions, both of which impacted the evolution of the Romanian Pioneers after the Second World War.

### ***Expedițiile Cutezătorii: Purposeful, Competitive, and Patriotic Tourism***

Not only did pioneer expeditions emerge out of the convergence of various traditions of socialist and patriotic education, but they encapsulated, and promised to solve, the contradictions between purpose and pleasure, compulsion and choice, as well as adult guidance and child initiative that informed youth socialization in late socialist Romania. Although these

---

<sup>521</sup> Kelly, *Children’s World*, 546.

<sup>522</sup> Stefan, “Asociația Cercetășii României (I),” 57.

contradictory goals coexisted in depictions of pioneer expeditions, the emphasis fell on pleasure, choice, and child initiative during the competition's initial years, while the late 1970s and 1980s marked a shift to purpose, duty, and adult guidance. Up until the mid 1970s, the official organizers appeared both more interested in genuine mobilization and more responsive to grassroots teacher initiative or practical concerns with funding, travel, or safety.<sup>523</sup> By the 1980s, the competition came to reflect the more general shift from modes of control based on material incentives to symbolic-ideological ones.<sup>524</sup> Not only did organizers encourage participants to rely on "self-financing" for expeditions, but the competition grew increasingly ideologically scripted as the organizers seemed to assume, or require, that socialist youth should find patriotic ventures inherently engaging. Beginning in the late 1970s, for example, each edition of *Expedițiile Cutezătorii* would celebrate a historical event of national significance, relying on ideology to garner mobilization and actively shape the participants' choices of expedition routes and goals.

The socialist regime's efforts to promote tourism for children and youth predated Ceaușescu's rise to power. Since the creation of the Pioneer Organization in 1949, youth instructors saw their pedagogical mission as "complementing" school instruction by ensuring that children spend their free time engaged in useful, instructive, and politically meaningful activities. In response to pervasive concerns that ideological activities were boring, dry, and age-inappropriate, youth activists were encouraged to draw on the Soviet model to promote practical, nature-based, and engaging pursuits that often blurred the border between work and play: voluntary work on school agricultural parcels, excursions for nature observation, as well as

---

<sup>523</sup> Organizers focused more on the experiential rewards and substantial awards of the competition and often instituted new awards for popular practices. Ethnographic research was first integrated along historical exploration in the "Dacian Shield" award and, by 1975, won its individual expedition track and award, "Miorita." Both my interviews and articles in the pioneer press show that award-winning teams received substantial prizes such as a memorable group trip to the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe up until the late 1970s.

<sup>524</sup> For a discussion of this general shift, see Verdery, "Eliminating Reformism," In *National Ideology*, 106-108.



“school trips” meant to enhance children’s love for the socialist motherland. Periodic party resolutions aiming to improve pioneer work throughout the 1950s advocated a utilitarian view of tourism as physical and patriotic education that can “mobilize hundreds of thousands of people and prepare strong and resilient workers for high productivity and defense of country.”<sup>525</sup> In 1956, the Romanian Workers’ Party dictated the introduction of “tourism sections” in Pioneer palaces and houses around the country alongside a system of rewards such as the badge of “Young Tourist” for active participants in club activities.<sup>526</sup> In 1958, another resolution entrusted the local councils of the Workers’ Youth Union with mobilizing pioneer units for a competition run under the banner “Let’s Explore Our Birth Place” by organizing “visits, trips, and pioneer rallies to explore the riches and beauties of their native village, commune, town, county, and region” and by engaging “in the preservation and conservation of monuments dedicated to the struggle of our party and people as well as that of other brotherly peoples.”<sup>527</sup>

Launched during a renewed national campaign to popularize physical education and tourism in schools in 1969, *Expedițiile Cutezătorii* not only continued the postwar tradition of purposeful socialist tourism, but also reflected the new discourse of the welfare state that legitimized expectations of pleasure, leisure, and consumption. The state campaign for school tourism debuted in 1968, when the Communist Youth Union was endowed with funds to run its own Youth Tourism Bureau, whose major goal was to democratize tourism by making it accessible to youth.<sup>528</sup> To facilitate the promotion of mass or social tourism, the educational

---

<sup>525</sup> *Îndrumător turistic. În ajutorul Secțiilor de Turism și Excursii din Întreprinderi*, (Bucharest: Imprimeria Ministerului Căilor Ferate, 1954), 3.

<sup>526</sup> ANIC, Fond C.C. al P.C.R. - Cancelarie, file 65/1956, “Măsuri menite să contribuie la îmbunătățirea educației politice a elevilor din scolile medii și a activității organizației de pionieri,” 10-11.

<sup>527</sup> ANIC, Fond C.C. al P.C.R. – Cancelarie, file 25/1958, “Hotărârea Plenarei a V-a a C.C. al U.T.M cu privire la unele măsuri pentru îmbunătățirea muncii organizației de pionieri,” 39-40. The competition was “*Să ne cunoaștem ținutul natal.*”

<sup>528</sup> “Turismul scolar in anul 1970: Interviu cu tov Iuliu Fejes, presedintele Biroul de Turism pentru Tineret,” In *Gazeta invatamantului*, March 6, 1970.

press popularized the Bureau's goals and programs as well as a complete list of the national network of tourist facilities available to teachers organizing trips, camps, or expeditions free-of-charge.<sup>529</sup> An integral part of the broader popularization of domestic and international tourism for the masses, pioneer tourism was a symptom of the genuine, if short-lived, attempts to legitimize Romanian socialism in terms of the promotion of a modern lifestyle, consumer culture, and leisure in the 1960s and early 1970s.<sup>530</sup> The promised democratization of consumption was often illustrated by guaranteed access to state-subsidized vacations in modern seaside and mountain resorts.

Echoing this language, much of the allure of expeditions for early teens and young teachers came from their popularization as “haiduk tourism” or historical adventures and jaunts in nature specifically distinguished from stuffy school environments.<sup>531</sup> Appealing to children's allegedly innate need for travel and adventure, the pioneer press sought to garner mobilization for the competition with an intriguing invitation: “How many of you have not dreamt of exploring the Amazonian jungle, the Saharan savannahs, and the Arctic, or of flying to some mysterious planet?”<sup>532</sup> The gap between dreams and realities, the journalist suggested, could be bridged by foregoing such exotic and cosmic destinations and “focusing on the magnificent landscape of our country” through participation in expeditions.<sup>533</sup> Indeed, while pioneer expeditions joined the growing number of activities meant to implement state-authored guidelines for the organization of children's vacations, they differed significantly from

---

<sup>529</sup> “Reteaua bazelor turistice din invatamantul de cultura generala” and “Reteaua taberelor de odihna,” in *Gazeta invatamantului*, March 20, 1970.

<sup>530</sup> For an account of how the promotion of consumption was used to both legitimate (post-Stalinist) socialism and eradicate backwardness, creating a modern citizenry in the early years of Ceaușescu's rule, see Jill Massino, “From Black Caviar to Blackouts: Gender, Consumption, and Lifestyle in Ceaușescu's Romania,” in *Communism Unwrapped: Consumption in Cold War Eastern Europe*, eds. Paulina Bren and Mary Neuburger (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 226-249.

<sup>531</sup> On “tourism haiducesc,” see “Pionieri pe cararile patriei,” in *Educatia pioniereasca*, January 1969, 14.

<sup>532</sup> Constantin Diaconu, *Expedițiile Cutezătorii*, (Bucharest: Editura Ion Creanga, 1973), 7-8.

<sup>533</sup> Ibid.

traditional activities such as pioneer camps (*tabere pionierești*) or the pioneer forums (*forumuri pionierești*) introduced in the 1970s. Both camps and forums were directly administered by youth activists of the Pioneer Organization and targeted teens occupying high positions in the pioneer hierarchy for ideological training in political leadership through highly regimented programs of activities and rituals: morning drills, rallies, political meetings and reports.

By contrast, interviews with former participants suggest that pioneer expeditions were neither mandatory, nor fully orchestrated by the state, remaining largely a grassroots activity dependent on the initiative and social capital of the organizing teachers, i.e. their ability to translate the rather dry official scripts into convincing arguments, inspire trust and confidence in parents, and motivate children.<sup>534</sup> Much like the widespread practice of school trips, i.e. shorter and less demanding excursions organized by dedicated teachers, expeditions reflected a phenomenon more broadly characteristic of late socialism in the Soviet bloc: the considerable amount of “voluntarist work with children” that depended on “the sacrifice and dedication of class teachers” at a time of increasing control and formalization of school life.<sup>535</sup> Most organizers were young teachers of physical education, history, geography, etc., who doubled as tourist guides and amateur archaeologists, ethnographers, hikers, or alpinists during summer vacations.<sup>536</sup> Professional or amateurish interest in history, geography, etc. would sometimes go

---

<sup>534</sup> Schools and pioneer palaces were expected to draw up their individual plans of pioneer activities, but instructors were free to choose between more symbolic pioneer activities such as cleaning up classrooms or class trips to the local movie theatre and more demanding activities such as mountain trips or expeditions.

<sup>535</sup> For the Soviet case, see Catriona Kelly, ‘The School Waltz:’ The Everyday Life of the Post-Stalinist Soviet Classroom, In *Forum for Anthropology and Culture*, no 1 (2004): 133.

<sup>536</sup> In the late 1960s, when the national promotion of tourism required the development of a “tourism industry,” including the professionalization of tour guides, articles in the national press complained about the shortage of tourist guides, most of whom were only available during summer vacations, because they had full time jobs as teachers or were college students. See Rodica Serban, “Studiul și perspectivele turismului impun reconsiderarea profesiei de ghid,” In *Scinteia*, January 4 1968.

hand in hand with genuine feelings of patriotism.<sup>537</sup> Furthermore, most teachers envisioned expeditions as meaningful pioneer activities they could embrace enthusiastically, distinguishing them from requirements they generally avoided or complied with only formally:

Even then [under communism], there were passionate teachers devoted to their calling. We didn't organize pioneer expeditions because they were imposed. Classes in political information (*informare politică*) were imposed and nobody put their heart and soul into them [laugh], but an expedition or an excursion was different. There was nothing political about it, it was life itself: we were cooking and hiking, it was a true slice of life."<sup>538</sup>

In contrast to the drudgery of political information classes that left little room for meaningful work with children, pioneer expeditions are not remembered as political pressures because they enabled teachers to activate meanings and interests that were not exclusively determined by inflexible state interpretations.

Teachers selected team members based on their enthusiasm, parental approval, and talent in a specific discipline from among pupils who met weekly in classes, clubs, and other school activities. Child participants came from diverse social backgrounds, ranging from families of doctors, teachers, engineers, to those of workers and cooperative peasants. Interviews suggest that early teens found the opportunities for adventure, independence from parental authority, friendship, romance, and even the chance to pursue an interest in history, ethnography, geography or hiking under the guidance of a trusted teacher appealing. Furthermore, being constantly on the move, expeditions required physical exertion and collective bonding, but did not easily lend themselves to pioneer ritual and political meetings. Ana, who participated both in an expedition and a camp when she was in middle school in Satu-Mare in the 1980s, contrasted

---

<sup>537</sup> A male respondent from Bucharest (b. 1968), for example, characterized his former teacher of geography as a "real patriot," pointing out that he organized regular school trips to historical sites during the 1970s, exhibited a beautifully carved wooden bust of Michael the Brave in his living room, tried his hand at patriotic poetry, and had recently (2009) called to wish him a Happy Great Union Day on the anniversary of the union of Transylvania with the Kingdom of Romania in 1918.

<sup>538</sup> Author interview (March 2010) with A.P., female, teacher of Romanian in Acas, Satu-Mare.

her experience of the expedition as “a great adventure” that enhanced her love of nature with that of the camp, memorable for its dry political training:

They [camp organizers] were extremely well-organized, they took us to factories and scheduled meetings and contests every day. Everything they did there seemed foreign to me. There were general convocations, when adult instructors lectured on socialist achievements and I thought I would fall asleep.<sup>539</sup>

The incentive to participate is further demonstrated by the willingness to contribute time and money to the venture. While expeditions were partly sponsored by the county councils of the Pioneer Organization, which ensured camping and research equipment (tents, sleeping bags, cassette recorders, cameras, etc.), free-of-charge accommodation in its national network of tourist facilities for youth, and financial support from a specially allocated fund for “tourism and vacation activities,” child participants still contributed an average of 300 lei in the late 1970s and 400 lei in the 1980s.<sup>540</sup> In response to the deepening economic crisis in the late 1970s and 1980s, the official regulations of the competition reflected the new policies of “self-financing,” encouraging pioneers to earn the necessary funds for travel, food, museum fees, or camping equipment through recycling programs or work in cooperative farms.<sup>541</sup>

Even though expeditions were often envisioned as opportunities for pleasure, adventure, and friendship, many teachers and youth activists also saw *Expedițiile Cutezătorii* as “a school,” continuing to affirm postwar views of purposeful socialist tourism. Much like Soviet “turizm” under Stalin, they presented pioneer tourism as “self-improving and socially constructive:

---

<sup>539</sup> Author interview (March 2010), Ana studied in a school in Acas, Satu-Mare.

<sup>540</sup> Although such support was, in principle, guaranteed by the organization, in practice, access to the organization’s resources also depended on the teacher’s social capital or connections. See, for example, the guidelines in the May 15, 1969 and May 17, 1973 issues of *Cutezătorii*.

<sup>541</sup> *Cutezătorii*, May 15, 1980. While industry was still protected by “soft budget constraints,” cultural enterprises – including some extracurricular programs as expeditions - were encouraged to partially sustain themselves. See Verdery, *National Ideology*, 108.

building knowledge, restoring and strengthening the body, encouraging patriotism.”<sup>542</sup> The pioneer press devoted numerous articles to the function of tourism, criticizing the practice of “spontaneous” tourism and arguing for a professionalization of socialist tourism through “planning, organization, and [professional] competence.”<sup>543</sup> Methodologies of history teaching reminded teachers of the educational mission of the school trip: “Do not make the mistake of treating the trip as an opportunity for light entertainment, vacation, or happenstance activity. Our goal is to develop our students’ scientific view of historical phenomena.”<sup>544</sup> It is in these contradictory terms of “purposeful adventure” that a former expedition participant described the impact of the campaign in his school in Buzău in the 1970s:

In the summer of ’78, I was on vacation, but a vacation in name only. Our gang (of children) still came to school, joining our teachers in debating, organizing, and honing the details of the grand adventure: “the Assault of the Carpathians.”<sup>545</sup>

According to its official organizers, *Expedițiile Cutezătorii* was born out of the realization that successful small-scale initiatives at the local level should be merged into a “national” and “unitary” competition that “unfolded within a common organizational framework” and “imposed a set of mandatory goals.”<sup>546</sup> Besides the obvious effort of centralizing and monitoring grassroots initiatives, *Expedițiile Cutezătorii* also turned them into a nationwide competition that guaranteed public recognition for winning teams and an array of collective awards and individual distinctions. It thus provided a way to engage children in the ubiquitous practice of “socialist competitions” (*întreceri socialiste*) and elicit “voluntary

---

<sup>542</sup> Anne Gorsuch, *All This is Your World: Soviet Tourism At Home and Abroad After Stalin* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 6.

<sup>543</sup> “Turismul se invata,” [Learning Tourism], *Educatia pioniereasca*, March 1969, 24-26; Mircea Trifu, “Turismul cel de toate zilele” [Our Daily Tourism], *Educatia pioniereasca*, August 1968, 44-47.

<sup>544</sup> Tatiana Gafan, *Metodica predării istoriei*, (Bucharest: Editura didactica si pedagogica, 1968), 235.

<sup>545</sup> See Gheorghe-Emil Pop’s post, “Amintiri” [“Memories”], on a public blog.

[http://alpinet.org/main/articole/show\\_ro\\_t\\_amintiri\\_id\\_2727.html](http://alpinet.org/main/articole/show_ro_t_amintiri_id_2727.html) Last accessed June 4, 2013.

<sup>546</sup> Constantin Diaconu, *Expedițiile Cutezătorii, școală a iubirii de patrie*, 16.

work.”<sup>547</sup> Envisioned as positive incentives to increase productivity and labor discipline, “socialist competitions” typically mobilized workers in factories or cooperative farms to surpass production norms and challenge other workers to emulate their example.<sup>548</sup> Although primarily organized among adult workers, “socialist competitions” also engaged “small citizens,” who competed with each other to raise graduation rates, break recycling norms (for paper, iron, and medicinal plants), or outperform each other in the traditional sessions of civic or “patriotic work” (*muncă patriotică*) throughout the 1970s and 1980s.

The emphasis on the “competitive” character of expeditions was also an attempt to evoke the postwar association of tourism with sports contests, envisioning the former as “active rest,” and thus as “physically demanding,” “disciplined,” and “competitive” rather than idly pleasurable.<sup>549</sup> To popularize this view, the Pioneer Organization issued a number of guidebooks such as *Pioneer, Explore Your Country!* (1968) that listed walking, hiking, biking (*cicloturism*), cave hunting (*speoturism*), and camping as the main forms of tourism.<sup>550</sup> Predating the competition only by a year, the brochure included chapters on recommended amounts of physical exertion by age (length of excursion, weight of backpack), practical information on reading the compass, tying knots, setting up tents, recognizing the traces of wild animals, etc., and a detailed guide of suggested historical sights.<sup>551</sup>

Encouraging teachers and their students to choose expedition routes that could not only shape athletic bodies, but also reenact national history and inspire patriotic sentiments, the

---

<sup>547</sup> For a detailed account of the role of “socialist contests” in engaging the population actively in the reproduction of the socialist regime in Romania the 1950s, see Kligman and Verdery, “Socialist Competitions,” In *Peasants Under Siege*, 245-248

<sup>548</sup> Unlike market stimulated competition assumed to divide capitalist societies into winners and losers, “socialist competitions” were intended as friendly contests that promoted cooperation and mutual help in the collective, contributing to socialist progress and essentially benefitting all.

<sup>549</sup> On the notion of “active rest,” see Gafan, *Metodica*, 236.

<sup>550</sup> Florian Frazzei, Tudor Opriș, Lucian Panait, *Pionier, cunoaște-ți țara! Ghid turistic*, (Bucharest: Editura politică, 1968).

<sup>551</sup> Ibid.

guidebooks and magazine articles published in the late 1960s and early 1970s both nationalized the landscape of expedition routes and naturalized the nation.<sup>552</sup> County by county, guidebooks mapped in significant detail, but in an increasingly standardized manner, the sites of national history and memory: the active archeological digs or ethnographic areas that served as proofs of ethnonational continuity, the ruins of Dacian and Roman civilization as materializations of the myths of ethnogenesis, and the legendary sites - medieval fortresses, palaces, castles, or memorial homes - of a long ancestry of heroes that included Dacian kings, medieval rulers, and figures of class warfare who fought for social and national liberation, embodying the ideals of national unity and continuity. In their turn, the network of expedition routes crisscrossing the country every summer anchored national myths in an identifiable natural landscape that centered on the Carpathian Mountains and their ramifications into the historical provinces of Transylvania, Maramureș, Moldavia, and Wallachia. The projection of national myths, heroes, and virtues on the very landscape covered by foot by expedition teams effectively naturalized the Romanian nation by lending it a distinctive sense of historical continuity and wholeness.

Given its mission of translating the party agenda into practice, the leadership of the Pioneer Organization envisioned the reclamation of national history on pioneer expeditions as a legitimating tool of the socialist regime. As ideologically committed youth, pioneers would embody the communists who saw themselves as “continuers” of “all those who contributed to building up our nation” proving that “only under socialism, can the nation come to full

---

<sup>552</sup> For a discussion of the “naturalization of the nation,” see Oliver Zimmer, “In Search of Natural Identity: Alpine Landscape and the Reconstruction of the Swiss Nation,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 40, 4 (1998): 637-665. On the spatial dimension of the modern conception of the nation and the role of tourism in nation-building projects in Europe since the nineteenth century, see Pieter Judson, “Frontiers, Islands, Forests, Stones: Mapping the Geography of a German Identity in the Habsburg Monarchy, 1848-1900,” in *The Geography of Identity*, ed. Patricia Yaeger, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 382-406; Alexander Vari, “From Friends of Nature to Tourist Soldiers: Nation Building and Tourism in Hungary, 1873-1914, In *Turizm*, 64-81.



flower.”<sup>553</sup> In keeping with the organization’s attempts to encourage a reclamation of the past in the service of the socialist present, the competition aimed to familiarize pioneers not only with “the major sites of the multi-millennial history of the Romanian people,” but also with “the contemporary achievements of the working people who, under the guidance of the party, are building a multilaterally developed socialist society on Romanian land.”<sup>554</sup> The attempt to control the meaning of the nation in expeditions intensified in the late 1970s and 80s. Paralleling the crystallization of historiographic theses in official discourse, organizers began to dedicate each edition of *Expedițiile Cutezătorii* to major national events starting in 1978. While some editions celebrated traditionally socialist landmarks such as “40 years since the antifascist and anti-imperialist Revolution of social and national liberation in August 1944” in 1984, others reflected the new national idiom. The first dedicated editions of 1978 and 1979, for example, joined the numerous public celebrations meant to honor “2050 years since the creation of the centralized, unitary, and independent Dacian state under Burebista.”

Much like the communist party, the Pioneer Organization “authorized the national language,” but could not control the meanings it acquired in expedition performances around the country. As Verdery noted, the party leadership might have reintroduced national symbols, but the “symbols were always open to other uses” by competing groups of public intellectuals, creating a deeply contested field of national ideology.<sup>555</sup> Conceived in an atmosphere saturated with national discourses, expeditions echoed the indigenist theories of national identity - with their focus on the local production and consumption of values - and their specific manifestations

---

<sup>553</sup> Nicolae Ceaușescu’s speeches from 1965 and 1966, quoted in Verdery, *National Ideology*, 117, 118.

<sup>554</sup> *Cutezătorii*, April 10, 1975.

<sup>555</sup> Katherine Verdery, *National Ideology Under Socialism: Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceaușescu’s Romania* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 132.

in myths of ethnogenesis, protochronism, or the concern with national continuity and unity.<sup>556</sup> However, a survey of expedition routes and research goals shows that they did not always remain true to the party version of history, singling out the national rather than the working class figures featured in the socialist pantheon of heroes, engaging in regional research that stemmed from an interest in local history, and sometimes succumbing to the idealization of the past and failing to make the desired connection between the national past and socialist present.

In appointing a national jury of prominent experts that would select and evaluate the scientific and patriotic success of expedition teams, pioneer activists representing the organization further aimed to impose their interpretation of the nation. In practice, the jury included experts of diverse ideological and disciplinary backgrounds: regime historians like Dumitru Almaş, Constantin Preda, a researcher at the Institute of Archeology, ethnologists such as the Moscow-educated Ion Vlăduţiu, the director of the Institute of Ethnography and Folklore in Bucharest, Gheorghe Focşa, the director of the Village Museum in Bucharest, who was trained in the interwar tradition of militant sociology initiated by Romanian sociologist Dimitrie Gusti, geographers such as Marcian Bleahu and Ion Pişota, both of whom were well-known college professors at the University of Bucharest, and writers such as Aurel Lecca or Ion Grecea.

Another means of making the nation socialist and ensuring that expeditions were forms of purposeful and patriotic tourism was the promotion of a Marxist Leninist “science of the nation.” Popularized as expressions of “scientific materialism,” expeditions were designed to cultivate the children’s “interest in scientific exploration and explication,” “spirit of observation, research, and analysis of natural, economic, and historical or social phenomena,” as well as

---

<sup>556</sup> For a discussion of protochronism as arguments about the originality of Romanian cultural production and its alleged anticipation of more widely publicized achievements in Western culture, see Verdery, *National Ideology*, 167-214.

“scientific view of the world and life.”<sup>557</sup> Expedition tracks in the natural sciences would not only train pioneers in geography, geology, botany, zoology, hydrology, and entomology or sensitize them to aspects of nature protection and conservation, but also employ scientific means to reveal the “objective” beauties of the motherland. Most importantly, the competition also included tracks specifically dedicated to the scientific exploration of history and folklore: “The Dacian Shield” prize for teams “conducting extraordinary research in the history of the motherland” and “Miorita” for “remarkable collections and studies of ethnography and folklore.”<sup>558</sup>

Members of the national jury followed Iorga’s model of mentorship, publishing a number of pocket size guidebooks designed to train pioneers in the science of the nation and accompany them on expeditions. While Iorga recommended “disciplined roamings,” socialist guidebooks promised to make the tourist experience “rational and efficient,” teaching pioneers the virtues of “rigorous selection of [research] sites,” “efficient use of time,” and “scientific discernment and systematic selection” of historical or ethnographic values.<sup>559</sup> Volumes such as *Tourism with the History Textbook* (1973) by historians Dumitru Almaş and Ioan Scurtu or *Tourism with the Ethnography Textbook* (1976) by Ion Vlăduţiu advocated “scientific tourism” as a form of experiential learning: “Engage in excursions to spend time usefully and you will never forget what you saw, understood, learned, and loved.”<sup>560</sup> Historians encouraged students “to observe, research, and caress the vestiges of the past”<sup>561</sup> while ethnographers counseled pioneers to overcome the “passive contemplation” plaguing the occasional tourist and “engage in direct

---

<sup>557</sup> “Expediţiile Cutezătorii,” In *Cutezătorii* issues of April 12, 1973; July 17, 1975; May 15, 1980.

<sup>558</sup> *Cutezătorii*, April 10, 1975.

<sup>559</sup> Ion Vlăduţiu, *Turism cu manualul de etnografie*, (Bucharest: Editura sport si turism, 1976), 12.

<sup>560</sup> Dumitru Almaş, *Turism cu manualul de istorie*, 6. Almaş was a prolific historian of the regime, famous for popularizing history for children in an impressive number of short stories, illustrated historical narratives, and scripts for historical comic strips regularly published in pioneer magazines.

<sup>561</sup> *Ibid.*

interaction with the creators of popular culture.”<sup>562</sup> As we will see, in their emphasis on the efficacy of “direct” and “unmediated” encounters with social and historical phenomena, scholars promoted an empiricist agenda of pioneer research that reproduced the epistemological regimes of communist history, archeology, and ethnography as well as the interwar legacies these disciplines revived in the communist period.

In order to mobilize child participants in the scientific research of the nation, official guidelines required that pioneers be assigned specific roles - diary writer, photographer, ethnographer, archeologist, historian, geologist, hydrologist, botanist, or medical expert - to play during the expedition.<sup>563</sup> Role playing on expeditions did not only promise to develop a sense of individual responsibility and initiative to be mobilized in the service of the collective, but it also recalled Soviet conceptions of children as small activists or “young citizens.” The pioneer press emphasized the grown-up positions of scientific expertise available to pioneers in its efforts to popularize expeditions to early adolescents: “Imagine being an archeologist at 13 or 14! Imagine mastering the skill of handling sophisticated digging instruments while specialists invest all their attention and trust in you! Imagine being fortunate to make important [historical] discoveries!”<sup>564</sup> As few children were truly versed in their allotted expert roles, the practice of assigning tasks during the expedition was supposed to train and invest them with expertise, eventually preparing pioneers for a fully productive adult life as socialist citizens.

Interviews suggest that some teams allowed children to either choose or refuse expedition roles based on their interests, while other teams encouraged their members to accept expert roles

---

<sup>562</sup> Vlăduțiu, *Turism*, 12.

<sup>563</sup> “Expedițiile Cutezătorii,” *Cutezătorii*, May 15, 1980.

<sup>564</sup> “Micii arheologi ai Sargedavei,” [Sargedava’s Small Archeologists], In *Cutezătorii*, July 3, 1986. For all his emphasis on scientific expertise, Iorga viewed boy scouts as educated amateurs, requiring them to report any discoveries to adult experts and warning them, for example, “not to do more harm than good by engaging in high school level archeology.” See Iorga, *Cercetașii*, 20.

that were assigned by teachers based on their assessment of the student's talent. In general, early teens entered expert positions with a mixture of playfulness and earnestness, being eager to meet adult expectations. Reflecting on the blurred border between adult assigned duty and child play or sense of importance, Cristi commented on his team's experience in 1973:

It is great when you can simultaneously play and accomplish relatively serious tasks. For us, this felt very much like child play. We were each appointed tasks we really enjoyed. If they asked me, for example, to write the diary, nothing would've come of it. But Maria was really talented and she truly enjoyed writing. The fact that the diary turned out well and she was praised for it was wind at her back.<sup>565</sup>

Many of my interviewees similarly associated role-playing with a sense of self-worth and importance. This also happened in cases when pioneers lacked previous training and their "expert" performances were not always successful because the assumption was that they would learn the trade on the job. The following sections will explore children's efforts of self-presentation, the character traits and abilities they practiced, and the attendant sense of agency they experienced in the process of applying themselves assiduously to the assigned tasks of diarists, historians, archeologists, or ethnographers during the expedition. Although discursive and embodied practices were closely related, I will first focus on the dialogical process of diary writing and then explore the impact of embodied performances of socialist patriotism and their representation in expedition diaries.

### **Discursive Performances of Socialist Patriotism in the Autobiographical Mode**

The task of representation was an integral part of the successful accomplishment of expedition goals. According to official regulations, teams were instructed to appoint a diarist to record their experiences "accurately, in a succinct but expressive manner," in a daily log that

---

<sup>565</sup> Group interview by author (July 2010). Cristi, who is now a doctor, was thirteen years old when he participated in an ethnographic expedition in 1973. Partly because he came from a family of doctors, he was appointed the role of medical expert.

took the form of a collective diary (*jurnalul expediției*) or travelogue (*jurnal de bord*).<sup>566</sup> On return from the expedition, diaries were first submitted to the county councils of the Pioneer Organization, which sent the most accomplished team diaries to the national jury in Bucharest alongside a photo album and relevant research collections of ethnographic artifacts, historical material, or, as the case might be, rocks, plants, and insects. Often integrating the visual material with the written text, the diary was the only record of the expedition and the main guarantee of its authenticity and validity. Suggestively named “the mirror of the expedition,” the travelogue was supposed to be completed during the expedition, accruing evidence of collective activities, national sentiment, and life in the collective (cooking, camping, playing) in order to give an unbiased, faithful, and accurate account of the expedition.

Interviews as well as visible “correcting” interventions in the text (erasures, elisions) indicate that expedition diaries were often the result of a collaborative effort, undergoing a censoring process before submission. The most common editing authorities were teachers and parents who joined in the effort to give diaries a politically correct discursive form and fix spelling, grammar, or vocabulary mistakes.<sup>567</sup> Teachers in particular realized that diaries were not only read as child productions, but also as records of their educational success and political credentials that could have serious consequences on their professional career.<sup>568</sup> Some diaries I consulted, but excluded from my analysis of discursive expressions of socialist patriotism, indicate an extreme degree of adult intervention that essentially elides child participation: they

---

<sup>566</sup> Regulations for pioneer expeditions published in *Cutezători*, May 15, 1969.

<sup>567</sup> Diaries that went through the national process of selection in Bucharest also bear traces of another layer of intervention, by individual jury members, who marked their laudatory or critical comments on the margins, giving readers a sense of how discursive expressions of socialist patriotism and expertise were evaluated. Finally, excerpts from award-winning travelogues published in *Cutezători* often reflect a further stage of ideological correction.

<sup>568</sup> Ilie Popescu from Salaj mentioned that he received reprimands for an expedition diary focused on visits to wooden churches from the local county of the Pioneer Organization.

are submitted in typed rather than hand-written format or exhibit a neat, adult hand-writing and a fluent, scientifically elaborate, and grammatically flawless language.

My interviews, however, offered a more balanced picture, indicating that adults usually worked with the child's text, correcting, adding, and giving finishing touches. Aurel Medve from Sălaj suggested that he often edited diary accounts since village pupils generally lacked the rich vocabulary and literary talent of urban children.<sup>569</sup> Gheorghe Makara from Baia-Mare commented on the impact of internalized censorship on diary writing, pointing out that episodes reported by the team diarist "with enthusiasm" on the road, such as the team's meeting with the Archbishop of the Rohia Monastery in 1973, were *preventively* censored on return from the expedition out of uncertainty over their ideological propriety: "We decided not to submit the audio recording with the archbishop. Then, we shamelessly tore the page away from the diary and rewrote it."<sup>570</sup> Asked how she selected the chronicler, Sarolta Vaida, a teacher of Romanian and former journalist, singled out the diarist's literary talent, but also acknowledged her role in stimulating the diarist to give a polished and "authentic" account of the expedition:

Of course, she [Maria] enriched some passages later because one can't expect to give a full account 'on the road.' The lived experiences (*trăirile*) were certainly fresh, but the language could be further polished. While I was revising the journal, page-by-page, I would always urge her [the diarist] 'How about this passage? How else could you phrase it?' So that the account would be as authentic as possible.<sup>571</sup>

As suggested, former teachers and child participants often commented during interviews on the talent and dedication of their team diarists, on their "spontaneous" or "enthusiastic" recording of expedition events, and sometimes rejected the suggestion that their diary could be an adult fabrication. The diarists I interviewed also recounted the sense of pride at being

---

<sup>569</sup> Author interview (July 2010). Aurel Medve is a teacher of geography in the village of Naprădea, Sălaj.

<sup>570</sup> Author interview (July 2010). Gheorghe Makara was a teacher of drawing in Baia-Mare. The teacher suggested there was not a particular aspect that was problematic in the original account (hence withholding the entire audio recording), but a general sense that the account might not be ideologically correct.

<sup>571</sup> Author interview (June 2010). Sarolta Vaida was a teacher of Romanian in Baia-Mare.

appointed diary writers, the feeling of guilt when they failed to work consistently on the expedition, and recognized some of their preferred literary expressions in the written accounts even as they identified passages (either elaborate scientific accounts or standardized ideological language) they could not have authored without the guidance of their teachers.

Acknowledging the degree of adult intervention is important because, as historical or social actors, children have been traditionally spoken for, making it difficult to locate “unmediated” forms of self-expression in order to recuperate children’s voices. This common adult mediation is further augmented in socialist regimes such as Ceaușescu’s Romania by the imperative of ideological correctness repeatedly enforced by institutionalized and self-censorship. I propose an alternative methodological approach that does not examine expedition diaries as either true or false expressions of an inner self. Rather than discard them as “biased sources” or attempt the impossible feat of disentangling the child’s voice from that of the adult and larger society, my intention is to use diaries as evidence of the dialogic and collaborative process of learning to “speak Bolshevik.” In this sense, expedition diaries can give insights into the process of being socialized in the discourse of socialist patriotism by practicing a narrative voice that realigned the self with the collective and centering one’s self-presentation on notions of civic duty and responsibility, national loyalty, scientific curiosity, or spirit of camaraderie.

The rather small body of literature addressing the socialization of children in Soviet Russia and the Eastern Bloc disqualifies practices of individual alignment with the collective as strategies of social homogenization and ideological indoctrination. Whether they examine the collective activities promoted by Pioneer organizations,<sup>572</sup> the disciplining strategies employed in

---

<sup>572</sup> Ildiko Erdei, “‘The Happy Child’ as an Icon of Socialist Transformation: Yugoslavia’s Pioneer Organization,” *Ideologies and National Identities. The Case of Twentieth-Century Southeastern Europe*, eds. John Lampe and Mark Mazower (Budapest: Central European University, 2004) and Katalin Juttau, *L'enfance Embrigadée Dans La Hongrie Communiste: Le Mouvement Des Pionniers* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2007).



kindergartens and primary schools,<sup>573</sup> the propagandistic content and intent of children's literature,<sup>574</sup> these studies cast children as passive recipients of masterfully controlled and largely successful campaigns of ideological indoctrination and homogenization. The collaborative process of learning to align the self with a collective defined in simultaneously socialist and national terms, I argue, did not preclude discursive agency, but it encouraged diarists to derive a sense of self-worth and accomplishment primarily from their mastery of authoritative discourse and only secondarily from the expression of personal experience.

Like the school compositions explored in the previous chapter, *jurnalul expediției* can be read as evidence of a pedagogy of socialist citizenship that relied on autobiographical genres to elicit practices of aligned socialist subjectivity. Histories of the genre in the Soviet context indicate that socialist ideologues envisioned the diary as a quintessentially bourgeois genre that had to be radically refashioned before it could be safely employed as a vehicle of revolutionary social change. Appropriating the diary, they sought to rid the genre of its alleged "bourgeois" conventions, particularly the expectation of privacy and the role of the diary as a purely self-reflective medium, which carried the dangers of individualism, narcissism, and social inaction.<sup>575</sup> In the 1940s and 1950s, the postwar magazines of the Pioneer Organization, for example, included articles that read like daily entries from the "notebooks" of fictional schoolchildren who kept records of "small daily events" alongside life-altering "great happenings" (the proclamation

---

<sup>573</sup> Lisa A. Kirschenbaum, *Small Comrades: Revolutionizing Childhood in Soviet Russia, 1917-1932* (New York: Routledge, 2001) and Catriona Kelly, "Shaping the 'Future Race': Regulating the Daily Life of Children in Early Soviet Russia," *Everyday Life in Early Soviet Russia. Taking the Revolution Inside*, eds. Christina Kiaer and Eric Naiman (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006).

<sup>574</sup> Paul Cernat, Ion Manolescu, Angelo Mitchievici, and Ioan Stanomir, eds. *Explorări în comunismul românesc*. vol. 1, 2, 3 (Iasi: Polirom, 2004, 2005, 2008).

<sup>575</sup> For an elaborate discussion of Soviet appropriations of the diary, including its use as a pedagogical tool of language development and self-transformation in Soviet schools, see Jochen Hellbeck's chapter, "Bolshevik Views of The Diary," in *Revolution on My Mind: Writing a Diary Under Stalin* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006), 37-52. The terms of the debate in the Soviet context are central to understanding the conditions in which the genre was appropriated in the immediate postwar years by Romanian publications, which were widely based on translations from Soviet literature.

of the Republic, the 1948 Reform of Education).<sup>576</sup> Introducing their young readership to the practice of aligning personal life with political events, such articles meant to teach children that the only guarantee of a full and purposeful life lay in its synchronization with revolutionary historical changes. The pioneer press was also instrumental in redefining the expectation of privacy as diaries featured in their stories were not just the children's "best friends" and "good listeners," but also the site of dialogue with authority figures, who were expected to read the diaries out of parental concern for the children's revolutionary education.

By far the most widely represented genre in the early pioneer press was the travel diary, a genre that could best be deployed as a pedagogical tool of self-transformation. Summer camp diaries, for example, typically featured young schoolchildren who were gradually cured of excessive (bourgeois) attachment to their natal family and its negative impact on their character (manifested in individualism, selfishness, and laziness) through camp experiences of life in the collective, collegial friendships, stimulating physical exercise, hard work, and play.<sup>577</sup> At the conclusion of the camp, not only was the main character transformed into a toughened, independent, and altruistic socialist person, but the secretly held diary also metamorphosed into an open letter that shared the child's miraculous change with friends and family.

Much in the same way, the expedition diary was not envisioned as the private record of a lone individual, but as the site of a transformative synergy of self and collective that could only be successfully achieved in a dialogic and collaborative effort. In their attempt to engage children in systematic writing during the expedition, some teachers enforced the expectation of collaboration, requiring all team members to keep written track of their respective

---

<sup>576</sup> Alexandru Sen, "Petruț isi răsfoieste caietul" ["Petruț Browses Through His Notebook"], In *Pogonici*, January 5, 1949.

<sup>577</sup> Luiza Vladescu, "In colonie (Din jurnalul lui Costel, elev in clasa a III-a primara)" [In Summer Camp: the diary of Costel, student in the third grade], In *Pogonici*, July 6, 13, 20 and August 3, 1949; "Sandu la colonie", *Pogonici*, July 20, 1949.

accomplishments and assembling these disparate notes into a final draft on return from the expedition. In practice, diarists often convened with other team members and the organizing teachers both during and after the expedition for “work on the diary,” which included collective sessions of remembrance with team members, transcription of rough drafts completed during the expedition, the diarist’s further polishing of the text or integration of teachers’ corrections. In addition, many diarists were likely encouraged by their teachers to see their task as a democratic endeavor that reflected the team’s collective voice and activity:

This year, I was entrusted again by my colleagues with the task of transcribing our impressions of the expedition on these pages, a rather difficult task since every evening on the route, I will have to listen to everybody, listen to myself, and listen to the nature in the midst of which we will spend the following three weeks.<sup>578</sup>

Appointed chronicler for a team that had previously won “The Golden Pen” prize for the best expedition diary, a sixth grader evoked his commitment to the team in order to assure the reader that he could handle the task despite being so young and inexperienced:

Everybody says the chronicler has the most difficult task on an expedition, but this won’t be the case with our team. It is only hard when you are struggling to discover and describe things on your own. I, however, cannot complain since I can rely on my colleagues’ help. I promise to always ask for their help when I need it and to never be sloppy. I will make sure the diary includes information about all their domains of activity and I will describe their activity exactly as it happens, second by second, for the entire sixteen days of the expedition.<sup>579</sup>

---

<sup>578</sup> Team “The Mountain Deers,” (Pioneer Palace, Bucharest), Untitled diary of expedition along the River Olt (1972). Archive of the “Sports and Tourism Club” of the former Pioneer Palace, Bucharest (currently the National Children’s Palace). Hereafter, APPB. The materials in this archive were consulted courtesy of Victor Constantinescu, former pioneer instructor and current administrator of the “Sports and Tourism” club. Interviews with former child participants also suggest that diarists convened with other team members and the organizing teachers for “work on the diary” both during and after the expedition. “Work on the diary” included collective sessions of remembrance that mobilized other team members besides the diarist, transcription of rough drafts completed during the expedition, the diarist’s further “stylization” of the text or integration of anthologized quotes, and teachers’ additions and corrections.

<sup>579</sup> Team “Dacia Felix,” *Jurnal de Bord al echipajului “Dacia-Felix”* (1989) [*The Travelogue of Team “Dacia Felix”*], Archive of the “History and Tourism School Club, 1972-2007,” village Chendrea, Sălaj county. Hereafter, ACS.

Most importantly, the imperative of self-transcendence ensured that diarists deployed the autobiographical voice as a conduit of collective subjectivity, a representational technique that pupils also practiced when performing the pioneer oath or penning school compositions. Diaries were thus dominated by a narrative voice presenting the self as an integral part of a larger community, alternatively represented by the expedition team, historical ancestors associated with the places visited, peasants envisioned as repositories of national traditions, and occasionally, by contemporaries associated with socialist achievements. One of the most popular strategies deployed in diaries was the description of the expedition team as a civically minded family of pioneers. Giving an account of the ambitious endeavor to refresh tourist marks on hiking tracks in the Southern Carpathians in 1978, the diary of “The Mountain Deers” team from the Pioneer Palace in Bucharest contrasted the humming noise of children leaving the capital city on vacation with their parents with the “purposeful tourism” of their pioneer team. Such expressions of individual identification with the team were often mapped on a broader distinction between family and pleasure-oriented forms of tourism indicative of bourgeois attitudes to leisure and civically responsible uses of free time such as expeditions:

I had a flashback of the young girl who was leaving with her parents for the seaside. While we were braving strong winds and rainstorms, she was probably bragging a lovely suntan, going to the movies, or talking a stroll in her Black Sea resort. But I had no regrets. On the contrary, I felt happy and I wish I could meet her on return to tell her that we carried heavy backpacks, dug up holes for marker poles and carried water for cement, that we climbed to such amazing heights urged by a deep desire to be useful and helpful. (...) I would tell her that I returned from this expedition more beautiful, more self-confident, fully intent on being an even better student and joining yet another expedition the following year.<sup>580</sup>

Much like the school compositions that made the topic of the previous chapter, expedition diaries should be seen as “dialogical” discourses that did not only refer to the actual

---

<sup>580</sup> APPB, Team “The Mountain Deers,” (Pioneer Palace, Bucharest), Untitled diary of Mountain Expedition in the Fagaras Mountains and the Negoiu Peak” (1978).

expedition experience, but also to another's speech, relying on the standardized ideological discourse of the socialist nation.<sup>581</sup> Actively encouraged by their adult mentors to use a wide array of sources of inspiration in preparation for their task, diarists were trained to appropriate the authoritative discourse of late socialism through the practice of "citationality."<sup>582</sup> Interviews suggest that the appropriation of "ideologically saturated" language<sup>583</sup> took many forms: diarists consulted other teams' expedition journals, familiarized themselves with expert discourses on national history, the village world, and natural landscape by browsing historical journals, ethnographic monographs, or geographical studies, created a bank of relevant quotes and anthologized "beautiful expressions" from classics of national literature abounding in old-time favorites from the militant and Romantic poetry of the nineteenth century,<sup>584</sup> collected newspaper clips on expedition sites of contemporary relevance (factories, cooperative farms, etc.), and learned the art of emplotment from socialist children's literature that abounded in morality tales with pioneers cured of selfishness and homesickness by integration in the collective.

Indicating a preference for diarists who were already ideologically literate and could bring their writing skills to bear on expedition experiences, teachers enforced a gender division of labor, systematically selecting their diarists from among older girls of twelve to fourteen, believed to have the necessary maturity, talent, originality, and passion for systematic and

---

<sup>581</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, Ed. and trans. Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 185.

<sup>582</sup> Yurchak, "Hegemony of Form: Stalin's Uncanny Paradigm Shift," *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 36-76.

<sup>583</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogical Imagination: Four Essays by Mikhail Bakhtin*, Ed. Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994), 293-4. In a Bakhtinian theory that does not conceive of language as "a neutral medium that passes freely and easily into the private property of the speaker's intentions," the dialogic process of appropriating words populated with the intentions of others is a general condition of discourse.

<sup>584</sup> This practice was rather widespread in schools. In primary and middle school, children were typically encouraged to anthologize "beautiful expressions" (*expresii frumoase*) from canonized texts of prose or poetry in a special notebook (*caiet de expresii frumoase*) that would then be used as inspiration in writing school compositions on predictable themes: nature and the four seasons, love of family and country, friendship and collegiality, etc.

creative writing.<sup>585</sup> Ana, for example, remembers that she was appointed chronicler of an ethnographic team in 1986 because she often tried her hand at literary creations: “I loved writing. I would write short stories and poetry, some of which were published in pioneer journals.”<sup>586</sup> The fact that the occasional male diarists felt the need to justify their discursive authority is another indication that the position of chronicler was gendered and the practice of diary-writing feminized. A middle school boy who was appointed chronicler in 1989, the last year of the national competition, sought to assure his potential readers that he could handle the task despite the fact that “Browsing through the issues of *Cutezătorii* I used for inspiration, I noticed that the role of chronicler is often assigned to girls and there are only a few boys among the winners of ‘The Golden, Silver, or Bronze Pen’ awards [for the best expedition diary].”<sup>587</sup>

The preference for early adolescent girls as journalists seemed rooted in a traditional view of girls as more emotionally rich and thus, more imaginative than boys. Addressing the challenge of cultivating children’s originality in literary compositions, scholars often couched their conclusions in gendered remarks that cast middle school girls as agents of literary creativity: “girls have more imaginative and creative personalities, being endowed with a richer repertoire of emotions that translates into genuine literary masterpieces.”<sup>588</sup> By contrast, authors argued, “boys have epic and prosaic characters,” resorting to “dry narratives” and “failing to invent anything, imagine a captivating event, or let themselves be ‘invaded’ by unique emotional

---

<sup>585</sup> It is important to point out that feminization was precisely the reason invoked by some Soviet ideologues in disqualifying diaries as appropriate genres of communist self-transformation. As an essentially bourgeois genre, the diary was associated with supposedly female attributes such as “narcissism, hysteria, and socially useless chatter” in contrast to male attributes of “firm, rational, and collective action.” See Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind*, 44-48.

<sup>586</sup> Author interview (February 2010). At the time of her participation in the expedition, Ana was twelve. Her literary propensities were likely encouraged by her parents, both of whom were teachers. As a graduate of the Faculty of Philology, who continues to be an amateur writer today, Ana recognized some of her “favorite expressions” in the body of the diary alongside more elaborate passages that she attributed to the expedition teacher.

<sup>587</sup> ACS, Team “Dacia Felix,” *Jurnal de Bord al echipajului “Dacia-Felix”* (1989) [*The Travelogue of Team “Dacia Felix”*].

<sup>588</sup> See Vistian Goia, “Compunerea școlară – ipostază a imaginației elevilor,” In *Revista de pedagogie* 3, March 1979. A professor at the Babeș-Bolyai University in Cluj, Goia based his conclusions on a small scale research in urban schools.

states.”<sup>589</sup> Whether because girls were allegedly more prone to deep emotional states or because they tended to be more proficient in “citationality,” most teachers found them better suited than boys to both experience and express socialist patriotism.

According to Alexei Yurchak, the practice of “citationality” was a symptom of the increasing normalization of authoritative discourse, which crystalized in fixed and predictable forms, ushering in a “performative shift” in the functioning of Soviet ideology that privileged the performative replication of propagandistic texts over engagement with their constative dimension.<sup>590</sup> Rather than render ritualized acts and public life meaningless, the author contends that the performative shift eventually decentered ideological messages, making “the constative dimension of discourse increasingly unanchored, indeterminate, and often irrelevant,” and enabled multiple and unanticipated meanings in everyday practice.<sup>591</sup> Similarly, taking the position that discursive agency emerged in relation with rather than in opposition to authoritative discourse, I argue that the performative engagement with the ideology of the socialist nation enabled diarists to play an active role in the production of expedition diaries. To the extent that expeditions were justified as training grounds for future communist citizens, the implication was that children were not fully proficient in official ideology and would acquire the desired discursive fluency in the course of writing the diary. The conventions of authenticity governing the production of diaries made excessive ideological correctness suspect of adult intervention, carving space for discursive improvisation. Official guidelines emphasized in bold characters that “diaries written after the completion of the expedition or produced by teachers or parents

---

<sup>589</sup> Ibid.

<sup>590</sup> Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever*, 36-76.

<sup>591</sup> Ibid., 25.

will not be accepted by the jury” although they did not specify how the distinction between child and adult productions would be made.<sup>592</sup>

For the most part, diaries read as dense narrative accounts of daily team activities with more or less ideological weight: waking up early, preparing breakfast, running out of food, braving poor weather in the mountains, dividing tasks, but also more colorful details of team life such playing football and volleyball, watching movies for fun in local schools and cinemas (including American series such as *Mannix* in the early 1970s), encountering foreign tourists such as Hungarian visitors (who sported Elvis T-shirts in the included pictures) at a former Greek Catholic church that became the property of the Orthodox Church after the war. As signs of genuine actualization of ideological imperatives by children who were not expected to be fully proficient in the discourse of socialist patriotism, instances of ideological clumsiness and improvisation were also tolerated in the unpublished versions of the diaries submitted to the national jury. Diaries are full of clumsy articulations indicating that the ideological discourse is not fully mastered yet and there are shifts from politically correct discourse to a sort of “innocent child speech” recording anything from apparently irrelevant episodes, curiosities, meal recipes, to aspects of economic scarcity, food rationing, or power cuts that affected expedition members directly. Throughout the 1980s, expedition diaries abounded in both comic and critical comments on economic scarcity, which emerged, rather ironically, as a major obstacle in the teams’ narratives of socialist endurance and success. Team members dared each other to buy something else besides canned fish in local stores or to come up with innovative substitutes for bread, which was rationed in the countryside. Alternatively, diarists drew on the socialist regime’s discourse of welfare provisions for children, assuming a critical position towards shortages. They

---

<sup>592</sup> See *Cutezătorii*, March 18, 1971. In the early years of the competition, expedition members were also required to mail the diary to the national jury in Bucharest on the last day of their expedition from the first locality with a post office.



complained about the difficulty of procuring expedition supplies, the indifference of school officials who refused to offer material support for the civic projects of their team, or the failure of local authorities in the researched areas to provide basic necessities for socialist citizens. Following her description of the team's visit of a hydroelectric power plant on the river Dâmbovița in the consecrated language of socialist progress in 1989, a diarist commented critically on the dire situation in the visited villages that was clearly a result of rationing policies:

Children tell us that none of the twenty houses in the village has electricity, that they don't have either electric light or TV sets and use only battery-powered radios. And yet, we can see that there are electric poles and cables everywhere and we know that the Dâmbovița provides electric power in this area. Why is it, then, that the children of this village do not benefit from it?"<sup>593</sup>

As a consequence, the superlative discourse of socialist achievement coexisted uneasily, in many diaries, with journalistic style reports and critical assessments of economic shortages affecting the places visited. Instances of ideological ambivalence that opened the ideological discourse to alternative, even if unintentional, interpretations emerged in other situations as well. For the most part, diaries of ethnographic expeditions that included visits to wooden churches and monasteries followed the convention of referring to religious establishments exclusively as historical monuments or cultural sites. However, the expectations of authenticity and originality as well as the insistence that diarists reflect on the team's state of mind and collective experiences encouraged some diarists to engage in lyrical musings that exceeded the limits of ideological propriety. Following the team's visit of a church cemetery and conversation with the local priest in 1973, the diarist of "The Magic Stone" team from Baia-Mare indulged in existential reflections that left the reader with a set of rhetorical questions, but failed to provide any ideologically appropriate answers about the meaning of life:

---

<sup>593</sup> APPB, Team "Flora," Târgoviște, "Diary of Expedition along River Dâmbovița, (1989).

Our questions weighed heavier than our backpacks. We were all meditating in silence. We were asking questions that have no answer. We kept asking “why,” “why,” “why”? Why do people die? Why do people live? What’s their purpose in this world?<sup>594</sup>

The room for rhetorical maneuver was further enlarged by the nationalist turn in the symbolic regime of socialist Romania, which opened the spectrum of discourses available to pioneer diarists beyond the strictly party-focused propaganda to patriotic rhetoric with a long tradition in Romanian culture, ranging from poetry and prose, to ethnographic and historical studies.<sup>595</sup> From the revolutionary literature of the militant *1848-ers*, for example, a great number of diarists learned that the invocation of historical figures or the contemplation of natural landscape as a theatre of national history could be expressive vehicles of national emotions of pride and belonging.<sup>596</sup> Diarists often echoed Romantic poets in their use of historical ruins as triggers of lyrical musings on the heroic past of Romania: “In Târgoviște, every stone comes to life when we speak of history... Our silent tower has witnessed many historical tragedies in the past, maybe even the treasonous murder of Tudor, the martyr of the struggle for justice and freedom.”<sup>597</sup> Similarly, Romantic poetry and various peasantist traditions in nineteenth and twentieth century Romanian literature were instrumental in providing diarists with a range of idyllic and militant visions of the peasantry that portrayed peasants either as artists of the people and reservoirs of folk traditions or as historical figures of class warfare and national resilience.

---

<sup>594</sup> APPB, Team “The Magic Stone” (Baia-Mare), “Diary of Ethnographic Expedition in Țara Lăpușului” (1973).

<sup>595</sup> Classics of Romanian poetry and prose whose work was included in school textbooks constituted the most popular source of patriotic rhetoric. In select cases, such sources extended to include prewar studies in history and ethnography by scholars as diverse as Romulus Vuia, Nicolae Iorga, or Ion Rusu Abrudan.

<sup>596</sup> Favorite works in this category included Dimitrie Bolintineanu’s *Legende istorice* and Alecu Russo’s *Cântarea României*. Although not strictly a Pasoptist creation, late nineteenth century works such as Alexandru Vlahuță’s *România pitorească* often joined the ranks of militant literature used for inspiration by school children.

<sup>597</sup> APPB, Team “Flora,” Târgoviște, “Diary of Expedition along River Dâmbovița, (1989), 2. This passage comes from an extensive account of the team’s visit of the fifteenth century royal court [Curtea Domnească] and Turnul Chindiei, in their hometown of Târgoviște, on the first day of the expedition. One of the museum collection is dedicated to the revolution led by Tudor Vladimirescu in 1821 in Wallachia.

Disrupting the Marxist Leninist discourse, the language and symbols of the nation available to child-diarists also rendered the authoritative discourse of late socialism inherently ambiguous and indeterminate. If ideological language and censorship in Stalinist Romania was “strict” and “unequivocal,” conforming to a “well-defined set of Marxist-Leninist ideas and values,” scholars argue that “[the ideology of] national-communism could no longer rely on a rigorous set of principles comparable to the Marxist-Leninist dogma, being contradictory in substance and ambiguous in formulations.”<sup>598</sup> Preserving ideological residues incompatible with the principles of socialist progress, the prewar literary and historical traditions child diarists were encouraged to appropriate through the practice of citationality did not only work towards “ideological unification and centralization” as the regime undoubtedly intended, but they also revealed the “contradiction-ridden” or heteroglot nature of the discursive regime of late-socialism.<sup>599</sup> Whether they engaged in historical, ethnographic, or sports expeditions, pioneer diarists were heavily armed with a repertoire of patriotic discourses - evoking historical figures, celebrating the Romanian peasant, or framing natural landscape as a theatre of national history - that they were prepared to deploy in order to make sense of the world they explored.

### **Embodied Performances of Socialist Patriotism: Playing Expert Roles On Expeditions**

My analysis focuses on historical and ethnographic expeditions both because these were considered the most important tracks of the competition and because they were more likely to occasion opportunities for the expression of socialist patriotism.<sup>600</sup> Quite a number of historical

---

<sup>598</sup> Nicolae Manolescu, “Realismul socialist. Literatura ‘nouă,’” *Revista literară Vatra*, no 9-10, 2004, 86.

<sup>599</sup> Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, 271-3. This view is inspired by Bakhtin’s conception of language as “heteroglossia,” a dialogic struggle among multiple socio-ideological discourses, each representing “a world view” or a belief system.

<sup>600</sup> Most expeditions combined natural science with historical research goals. The fact that even expeditions that focused on natural science research often integrated sites of historical significance in their itineraries is another indication of the overriding importance of patriotic education.

expeditions relied on expert guidance and the consumption of ready-made historical narratives, being spiced up with visits at museums, monuments, and memorial houses of famous historical, artistic, or literary personalities, and legendary places of historic battles. Studies of the socialist regime of “heritage” indicate that the Romanian state developed a national network of museums as “ideologically stable recipients for (...) an equally stable and pervasive narrative of history” in efforts to recuperate a usable past since the 1950s.<sup>601</sup> In part because they could be “rearranged and developed according to the principles of dialectical materialism,” museum collections were promoted in numerous articles in pioneer magazines or guidebooks such as *Tourism with the History Textbook* as ideologically safe visions of history.<sup>602</sup> Diary accounts of museums visits read like standardized narratives reproduced from guides or printed brochures and are typically adorned with photos of the team at symbolic monuments.<sup>603</sup> It is important to point out, however, that even though diary accounts of museum visits reproduced institutionalized narratives of history, teams still maintained a degree of independence in selecting what aspects of national history they wanted to explore. The number of expeditions that researched the life and courageous feats of national heroes far outweighed the small number of expedition teams that chose to focus on working class heroes or sites of socialist achievements such as factories, mines, or hydroelectric plants.

Alternatively, there were historical expeditions that employed a more investigative and performative method of doing history, engaging pioneer teams in efforts to fill in the blanks in the historical record in a detective-like manner. Examples in this category included expedition teams engaged in historical research to locate the still unidentified places of legendary battles,

---

<sup>601</sup> Emanuela Grama, “Building Politics, Searching for Heritage: Archaeology, Architecture, and Imaginaries of Social Order in Romania, 1947-2007,” (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2010), 76.

<sup>602</sup> Ibid.

<sup>603</sup> See, for example, APPB, Team “Romanița Bărăganului,” School Jugureanu, Brăila, “Jurnal de bord,” (1972), entry June 21.

and thus complete the contours of a nationalized landscape.<sup>604</sup> Pioneer teams also aimed to retrace by foot historically relevant and physically demanding mountain routes such as those covered by conquering Roman armies during their invasion of ancient Dacia or the route followed by eighteenth century Transylvanian peasant rebels - Horea, Cloșca, and Crișan - under Austro-Hungarian imperial escort from the place of their arrest to that of their execution and subsequent martyrization as national heroes.<sup>605</sup> Oftentimes, the historical routes retraced by foot were relatively familiar and inconspicuous areas in the pioneers' native county, but expeditions invested them with historical significance, eventually turning them into symbolic local geographies. Tracing the route of Roman armies, for example, team *Dacia Felix* from the Transylvanian county of Sălaj were encouraged by their teacher to think of their birthplace as the northernmost border of ancient Dacia and of themselves as Dacian descendants.<sup>606</sup>

My survey of the routes of historical and ethnographic expeditions revealed that, driven by the teachers' interest in local history of national relevance, much of the research was focused on the teams' own village, county, or historical region. Much like *Dacia Felix*, team *Sargedava* from the mountain village Orăștioara de Sus (Hunedoara) conducted archeological research in the Orăștie Mountains for more than a decade, digging for and uncovering Dacian settlements and Roman remains in their back yard. Team *Iancu's Falcons* from Răcătău (Cluj) explored the ethnographic area of the neighboring Apuseni Mountains in the summer of 1969 only to return to "our mountains" to follow in the footsteps of a nineteenth century local hero turned national symbol, Avram Iancu, a few years later. Interviews with organizing teachers from various

---

<sup>604</sup> Most common were attempts to identify the place of the Battle of Posada (1330) between Basarab I of Wallachia and Charles I of Hungary, or the Battle of Rovine (1395) between the Wallachian and Ottoman armies.

<sup>605</sup> Ilie Popescu, "*Dacia Felix:*" *35 de ani de istorie si turism, 1972-2007*, [*"Dacia Felix:" 35 Years of History and Tourism, 1972-2007*], (Zalau, 2007), 12-13.

<sup>606</sup> ACS, Team "*Dacia Felix*," *Jurnal de Bord al echipajului "Dacia-Felix"* (1973) [*The Travelogue of Team "Dacia Felix"*], 5, 9-10.

villages in Transylvania, who were college friends or knew each other from local events, indicate that regional research was often enhanced by collaboration and mutual help among teams from neighboring villages or counties.<sup>607</sup>

Reflecting on the impact of local research, diary accounts sometimes employ the language of national unity and continuity to articulate a sense of common regional belonging. Likely prompted by their history teacher, pioneers from Sălaj reflected on their visit of the museum of history in Deva (Hunedoara) in 1988: “We were impressed by the unity and continuity of national culture in the region of Transylvania because many of the exhibits resembled the remains that our colleagues discovered in the county of Sălaj and exhibited in our school museum in Chendrea.”<sup>608</sup> The concern with proving the continuity of Romanian settlement from Roman and Dacian times was likely fueled by the publication, in 1986, of a *History of Transylvania* by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. The volume reaffirmed the Hungarian thesis that there were no Romanian inhabitants when the first Hungarians arrived in the middle ages and provoked an extreme reaction from Romanian authorities. Rekindling older territorial disputes with Hungary over Transylvania, the publication flared into historiographical conflicts that did not only play out in academic conferences and publication, but also in historical research by local pioneer teams. The teacher running the history club in Salaj for over three decades (1972 – 2007) explained in an interview that he continued to use expedition diaries as a teaching tool in history classes throughout his career, so we might assume that the archeological lessons of ethnonational continuity reached out beyond their original producers and audience.

---

<sup>607</sup> Ilie Popescu, the teacher of history who led team “Dacia-Felix” (Salaj), did not only collaborate closely with his colleague from a neighboring village, Aurel Medve who led team “Samus 2000,” but also with fellow historian Viorel Manolescu, leader of team “Sargedava” (Hunedoara). Popescu and Manolescu had been college friends and shared an interest in ethnography and Daco-Roman history. They maintained a friendly and professional relation, helping each other design itineraries in Salaj and Hunedoara respectively throughout the 1970s and 80s.

<sup>608</sup> ACS, Team “Dacia Felix,” *Jurnal de Bord al echipajului “Dacia-Felix”* (1988) [*The Travelogue of Team “Dacia Felix”*], 37. The colleagues mentioned in the diary are previous team members of “Dacia-Felix.”

Initially applied to the study of natural sciences, the “scientific materialism” expressed in experiential learning was also used by educators in the domain of historical education, where it translated into a decidedly empiricist approach and positivist attitude to historical phenomena. Particularly when they focused on the faithful reconstruction of past historical experiences and the accrual of evidence in support of national narratives of unity and continuity, historical expeditions did not only engage children in the passive reproduction, but also the active production of history. Led by their history teacher, members of team *Dacia Felix* proved extremely adept at gathering historical evidence in the form of artifacts and testimonies. The team acted out its interest in Dacian and Roman civilization by participating actively in archeological diggings at sites in Sarmizegetusa, Costesti, and Porolissum throughout the 1970s and 1980s. Pioneers were hosted at the archeologists’ headquarters, working under the guidance of famous historians and archeologists such as Ioan Piso, Hadrian Daicoviciu, and Ioan Glodariu. Detailing his team’s activity at the archeological site in Sarmizegetusa, one of my interviewees indicated that children welcomed the experience even though it could be construed as “voluntary labor.” “They [archeologists] were happy because they needed labor force (*forță de muncă*). (...) We worked under the guidance of Ion Pisu [Ioan Piso]. We were mostly in charge of cleaning [artifacts] than of digging, since soldiers did most of the digging. We enjoyed it and even went on a tour of the [archeological] complex.”<sup>609</sup> Not unlike the fictional characters in children’s literature, the pioneers from Sălaj spent several weeks during their summer vacations digging for ancient remains. As interviews indicate, these efforts also culminated in the successful discovery

---

<sup>609</sup> Author interview (July 2010). Marian studied in Chendrea, Salaj, He turned twelve during the team’s expedition in 1989. Although he fulfilled the role of chronicler, he also joined the team in archeological efforts.

of Dacian and Roman artifacts, which continue to be proudly exhibited in the local school museum in Chendrea to this day.<sup>610</sup>

In their turn towards archeology as the privileged science of national origins, pioneer expeditions closely reflected larger disciplinary and epistemological shifts in socialist Romania. As Grama argues, communist archeology developed out of the interwar school of archeology founded by Vasile Parvan, who put forward “an epistemological framework that was materially grounded and used artifacts to make the origins of the nation more ‘palpable’ and thus imaginable.”<sup>611</sup> Surviving into the postwar period, the interwar epistemology of “materiality” colluded with a vulgar interpretation of “historical materialism” according to which the material served as the ultimate proof of historical truth.<sup>612</sup> Archeologists thus favored an empiricist agenda, valuing excavated artifacts as raw matter and thus as allegedly “objective” renditions of the past.<sup>613</sup> Similarly described as “scientific materialism,” the pioneers’ work at archeological digs reproduced the empiricist agenda of their adult mentors. Judging by how excavated artifacts were relocated and proudly exhibited in the school museum, it is likely that children and their teachers also experienced the materiality of archeological discoveries as raw or unmediated evidence of ethnonational origins and continuity.

In later years, team “Dacia Felix” further pursued its research on the topic of Dacian origin and ethnonational continuity by conducting small-scale oral history projects with villagers

---

<sup>610</sup> I visited the school exhibition in the village Chendrea in Salaj in the summer of 2010, when I was conducting interviews with former team members. The endurance of the exhibition is more important for the purposes of this study than the actual value of the exhibits (whether they are genuine Dacian and Roman artifacts), being testimony to the importance participants attached to pioneer exhibitions and their accomplishments (awards, collections, diaries, etc.).

<sup>611</sup> Grama, *Building Politics*, 65.

<sup>612</sup> *Ibid.*, 201.

<sup>613</sup> *Ibid.*



believed to be direct descendants from Dacian ancestors.<sup>614</sup> In order to establish this continuity, pioneers drew on ethnographic studies of mountain areas such as Ținutul Pădurenilor (The Woodmen's Land) elaborated in the interwar period by ethnologist Romulus Vuia, who argued that ethnographic studies of folk costumes and rural architecture can compensate the glaring lack of archeological evidence on Dacian civilization.<sup>615</sup> Pioneers found inspiration in a set of images included in Vuia's chapter on traditional village costumes: the first image showed a section of Trajan's Column in Rome that featured Dacians in traditional attire while the second reproduced Vuia's photograph of villagers from Tara Padurenilor wearing hooded attires in the interwar period. The implication was that, given the similarity of the attire, villagers in that area were descendants of the Dacians represented on Trajan's Column.

Fifty years after the elaboration of the study, both Trajan's Column and Vuia's photographs had reified into evidence. The fact that they mediated past representations of past events did not prevent pioneer teams from using them as evidence when they decided to visit the village mentioned by Vuia and use copies of his photos to interview villagers in their 80s in order to identify the peasants in the picture by name.<sup>616</sup> Old villagers further confirmed the thesis of continuity, recognizing their grandfathers in the pictures and entertaining their interviewers with elaborate stories about their ancestors' destiny and personality. Furthermore, village officials advised the team on how to locate one of the few remaining hooded costumes in the region in a neighboring village. Having successfully established the link between ancient Dacians, interwar peasants, and contemporary villagers, pioneers acted as active producers of

---

<sup>614</sup> ACS, Team "Dacia Felix," *Jurnal de Bord al echipajului "Dacia-Felix"* (1989) [*The Travelogue of Team "Dacia Felix"*].

<sup>615</sup> The edition mentioned in the pioneers' diary is Romulus Vuia, *Studii de etnografie si folclor*, vol 1 (Bucharest: Editura Minerva, 1975).

<sup>616</sup> Pioneers were seconded by amateur historians in the use of Trajan's column as unproblematic evidence for confident claims about national origin. In 1976, for example, an article in *Analele de istorie* reaffirmed prewar theories on the Latin origin of Dacian language, invoking as indisputable evidence the bas-reliefs on Trajan's column that show Dacians and Romans communicating without interpreters. See Boia, *Istorie si mit*, 175-76.

historical narratives of millennial (Romanian) continuity on Dacian territory. The fact that children who were routinely called “grandsons of Dacians and Romans” (*nepoti de daci si de romani*) in official rhetoric accomplished such great goals in their quality of team historians or archeologists further enhanced their personal investment in collective narratives. The sense of accomplishment proved memorable as former participants brought this episode up without being prompted as an example of their extraordinary achievements during the summer expedition.

In practice, historical expeditions did more than enrich children’s knowledge of the past. In the process of performing expert roles, pioneers learned that national history was as objectively real as the treasures they unearthed and as unitary and coherent as the biographies they documented. For pioneer archeologists and ethnographers, history resided in objects, places, and people, which could provide direct and unmediated access to the past. Whether it meant holding ancient artifacts in one’s hand, walking the walk of national heroes, or talking to presumed Dacian descendants, experiential learning gave historical expeditions a foundational and essentializing character that textbook narratives could never hope to attain. The practice of assigning children expert roles in the expedition further enhanced this positivist approach to historical phenomena, encouraging an attitude that proclaimed personal observations couched in the cloth of expertise to be unequivocal truth.<sup>617</sup>

As suggested by the examples above, pioneer expeditions often mobilized ethnography in the service of national history. Typically, ethnographic expeditions took place in highly symbolic, and sometimes recently mapped, ethnographic areas such as Țara Maramureșului, Țara Lăpușului, Țara Moților, Ținutul Pădurenilor or Țara Hațegului and aimed at documenting village life and activities with collections of folk costumes and folk art, including recordings of musical performances or accounts of traditional village activities. To a great extent, the methods

---

<sup>617</sup> *Cutezătorii*, April 10, 1975.

deployed by pioneer teams were reminiscent of the patrimonial obsession characteristic of the nation-building Romantic ethnology of the nineteenth century, an enduring tradition that survived into ethnographic practice under communism.<sup>618</sup> Following in this tradition, pioneers engaged in the collection, taxonomic categorization, and archival preservation of *Urtexte* - folk lyrics or objects believed to be the origin of present-day versions of folk art - from old villagers valued for their quality as preservers of popular memory.<sup>619</sup> However, the militant nature of pioneer expeditions ensured that children overcame the collector's obsession with isolated patrimonial texts, participating actively in village life by trading "voluntary work" for various resources. Both interviews and diaries indicate that pioneers often helped villagers with field or housework in exchange for folk artifacts, food, accommodation, as well as time and good will in cases when busy villagers proved harder to persuade to take the time to discuss village crafts or record folk music and dances with the team.

Following the model of natural science and historical ventures, pioneer expeditions relied heavily on an empirical approach. They turned children into ethnographers of peasant life, encouraging them to resort to direct observation and participation as well as interviews with locals in order to document century-long national traditions. As suggested in my analysis of "citationality," participant observation was always already shaped by larger cultural discourses about Romanian peasants and thus by expectations regarding their nature and behavior. Engaged on an ethnographic expedition less than thirty miles south of their native town, the pioneer team the "Magic Stone" from Baia-Mare described their decision to explore the village world of Țara

---

<sup>618</sup> Otilia Hedeșan, "Doing Fieldwork in Communist Romania," In Vintila Mihăilescu, Ilia Iliev and Slobodan Naumovic (eds.), *Studying Peoples in the People's Democracies: Socialist Era Anthropology in South-East Europe*, vol II (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2008), 21-39. The author suggests that this *longue durée* trend in the history of the discipline took on additional meanings during communism, when ethnographers saw their work as a counterattack on the communist destruction of "true folklore."

<sup>619</sup> For a detailed account of the ideological underpinnings and methodological strategies of Romantic ethnology in the Romanian case, see Otilia Hedeșan and Vintila Mihăilescu, "The Making of the Peasant in Romanian Ethnology," In *Martor* 11 (2006): 187-202.

Lăpuşului in 1973 in a language that exoticized the area by banishing it from historical time and relegating it to a different temporality. Constructing the village world as a legitimately anthropological object of research, pioneers employed a time distancing device - “allochronism” or the “denial of coevalness” - that is central to anthropological discourse.<sup>620</sup>

Our expedition was born out of the desire to observe and study the folk costumes, the habits, and the life of people in Țara Lăpuşului. We wanted to travel beyond the confines of our everyday life, to a beautiful landscape without apartment buildings and factory chimneys. Our desire to escape noisy streets and cars took us to a new world, a world of flowers, forests, serenity, and most importantly, of people. Of people whose traditions could not be affected by the passing of time or by the changes that spread like the tide over the entire country. Their life has changed, but their traditions remained the same, reflecting the undying fiery love for everything that is beautiful, for life, for the lands where they have lived for millennia.<sup>621</sup>

Before the nationalist turn of the mid-1960s, ethnographic representations of the village often contrasted the modernizing changes of the socialist regime with a dark history of class struggle (rather than one of national continuity), as the following account of a school trip to the countryside, allegedly written by a fourth grader and published by the pioneer press in 1962, indicates: “There, where serfs slaved under feudal oppression and peasants were exploited by the bourgeois and landowning classes in the past, people are today masters of their own destinies, building a happy life.”<sup>622</sup> Even in the 1970s, most expedition diaries offered more balanced accounts of the village, noting both the “unchanged” traditions and the modernizing changes. Some remarked that the villagers’ mentality seemed positively impacted by the industrialization process even in remote rural areas, where pioneers observed modern housing adorned with radios and television sets,<sup>623</sup> while others commented with surprise that the shepherds they met on hikes

---

<sup>620</sup> Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983).

<sup>621</sup> APPB, Team “The Magic Stone” (Baia-Mare), Diary of ethnographic expedition in Țara Lăpuşului (1973).

<sup>622</sup> Popescu Dana (clasa a IV-a, Sc gen nr. 46, Bucuresti), “Excursie in istorie,” *Cravata rosie* 4, 1962.

<sup>623</sup> ACS, Team “Dacia Felix,” *Jurnal de Bord al echipajului “Dacia-Felix”* (1988), 50.

in scarcely inhabited mountain areas carried around transistor radios.<sup>624</sup> For politically vigilant youth activists, who still warned educators in the 1970s to combat the idealization of the past by balancing their teaching of history with active engagement in the socialist present, the pioneers' discourse of allochronism was undoubtedly guilty of "passeism."<sup>625</sup>

It is in this spirit that the diary excerpt quoted above was edited on its partial publication in the pioneer press in 1975 to correct the ideological mistakes of downplaying socialist achievements such as industrialization or the modernizing impact of socialist change on the village.<sup>626</sup> Even as it edited expedition diaries, however, the pioneer press continued to deploy similarly exoticizing language that described pioneers as "explorers of ethnographic islands" who salvaged "traditions that had not changed for centuries,"<sup>627</sup> thus validating the national idiom. Pioneer diarists and teachers representing the village world as a timeless oasis of national essence clearly felt comfortable employing the language of national essence, but they exploited the unresolved tension between modernity and tradition at the heart of official rhetoric. Asked why they chose Țara Lăpușului as the destination of their expedition, one of the organizing teachers invoked an interest in the rural world that stemmed from anxiety over a real-life collision of traditional village life and socialist change: "Both my colleague and I were deeply attached to the village world. (...) We were drawn to the beauty of the rural world, and so were the children, especially since the times were of such nature that many of the still existing [traditions] were threatened with extinction."<sup>628</sup>

---

<sup>624</sup> Diary of Team Sargedava (1971), In Diaconu, *Expedițiile Cutezătorii*, 108.

<sup>625</sup> On the danger of passeism, see Silvestru Patița, "Participarea afectiva a pionierilor la evenimentele istorice," *Educția pioniereasca*, July 1971, 16.

<sup>626</sup> While references to "factory chimneys" and the traditions unaffected by "the changes that spread like the tide over the entire country" were removed, the final sentence was rephrased as "Their life has changed, in step with that of the entire country, but their traditions remained the same (...)." See *Cutezătorii*, January 9, 1975.

<sup>627</sup> Constantin Diaconu, "Exploratori într-o 'insula etnografică,'" *Cutezătorii*, September 18, 1986.

<sup>628</sup> Author interview with Sarolta Vaida (July 2010), teacher of Romanian in Baia-Mare.

Emboldened by the mission of salvaging village traditions that teachers likely imparted to them, pioneer ethnographers played their expert roles in full earnestness, cultivating an anthropological gaze that often had the effect of exoticizing the peasant world. Retrospective recollections echo diaries in their representation of researched villages as another world: “It was the first time I set foot in the world of the village (*lumea satului*), which is an absolutely fascinating world and absolutely ... different for a city kid raised in an apartment building.”<sup>629</sup> Whether they documented folk costumes, participated in traditional village activities, interviewed villagers, recorded musical creations and language specificities, or reenacted, in child play, some of the religious ceremonies characteristic of village life, child ethnographers invoked the expert acts of direct observation and participation in order to construct a world of essential differences and specificities. Ethnographic diary accounts suggest that peasants were unaware of the treasures they harbored, being reluctant to give children “old” folk costumes or crafted objects: “We were amused by the old woman, with her wrinkled face and wide smile. She could not believe that her discarded and dusty “*ciupeag*” [embroidered front of blouse] was a real jewel for us.”<sup>630</sup> Even in retrospect, former expedition participants imply that it took a trained eye to distinguish valuable, i.e. old, from unworthy artifacts:

Cristi: We went from house to house asking for various objects, especially old folk costumes. To which, and this happened twice, they [villagers] would say ‘I’ll give you this new one.’ One of them even told me ‘If you want the old costumes, you have to take the new ones as well or else people [villagers] will think we are stingy (*calici*).’ ... Florin: They didn’t understand why we wanted old attire. [laugh]<sup>631</sup>

---

<sup>629</sup> Group interview by author (July, 2010). The respondent is Cristi, quoted previously in this article. It is important to point out that the rural-urban divide alone cannot account for this view. Village teams also entertained this idea, distinguishing the “untouched” ethnographic areas they set out to research from villages such as their own, which no longer preserved customs and traditions.

<sup>630</sup> APPB, Team “Romanița Bărăganului,” Brăila, “Jurnal de bord,” (1972), entry June 21.

<sup>631</sup> Group interview by author (July 2010). Like Cristi, Florin was thirteen during the 1973 expedition in Țara Lăpușului. The son of a stonemason who has followed in his father footsteps, Florin was the team’s geologist. However, this episode shows that, no matter their roles, all members of the team were engaged in the collection of ethnographic artifacts.

While the asymmetry of power between researcher and researched is more generally characteristic of anthropological practice, one might argue that the pioneers' expert paternalism came in a long Romanian tradition of "pastoral power" with which communist officials readily colluded.<sup>632</sup> Thus, pioneer ethnographers entered expert positions marked by a hegemonic relation that presented itself as a benevolent form of power exercised exclusively for the benefit of the oppressed (here, for the enlightenment of the peasantry).<sup>633</sup> Reflecting on this sense of empowerment, former expedition participants recall villagers' expressions of surprise - "Don't you have parents?" - when large groups of seemingly unsupervised children approached them. Ultimately, the scientific expertise bestowed on pioneers achieved an interesting inversion of roles as children were empowered with the authority to reduce peasants to childlike dependency as objects of ethnographic research. Under the guidance of adult mentors, children described direct encounters with locals in a decidedly patronizing and infantilizing language that yielded an idealized image of the peasant as a "noble savage" in expedition diaries. An example of this language, the following diary excerpt focuses on the importance of experiential learning – having dinner with the locals – in enabling pioneers to gain insights into the peasants' presumably uncontaminated and childlike nature:

At Costeni, we stopped by the river. This is how we organized ourselves: the ethnographers, the folklorists, the reporters and the captain's adjunct went from house to

---

<sup>632</sup> I am thankful to Professor Gail Kligman for this insight on the collusion of communist authorities with a long-term trend in Romanian culture.

<sup>633</sup> I use Foucault's term of "pastoral power" in the sense attributed to it by Zygmunt Bauman in his analysis of the self-legitimizing ideology of East Central European intellectuals. See Bauman's "Intellectuals in East-Central Europe: Continuity and Change," in *Eastern European Politics and Societies*, 1987, 162-186. Bauman employs Foucault's term of "pastoral power" to signal that fact that the cultural capital of Eastern European intellectuals derived from their self-presentation as enlightened teachers, reformers, and spokespersons for an illiterate peasantry. For a detailed analysis of the Romanian case, see Katherine Verdery, "National Ideology and National Character in Interwar Romania," in Ivo Banac and Katherine Verdery (eds.), *National Character and National Ideology in Interwar Eastern Europe*, (New Haven: Yale Center For International and Area Studies, 1995), 103-133. In her analysis of debates over national essence in interwar Romania, Verdery argued that the competing visions of the peasantry put forth by diverse intellectual groups were not only instrumental in reducing the peasant to a silent and passive object of public discourse, but also in constructing rival intellectuals as a privileged class of enlightened spokespersons for the peasantry.

house to collect artifacts; the boys were in charge of dried wood and putting up the tents, the girls started cooking. Here, on this first night, we got to know the locals better. [They were] Humble, as shy as children, but with an open heart and soul. They served us cheese pie. What a treat! While eating, I kept looking at their sun burnt but shiny and clean faces, at their hardworking hands, at their bare feet.<sup>634</sup>

Eating and working with the locals were typical examples of participatory ethnography on pioneer expeditions, in part because they rehearsed positive traditional stereotypes of the Romanian peasant (and by analogy, people) – hard work and hospitality – that were also embraced in communist rhetoric. Although active interaction with villagers and direct participation in village life were practices recommended by official brochures of the organization such as *Tourism with the Ethnography Textbook*, some teams might have pushed the limits of ideological propriety in their enthusiastic performance of local traditions. After a visit of the wooden church in Șurdesti,<sup>635</sup> described as a remarkable historical monument, the pioneer team from Baia-Mare attempted unsuccessfully to attend a village wedding. As both the diary and the team's recollections indicate, the pioneers and their teacher decided to satisfy their celebratory mood with a mock performance of the Christian Orthodox wedding ritual during their dinner. They dressed up in the folk costumes collected in the village, elected a bride, a groom, and a priest and set out to perform the wedding ritual. It is unclear how the national jury viewed the pioneers' mock performance of religious ritual that included the Holy Communion and the dance of Isaiah fully documented with pictures, but the episode remains one of the few unorthodox instances of child play tolerated by adult teachers and included in the expedition diary.

When included, such episodes coexisted in diaries with highly standardized accounts of participatory ethnography such as the pictorial and descriptive representation of pioneers wearing folk costumes as expressions of identification with the people. Some diarists accounted

---

<sup>634</sup> APPB, Team "The Magic Stone" (Baia-Mare), *Diary of Ethnographic Expedition in Țara Lăpușului* (1973).

<sup>635</sup> A formerly Greek-Catholic church, it that became the property of the Romanian Orthodox church in 1948.



for such moments in scientific language, including detailed descriptions of the costumes and their uses in various village traditions.<sup>636</sup> Those more lyrically inclined, however, represented villagers as timeless repositories of national traditions. Excited at the opportunity to complete the team's ethnographic collection, the diarist and the ethnographer of the pioneer team from Baia-Mare tried on the folk costumes offered by a peasant woman as gifts. Dressed in folk attire, the two girls joined a large group of peasants attending the church ceremony on a Sunday, a memorable episode also evoked by former child participants as a moving experience during my group interview. According to the diary, the act of putting on the traditional costume and joining the village procession was so overwhelming that it triggered in the diarist an instance of empathy and a sense of imagined community with ancestors across centuries:

Her dark face was wrinkled with hard work, her hands were chopped, and there was a spirited sparkle in her eyes that mesmerized us. What was it? (...) I don't know, but I felt my heart beating faster, my cheeks burning up, and my eyes exploding with happiness. If I ever felt happy, it was at that particular moment. And I will never forget it because I do not know when I will ever again feel one with my ancestors, with Horea, Cloșca and the unforgettable heroes of Moisei. Maybe never again... Dressed up, each with a flower in our hands, we were walking on both sides of the woman. (...) But we were feeling somehow different, happy, proud. There were a lot of people in the street dressed in folk costumes.<sup>637</sup>

Whether they envisioned the peasant as a noble savage or as a timeless repository of national traditions, the diaries of ethnographic expeditions drew extensively on traditional representations of the peasant in Romanian literature and culture. While socialist rhetoric tended to represent the peasantry as a collective force integrated with the working class, emphasizing the process of modernization it underwent during the regime's technologization of agriculture, prewar discourses tended to focus on a generic peasant imagined as the untapped reservoir of national traditions and identity. Mandatory school readings from the rich body of canonized

---

<sup>636</sup> See ACS, Team "Dacia Felix," *Jurnal de Bord al echipajului "Dacia-Felix"* (1988), 97-99.

<sup>637</sup> Ibid.

nineteenth and twentieth century poets of the peasantry - Vasile Alecsandri, George Coșbuc, or Octavian Goga - can account for idyllic visions of the Romanian peasant as the humble, hospitable, and hard-working inhabitant of a world unspoiled by (urban) civilization.

My interviews indicate that, far from being a mere rhetorical flourish relegated to the diary, the idea that researched villages were surviving oases of century-old folk traditions was shared by many expedition participants. For Ana, for example, the villagers in Țara Moșilor (*moșii*) “were different from us. It felt as if they were mountain people, who had a purer soul.”<sup>638</sup> In their attempts to mobilize their teams and impress on them the magnitude of their collective endeavor, organizing teachers played a significant role in popularizing this view. Not only did they train pioneer ethnographers as treasure hunters rescuing folk culture and national history, but they encouraged children to expect extraordinary incursions into spectacular worlds on their venture. It is more likely that culturally entrenched discourses about the generic Romanian peasant and ethnographic encounters with contemporary villagers were mutually constitutive and enabling. While examples of generosity and hospitality could occasion lyrical effusions of national sentiment, plenty of other expedition encounters tested the limits of this discourse, producing less idyllic images of peasants as drunkards in the role of village fools, “evil witches” chasing ethnographers away, or stingy locals refusing to host them, offer them the much coveted samples of folk art, or sell them food.

Described by her teachers as “a sensitive soul,” “a talented writer and passionate student of literature,” who “simply loved writing,” Maria, the chronicler appointed to write the diary quoted above, seemed well versed in the practice of “citationality.”<sup>639</sup> As the recollections of other team members suggest, proficiency in citationality does not exclude the possibility that

---

<sup>638</sup> Author interview (February 2010).

<sup>639</sup> Author interviews with Sarolta Vaida (June 2010) and Gheorghe Makara (July 2010). Although both her teachers and colleagues envisioned a writing career for Maria, she became a science teacher.

children experienced participation in village celebrations dressed in folk costumes as genuinely moving, whether their emotions involved national feelings of identification or not. Likely prompted by her teacher, who remembers encouraging her to “polish” the language of lived experience, Maria appropriated the imagery of idyllic peasantry in the service of a reverie of national community ultimately centered on the diaristic self. Channeling national ancestors and occasioning instances of national unity and solidarity across centuries, the diaristic self was not annihilated but empowered by the collective.

Given the specific conditions of diary production detailed earlier in this chapter, *the diaristic self* should not be read as an unmediated expression of the chronicler’s voice and experience, but as *a discursive position* articulated out of their dialogue with colleagues, teachers, and the authoritative discourse of socialist patriotism. While some retrospective recollections suggest that discourse was not divorced from lived experience, it is likely that some teams reproduced authoritative expressions of socialist patriotism to emphasize their successful patriotic education for the benefit of the national jury. In their attempts to convince the jury of the success of their expedition and avoid official reprimands for potential failures to conform to ideological and educational imperatives, expedition teams produced ideologically polished diaries that emphasized their extraordinary scientific discoveries, civic and patriotic feelings, or collective bonding. At the same time, a majority of expedition participants remember forging genuine friendships, engaging in research in earnestness, and developing an appreciation for the natural beauties or heroic history of their country, suggesting that the relation between social and discursive practices should not, however, be conceptualized in terms of a dichotomy between genuine experience and its discursive falsification in the service of the party.

## **Conclusions: Lived and Remembered Experiences of Pioneer Expeditions**

In launching *Expedițiile Cutezătorii*, the Pioneer Organization aimed to engage teachers and their students in purposeful and patriotic tourism that would enhance their love of the motherland and loyalty to the socialist regime. Judging by the positive recollections of former child and adult participants, pioneer expeditions were successful in attracting teachers and students, although this mobilization did not always occur on the socialist regime's terms or achieve its goals. The multivalence of expeditions, which were envisioned as both physical education and tourism, as both schooling and leisure, as both rigorously scientific training and moral, civic, or patriotic education, might also explain their broad appeal to children, educators, and youth activists alike, who invested their experiences with different meanings and ambitions. Youth activists and journalists in the pioneer press derived professional satisfaction and recognition from the successful administration of expedition competitions in addition to fulfilling the organization's plans for extracurricular activities.<sup>640</sup> While early teens typically saw expeditions as opportunities for adventure and friendship away from parental supervision, most teachers envisioned them as pedagogical experiments and useful vacations likely to advance their careers or professional standing. In the process, teachers and children actualized national ideals of patriotism and socialist values such as education, work, friendship, altruism, self-realization or selflessness, rescuing them from their rigid interpretations in official rhetoric.

Concerned with rehabilitating their educational legacy at a time of widespread delegitimation of communism, the teachers I interviewed listed pioneer expeditions proudly among their professional and personal accomplishments. Many teachers and local communities

---

<sup>640</sup> Youth organization operated much like socialist enterprises whose activity was measured in the fulfillment of annual plans, although their focus was not so much on successful production as on degree of mobilization.

continue to exhibit their expedition discoveries in village schools or local museums.<sup>641</sup> For some teachers, “patriotic education” was a worthy and appealing goal irrespective of its political instrumentalization under Ceaușescu: “This was a grand and beautiful competition: consider the mere fact that we engaged thousands, maybe tens of thousands [of children], every summer to familiarize them with... and this is not ‘wooden language’... ‘the beauties of our country.’”<sup>642</sup> For others, expeditions differed from ordinary pioneer activities in that they provided opportunities for meaningful work with children.

Most teachers started organizing expeditions in their first years on the job, when they were eager to prove themselves and start a professional career. Although for some, this was a one-time experience, others established tourism and history clubs in their schools and continued to organize expeditions until 1989 and even after. At a time when the educational reform touted the importance of educators in enhancing the much-needed human capital of the socialist nation, teachers’ engagement in extracurricular activities hinged increasingly on their assumption of professional identities and internalization of values such as professional dignity and satisfaction. Pioneer expeditions meant many things to many people. Some engaged in these expeditions in the hope of securing career promotions and professional recognition, others because they were passionate mountain hikers or amateur historians and ethnographers and quite a few combined genuine passion with professional fulfillment and utility.

An indication that teachers were genuinely invested in these ventures is also the fact that some continued to organize expeditions after the collapse of the regime, extending the use of

---

<sup>641</sup> Victor Constantinescu (Bucharest), Ilie Popescu and Aurel Medve (Sălaj), all showed me exhibits of their expedition discoveries during interviews. See also an article on the expedition exhibits of a village team still held at the local Children’s Museum in Răcătău (Cluj): Silvia Boncuțiu, *Măguri-Răcătău, Paradisul din munti*, *Gazeta de Cluj*, September 27, 2009 at <http://www.gazetadecluj.ro/stiri-eveniment/maguri-racatau-paradisul-din-munti/> Last accessed May 28, 2013.

<sup>642</sup> Author interview (December 2008) with Victor Constantinescu.

purposeful tourism to the reeducation of juvenile delinquents who performed works of social utility such as reconditioning the tombs of national heroes.<sup>643</sup> Some former organizers even petitioned the Ministry of Education for approval to launch a revamped national competition which features some new awards - such as “Troita” for teams helping renovate religious sites (churches, monasteries, etc.), - but which remains largely modeled on the goals of patriotic, physical, and scientific education and methodologies of experiential learning and self-reliance popularized by the communist antecedent.<sup>644</sup> Some former child participants turned amateur mountain hikers similarly dream of establishing private tourism businesses that could collaborate with schools to provide post-communist generations with affordable opportunities for physical exertion, mountain camping, and collective bonding.<sup>645</sup> The ease with which this communist practice translated into acceptable educational methods in the 1990s points to the fact that some of its values, goals, and meanings were genuinely shared by regular participants and state actors.

In the process of managing pioneer expeditions, most organizers cultivated closely-knit groups of like-minded students and informal networks of parents, fellow teachers, or friends that were surprisingly similar to those characterizing everyday life under communism. Parents, for example, were actively involved in the organization of expeditions, ensuring that their children had the necessary equipment and pocket money, or driving to various destinations on the expedition route to deliver food supplies or help transport large folk objects collected by ethnographers for projected school exhibitions. Although expedition teams were supposed to displace children’s natal families, parents provided invaluable help, committing time, money and resources to the successful completion of the expedition. Parents’ involvement was a direct

---

<sup>643</sup> Author interview (March 2009) Victor Constantinescu. Ilie Popescu and Aurel Medve from Salaj also continued to organize local expeditions with students from their schools after 1989.

<sup>644</sup> See “Expediții scolare” and “Expedițiile Cutezătorii, Regulament,” in the archive of the “Sports and Tourism” club at the National Children’s Palace, Bucharest.

<sup>645</sup> Author interview (December 2009) with Emil Pop who studied at a school in Buzau.

consequence of the fact that expeditions were only partially and unevenly financed by the state through local unions or county councils of the Pioneer Organization, leaving the job of mobilizing human and material resources to the organizing teachers.

Whether they concur with official interpretations of the formative goal of expeditions or invest their experiences with alternative meanings, child participants overwhelmingly remember pioneer expeditions as enabling rather than constraining activities. Interviews indicate that many developed genuine bonds of friendship that were strengthened by hardship or separation from their families, often enduring long after the completion of the expedition. For early teens describing themselves as “lonely,” “withdrawn,” “an only child who was often pampered and sheltered,” and even “a klutz,” expeditions proved great opportunities to make friends outside formal school environments, pursue a romantic interest, and practice self-reliance and responsibility outside the family. Expedition members often portrayed their teams as families away from home in diaries as well as retrospective recollections. Camelia, who was twelve during an ethnographic expedition in 1988, noted that “we were like a family.”<sup>646</sup> Emil, who was thirteen at the time of his participation in a hiking expedition in the Ceahlău Mountains in 1978, employed a similar familial metaphor: “It was a different feeling than in school, where at the end of the day, we would each go home ‘to mom.’ On the expedition, we ended up referring to our tent as ‘home.’ Returning home meant coming back to the camping area, not to mom.”<sup>647</sup> Child participants echoed teachers, who employed the familial rhetoric of “home away from home” to mobilize students for participation. Despite relying on recognizable state rhetoric, however, children’s loyalties did not shift from their birth families to the paternalist state, but to their newly formed “gangs” of friends (*gașcă*).

---

<sup>646</sup> Author interview (July 2010). Camelia studied in Chendrea Salaj and was one of the team ethnographers.

<sup>647</sup> Author interview (December 2009). Emil Pop was the team’s geologist.

Moreover, the sense of friendship and community invoked by child participants resulted as much from approved forms of collective life such as mutual help and overcoming of obstacles as they did from less orthodox forms of sociability that were rarely documented in diaries: late night exchanges of science fiction stories, breaking curfew, pulling pranks, coming up with silly nicknames, failure to accomplish tasks, playing cards, the thrill of adventure and danger, or even a first love and the possibility of romance. Similarly, civic activities such as recycling bottles in camping sites or helping with seasonal work in cooperative farms could be motivated by a need for pocket money and food supplies for the expedition, by a sense of civic duty, or by both. Many former participants argue that they developed a life-long passion for ethnography, history, hiking and alpinism, or ecology during the expedition or that they derived a sense of self-worth and self-fulfillment from playing a role on the team, but this did not translate into expressions of loyalty to the Pioneer Organization and the socialist regime. The realization that one is engaged in a collective venture with a higher civic or national goal was usually occasioned by public recognition for dedicated diarists published in pioneer magazines or award-winning teams of pioneer historians and ethnographers invited to exhibit their research collections in local schools and museums. Rather than being experienced as oppressive and alienating, this realization proved surprisingly empowering since it sanctioned individual achievements by investing them with broader significance.

Moreover, the practice of playing expert roles on pioneer expeditions empowered children to act as experts in order to master the natural and social world they explored. Children's sense of agency and authority was further enhanced when their expertise and "voluntary labor" were harnessed for the completion of larger research agendas, coordinated by adult specialists. This was the case with pioneer teams who discovered Roman and Dacian



remains while participating in archeological diggings in Transylvania or contributed to the ambitious project of the *Ethnographic Atlas of Romania* by conducting research in select villages.<sup>648</sup> Pioneer teams operated within certain ideological and methodological confines, ranging from scientific materialism, empiricism, and positivism, to the national and civic imperatives of the time. However, it was these very ideological imperatives that empowered pioneers to take control of the natural, social and historical world in the process of defining, cataloguing, interpreting, and representing it as the object of their expeditions.

Similarly, discursive agency was shaped by the limits and possibilities of the discourse of socialist patriotism, particularly the imperative to align the self with the collective. While I acknowledge that these discursive practices were scripted modes of self-presentation, I argue that we should not only enquire into what forms of identification they constrained, but also into what forms they enabled. Rather than achieve social homogenization and ideological indoctrination by annihilating the self in the collective, the discourse of aligned and purposeful childhood informing expedition diaries often empowered the self to stand metonymically for the collective and, in the case of diarists, to speak in its name. Coached by their teachers in the practice of “citationality,” lyrically inclined chroniclers such as Maria learned that the diary was not just a “mirror of the expedition,” but a broad canvas on which to conjure up visions of an expansive diaristic self invested with national significance. Ambitious diarists like Ana, who remembers feeling guilty when she failed to keep the diary consistently, also derived a sense of self-importance from playing decisive roles in their team’s prospect of winning the competition.

---

<sup>648</sup> Team “Dacia-Felix,” for example, conducted research in their native village, Chendrea, and the village of Lelese in Tinutul Padurenilor, for the ethnographic atlas coordinated by Ion Vladutiu, one of the national jury members. Published accounts of the achievements of pioneer expeditions included proofs of the official recognition of the value of artifacts by archeologists such as Hadrian Daicoviciu or specialists at major urban museums. See, for example, Diaconu, *Expedițiile Cutezătorii*, 100; “Copie după documentul de omologare a descoperirii statuetei Mercurius,” In *Expedițiile Cutezătorii, școală a iubirii de patrie*, 82.

Teachers and students also generated alternative meanings of patriotism and nation in the process of selecting and justifying the historical sites or ethnographic routes of their expeditions. Constructing the village as an anthropological object of research, a significant number of ethnographic expeditions painted the picture of a peasant world that remained untouched by the modernizing changes of the socialist regime by virtue of its ahistorical quality as a reservoir of traditions and quintessence of Romanianness. Interviews suggest that these ethnographic efforts were intensified by the tangible threat posed by the regime's modernizing efforts to the old world of the village and its traditions. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, when Ceaușescu's regime was engaged in a domestically reviled campaign for "the systematization of the countryside," tearing down entire villages to replace them with modern facilities, teachers led teams of child ethnographers up mountain routes to unravel oases of atemporality and peasant universes that transcended the transformative efforts of the regime. Although these visions of the village were articulated with discursive tools that originated in literary traditions actively appropriated by the socialist regime, they preserved residual ideological strands that remained incompatible with the regime's rhetoric of socialist progress. On publication in *Cutezătorii*, the diary paragraphs reproduced above were edited to avoid the implication that the village world was not transformed by socialist changes and remove the reference to the peasants' "bare feet," which were acceptable descriptions of the revolutionary peasants of the past, recuperated as figures of class warfare, but not of present-day socialist villagers.<sup>649</sup>

As suggested in my discussion of the nationalization of natural landscape, the Carpathian Mountains became the nodal point of pioneer expeditions. The mountain range emerged as the heart of the motherland in part because official guidelines required that expeditions routes be at a

---

<sup>649</sup> Excerpts from the diary were published in *Cutezătorii*, January 9, 1975.

minimum altitude of 1700 feet, making it a preferred destination.<sup>650</sup> At the same time, pioneer teams found it easy to map nationally significant sites over physically demanding routes in neighboring mountain ranges since the Carpathians were traditionally represented as a defensive, unifying, and purifying force of the nation in historical discourse. Throughout the two decades of pioneer expeditions, a number of heavily treaded national paths emerged around the so-called “islands” of ethnographic purity and ethnic continuity in the Apuseni Mountains, Țara Maramureșului, and Ținutul Pădurenilor as well as the political center of ancient Dacia at Sarmizegetusa Regia in the Orăștie Mountains or the largest city of Roman Dacia at Ulpia Traiana in the Poiana Ruscă Mountains. By contrast to postwar Soviet tourism that centered on Moscow as the epitome of Soviet modernity and “the state, where power radiated out from the center to the periphery,”<sup>651</sup> the patriotic tourism encouraged by pioneer expeditions under Ceaușescu did not just privilege the past, but relegated major urban centers, including Bucharest, the capital city, to secondary status as temporary stops on expedition routes. The spatial mapping of expeditions thus further determined the temporal dimension of the pioneers’ scientific research. Despite the fact that pioneer teams were openly encouraged to document contemporary socialist change, participants were inadvertently enabled by official regulations to shift the authentic locus of the nation away from contemporary socialist achievements to the timeless peasant world or past historical times and heroes.

Historical expeditions were also the sites of improvisation on ideological scripts. As most village or small town teachers were genuinely motivated by an interest in local history and had only modest material resources at their disposal, a substantial number of historical expeditions started small, engaging children in local and regional projects that placed their village or county

---

<sup>650</sup> Expeditions in the Danube Delta or along rivers were officially recognized and encouraged, but they continued to represent a minority.

<sup>651</sup> Gorsuch, *All This is Your World*, 36-7.

at the center of historical events of national importance. Child archeologists turned familiar village territory into archeological sites while child historians interviewed relatives and acquaintances about their ancestors' participation in past events such as peasant rebellions. While routes in the Apuseni or Orăștie Mountains attracted expedition teams from around the country, becoming sites of a national pilgrimage, by the 1980s, it is likely that they were initially mapped out and thus made visible to contest participants by successful local teams.

A survey of the award winning teams from 1969 through 1988 shows that the majority conducted historical and ethnographic research of local significance, typically incorporating the nearest mountain range in their expedition routes.<sup>652</sup> This phenomenon paralleled the “centrifugal” tendencies of the institutionalized production of history that manifested in tensions between the center (Bucharest) and regional scholars in the provincial capitals of Cluj or Iași, who felt better positioned to conduct regional history.<sup>653</sup> The practice of engaging in regional research also contrasted with the Pioneer Organization's attempts to give national scope to local initiatives in part through an increasing standardization of memory sites (discussed as a strategy of patriotic tourism) that would encourage pioneers to venture beyond their birthplace to nationally symbolic destinations. Although they were intended to promote a broadly national rather than narrowly regional imaginary as a way to instill loyalty and devotion to the socialist nation, most expeditions were more likely to develop a sense of local identification and pride.

In the process of mobilizing human resources, mapping historical and ethnographic routes, and organizing expeditions, child and adult participants generated multiple meanings of socialist patriotism, professional fulfillment, friendship, and community. Some of these

---

<sup>652</sup> There is no consistent record of regular expedition teams that were not awarded prizes (which became quite numerous in the 1970s). For award winning teams, see the two volumes edited by the pioneer press and the Pioneer Organization that include diary excerpts and interviews with previous expedition participants: Diaconu, *Expedițiile Cutezătorii* (1973) and *Expedițiile Cutezătorii, școală a iubirii de patrie* (1988).

<sup>653</sup> See Verdery, *National Ideology*, 222.

meanings concurred with official interpretations, while others inadvertently exploited the tensions inherent in the regime's ideological fusion of socialist principles and national loyalties, and still others violated the increasingly standardized ideological codes of late socialism. However, few teachers articulated these alternative meanings as an agenda of opposition to the regime, making it problematic to approach pioneer expeditions as sites of resistance. On the contrary, the experiences and meanings they generated were only possible through active engagement with state structures and ideological scripts. The premise of this engagement was a common set of values. Teachers and their students shared with the socialist regime the assumption that the state should be actively engaged in the education and formation of young generations, subsidizing formal education and extracurricular activities. Two decades after the collapse of the regime, former participants in pioneer expeditions remember nostalgically the times when the socialist state made education its priority, when the teaching profession commanded respect and ensured dignity, and when children were proudly educated in the spirit of national attachment and loyalty as well as civic responsibility. Consequently, the diverse meanings and understandings with which participants invested their experiences were neither in opposition to state authored interpretations, nor in full consonance with them. My contention is that it is precisely this shared set of values that softened coercion with consent and harmonized ideological imperatives with personal values, allowing participants in pioneer expeditions to portray themselves as agents in full control of their choices and actions.

## Chapter V

### Internationalism Without Contamination?

#### Romanian Pioneers In International Children's Camps During the Cold War

*You are the sons of a new Romania, which pursues cooperation and friendship with all socialist countries, strengthens its solidarity with all the peoples fighting for national and social liberation, and extends its cooperation to all the states of the world. (...) Children and pioneers should be educated in the spirit of internationalist solidarity with the worldwide struggle for social progress and peace, in the spirit of friendship and brotherhood with all the pioneers in socialist countries, with children in developing countries, in countries fighting for national independence and striving for a better life.*<sup>654</sup>

In the summer of 1975, the winners of the grand prix of *Expedițiile Cutezătorii* invited members of the leftwing French organization, *Les Francas*, on a joint expedition in the land of “Dacian fortresses, the cradle of Romanian history.” In a bilingual title suggestively entitled “Împreună/Ensemble,” the pioneer press reported on “the first Romanian-French team” and its search for Dacian vestiges on a route extending “from the Carpathians to the Danube.” Featured as a symbol of internationalist friendship, the expedition became a lesson in Romanian history for an admiring French audience whose members reportedly engaged in comparative evocations of myths of ethnonational origin and unity: “Decebalus’ destiny resembles that of our Vercingetorix: both had initially defeated the Romans. What I see here reminds me of our Gauls, of the history of France.”<sup>655</sup> Although the article portrayed French and Romanian children in communal solidarity as they overcame the obstacles of communicating in foreign languages and shared efforts on a demanding hiking venture, it chose to popularize to its readers a vision of socialist internationalism that remained fully compatible with national self-identification,

---

<sup>654</sup> Nicolae Ceaușescu’s address to pioneers and school children at the second national Conference of the Pioneer Organization in 1971, In *Educația pionierească* 11, November 1971, 3-4, 6.

<sup>655</sup> Ilie Traian, “Ecuson pentru primul echipaj Romano-Francez în Expedițiile Cutezătorii: Împreună /Ensemble,” In *Cutezătorii*, September 11, 1975.

affirming national allegiance as the very condition for internationalist friendship. Reducing internationalism to the mutual recognition of national specificity and sovereignty, the magazine echoed the international agenda of the Pioneer Organization, which envisioned youth exchanges as strategies of advocacy for “the renewal of state relations in the spirit of collaboration and full equality of rights, national sovereignty and independence, noninterference in internal affairs, mutual respect and mutually advantageous cooperation.”<sup>656</sup>

Much like other children’s organizations in the Eastern Bloc, the Romanian Pioneers professed to socialize the young in the spirit of socialist internationalism through a host of activities such as youth exchanges, pen pal correspondence with children in fraternal socialist countries, membership in so-called “Friendship Clubs” in Pioneer Palaces, articles in the pioneer press that illustrated aspects of children’s lives around the world, participation in a host of UNESCO-sponsored competitions, and even the integration of pioneer groups in communist youth delegations that attended the World Youth Festival. Despite being a rather costly investment, pioneer camps ranked high among international activities because they facilitated direct encounters with foreign delegations of children and adults, giving the Pioneer Organization the opportunity to showcase the superiority of Romania’s socialist regime in welfare provisions for children. Arguing that direct encounters among children contributed to “the relaxation of tensions and rapprochement among nations, promoting mutual understanding and respect,” the organization also approached youth camps as diplomatic opportunities to reassert the regime’s commitment to European security, world peace, and economic cooperation across the Iron Curtain.<sup>657</sup> The organization’s mission was to rely on a careful selection of child prodigies to embody the socialist regime’s vision of “good society” and non-aligned foreign

---

<sup>656</sup> Archive of the Romanian Pioneers (hereafter, ARP), file 24/1974, “Informare cu privire la activitatea internațională în anul 1973,” 1.

<sup>657</sup> ARP, file 21/1972, “Notă privind realizarea planului de relații externe pe anul 1972,” Virgiliu Radulian, 220.

policy, thus joining in the ideological battle between the Soviet Union and the United States that was increasingly fought on the symbolic terrain of childhood.<sup>658</sup>

As universally accepted symbolic currency in an ideologically divided world, children were uniquely qualified to advance the Romanian Pioneers' mission. Serving to embody the collective future modern societies envision for themselves, childhood and youth were "particularly overdetermined" in future-oriented and paternalist societies such as Ceausescu's Romania.<sup>659</sup> Furthermore, the traditional association of children with innocence made them valuable resources in the rhetoric of world peace and disarmament campaigns that informed most international youth events throughout the 1970s and 1980s. By contrast to U.S. propaganda efforts during this period, which drew on a long western tradition of Romantic visions of childhood to locate children in a distinctively middle class setting, portraying them as "insulated, wealthy, and contained at home," Romanian pioneer activists followed the Soviet tradition of casting children as militants for peace, actively engaged in charity work to support victims of imperialist aggression or writing letters to the U.S. president to protest war on behalf of the children of the world.<sup>660</sup> Finally, representing children as an "oppressed class" in ways that

---

<sup>658</sup> See Catriona Kelly, "Defending Children's Rights, 'In Defense of Peace': Children and Soviet Cultural Diplomacy," In *Kritika* 9, 4 (Fall 2008): 711-746, and Margaret Peacock, "Broadcasting Benevolence: Images of the Child in Soviet, American, and NLF Propaganda to Vietnam, 1965-1973," *The Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth* 3, 1 (Winter 2010): 15-38.

<sup>659</sup> On the role of the first socialist generation, the October children, as "icons of the Revolution's future" in Bolshevik conceptions of revolutionary transformation, see Lisa A. Kirschenbaum, *Small Comrades: Revolutionizing Childhood in Soviet Russia, 1917-1932* (New York: RoutledgeFalmer, 2001). Anne Gorsuch explores the convergence of contemporary psychology with revolutionary need in turning "youth" into a metaphor of revolutionary transformation in the texts of Bolshevik reformers: "For many Bolsheviks in this period, "youth" meant something far more than a stage in human development. It implied a "youthful" state of mind, a revolutionary way of perceiving the world." Anne Gorsuch, *Youth in Revolutionary Russia: Enthusiasts, Bohemians, Delinquents*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 16.

<sup>660</sup> Addressing the enduring power of the Romantic vision of childhood in contemporary American culture, Anne Higonnet discusses the persistence of five types of images invented or perfected in the eighteenth century, all of which affirm the innocence of the child: mother with child, child with pet, child dressed up in a fancy costume, angel child, and children posing as adults. See Anne Higonnet, *Pictures of Innocence: The History and Crisis of Ideal Childhood*, (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1998). On how these notions of childhood contrasted with the Soviet iconography of revolutionary youth, informing U.S. propaganda efforts during the Vietnam War, see Margaret Peacock, "Broadcasting Benevolence," 18.



echoed socialist rhetoric on traditionally exploited categories such as women and workers, socialist regimes could advertise their unique welfare provisions and advocacy for the young.<sup>661</sup>

Drawing on the symbolic richness of childhood and youth, the Romanian Pioneers spent significant financial resources on an ambitious international agenda that aimed at enhancing the socialist regime's international visibility and advancing its foreign policy under Nicolae Ceaușescu. In keeping with the organization's mission, pioneer delegations were expected to challenge Soviet hegemony and assert Romania's autonomy in the Soviet Bloc, act as neutral mediators of Cold War conflicts during their encounters with children's organizations outside the Eastern Bloc, and advocate Ceaușescu's Romania as a successful model of national sovereignty, socialist progress, and non-aligned foreign policy for children's organizations in developing countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. The organization's international visibility and exchanges were facilitated by its membership in or affiliation with a series of international bodies such as UNESCO or youth and children's organizations, be these Soviet-led organizations like the *Comité international des mouvements d'enfants et d'adolescents* (CIMEA), leftist movements such as the *International Falcons' Movement* (IFM), the *Scouting Movement*, or professedly apolitical structures like the *Children's International Summer Villages* (CISV).

Focusing on the organization's annual participation in international youth camps around the world and administration of an international pioneer camp on the Black Sea coast in Romania, this chapter will explore how the Romanian Pioneers envisioned socialist internationalism for children, how it attempted to translate this vision into practice, and how it reconciled its mission of socializing the young into socialist patriotism with the principles of internationalist solidarity. Approaching international youth exchanges as sites of diplomatic

---

<sup>661</sup> Catriona Kelly makes this point with respect to the symbolic value of children and childhood in the cultural diplomacy of the Soviet Union, "Defending Children's Rights," 713.

struggle rather than of internationalist harmony, this chapter will draw on official sources – reports of travels abroad - in order to examine the episodes of tension and contention generated by direct encounters between the Romanian Pioneers and other national delegations in youth camps. In order to give the project a much needed comparative dimension, I rely on a number of institutional histories that draw their sources from recently opened archives in the former Soviet Bloc, ranging from studies of the Young Leninists in the Soviet Union, to children and youth organizations in the former GDR, Hungary, and Yugoslavia.<sup>662</sup> Most importantly, I expanded my archival research to incorporate the internationalist outlook of the *Woodcraft Folk*, a small grassroots organization that emerged in Britain at the turn of the century as a left-wing alternative to Baden-Powell's *Boy Scouts*, and engaged in numerous exchanges with communist children's organizations in the Soviet Bloc during the Cold War.<sup>663</sup> This approach will illuminate how the Romanian Pioneers responded to alternative understandings of internationalism for youth articulated by children's organizations with different historical backgrounds or political agendas, be these pioneer organizations in the Eastern Bloc or left-wing movements in western Europe that did not develop as spinoffs of the Soviet Pioneers. Given my focus on the ambassadorial roles assigned to children, I am particularly interested in how expressions of discontent drew on alternative conceptions of childhood and adolescence in order to articulate competing visions of internationalism for youth.

---

<sup>662</sup> See Catriona Kelly, *Children's World: Growing Up in Russia, 1890-1991* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007); Anna Saunders, *Honecker's Children: Youth and Patriotism in East(ern) Germany, 1979-2002*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007); Katalin Juttau, *L'enfance Embrigadée Dans La Hongrie Communiste: Le Mouvement Des Pionniers*, (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2007); and Ildiko Erdei, "'The Happy Child' as an Icon of Socialist Transformation: Yugoslavia's Pioneer Organization," In John Lampe and Mark Mazower (eds.), *Ideologies and National Identities. The Case of Twentieth-Century Southeastern Europe* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2004).

<sup>663</sup> The archive of the Woodcraft Folk was recently catalogued as part of the Youth Movement Archive and made available for research by the Library of the London School of Economics (hereafter YMA/WF). The archives of other leftwing children's organizations in Europe that were even more actively involved in youth exchanges with Soviet Bloc countries throughout the 1970s and 1980s, such as the French pioneers (*Pionniers de France*), are not yet accessible for research. On the lack of archival availability for recent decades (1970s and 1980s), see also Katalin Juttau, *L'enfance Embrigadée*, 209.

Since international exchanges were highly monitored, most accounts were produced by adult youth activists in formal genres such as reports of collective visits abroad (*informări* and *rapoarte*) or evaluation reports of foreign delegations' performance in domestic pioneer camps. Leading pioneer activists were directly invested in expanding the organization's international contacts and thus, improving their prospects of career advances and access to state resources.<sup>664</sup> At a time when travel abroad was significantly restricted and the possession of foreign currency criminalized, they enjoyed the benefits of state-sanctioned and state-sponsored travel, initiating youth exchanges, mediating town twinning, and attending youth conferences, seminars, and camps throughout the world.<sup>665</sup> Whether they led child delegations to international camps abroad or administered Romania's international camps at home, pioneer activists documented their activity in travel reports that followed a ready-made template. Travel accounts were required to address "the delegation's official meetings with the party or state leadership in the host country, its discussions with representatives of the host organization and other foreign delegations, and its participation in camp activities" with a focus on the celebration of Romania's National Day, the usefulness of the three-day training period before departure, and the children's overall behavior and accomplishments.<sup>666</sup> Youth activists were also expected to report on "the foreign delegations' general knowledge of Romanian realities" or "remarks about socialist Romania and

---

<sup>664</sup> Leading positions in the organization's National Council in Bucharest or in the many county and municipal councils throughout the country included those of presidents, vice-presidents, members of the Executive Committee, and program directors (*șefi de comisie*) in charge of the organization's main sections: science and technology, arts and culture, sports and tourism, press and propaganda, research and methodological centers for pioneer instructors. Given their lower positions in the organization's hierarchy, journalists for the pioneer press, various directors of the Pioneer Palaces and Houses, or translators of the National Council traveled only occasionally to attend training seminars or pioneer camps.

<sup>665</sup> For lists of delegation leaders by position in the hierarchy of youth and pioneer activists, see ARP, file 12/1967, "Tabel cuprinzând conducătorii grupelor de copii care vor pleca în taberele internaționale de peste hotare," 17; file 32/1971, "Lista conducătorilor loturilor de pionieri pentru taberele și acțiunile externe," 19-22; file 34/1973, "Fișe de evidență personală," 1-10, and "Tabele cu conducătorii de loturi în tabere internaționale," 11-13; and file 32/1980, "Repartizarea activiștilor în tabere internaționale," 5-7.

<sup>666</sup> ARP, file 29/1981, "Plan de întocmire a informărilor privind participarea delegațiilor Organizației Pionierilor în tabere internaționale," 1-3.

Nicolae Ceausescu's leadership" as well as on "any special situations or major difficulties they had to overcome."<sup>667</sup> Finally, they were to conclude with an assessment of "the positive camp experiences that could be integrated in the activity of the Romanian Pioneers."<sup>668</sup>

Being submitted to the leadership of the organization and then forwarded to the Central Committee of the RCP, travel accounts reflect the extent to which personal interest and state mission converged. Although virtually all reports followed the required template, they also read as self-promotional texts whose narrative was organized around the youth activist's successful diplomatic activity, pedagogical prowess in mobilizing children's talents, and efforts to overcome practical, political or ideological obstacles. In fact, youth activists typically fashioned their narrative persona out of a combination of acceptable roles, positioning themselves either as their pioneer delegation's mentors or as their country's diplomats, spies, and advertisers. While most reports presented a rosy picture of internationalist harmony that reflected positively on the authors as ambassadors of peace and solidarity, pioneer activists did not shy away from depicting political and ideological conflicts that allowed them to emerge as staunch defenders of Romania's socialist credentials and national autonomy.

Since Romanian pioneers were central to the organization's international mission, travel reports included detailed accounts of children's activities, accomplishments, drawbacks and failures in international camps. These adult-authored accounts gave little indication of how children themselves experienced international encounters and how their view of themselves, others, and the world was transformed in the process. They did, however, shed light on the political and ideological forces that structured children's internationalist experiences, indicating how the changing political scene of the Cold War impacted children's experiences abroad as well

---

<sup>667</sup> Ibid.

<sup>668</sup> Ibid.

as how the organization selected child participants, how it defined successful participation, and what it expected of its small ambassadors.

### **Child Ambassadors: Ideal Profile and Practices of Selection**

During the late 1960s, approximately one hundred Romanian pioneers visited youth camps abroad while three hundred participants, including over a hundred foreign children, attended the international camp in Romania every summer.<sup>669</sup> In response to the socialist regime's ambitious diplomatic policy, the 1970s witnessed a boom in youth exchanges. As the number of child ambassadors more than doubled throughout the 1970s, the Romanian Pioneers was represented by an average of two to three hundred young envoys in international camps abroad, accommodating annually up to three hundred foreign guests and two to three hundred Romanian pioneers in its youth camp on the Black Sea coast.<sup>670</sup> During the 1980s, the trend took a sudden downturn as youth exchanges were significantly affected by the economic and foreign currency crisis. By the mid-1980s, Romanian children's participation in international camps

---

<sup>669</sup> The annual statistics preserved in the ARP are neither systematic nor consistent. Like many other state structures, the Pioneer Organization used statistics compiled for the Central Committee of the RCP to bolster its image, emphasizing its increase of youth exchanges, which was the main indicator of its successful "fulfillment" of annual plans to expand international relations. Reports and statistics for the same year often provide figures that differ by fifty to one hundred pioneers for the same category. Despite the lack of consistency in statistics, the existing reports and charts can still be helpful in uncovering major trends. For statistics for the late 1960s, see ARP, file 7/1967, "Notă cu privire la activitatea din taberele internaționale - Costinești și Sinaia – precum și la participarea copiilor români la taberele de peste hotare," Traian Pop, 149-151, "Informare cu privire la organizarea și desfășurarea vacanței de vară a pionierilor și școlărilor în anul 1967," Traian Pop, 171-179; ARP, file 7/1968, "Informare privind activitatea din taberele internaționale de la Costinești și Sinaia, precum și participarea copiilor români în taberele de peste hotare, Virgiliu Radulian, 235-239. ARP, file 9/1969, "Informare cu privire la activitatea pe plan extern a Organizației Pionierilor," 112-121.

<sup>670</sup> These numbers refer exclusively to child participants engaged in youth exchanges. For statistics for the 1970s, see ARP, file 10/1970, "Informare cu privire la activitatea taberei internaționale din țara noastră și la participarea pionierilor români în taberele de peste hotare," 115-118. ARP, file 31/1971, "Informare privind trimiterea pionierilor în taberele din străinătate și organizarea taberei internaționale din țara noastră," Virgiliu Radulian, 160-167. ARP, file, 21/1972, "Notă privind realizarea planului de relații externe pe anul 1972," Virgiliu Radulian, 218-221; file 23/1974, "Notă privind schimburile de copii în taberele internaționale în anul 1974," Virgiliu Radulian, 79-81. 13/1977, "Notă privind pionierii și adulții propuși să participe în tabere internaționale," 139-140.

abroad became purely symbolic, dropping under one hundred per year while the Romanian camp at Navodari only accommodated an average of two hundred pioneers every summer.<sup>671</sup>

The slight variation in numbers notwithstanding, participation in international pioneer camps had always been a privilege reserved for the select few. The selection criteria and guidelines issued by the president of the Romanian Pioneers for the organization's local councils, which were charged with recruiting exemplary pioneers, can give us insights into how the organization envisioned the ideal child ambassador and how it selected and trained pioneers for this role. Although issued annually, these criteria were not significantly altered throughout the last decades of Romanian socialism.

Echoing the rhetorical focus on “multilateral development” in the regime's broader discourse of the “new socialist man,” pioneer activists envisioned a multivalent youth whose healthy and athletic bodies, good-looking physique, artistic skills and sensibilities, and encyclopedic minds were enhanced by a sociable and outgoing personality, an unshakeable team spirit and commitment to the collective, an impeccable moral compass, and self-discipline.<sup>672</sup> On occasion, travel accounts featured such ideal ambassadors. Reporting on the participation of a Romanian delegation in an international camp in Norway in 1970, the leader singled out one of the pioneers in his evaluation: “A fluent speaker of French, with a good command of German and English, talented at dance performances and familiar with a number of songs, Carmen Firan conducted herself in an irreproachable manner, knowing when to play and when to be serious

---

<sup>671</sup> For statistics for the 1980s, see ARP, file 28/1982, “Tabel nominal cu pionierii propuși să participe în tabere internaționale,” 1-13; file 15/1984, “Notă privind participarea pionierilor în taberele internaționale peste hotare,” 14-15.

<sup>672</sup> See ARP, file 32/1971, “Indicații privind selecționarea și pregătirea pionierilor în vederea trimiterii în taberele internaționale din țară și din străinătate, Elena Popard, 2-9; file 21/1972, “Criterii privind selecționarea pionierilor în vederea trimiterii în taberele internaționale,” Virgiliu Radulian, 4-13; file 34/1973, “Instrucțiuni privind selecționarea pionierilor în vederea trimiterii în taberele internaționale,” Virgiliu Radulian, 49-56.

and focused, eventually winning everybody's sympathy and respect, children and adults alike."<sup>673</sup>

A tribute to the discourse of "multilateral development," this broad range of skills was also meant to secure top positions for Romanian teams participating in international camps with a diverse and demanding program that pitted national delegations against each other in sports contests, music and dance festivals, camp games competitions, carnival costume celebrations, and even political seminars and rallies. The organization's official guidelines also provided local councils with concrete ways of measuring and assessing the desired qualities. Child ambassadors of twelve to fourteen were selected based on their grades and general performance in school, their record of success as singers, dancers, and instrument players in national music and dance festivals, their athletic performance, their fluency in modern foreign languages with an increasing preference for English, French, or German over Russian, which continued to be employed for Soviet Bloc exchanges, and their leadership in an increasingly ambitious hierarchy of pioneer achievement.<sup>674</sup>

Once local school and county pioneer councils made their preliminary decisions, they submitted files for every pioneer selected to represent the country in international camps, including six large portrait photographs, the date and place of birth, the parents' names, profession, work place, and political membership, as well as a recommendation, emphasizing the child's skills and accomplishments. The standardized texts of the recommendations indicate that artistic, athletic, social, and foreign language skills were as important as political leadership. Although no child excelled in all required domains, a combination of various skills sufficed to qualify children for participation in pioneer camps throughout the 1960s and much of the 1970s.

---

<sup>673</sup> ARP, file 10/1970, "Informare cu privire la participarea noastra în tabăra internațională din Norvegia," Constantin Diaconu, 59.

<sup>674</sup> Ibid.

During this period, children could be recommended as pioneer leaders exhibiting strong organizational skills and spirit of initiative, but also as leaders of their school's folk dance troops, competitive football or handball players, winners of sports competitions, experienced folk music performers, members of their school's choir, soulful poetry writers and reciters, award winning instrument players, active members of various Pioneer Palace clubs, editors of their school magazine, successful participants in national Olympiads in the sciences or humanities, fluent speakers of foreign languages, and even as passionate readers, talented story and joke tellers, math problem solvers, or good colleagues popular with their classmates.<sup>675</sup>

By the 1980s, however, pioneer leadership emerged as a deal sealer in the selection process. While the majority of children attending youth camps in the 1960s and 1970s were class or school leaders (*comandant de detașament* and *commandant de unitate*) at best, by the 1980s, virtually all pioneers had surpassed the school level, attaining extremely high positions in an expanding hierarchy of pioneer leadership that had developed gradually throughout the 1970s.<sup>676</sup> The twelve to fourteen year olds who were recruited for international camps belonged to a pioneer elite that participated in the organization's leading structures alongside adult activists, enjoying the status of members in the county or national councils of the Pioneer Organizations or adjuncts to the president of the organization (*pionieri locțiitori*). Despite the pioneers' purely symbolic role in such leading structures, the process of selection and ideological training for leadership roles among their peers contributed to the creation of a pioneer elite that was openly recruited to participate in international activities by the late 1970s.

---

<sup>675</sup> See the charts in ARP, file 12/1967, 27, 72-75, 88; file 33/1971, 1-105; file 23/1972, 51-77; file 34/1973, 61-134.

<sup>676</sup> By comparison to the 1970s, in the 1980s, children's "role in the pioneer organization" appears in official charts as a discrete category. See file 32/1980, "Propuneri de pionieri pentru tabere internaționale," 8-28 and 28/1982, "Tabel nominal cu pionierii propuși să participe în tabere internaționale," 1-13.



Like much socialist propaganda of the time, children's access to international camps was couched in the language of meritocracy, being presented as a well-deserved award reserved for the best and brightest pioneers. However, selection criteria did not focus exclusively on children's own achievements - whether political, artistic, or athletic, - extending to include children's "social background" and ethnic origin. In keeping with the Soviet model that will be detailed later in this chapter, Romanian delegations included members of Hungarian, German, and Serbian origin, to ensure the proportional representation of some of the recognized "cohabiting nationalities" (*națiuni conlocuitoare*) in counties with "mixed population." The statistics for the summer of 1973, which seem to be representative for the 1970s, show a total number of two hundred twenty-three pioneers, out of which one hundred and ninety-four were listed as Romanian (87%), twenty-one as Hungarian (9.5%), seven as German (3%), and one as Serbian (0.5%).<sup>677</sup> However, by the mid-1980s, when youth exchanges came to an all time low, Romanian pioneers exceeded ninety percent of the total number of participants rendering the percentage of "national minorities" so dismal that the majority of delegations lacked the much desired ethnic diversity, falling short of the Soviet standard of national representation.<sup>678</sup>

Although the system of proportional representation was often tweaked to ensure a majority of ethnic Romanians on pioneer delegations, the organization's rhetorical commitment to equitable participation ensured that it was never completely abolished. The presence of ethnic minorities on pioneer teams charged with the ambassadorial mission of embodying socialist

---

<sup>677</sup> See ARP, file 34/1973, "Repartizarea locurilor, pe județe, pentru plecările în taberele internaționale," 52-54. On pages 15-17, the total numbers provided for 1973 are slightly different, but the overall percentages remain roughly the same. Although the organization's archives did not preserve systematic annual statistics, the available documents indicate that the statistical situation was similar throughout the 1970s (see ARP, file 32/1971, "Repartizarea pe județe a numărului de locuri pentru taberele internaționale," 12-13).

<sup>678</sup> In 1982, for example, out of a total of one hundred and forty nine pioneers, one hundred and thirty nine were listed as Romanian (93.3%), nine as Hungarian (6%), and one as German (0.7%). During this period, national minorities enjoyed exclusively symbolic participation on pioneer delegation. See the charts in ARP, file 32/1980, "Propuneri de pionieri pentru tabere internaționale," 8-28 and 28/1982, "Tabel nominal cu pionierii propuși să participe în tabere internaționale," 1-13.

Romania was, however, a sensitive topic. Some youth activists chose to see the glass as half full, suggesting that Hungarian and German pioneers made positive contributions to the teams' popularity and success, enlarging the teams' spectrum of foreign languages or winning medals and awards in sports competitions. Most other pioneer activists argued that the presence of Transylvanian Hungarian pioneers on the team generated diplomatic tensions. Not only did it encourage Soviet or Czechoslovak hosts, for example, to express concern about Ceausescu's policies towards national minorities, but it also ensured that Transylvanian Hungarian pioneers enjoyed more visibility and popularity than their colleagues.<sup>679</sup> Lurking behind these concerns was the anxiety over national disloyalty, the fear that Hungarian youth approached directly by Soviet hosts or interviewed extensively by journalists of the Slovakian Hungarian minority press might be inclined to spoil the rosy picture of egalitarian policies that Ceaușescu's regime and its children's organization sought to project abroad.

In addition, the Romanian Pioneers set quotas for children's participation in international camps based on their parents' profession and political loyalty measured by their membership and position in the RCP. Since its foundation in 1949, the Romanian Pioneers fashioned itself as an organization dedicated to the mobilization, nurture, and education of workers' children, echoing the Romanian Workers' Party's alleged commitment to the cause of the working class. Although by the late 1960s, the percentage of school children inducted into the organizations was so high that it no longer warranted the Romanian Pioneers' self-description as a platform for vanguard working class youth, "social background" remained an important indicator in its distribution of

---

<sup>679</sup> ARP, file 7/1967, "Informare cu privire la organizarea și desfășurarea vacanței de vară a pionierilor și școlărilor în anul 1967," Traian Pop, 178; file 10/1970, "Informare în legătura cu activitatea delegației de pionieri care au petrecut vacanța în tabăra internațională din Cehoslovacia," Gligor Hașa and Elena Irimie, 47.

privileges.<sup>680</sup> The organization sought to recruit 80% of its ambassadors from families of workers and cooperative peasants, who represented the backbone of the socialist economy and were entitled to reap its benefits, and 20% from children of intellectuals, a category that continued to be suspected of political disloyalty and bourgeois sensibility throughout the communist period.<sup>681</sup>

In practice, the organization rarely met its ideal quotas, the actual percentages varying between 60% and 75% for children of workers and cooperative peasants and 14% to 32% for children of intellectuals.<sup>682</sup> However, judging by the organization's statistics, children of workers were, indeed, the most numerous group with one or both parents engaged in professions such as industrial worker, miner, machinery mechanic, lathe operator, plumber, carpenter, tractor driver, tailor, hair dresser, textile worker, lab assistant, nurses, and factory administrator. By comparison, categories that tended to be counted as "intellectuals" - school and high school teachers, college professors, doctors, engineers, economists, accountants, and civil servants such as public prosecutors, attorneys, office workers and clerks - were significantly less represented.

Statistical charts, however, tend to obscure the significant room for maneuver that youth activists enjoyed in manipulating statistics to come closer to the ideal percentages and project the image of an egalitarian society that was committed to fair social representation, striving to cater to the needs of its less privileged children. To mention just a few strategies, virtually all reports included cooperative peasants and workers in the same category, eliding the underrepresentation

---

<sup>680</sup> By the late 1960s, approximately 70% of school children were inducted into the organization regardless of their social background, a percentage that would grow steadily throughout the 1970s and 1980s, when membership in the organization was just short of 100% for school children. See ARP, 17/1968, "Rapoarte statistice semestriale (procentul școlărilor primiți în organizația pionierilor, pe județe), 1-51. 18/1968, "Rapoarte statistice," 1-3.

<sup>681</sup> ARP, file 34/1973, "Instrucțiuni privind selecționarea pionierilor în vederea trimerii în taberele internaționale," Virgiliu Radulian, 50.

<sup>682</sup> See ARP, 22/1972, "Notă privind cuprinderea, pe categorii sociale, a pionierilor în tabere din străinătate," Virgiliu Radulian, 88; file 32/1973, "Notă," Virgiliu Radulian, 15; file 23/1974, "Notă privind schimburile de copii în taberele internaționale în anul 1974," Virgiliu Radulian, 79-81; 13/1977, "Notă privind pionierii și adulții propuși să participe în tabere internaționale," 139-140; file 28/1982, "Tabel nominal cu pionierii propuși să participe în tabere internaționale," 1-13; file 15/1984, "Notă privind participarea pionierilor în taberele internaționale peste hotare," 14-15.

of children from rural areas among pioneer ambassadors. Some reports made it hard to determine the actual participation of toxic social categories such as “intellectuals,” listing them as part of professionally mixed families of “workers and intellectuals” or “intellectuals and others,” thus diluting the sense of social danger and inequity implied in their overrepresentation.<sup>683</sup> Finally, no statistics reflected the rhetorical strategies that served to recast positions of political privilege into “healthy working class origins” as evidenced by the following recommendation: “The pupil was recommended because his school performance is very good and he is from a working-class family, his father being also the party secretary of the Local Union of Consumer Cooperatives.”<sup>684</sup>

While some children of party activists swelled the ranks of the working class as the example above suggests, most statistics counted them routinely in a discrete category of “children of party activists, officers, and others,” providing detailed lists that were submitted for approval to the parents’ respective party structures. Circulated internally as informative reports for hierarchically superior party structures, including the Central Committee, these documents kept track of the distribution of privileges in the party. Inadvertently, they also acknowledged the inadequacy of professional categories such as “workers” and “intellectuals” in explaining politically facilitated access to material and symbolic resources in socialist societies. Children of youth and party activists, officers of the Ministry of Interior, National Defense, and External Affairs, and Ministry of Education officials (ministers, inspectors, etc.) were all assigned to this category, which accounted for an average of 7% to 14% of the total number of participants.

Participation in international camps was a privilege in yet another sense. Seeking to impress domestic audiences as well as foreign guests or hosts, representatives of the organization used every opportunity to feature Romania’s welfare provisions for the young, claiming that the

---

<sup>683</sup> ARP, file 13/1977, “Notă privind pionierii și adulții propuși să participe în tabere internaționale,” 139-140.

<sup>684</sup> See ARP, file 12/1967, 75. In fact, a significant number of charts listed parents’ profession as both “workers” and leading “party activists” of their Workers’ Union.

socialist regime supported fully children's participation in international camps. Despite these self-congratulatory claims, half of the Romanian pioneers traveling to international camps abroad were expected to contribute increasingly hefty participation fees in order to ease the financial expenses of the organization.<sup>685</sup> Although the parents' contribution depended on the family's total income (cumulated salaries and pensions), participation in international camps remained prohibitively expensive, especially for the low-income families of workers or cooperative peasants that needed most the financial support of the organization.<sup>686</sup>

It is fair to argue that personal merit, as defined by the organization, combined with political privilege and loosely enforced standards of ethnic and social representation in the selection of pioneers for international camps. The pressure to represent socialist Romania honorably in international camps encouraged the organization to recruit genuinely talented youth who could perform well in sports or artistic competitions, communicate fluently in foreign languages, and mobilize successfully for political rallies and seminars. Compliance with the Soviet model reinforced by the expectations of fair representation in exchanges with analogous pioneer organizations in the Soviet Bloc also prompted the Romanian Pioneers to adhere to a system of proportional representation for ethnic minorities and social categories. At the same time, the hierarchical system of recommendations and approvals gave youth activists at various levels in the hierarchy the relative power to claim or allocate party resources at their own discretion, often privileging less qualified pioneers to the detriment of talented youth.

---

<sup>685</sup> In 1972, the official provisions indicated that 50% of the selected pioneers will be fully supported by the organization while the other 50% would contribute to the costs of their travel and living expenses. See ARP, file 21/1972, "Criterii privind selecționarea pionierilor în vederea trimerii în taberele internaționale," Virgiliu Radulian, 4-13. The fees established in 1965, for example, were further raised in 1972, ranging from a minimum of 1200 *lei* to a maximum of 5250 *lei*, the equivalent of one to five average monthly salaries.

<sup>686</sup> *Ibid.*

The process of selecting children for participation in youth exchanges indicates that the organization viewed pioneer camps as opportunities to boost the international prestige of Ceaușescu's socialist regime. Not least because ideological intentions did not easily translate into practice, the international experiences of Romanian pioneer delegations often fell short of the idealized script of ambassadorial representation in contexts of internationalist harmony. Whether it was the botched selection process in Romania or the adversarial political conditions abroad, official delegation reports indicate that pioneer groups encountered significant obstacles in projecting an ideal image of Romania abroad.

### **Trouble in Paradise: International Pioneer Camps in the Soviet Bloc**

In carrying out their diplomatic mission, the Romanian Pioneers' first line of offense was the cultivation of the traditional system of mutual exchanges with youth organizations in the Eastern Bloc that facilitated the annual participation of tens of thousands of pioneers in traditional summer camps run after the Soviet model of the Artek resort in the Crimean Peninsula. Thus, the organization administered its own international camp on the Black Sea Coast and in the Carpathian Mountains, making efforts to appropriate, expand, and modernize housing facilities available in several seaside and mountain resorts at Costinești, Navodari, Sinaia, and Timiș throughout the 1960s and 1970s. In return for hosting children from fraternal socialist countries every year, the organization would send delegations of ten to twenty pioneers headed by one or two adult delegates to spend their summer vacations in pioneer camps at Artek in the Soviet Union, Csilleberc and Zanka in the proximity of Budapest and Lake Balaton in Hungary, the village of Kranevo on the Black Sea Coast in Bulgaria, the Wilhelm Pieck

Republic of Pioneers on the shores of the Werbellinsee in the German Democratic Republic, and a diversity of locations in Czechoslovakia, Poland and Yugoslavia.

The network of relations among pioneer organizations in eastern Europe dated back to the late 1940s.<sup>687</sup> In the context of political unrest and economic distress dominating the immediate postwar years, international pioneer camps were meant to create the impression that the still vulnerable communist governments in eastern Europe formed a united socialist front and testify to the superiority of the Soviet model of state provisions for the young.<sup>688</sup> To this end, national and international pioneer camps designed after the Soviet model functioned simultaneously as medical rehabilitation centers and ideological schools for the children of cooperative peasants and the working class, being staffed with nurses and cooks alongside teachers and pioneer instructors. The flagship Soviet camp at Artek was opened as a health resort for children in 1925 and continued to monitor children's minds and bodies through a carefully controlled regimen of sleep, food, and exercise throughout its existence.<sup>689</sup>

Similarly, early press accounts of Romanian pioneer camps (*tabere*), also called "summer colonies" (*colonii de vara*), focused as much on the virtues of collective life as they did on the food menus allegedly featuring five meals a day (including meat, fruit, and sweets), the daily intakes of calories and vitamins, and the ideal balance between rest and physical exercise, measuring the camps' success both in terms of the children's gratitude to the Workers' Party and

---

<sup>687</sup> The Romanian Pioneers started its international relations with a modest exchange of forty pioneers with Bulgaria in its founding year (1949), following the induction of the first pioneer groups into the organization. See ANIC, Fond C.C. al P.C.R. – Organizatorică, file 83/1949, "Raport de activitate a secției centrale de pionieri in perioada 1 iulie – 15 septembrie 1949, 23-24. Its international agenda became more ambitious in the 1950s, when it planned to invite delegations from the Soviet Union, Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Albania, the German Democratic Republic as well as France, Greece, and Italy to an international pioneer camp in the Carpathian Mountains designed to accommodate eight hundred pioneers in two subsequent sessions. See ANIC, Fond C.C. al P.C.R. – Organizatorică, file 32/1950, "Proiect de organizare a taberelor de pionieri pentru vara anului 1950," 27-30.

<sup>688</sup> Ibid. See also Paul Gh. Popescu, "Activitatea pionierilor în vacanță," In *Gazeta Învățământului*, July 29, 1949, 1-2.

<sup>689</sup> Valentina Lubimova, *Soviet Children at Summer Camp* (Moscow: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1955), 31-40, and Stanislav Furin and Y. Rybinsky, "What is Artek?," In *The Artek Pioneer Camp* (Moscow: Novosti Press Agency, 1975), 3-5.

the number of pounds gained in weight.<sup>690</sup> The climate of “clean air, serenity, beautiful natural surroundings, and parental surveillance” was meant to contribute as much as diet and exercise to the shaping of robust bodies and personalities.<sup>691</sup> Reminding its readers that children were nourished in mountain camps or “Black Sea resorts at Eforie, Vasile Roaita, Costinesti and Techirghiol that had been previously enjoyed only by gluttonous boyars and their sons,” *The Education Gazette* completed the image of the paternalist state with references to the ongoing process of state nationalization of assets portrayed in terms of an unprecedented democratization of space and resources under the new “people’s democracy.”<sup>692</sup> By the 1960s, the youth and children’s organizations of the communist parties in the Eastern Bloc perfected the task of showcasing socialist achievement, mobilizing significant state resources in order to administer international pioneer camps that were located in extremely picturesque spots and featured modern facilities and specialized personnel.

After more than a decade of mutual exchanges, international pioneer camps had also become highly standardized, featuring a predictable program that engaged children delegations in a great number of political activities, sports competitions, artistic festivals, group visits to museums, major historical sites, the capital cities of the visited country, or contemporary sites of socialist progress and achievement such as local Pioneer Palaces, factories, or cooperative farms. Although highly monitored by adult delegation leaders, mediated by translators, and administered by specialized staff, pioneer camps continued to be represented as experiments in collective living, self-management, and self-government for children and youth. Typically, camp

---

<sup>690</sup> Al. G. Trifoi, “Viața elevilor în coloniile de vară la munte și la mare,” In *Gazeta Învățământului*, July 22, 1949, 3.

<sup>691</sup> Ibid.

<sup>692</sup> Petre Lenghel Izanu, “Cum își petrec vacanța la Eforie copiii muncitorilor în colonia de vară a Ministerului Sănătății,” In *Gazeta Învățământului*, July 22, 1949, 3. See also “Organizarea vacanței elevilor, o problemă de Stat,” In *Gazeta Învățământului*, June 24, 1949, 1 and 4. For an account of the role of after-school institutions for children in the “democratization of space” in the Soviet Union, see Susan E. Reid, “Khrushchev’s Children’s Paradise: the Pioneer Palace, Moscow, 1958-1962,” In *Socialist Spaces: Sites of Everyday Life in the Eastern Bloc*, eds. Susan E. Reid and David Crowley, (Oxford, New York: Berg, 2002), 141-180.



administrators organized life in the collective by creating two leading bodies – a pioneer and an adult Soviet or council – each of which was composed of elected representatives from national delegations and could, in principle, draw up a schedule of activities or propose changes to the already existing camp program.

In order to manage effectively hundreds of children coming from different countries and organizations, camp administrators also integrated national delegations in larger pioneer units. As part of these units, delegations would hold “friendship meetings” during which they swapped pioneer insignia, teach each other folk songs and dances or camp games, participate in press conferences and political seminars about current international events, engage in fund-raising and voluntary work in local cooperatives or camp workshops, or take short camping trips together. Political activities of magnitude reunited all pioneer units for meetings of solidarity with “victims of imperialist aggression,” anti-war demonstrations, and peace campaigns that included the writing of collective letters asking US leaders to end armed conflicts and nuclear proliferation. However, national delegations remained the basic organizational units of international pioneer camps, competing against each other for prizes, awards, and medals in sports contests such as the mini-Olympics or Spartakiads, festivals of folk dance and music, or National Day celebrations of national specificity and diversity in the socialist world.

In the immediate post-war years, when pioneer organizations in eastern Europe were busy learning from the Soviet experience, the model of internationalism offered by Artek, which opened its doors to pioneer groups from all Soviet Republics, but remained closed to all but a few foreign delegations and honorary guests, was that of “the friendship of the Soviet peoples.”<sup>693</sup> As scholars have pointed out, the climate of “increasing isolationism marked by

---

<sup>693</sup> In his memoir, *Model Children: Inside the Republic of Red Scarves* (Brooklyn, New York: Autonomedia, 1991), Paul Thorez, the son of Maurice Thorez, the secretary general of the French Communist Party, comments on the

overt ‘spy mania’ and suspicion of the outside world” characterizing the Soviet Union in the 1930s “increased in virulence after the Second World War,” accounting for the fact that the socialist internationalism for youth promoted by the Soviet Union was an ancillary form of Soviet patriotism.<sup>694</sup> English and Russian language propaganda brochures advertising Artek as the finest Soviet health resort for children in the mid-1950s featured groups of rosy cheeked pioneers from all over the Soviet Union, boasting that the camp welcomed children of seventy nationalities.<sup>695</sup> Much like pioneers from Union Republics, the occasional children delegations from China, Vietnam, Bulgaria, the German Democratic Republic, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Romania were counted among the seventy nationalities that visited the camp, being assimilated into the big socialist family headed by the Soviet Union.

By the 1960s, Artek hosted tens of thousands of children from various countries and continents, emerging as a central site in the diplomatic efforts of the Soviet Union to articulate a morally superior alternative to western capitalism that could function as a model for the rest of the world, especially developing nations.<sup>696</sup> The effort of refashioning Artek coincided with the Soviet Union’s attempt at coordinating international children’s exchanges in the same way it oversaw the organization of World Youth Festivals under the patronage of the Komsomol-dominated World Federation of Democratic Youth. Both developments aimed at exploiting the traditional arena of exchanges within the Eastern Bloc and Europe in order to create the impression of a broad and united socialist front and attract a wider following in the Third World.

---

absence of a cosmopolitan atmosphere at Artek in the 1950s: “Artek wasn’t as cosmopolitan then [the 1950s] as it came to be afterwards because cosmopolitanism wasn’t in favor then. Foreigners did come to Artek, but really they barely trickled in. There were some tiny delegations from Czechoslovakia, Poland and China – those certain friends! – but only a handful of other, special cases. Boys and girls from the Soviet Union were in force, enjoying the charms of the Crimea” (29-30). Among the few honorary guests outside the Soviet Bloc, Thorez lists himself and Anita Presto, the daughter of the general secretary of the Brazilian Communist Party.

<sup>694</sup> Kelly, “Defending Children’s Rights,” 744.

<sup>695</sup> See Lubimova, *Soviet Children*, 31-40 and *Artek*, (Kiev, 1955).

<sup>696</sup> Kelly, “Defending Children’s Rights,” 735.

In 1958, the World Federation of Democratic Youth initiated the creation of a children's bureau that was meant to ensure the doctrinal coordination of pioneer organizations in eastern Europe, left-wing children's organizations in western Europe, and emerging youth organizations in Asia, Africa and Latin America under Soviet control.<sup>697</sup>

For the Romanian Pioneers, the International Committee of Children's and Adolescents' Movements (CIMEA) provided an international platform to extend its contacts with children's organizations outside the Soviet Bloc and gain international visibility by challenging Soviet hegemony in internationalist work for youth. As part of its independent policy, the organization courted children's organizations in western Europe, the Third World, and socialist countries such as Albania, China, and North Korea whose strained or noncommittal relations with the Soviet Union prevented them from participating in the traditional exchanges within the Soviet Bloc.<sup>698</sup> Unlike the youth organizations in Albania, China, and North Korea, which declined participation in CIMEA proceedings, the Romanian Pioneers built its reputation on measured and essentially harmless objections to Soviet domination couched in the language of national autonomy and democratic participation in the committee's presidency. Judging by the organization's annual reports, such disagreements were not uncommon in CIMEA meetings, where Romanian youth activists protested the proposed imposition of a mandatory, Soviet-inspired, program for all international pioneer camps in the Eastern Bloc, arguing that individual countries should have

---

<sup>697</sup> For an institutional account of the emergence of the children's bureau (CIMEA) with the headquarters in Budapest, see Katalin Jutteau, "Les mouvements internationaux des enfants," In *L'enfance Embrigadée*, 193-201.

<sup>698</sup> See, for example, ARP, file, 21/1972, "Notă privind realizarea planului de relații externe pe anul 1972," Virgiliu Radulian, 218-221. The president of the Romanian Pioneers indicates that the organization continued to make significant efforts to establish contacts with children's organization in China, North Korea, and Albania despite the latter's modest response.

the freedom to draw on domestic traditions and professional expertise to generate unique programs for internationalist education.<sup>699</sup>

Echoing larger political tensions in the Eastern Bloc, the disagreements among children's organizations played out in actual encounters among pioneer delegations in international camps, structuring children's internationalist experience. Nowhere did these tensions become more evident than in the Soviet Union's major international camp in the years following Nicolae Ceaușescu's ascension to power in 1965 on a self-legitimizing discourse of national sovereignty that continued the policies of national reclamation of his predecessor, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej. Romanian pioneers arriving at Artek in the mid and late 1960s found themselves the target of politically charged questions that seemed at odds with an environment designed to promote socialist solidarity and internationalism. Twelve to fourteen year olds as well as their adult delegation leaders had to fight off "insinuating questions" asked mostly by Soviet pioneers, but also by their Polish or Hungarian counterparts in press conferences and seminars: "Do Romanian pioneers still wear scarves?" "Are their scarves still red?" "Do Romanian Pioneers still celebrate the Great October Socialist Revolution?" "Do they study Russian in school?" "Do they correspond with Soviet pioneers?" "What activities promoting internationalist solidarity do they organize?"<sup>700</sup> Triggered by the perceived de-politicization of pioneer activities following the organization's recent institutional reform, these questions hinted at the Romanian leadership's policy of national sovereignty.

---

<sup>699</sup> ARP, file 10/1970, "Informare privind activitatea delegației CNOP la cea de-a VI-a întâlnire a organizației pionierilor 'Ernst Thalmann,' Cottbus," 75-83; 33/1973, "Mandatul delegației participante la Conferința conducătorilor de tabere internaționale ale pionierilor din țările socialiste," Budapesta, 80-81 and 104-112; 13/1977, "Raport privind participarea la întâlnirea conducătorilor taberelor internaționale din unele țări socialiste," Bulgaria, Constantin Bostina, 66; 17/1984, "Notă privind participarea, în RDG, a unei delegații a Organizației Pionierilor la reuniunea Prezidiului CIMEA, la întâlnirea reprezentanților organizațiilor de pionieri din unele țări socialiste și la o manifestare a copiilor pentru pace," Poliana Cristescu, 20-25.

<sup>700</sup> ARP, file 7/1967, "Informare asupra lucrărilor conferinței organizate de Comitetul Central al Uniunii Tineretului Comunist Leninist din Uniunea Sovietică," Elena Popard, 166-7, and ARP, file 24/1974, "Informare: Tabăra internațională Artek – URSS," 98-9.

Oftentimes, the hosts' uncomfortable questions extended beyond the pioneers' own activities to include the diplomatic and economic agendas of Ceaușescu's freshly anointed socialist regime: "What is Romania's position with respect to the Arab-Israeli conflict? What about the Vietnam War?"<sup>701</sup> Most of these exchanges took place in pioneer press conferences and seminars, but Soviet translators also approached Romanian delegation leaders in informal contexts with similar questions: "Why does Romania maintain a neutral position with respect to China's cultural revolution? How does it view its participation in the Warsaw Pact? Why is there so much talk of national sovereignty and independence in Romania?"<sup>702</sup>

Since international camps functioned as diplomatic venues, it is not surprising that the political tensions generated by Ceaușescu's domestic and international agendas played out in pioneer exchanges at Artek. It is, however, interesting that political disagreements were fought on the common terrain of shared assumptions about the role of children as political activists and leaders who were expected to be ideologically prepared to play ambassadorial roles on the international stage.<sup>703</sup> Following the initial incidents of the late 1960s, Romanian delegations came well equipped with diplomatic answers for the provocative questions they had learned to expect at Artek. In 1967, they rebutted successfully a veiled criticism of Romania's recent establishment of diplomatic relations with the Federal German Republic. When asked by a German pioneer: "What do Romanian children think about the Federal German Republic's involvement in the Vietnam War?", Romanian pioneers defaulted on the abstract, but generally accepted, language of the peace movement: "Romanian children have learned to hate war and

---

<sup>701</sup> ARP, file 7/1967, "Informare cu privire la activitatea desfășurată în cele două tabere cu caracter internațional din țara noastră și la participarea pionierilor români în taberele de peste hotare," 143-4.

<sup>702</sup> ARP, file 8/1967, "Informare privind unele aspecte din activitatea detașamentului de pionieri români în tabăra internațională Artek," Stoica Anghel and Sintimbreanu Gheorghe, 102.

<sup>703</sup> For a historical account of the shifts in the perception of children as "activists" and "revolutionaries" to disciplined and loyal youth dependent on adult supervision in Soviet Russia, see Catriona Kelly, *Children's World*, and Ann Livschiz, "Growing Up Soviet: Childhood in the Soviet Union, 1918-1958" (PhD diss., Stanford University, 2007).

condemn US politics in Vietnam as well as those that support these politics.”<sup>704</sup> During the same press conference, children addressed their country’s foreign policy in the Middle East: “What is your opinion about the war waged by the Israeli government?” No longer taken by surprise, Romanian pioneers provided a ready-made answer that did not only express Ceausescu’s ambition of playing the role of appeaser in international conflicts, but also the Romanian leader’s efforts to maintain diplomatic relations with all sides in the Arab-Israeli conflict:

Our country militates actively for peace, opposes military solutions to conflicts, and advocates mutual understanding and peaceful solutions that would satisfy the interests of all the peoples living in the region. At this year’s conference in Moscow, our country advocated its support for an immediate and final ceasefire in the Middle East. At the same time, our country disagrees with the position of those groups supporting the destruction of the state of Israel.<sup>705</sup>

Although they often agreed with the premise of the debate, Romanian youth activists visiting Artek in the late 1960s had the mission of asserting national and organizational autonomy from the Soviet Union. Despite the fact that they themselves were routinely charged with training Romanian pioneers in the practice of diplomatic retorts, delegation leaders took issue with the unfair Soviet tactics that generated an uneven terrain of diplomatic struggle, putting Romanian children at a disadvantage by making them the target of politically charged questions “staged” by adults.<sup>706</sup> Their travel reports denounce the hosts’ failure to promote internationalism among children, blaming it on blatant manifestations of Soviet militarism and suprematism.<sup>707</sup> Not only were Soviet pioneers instructed to act as “patrons” of foreign children’s groups, but the latter were systematically exposed to Soviet language songs and rituals, a manifestation of cultural colonialism which ensured that delegations from Asia, Africa,

---

<sup>704</sup> ARP, file 8/1967, “Informare,” Stoica Anghel and Sîntimbreanu Gheorghe, 102.

<sup>705</sup> Ibid.

<sup>706</sup> ARP, file 7/1967, “Informare cu privire la organizarea și desfășurarea vacanței de vară a pionierilor și școlărilor în anul 1967,” Traian Pop, 177.

<sup>707</sup> ARP, file 8/1967, “Informare privind unele aspecte din activitatea detașamentului de pionieri români în tabăra internațională Artek,” Stoica Anghel and Sîntimbreanu Gheorghe, 25-6.

and Latin America were exclusively familiarized with the Soviet model of organizing and educating children.<sup>708</sup> In addition, Soviet hosts often exceeded their responsibilities as translators or camp instructors, encroaching on the Romanian leaders' authority over their team. On one occasion, the Soviet translator approached directly a Hungarian pioneer on the Romanian team with questions about the rumored closing down of Hungarian-language schools and universities.<sup>709</sup> Another Soviet translator queried Romanian pioneers on their organization's selection criteria, asking for information on their birthplace, parents' profession, current place of residence, best friends, and the reasons why they were selected to spend their vacation at Artek.<sup>710</sup>

As youth activists claimed, the absence of a genuinely internationalist spirit was reflected in the Soviet hosts' patronizing attitude and the excessively propagandistic and rigidly militaristic character of the camp. Invoking the Soviet model that founded pioneer camps as health resorts, delegation leaders argued that the hosts' focus on collectively organized activities such as marches, festivals, and press conferences weakened the restorative value of pioneer camps, depriving Romanian children of rest and free-time in the healing climate of the Crimean Peninsula.<sup>711</sup> Since children's bodies remained a traditional measure of the socialist and internationalist credentials of the host country, it is not surprising that ideological criticisms were expressed in veiled comments about the Soviet host's failure to nourish Romanian children, who had allegedly lost four to six pounds on "a poor diet of apple, pear, raisin, and pearl barley soups, minced meat, and all sorts of sweets" during their summer vacation in Artek.<sup>712</sup>

---

<sup>708</sup> Ibid. See also ARP, file 24/1974, "Informare: Tabăra internațională Artek – URSS," 99-100.

<sup>709</sup> ARP, file 7/1967, "Informare," Traian Pop, 178.

<sup>710</sup> ARP, file 8/1967, "Informare Artek," Stoica Anghel and Sîntimbreanu Gheorghe, 24-5.

<sup>711</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>712</sup> Ibid., 27.

Much like the groups visiting Artek in the late 1960s, the Romanian delegation spending its vacation in the Wilhelm Pieck Republic of Pioneers only a few months after the Romanian government established diplomatic relations with the Federal German Republic in January 1967 had to contend with a set of disgruntled East German hosts. They were received with unfeigned reservation and were subjected to relentless surveillance by the German translator, who accompanied the group everywhere, reported on their communications, and sought to gauge their opinions on Romania's relations with West Germany and its policy in the Middle East.<sup>713</sup> For their part, pioneer activists took the liberty of amending "the excessively formal ceremonial" prescribed by the hosts for meetings with foreign delegations, organizing their meetings as spontaneous and informal exchanges of impressions among children.<sup>714</sup> Asking permission to take Romanian children to art museums or artistic events in Berlin, they also attempted to circumvent the rigid program of excursions and visits, which was restricted to a visit of Berlin, a concentration camp, and a border guards' camp. To their dismay, the hosts refused their request, suggesting that the monument dedicated to Soviet heroes, a printing house, and the Zoological garden would be more appropriate educational sites.

In later years, youth activists would continue to respond to political chicanery by denouncing the predilection for Soviet style militarism, ideological dogmatism, and age inappropriate camp events such as political seminars on military training, solidarity meetings and rallies in other international pioneer camps in the Eastern Bloc. Delegations visiting Hungary in the summer of 1968 disapproved of the military focus of the camp, mocking the Hungarian practice of marching in unison all day and complaining that foreign delegations were required to march in columns on all occasions and be in attendance at the raising and lowering of the

---

<sup>713</sup> ARP, file 8/1967, "Informare, tabăra internațională 'Wilhelm Pieck' din RDG," Voichiță Savu and Săplăcan Petru, 75.

<sup>714</sup> Ibid., 74.



Hungarian flag every morning and evening.<sup>715</sup> During their vacation in the international camp organized by the Mongolian Pioneers in the proximity of Ulan Bator in 1969, Romanian youth activists seemed positively shocked to learn that Mongolian pioneers attended daily six-hour seminars dedicated to the anniversary of Lenin's birth and declined to allow Romanian pioneers to join the seminars, arguing that activities such as lecturing and note-taking were neither age appropriate, nor fit for camp life.<sup>716</sup> In a similar spirit, the Romanian group visiting Bulgaria in 1970 found the meeting of solidarity with Indochina to be "an artificial, unconvincing, noisy, and ultimately age-inappropriate method of influencing children's beliefs and attitudes."<sup>717</sup>

Despite the emphasis on ideological tensions in these reports, it is important to point out that international children's camps functioned as relatively self-contained diplomatic sites, where adult delegation leaders were more commonly inclined to gloss over intergovernmental conflicts than to address them in a confrontational manner. Since pioneer organizations in the Eastern Bloc were directly subordinated to their respective communist parties and youth unions, the activists' room for maneuver was severely restricted by narrowly defined "mandates" requiring them to stay within the vaguely defined ideological boundaries of their parties' diplomatic agendas. As a consequence, lower rank party activists made efforts to avoid potentially mined ideological terrains and open confrontations. Furthermore, most youth organizations participating in left-wing youth exchanges in Europe were more invested in maintaining an image of unity in the socialist European front than in exposing its fault lines and vulnerability.

---

<sup>715</sup> ARP, file 12/1968, "Informare cu privire la participarea delegației de pionieri români în tabăra internațională din R. P. Ungară," Gâță Dumitru, 13-4.

<sup>716</sup> ARP, file 9/1969, "Informare privind activitatea delegației de pionieri care a participat la tabăra internațională din R. R. Mongolă," Ion Ionașcu and Iliuț Coman, 76-77.

<sup>717</sup> ARP, file 10/1970, "Informare privind activitatea delegației de copii din R. S. România în tabăra internațională 'Gh. Dimitrov' din Bulgaria," N. Predescu, 126.

It was in this climate of submerged and silenced conflicts that the Romanian Pioneers sought to assert its independence from Soviet influence and its superior vision of internationalist work for children. Following the path of least resistance, youth activists leading pioneer groups on visits to Artek, but also to the Wilhelm Pieck camp in the GDR, Csilleberc in Hungary, Selbe and Horon in Mongolia, or Kranevo in Bulgaria expressed essentially harmless objections, criticizing the Soviet-style militarism of camp activities (marches, morning drills, and rituals), the formal and official nature of international meetings among foreign delegations, or the highly repetitive and tedious nature of pioneer activities. By contrast, youth activists argued, their vision of internationalist education for children was both scientifically informed and methodologically efficient, being a direct result of their organization's reform and its close cooperation with social scientists and educators in research institutes and schools. In practice, the organization shared the Romanian leadership's pervasive distrust of social sciences such as sociology and psychology, articulating a vision of internationalist work for youth that was not only subordinated to the party's diplomatic agenda but was also heavily indebted to the Soviet model.

Furthermore, international pioneer camps in the Soviet Bloc had become so highly standardized that the differences among pioneer camps in the Soviet Bloc were not of essence, but of degree. They depended on the natural and touristic resources at the disposal of the organizers and the balance between free time and collectively organized or politically mobilized time. Over more than a decade of mutual exchanges, pioneer organizations in the Eastern Bloc had, however, learned to compete on common grounds, either blowing differences of degree out of proportion or glossing over existing differences as the situation required. Accusing political opponents of old-fashioned ideological dogmatism and Soviet-style militarism while promoting

the Romanian Pioneers as advocates of innovative political visions was a rhetorical strategy meant to create the illusion of difference and autonomy.<sup>718</sup>

### **Which West: Ideological Enemy or Unlikely Ally?**

In its attempt to counter Soviet domination and assert organizational autonomy in internationalist work for youth, the Romanian Pioneers made sustained efforts to diversify its international relations beyond the Eastern Bloc, initiating exchanges with the youth sections of socialist and communist parties or with broadly defined “progressive” or leftwing youth movements in western Europe throughout the late 1960s and 1970s. Youth activists took particular pride in outrunning the Soviets and breaking new ground in internationalist work by establishing contacts with influential movements such as the International Falcon Movement (IFM) of the Socialist Educational International (SEI) that enjoyed significant political backing from social democrat and socialist parties in western Europe.<sup>719</sup> In their turn, leaders of the IFM commended the Romanian Pioneers for advancing communist co-operation and expressed disappointment at the disengagement of other Pioneer Movements in eastern Europe.<sup>720</sup>

Compared to previous decades, when the Romanian Pioneers’ youth exchanges outside the Soviet Bloc were mainly limited to members of the Fédération Internationale de Résistance (FIR) from Italy, France, or Belgium, IFM members from the Federal German Republic, Austria,

---

<sup>718</sup> These accusations were not restricted to the travel reports submitted by youth activists with the leadership of their organization on return from visits abroad. Delegation leaders often used these same arguments to justify their refusal to participate in large scale political activities organized by host organizations or follow the specific template suggested by the organizers.

<sup>719</sup> In a report of the organization’s first meeting with the Austrian Falcons in 1970, the president of the organization, Virgiliu Radulian, noted that Soviet representatives expressed dissatisfaction with the Romanian attempts to initiate youth exchanges with national branches of the International Falcon Movement that did not entertain official relations with the Soviet organization. See ARP, file 10/1970, “Informare privind deplasarea în Franța [și Viena] a unei delegații oficiale a CNOP,” Virgiliu Radulian, Vasile Popa, and Vera Nicolcioiu, 227-229.

<sup>720</sup> ARP, file 36/1972, “IFM Circular Letter No. 8/72 on the International Committee Meeting in Vienna,” Miguel Angel Martinez, 53-54.

Finland, Sweden, and Denmark became the organization's most active partners in the 1970s.<sup>721</sup> In addition, the Romanian Pioneers established bilateral contacts with a number of other children's organizations among which the youth section of the French Communist Party,<sup>722</sup> leftwing secular movements such as *Les Francas*, the French Scouts (*Eclaireurs/Eclaireuses*), the Swedish Scouts, the Finnish Pioneers, and a working-class children's organization from Britain, the *Woodcraft Folk*. The organization's international exchanges were further facilitated by its membership in CIMEA and its affiliation with the Children's International Summer Villages (CISV), which administered a great number of camps in western Europe (England, Italy, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, and Holland) as well as in the U.S. and Canada.

The liberal policy of youth exchanges was ushered in by Nicolae Ceausescu's independent line in foreign policy and diplomatic opening to the West. An integral part of the RCP's assertion of independence in the Soviet Bloc, the policy of "active neutrality inside the world communist movement" manifested itself in the vocal support of Euro-communism and the reestablishment of cordial relations with western communist parties such as the Italian, Spanish, French, and Scandinavian "in opposition to Moscow's hegemonic maneuvers."<sup>723</sup> Despite the often-noted limitations of Romania's short-lived period of liberalization, the discourse of diplomatic opening and active neutrality gave pioneer activists more room for rhetorical maneuver in choosing the ideological stance that would serve as the organizing principle of their travel narratives to the West. Whether their encounters with the progressive West took place at

---

<sup>721</sup> FIR is an international organization founded in 1951. During the Cold War, organizations from twenty-nine European countries, including the Soviet Union, were represented.

<sup>722</sup> In 1970, the organization changed its name from *Les Vaillants (L'Union des Vaillants et des Vaillantes)* to *Pionniers de France*. See Katalin Jutteau, *L'enfance Embrigadée*, 208.

<sup>723</sup> Vladimir Tismaneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons: A Political History of Romanian Communism* (University of California Press, 2003), 197. For accounts of RCP's relations with the French and Scandinavian Communist Parties, see Peter Morris, "The French Communist Party and Eurocommunism" and Trond Gilberg, "Communism in the Nordic Countries: Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and Iceland," In David Childs (ed.), *The Changing Face of Western Communism* (London: Croom Helm, 1980).

home or abroad, pioneer activists were generally divided into two camps: the unreformed socialist critics of the ideological and economic evils of western capitalism and the freshly anointed appeasers of Cold War conflicts, who envisioned themselves as friends of all nations “regardless of their socio-economic system.” Despite their ideological inconsistency, both positions were equally legitimate, occasionally coexisting in the scope of the same report.

Pioneer activists who envisioned themselves as ambassadors of diplomatic opening painted the picture of a friendly and hospitable West, where Romanian pioneers often enjoyed a privileged status as representatives of “the only socialist country from the Soviet Bloc.”<sup>724</sup> Romanian children, they implied, were not only received as national envoys, but also as ambassadors of a socialist world liberated from Soviet hegemony.<sup>725</sup> Romanian delegations enjoying this privilege seemed intensely aware of being the object of western gaze. As their reports indicate, the western gaze was often flattering and friendly, creating opportunities for public visibility such as press interviews, televised recordings of Romanian pioneers’ artistic performances, and meetings with the local mayors, officials or politicians who supported the left-wing children’s organizations hosting the Romanian Pioneers.

In their official reports, pioneer activists often attributed the welcoming attitude of their western hosts to Nicolae Ceaușescu’s “wise politics of peace in the world,” considering such instances of conviviality instructive for Romanian children who could experience firsthand the prestige that their country enjoyed in the world. Paying their tribute to the party leadership at home, youth activists reported, for example, that the German Falcons expressed their enthusiasm

---

<sup>724</sup> ARP, 31/1971, “Informare” (IFM summer village in Finland), 57- 60; “Informare privind deplasarea grupului de pionieri români la tabăra internațională de la Goteborg, Suedia,” Calcan Mihai and Bărboi Constanta, 65-70; “Informare” (CISV Camp in Normandy), Nicușor Constantinescu, 153-156; file 24/1974, “Informare privind participarea delegației de pionieri în tabăra internațională a IFM-SEI de la Döbriach (Kärtech), Austria,” 76-84; “Informare asupra activității desfășurate în tabăra internațională de vară în Philadelphia, SUA,” Pavel Bordan, 112-119. 29/1981, “Informare privind participarea delegației CNOP la tabăra internațională din Canada,” 26-28; “Informare privind participarea delegației CNOP la tabăra internațională din SUA,” 34-36.

<sup>725</sup> Ibid.

at Ceaușescu's visit to the Federal German Republic in 1973 by gathering spontaneously around the Romanian pioneers' tents every night to chant the familiar slogan, "Ceaușescu-Romania," in support of the socialist leader's politics of Cold War appeasement.<sup>726</sup> The sense of pride at socialist Romania's worldwide prestige was also triggered by western hosts' appreciation for Romanian pioneers' artistic performance, the beauty of Romanian folk costumes, Romania's tourist destinations, and even the popularity of its industrial products which provided the raw material for large-scale constructions in western Europe.<sup>727</sup>

For these messengers of reconciliation, the Romanian pioneers' sense of national pride was not incompatible with their immersion in western culture. Youth activists in this category felt comfortable arguing that the rich program of trips and excursions organized by their western hosts expanded Romanian children's cultural horizons, giving them the opportunity to visit major architectural, historical, and cultural sites in places as diverse as Paris, London, Vienna, Geneva, München, Dortmund, Köln, Stockholm, or Göteborg and admire the natural beauty of the French and German Alps, North Sea islands, Norwegian fjords, or the Mediterranean coast in Marseille. At times, delegation leaders themselves showed great appreciation for western cultural achievements, impressing French journalists, for example, with their familiarity with French literature and lectures on the long tradition of Francophony in Romanian culture.<sup>728</sup>

As we will see later in this chapter, not all manifestations of western culture and society were considered appropriate influences on Romanian children. While picturesque landscapes and places of historical import or cultural achievement such as monuments and museums could safely elicit the admiration of Romanian visitors, manifestations of youth or popular culture were

---

<sup>726</sup> ARP, file 33/1973, "Informare privind activitatea grupului de pionieri români în R. F. Germania," Gheorghe Ștefănescu, 14.

<sup>727</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>728</sup> ARP, file 31/1971, "Informare" (International Camp of *Francs et Franches Camarades*), Ioan Mișuț and Nicolae Predescu, 185-6.

irredeemably charged with unacceptable suggestions of western affluence or political anarchism. The few references to western affluence were always implicit, couched in the form of repeated requests for larger sums of foreign currency for children traveling to the West, embarrassing accounts of Romanian children caught stealing from western stores or their newly made friends,<sup>729</sup> and, beginning with the 1980s, reports of teachers and teenagers on the Romanian delegation who absconded to the West.<sup>730</sup> In defense of their requests for more pocket money, some activists argued that “children will be children,” implying that the young should not be held to the same high standards of socialist restraint as their adult leaders.<sup>731</sup> For others, the mere fact that Romanian children could not join their western friends in buying drinks, sweets, or ice cream in camp stores created an embarrassing sense of inferiority that spoiled socialist Romania’s image of a successful welfare state in the West.<sup>732</sup>

Expected to show an attitude of friendly diplomacy without losing their acumen for social criticism, some pioneer activists solved this inherent tension by drawing the picture of a deeply divided West, torn between the reactionary forces of capitalist exploitation and decadence and the progressive forces of proletarian struggle and mobilization. While the former deserved their harsh criticism, the latter were worthy of their support and appreciation. Thus, the children visiting France in 1973, “did not only have the opportunity to visit many interesting places, but also to observe the contradictions characteristic of capitalist societies: students begging in the

---

<sup>729</sup> ARP, file 10/1970, “Informare privind participarea la tabăra internațională Ransberg 1970, Suedia,” Silvestru Boatcă and Sanda Moucha, 74.

<sup>730</sup> ARP, file 29/1981, “Informare privind desfășurarea taberei de pionieri în R. F. Germania,” 109-110; “Informare privind desfășurarea schimbului cultural al Ansamblului folcloric ‘Crai Nou’ al casei pionierilor și șoimilor patriei Brasov în Franța,” Ion Calaică, Lucia Constantinescu, Dionisie Axente, 117.

<sup>731</sup> ARP, file 31/1971, “Informare privind activitatea delegației de pionieri care a participat în tabăra organizată de CISV în orașul Leeds, Anglia,” Laurențiu Calăuz, 44.

<sup>732</sup> ARP, file 9/1969, “Informare privind felul cum a fost primită și cum și-a petrecut timpul delegația de copii în tabăra din Hemmenhög, Suedia organizată de CISV,” 99; 21/1972, “Informare asupra activității desfășurate de delegația de copii a Republicii Socialiste România în Norvegia, în tabăra internațională CISV,” Aurel Anghel, 90.

street to be able to continue their studies and the unkempt appearance of youth in general.”<sup>733</sup> Similarly, the delegation leaders visiting Britain in 1972 envisioned the international camp administered by the Woodcraft Folk as an oasis of progressive thought and internationalist education in a sea of moral decadence and social exploitation: “Being led by communists and socialists, the Woodcraft Folk has a democratic and progressive character that informed the entire camp program. We were thus sheltered from the influence of decadent morality that is unfortunately characteristic of many a British youth.”<sup>734</sup>

The challenge faced by Romanian youth activists was to simultaneously foster in children a spirit of internationalism and a critical attitude towards the imperialist and capitalist West. There is a palpable tension between the efforts to encourage friendly exchanges between British and Romanian children and the attempts to reveal the social inequalities and historical injustices underlying the appealingly prosperous western world. For youth activists seeking to alert pioneers to the moral dangers lurking behind the alluring surface of the West, children’s malleable and thus, impressionable, nature was both a blessing and a curse. Faced with this challenge, youth activists relied on British newspapers and camp debates to lift the veil of deceiving appearances and reveal to children the dire British realities: the strikes, the rising inflation, the unemployment that affected even young college graduates working in the camp, the lack of state support for children’s organizations, the tensions in Northern Ireland, and an industrial prowess based on centuries of colonial exploitation.<sup>735</sup> By comparison, Romania’s socialist government worked tirelessly to catch up with heavily industrialized countries and raise living standards for working people. Rather than promoting a spirit of internationalism, adult

---

<sup>733</sup> ARP, file 33/1973, “Informare privind activitatea grupului de pionieri care s-a deplasat în Franța,” Iliuț Coman and Havrici Nicolae, 64-5.

<sup>734</sup> ARP, file 21/1972, “Informare asupra deplasării în Anglia cu un grup de pionieri,” Rada Mocanu and Mircea Ștefan, 112.

<sup>735</sup> *Ibid.*, 114.



leaders hoped that such lessons in the evils of capitalism would enhance Romanian children's love for the socialist motherland.

Youth camps administered by left-wing organizations in the West were not only viewed as safe oases of socialist solidarity, but also as potential sources of inspiration for a progressive camping pedagogy. Pioneer activists leading delegations to IFM camps were particularly impressed by the predominantly recreational and elective character of the camp program which catered to children's interests, giving them the freedom to choose from a large array of hobby groups that included traditional camp activities such as sports, electro-technical experiments, classes in modern dance, guitar, painting and drawing, acting, toy making, and domestic art as well as more exotic options such as Ikebana arrangements or judo training.<sup>736</sup> Similarly emphasizing the preference for spontaneous activities, youth activists visiting the French organization, *Les Francas*, in 1981 suggested that the Romanian Pioneers should draw inspiration from their hosts, who exploited the educational valences of child play, featuring a number of elective and open-air activities, but no mandatory meetings or lectures.<sup>737</sup>

Romanian delegations also noted that CISV camps promoted an easy-going atmosphere stripped of any formality, being run according to principles that privileged children's emotional well-being over camp discipline: "no camper should be upset and every activity should be accomplished with pleasure."<sup>738</sup> As other delegation leaders would notice, the climate of friendship and intimacy was further enhanced by the small-scale character of most western camps and the tradition of employing "helpers" or "junior counselors" who were in their late

---

<sup>736</sup> ARP, file 9/1969, "Informare cu privire la activitatea pionierilor români în tabăra internațională 'Die Falken' de la Schwangan – R. F. Germania," Nicolae Predescu, 79-82.

<sup>737</sup> ARP, file 29/1981, "Informare privind participarea delegației CNOP la tabăra internațională din Franța," Ioan Lamatic, 46.

<sup>738</sup> ARP, file 9/1969, "Informare privind felul cum a fost primită și cum și-a petrecut timpul delegația de copii în tabăra din Hemmenhög, Suedia organizată de CISV," 97.

teens in the supervision and mobilization of children.<sup>739</sup> Having had attended the same camps as children, IFM “helpers” and CISV “junior counselors” were closer in both age and experience to the children entrusted in their care, establishing stronger bonds of friendship and trust with the children than adult “authority figures” such as the delegation leaders.

Although opinions were somewhat divided on the matter, some youth activists also appreciated the efforts of their western hosts to “harden children’s bodies and wills” and “educate them in spirit of self-responsibility and self-management” by organizing international IFM camps in tents in a manner reminiscent of pioneer expeditions in Romania.<sup>740</sup> This went hand in hand with the laudable IFM practice of engaging children directly in the leadership and organization of camp activities by encouraging the participation of those elected as representatives of their tent or tent area (“villages”) in the Camp Parliament. Pioneer activists ready to take a cue from their western counterparts concluded their reports with an enthusiastic tone: “The care with which adults seek to respect children’s wishes and personalities as well as the climate of intimacy, calm, and respect that characterizes the camp is impressive.”<sup>741</sup>

By comparison, a great number of youth activists leading Romanian pioneers to international camps abroad throughout the late 1960s and 1970s saw no reason for enthusiasm. Accepting their diplomatic mission to the West with a strong sense of duty, but seemingly without pleasure, they sharpened their critique of the permissive nature of social and educational environments in the West. In her study of published Bulgarian travelogues of official trips to the West after the late 1950s, when Bulgaria’s renewed economic relations with the West made

---

<sup>739</sup> ARP, file 10/1970, “Informare cu privire la participarea noastră în tabăra internațională din Norvegia,” Constantin Diaconu, 57-8.

<sup>740</sup> ARP, file 9/1969, “Informare cu privire la activitatea pionierilor români în tabăra internațională ‘Die Falken’ de la Schwangan – R. F. Germania,” Nicolae Predescu, 80. See also ARP, file 29/1981, “Informare privind participarea delegației CNOP la tabăra internațională din Franta,” Ioan Lamatic, 45.

<sup>741</sup> ARP, file 9/1969, “Informare cu privire la activitatea pionierilor români în tabăra internațională ‘Die Falken’ de la Schwangan – R. F. Germania,” Nicolae Predescu, 80.

travel to “the ideological enemy” indispensable, Rossitza Guentcheva noted similar strategies of self-presentation:

Travel to the West had become an involuntary expedition into enemy territory. Visiting the West became acceptable as an accomplishment of a higher order, an obligation, not a pleasurable pursuit for its own sake. (...) It was a duty, a command, to be carried out for the sake of socialism’s triumph over capitalism.<sup>742</sup>

For every pioneer activist who welcomed the unexpected freedom from mandatory camp routines, there was one deploring the glaring absence of “structure and discipline,” “purposeful education,” or “ideological content” in western camps.<sup>743</sup> The laissez faire pedagogy of their western hosts was felt to impact negatively children’s education, as they no longer benefitted from energizing morning gymnastics or afternoon naps in the general atmosphere of disorder and indiscipline.<sup>744</sup> By comparison, a mandatory camp program, they argued, would have mobilized all children, avoided the boredom of random activities, and created the opportunity for children to become more intimately acquainted and establish friendships.<sup>745</sup> If Soviet camps erred on the side of militarism and ideological dogmatism, children’s camps organized in the West seemed ideologically weak, failing to capitalize on the formative potential of camp activities in order to educate a politically conscious youth.

While some of their fellow travelers to the West appreciated the educational value of camping in tents, most youth activists objected to this living arrangement. Some argued that the predominantly cold and rainy weather in England, Germany, and Scandinavian countries tended

---

<sup>742</sup> Rossitza Guentcheva, “Images of the West in Bulgarian Travel Writing During Socialism, 1945-1989,” In *Under Eastern Eyes: A Comparative Introduction to East European Travel Writing on Europe*, eds. Wendy Bracewell and Alex Drace-Francis, (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2008), 358.

<sup>743</sup> ARP, file 33/1973, “Informare privind activitatea grupului de pionieri români în R. F. Germania,” Gheorghe Ștefănescu, 12; file 10/1970, “Informare cu privire la participarea noastră în tabăra internațională din Norvegia” Constantin Diaconu, 57.

<sup>744</sup> ARP, file 12/1968, “Informare cu privire la participarea delegației de pionieri români la tabăra internațională de la Sète, Franța,” Ion Pop and Cătuneanu Cornelia, 5-6; file 33/1973, “Informare privind participarea grupului de pionieri la satul de vacanță (CISV) din Belgia,” Vasile Văcaru, 78. 26/1983, “Informare” (CISV Camp in Italy), Dumitru Mircea, 56.

<sup>745</sup> Ibid.

to be too rough on Romanian children who were unfamiliar with camping in tents and physically unprepared for demanding activities such as canoeing or tourist orientation competitions in marshy terrains.<sup>746</sup> Others insisted that the high volume of work children were expected to perform – gathering wood for fire, carrying water, helping in the kitchen, cleaning, etc. – left no time for common activities such as sports competitions or music and dance festivals.<sup>747</sup> Most commentators found this form of camp administration unfit for international camps, indicating that the Soviet Bloc model of diplomatic plenty taught them to expect better living conditions.

For youth activists in this category, the West seemed often unaware of socialist Romania's singular position in the Soviet Bloc. Delegation leaders visiting West Germany in 1970 were shocked by the ignorance of prominent members of the left who asked them embarrassing questions: "Is Romanian a Slavic dialect? What is your capital? Are you a Soviet Republic? Who are some of the famous Romanian personalities in culture and the sciences? Can Romanians travel abroad? Do you show western movies in Romania? What foreign languages do you teach in schools? Are there student movements against the regime?"<sup>748</sup> Similarly, the pioneer delegation visiting France in 1971 as guests of the CISV reported that French children and adults showed surprisingly little knowledge of Romania, its capital, its leader, and its politics of world peace and friendship.<sup>749</sup>

Most importantly, the Romanians' singular status as representatives of "the only socialist country" attracted a critical and judgmental western gaze, occasionally informed by a "prying curiosity" that was not altogether politically innocent. On a visit to Norway in 1974, a group of

---

<sup>746</sup> ARP, file 31/1971, "Informare privind deplasarea grupului de pionieri români la tabăra internațională de la Goteborg, Suedia," Calcan Mihai and Bărboi Constanta, 65-70.

<sup>747</sup> ARP, file 31/1971, "Informare privind activitatea grupului de pionieri care a participat la tabăra din Anglia," Traian Bărăian, 86.

<sup>748</sup> ARP, 10/1970, "Informare privind participarea la Congresul Uniunii Internaționale a Șoimilor și vizita în Austria (și Germania Federală), Silvestru Patița, 18.

<sup>749</sup> ARP, file 31/1971, "Informare" (CISV Camp in Normandy), Nicușor Constantinescu, 153-156.

Romanian pioneers was the target of attacks by local officials who accused the organization of having a rigid ideological outlook on the world.<sup>750</sup> The delegation leader also reported that the families accommodating Romanian pioneers complained that they were forced “to host communists in their house.”<sup>751</sup> Proof that the relation between youth and government was on the minds of their western hosts in the late 1960s, Romanian pioneers visiting the German Falcons a few weeks prior to the Soviet-orchestrated stifling of the Prague Spring were asked by their hosts in Münster whether Romanian and Czechoslovak students supported their communist parties. While Romanian pioneers reportedly assured their hosts that students stood firmly united behind the RCP, youth activists continued to view this type of exchange with a certain anxiety.<sup>752</sup>

Not least because the Romanian Pioneers intensified its exchanges with left-wing children’s organizations in the wake of the student protests that swept western Europe in 1968, many pioneer activists expressed concerns with the ideologically and morally corrupting influence of western youth. The progressive West they had set out to explore was being transformed by a radical and anarchic New Left that bore little resemblance to the ideal of disciplined youth promoted by the heavily bureaucratized Pioneer Organizations and Youth Unions in the Soviet Bloc. Progressive French and German youth, in particular, who often volunteered to run activities for children in international camps shocked pioneer activists with their disturbingly uncivilized behavior: they smoked, drank, indulged in embarrassing public displays of affection, wore long hair, and sported a generally disheveled appearance that failed to distinguish them from the students seen begging for money in the streets.<sup>753</sup> Delegation leaders

---

<sup>750</sup> ARP, file 10/1970, “Informare cu privire la participarea noastră în tabăra internațională din Norvegia” Constantin Diaconu, 63.

<sup>751</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>752</sup> ARP, file 12/1968, “Informare cu privire la deplasarea delegației pionierilor români în tabăra internațională de la Reinwarzhofen din R. F. a Germaniei,” Ioan Mihuț and Moțet Dumitru, 45.

<sup>753</sup> ARP, file 21/1972, “Informare privind participarea delegației CNOP la cel de-al II-lea Congres al Organizației ‘Pionierii Franței,’” Virgiliu Radulian și Gheorghita Fleancu, 59; file 33/1973, “Informare privind activitatea

noted that the irresponsible behavior of western children and young monitors went hand in hand with an educational outlook that prevented adult intervention or monitoring of children, promoting a dangerously disengaged attitude towards children's education.

Such attitudes were seen as obstacles to internationalist friendship: "Our children could not establish serious friendships with the French because they were younger and because the attitude and behavior of the French participants left much to be desired: drunken binges, scandals, both boys and girls smoking, etc."<sup>754</sup> Youth activists assured their audience at home that, under their ideological guidance, Romanian pioneers were successful in fighting off unhealthy manifestations of western decadence: "Romanian pioneers integrated seamlessly in the camp program and did not let themselves be influenced by the French and the Germans, showing self-discipline and sobriety in all instances."<sup>755</sup> Faced with such challenges, youth activists recommended that the organization should weigh the benefits against the disadvantages of exposing Romanian children to the irresponsible behavior of "young hippies in their late teens and early twenties."<sup>756</sup>

Indicative of the RCP's "arrogant and narcissistic isolation from the real debates of the European left,"<sup>757</sup> the focus on the progressive West's alleged decadence is also suggestive of the party's anxiety over the anarchic and ultimately contagious power of youth protest movements in western and eastern Europe.<sup>758</sup> Echoing this discourse of moral decadence and political anxiety,

---

grupului de pionieri români în R. F. Germania," Gheorghe Ștefănescu, 14; "Informare privind activitatea grupului de pionieri care s-a deplasat în Franța," Iliuț Coman and Havrici Nicolae, 64-5.

<sup>754</sup> ARP, file 33/1973, "Informare, Franța," Iliuț Coman and Havrici Nicolae, 64.

<sup>755</sup> Ibid. 65.

<sup>756</sup> ARP, file 33/1973, "Informare privind activitatea grupului de pionieri români în R. F. Germania," Gheorghe Ștefănescu, 14.

<sup>757</sup> Tismaneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons*, 198.

<sup>758</sup> In a report on a meeting organized in Prague with representatives of western communist parties from France, Italy, the Federal German Republic, Spain, and the United States, the Romanian representative noted that youth movements in the West exhibited "extreme left tendencies, whether Trotskyist or anarchist," arguing that western

Romanian camp directors in charge of hosting foreign delegations at the international pioneer camp on the Black Sea coast complained that youth from France, Belgium, England, Austria, and the Federal German Republic betrayed a complete lack of discipline, exerting a corrupting influence on Romanian children and affecting negatively the atmosphere of internationalist friendship. Not only did western guests make strong objections to the rigorously planned camp program, proposing to replace it with elective activities, but they also evaded camp activities and broke curfew, sneaking out of the camp with the help of interpreters in order to go to restaurants and bars.<sup>759</sup> Western delegations' violations of camp rules, camp directors would further argue, were often triggered by the permissive attitude and outlandish behavior of their adult leaders who did not only fail to discipline their children, but abused alcohol, partied nightly in bars, and even chose to sleep outside.<sup>760</sup> Romanian youth activists diagnosed foreigners' flagrant disregard for camp regulations as the symptom of an insidious affliction of western societies - a deeply flawed understanding of liberty as libertinism - that had the potential of corrupting socialist youth.<sup>761</sup>

Romanian youth activists thus considered the problems of teen romance and sexuality, smoking, drinking, and drug use in international camps to be flagrant violations of acceptable youthful behavior, often referring to such instances in moralistic language as "age-inappropriate activities" and "crass indiscipline."<sup>762</sup> By comparison, most leftwing Western monitors saw youthful transgressions as common, if undesirable, occurrences in youth camps, attributing them

---

communists are divided between rejecting and embracing student protests. See ANIC, Fond C.C. al P.C.R. – Organizatorică, file 26/1968, "Informare," B. Zaharescu, 149.

<sup>759</sup> ARP, 8/1967, *Report on the International Camp at Costinesti*, A. Stancu, 52-58 and *Report on the International Camp in Sinaia*, V. Dascalita and Gheorghe Popescu, 59-65; 21/1972, "Informare privind funcționarea Taberei internaționale de pionieri și școlari din vara anului 1972," *Negrea Victoria*, 151.

<sup>760</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>761</sup> ARP, file 21/1972, "Informare," *Negrea Victoria*, 151; "Informare" (Delegation of the Romanian Pioneers at the Second European Convention "Youth Research" in Mainz, the Federal German Republic), Hasa Gligor, Silier Iosif, Maries Ion, 128; file 33/1973, "Informare privind participarea grupului de pionieri la satul de vacanță (CISV) din Belgia," Vasile Văcaru, 78.

<sup>762</sup> ARP, file 21/1972, "Informare," *Negrea Victoria*, 151.

to age specific characteristics that would inevitably play out in international encounters in youth camps. Countering the implication that western leaders condoned or encouraged teen misbehavior, a British monitor of the Woodcraft Folk recounted his efforts to deal with several incidents of teen smoking and drug use involving British and Austrian youth as well as a Romanian interpreter in 1979 at Navodari.<sup>763</sup> In her account of the visit of a Romanian delegation to Malvern in 1979, one of the British organizers commented on the unusually disciplinarian reaction of the Romanian leader to common instances of teen friendship and romance: “Several boy/girl relationships were formed, as is natural at International Camps, but later during the camp the Rumanian children were forbidden from speaking English (because Tomo could not understand what was being said).”<sup>764</sup>

The British organizers’ reaction echoed broader attempts in the International Falcon Movement to find pedagogical alternatives to characteristically bourgeois attitudes that tended to respond to manifestations of youth (sub)culture and teen sexuality in a moralistic and authoritarian manner. At an IFM seminar organized in 1972, for example, the German Falcons advocated a “progressive camp pedagogy” that would break with the bourgeois repression and demonization of infantile and juvenile sexuality, reclaiming sexuality as “the most social of all instincts” and “an expression of inter-human communication.”<sup>765</sup> Although it remained unclear how such views could be translated in camp pedagogy by monitors and instructors, *Die Falken* representatives suggested that sexual transgressions should not be met with outdated injunctions but with sympathetic help and level-headed advice that would encourage teens to show respect,

---

<sup>763</sup> YMA/WF FH50, Box 3, “East Barnet Delegation Report – Romania 1979,” Sid Crawley, 2.

<sup>764</sup> YMA/WF FH42, “Report of Visit of Roumanian Pioneers to Crayheath District and to International Camp, Malvern, 1979,” Violet Davis, 1.

<sup>765</sup> ARP, file 36/1972, “IFM Circular Letter No. 6/72 (Background papers for the meeting of the Special Commission for Educational Matters),” 40.



consideration, and responsibility towards their partners.<sup>766</sup> To the extent that Romanian youth activists turned into “middle-aged moralists” shared an anxiety over youth decadence and popular culture with the European middle classes, there was significant room for disagreement with leftwing western monitors.<sup>767</sup>

Disagreements over camping pedagogies likely to foster or inhibit internationalist friendship were not restricted to norms of acceptable youthful behavior. The international camp organized annually at Navodari, for example, became the target of critiques similar to those that Romanian youth activists leveled at their own colleagues in the Eastern Bloc. A number of western delegation leaders complained about the rigidity, formality, and competitive character of Romanian camps, arguing that they often failed to promote a genuine spirit of friendship and internationalism. Asked for their opinions of the Romanian camp they attended in 1972, Woodcraft Folk leaders singled out the focus on competition at the expense of cooperation and the failure of Romanian hosts to facilitate friendly small-scale exchanges among visiting delegations, concluding their report on an unusually critical note:

The competitive nature of the activities was not to our liking. In sport, it means that after the first round some teams never had another game. It does not encourage participation by the less sporting delegations. (...) We would have liked more friendship meetings with other delegations and with Romanian children. Our one with an enormous group of Romanian pioneers was fruitless. (...) As socialists attempting to educate children for social change in a capitalist world we were very happy to be chosen to head this delegation. We have a great need, for our own encouragement, of contact, discussion, exchange of ideas in informal, friendly meetings with the leaders of other delegations. We shall leave tomorrow morning feeling that we did not satisfactorily achieve this.<sup>768</sup>

---

<sup>766</sup> Ibid.

<sup>767</sup> Scholars who explored the anxiety over youth decadence and popular culture in the Soviet case noted the similarities between entrenched communist party elites and the middle classes in Europe and America in their common emphasis on youth discipline, obedience and self-control. See Anne Gorsuch, *Youth in Revolutionary Russia*, 25-7.

<sup>768</sup> ARP, file 31/1973, Untitled evaluation letter, Kate and Syd Crawley, 58-61.

The insistence on informal meetings and small scale activities echoed broader concerns among leftwing children's organizations in the West with the dangers posed by "large scale manifestations."<sup>769</sup> IFM organizations, for example, insisted that camp activities with a "mass" character ran the risk of pressuring participants, ignoring their individual interests and desires, making them feel "manipulated," and stifling their spirit of initiative and self-responsibility.<sup>770</sup>

In addition, Woodcraft Folk activists recommended that children should be taught the socialist values of self-management, cooperation, and communal living by being directly engaged in the running of the camp: "We greatly admire the cleanliness and efficiency of the kitchens at Navodari and consider it would be socially useful for the children to be responsible for the laying and cleaning of meals."<sup>771</sup> The fact that adults performed most of the camp work for children was seen by the Woodcraft Folk as a violation of progressive camping principles: "We maintain that the practical lessons learned from our camps by each child taking his or her share in the chores and running of the camp is an essential part of their training in democracy."<sup>772</sup>

These tensions point to deeper disagreements between pioneer movements in the Soviet Bloc and leftwing youth organizations in the West on progressive camping pedagogies as well as the ideal type of child and teen behavior likely to foster mutual understanding and a spirit of internationalism. While Eastern Bloc organizations emphasized self-discipline, prized adult authority, and competitive spirit, engaging children in a mandatory collective program, most western European camps promoted elective activities and sought to enhance children's spirit of initiative, self-management, and cooperative work (living in tents, taking turns to cook, wash dishes, clean the common living area). The Romanian Pioneers' most active partners, the

---

<sup>769</sup> ARP, file 36/1972, "IFM Circular Letter No. 6/72 (Background papers for the meeting of the Special Commission for Educational Matters)," 36-46.

<sup>770</sup> Ibid.

<sup>771</sup> ARP, file 31/1973, Untitled evaluation letter, Kate and Syd Crawley, 59.

<sup>772</sup> YMA/WF FH 19, "International Work," In Woodcraft Folk Report for 1957, 8.

International Falcon Movement, convened its national branches regularly throughout the 1970s and 1980s for seminars and conferences on aspects as diverse as internationalist education, the IFM camping tradition and camp concepts, youth (sub)culture, youth sociality and sexuality.

Held against the ideal of independent, self-reliant, self-expressive, but tolerant and cooperative youth advocated by “progressive camping pedagogies,” Romanian children did not always fare well. Although there was no shortage of enthusiastic assessments of Romanian pioneers, western organizers evaluating their camp performance were occasionally critical. In their critiques, they singled out the excess of self-discipline or the lack of self-confidence, spontaneity, and initiative, describing individual team members as quiet, reserved, shy, or withdrawn: “Children acted like grown-ups, they are not used to express needs. All of them were waiting for contact by others instead of going ahead themselves. By the end of the village, they all gained a lot in self-confidence.”<sup>773</sup> This psychological profile resonated with the concerns expressed by a number of Romanian pioneer activists who argued that children on their team lacked spirit of initiative and imagination as a result of the excessively authoritarian school environment, were not well-trained in the practice of self-management, requiring constant assistance from their adult leaders, or that they came off as too serious and mature, standing out for their gravity, self-discipline, and artistic sophistication, but being reluctant to engage in “childish,” entertaining, and funny activities.<sup>774</sup>

Other western hosts, however, painted an entirely unflattering picture of Romanian pioneers, listing personality traits and behaviors that did not only violate the principles of initiative, cooperation, and communication across cultural barriers informing western camps, but

---

<sup>773</sup> ARP, file 32/1982, “Camp Director’s Report Form (CISV Village Luxembourg),” Theis Marc, 175.

<sup>774</sup> ARP, file 12/1968, “Informare cu privire la activitatea grupului de pionieri români în tabăra de la Kranevo, Bulgaria,” Bărăian Traian, 35; file 9/1969, “Informare privind felul cum a fost primită și cum și-a petrecut timpul delegația de copii în tabăra din Hemmenhög, Suedia organizată de CISV,” 98-100.

contradicted the very ideal of responsible and disciplined socialist youth meant to guide the Romanian Pioneers' selection of child ambassadors of the socialist way of life. In 1979, the Romanian delegation visiting the international children's camp of the Woodcraft Folk in Britain frustrated the organizers' efforts to foster friendship and internationalism in self-managing collectives.<sup>775</sup> Not only were Romanians unfamiliar with camping under canvas, but they ignored the repeated warnings not to smoke in tents and "made a mockery of the entire camp" refusing to do their rotations except when they thought they could steal food.<sup>776</sup> Showing surprising business acumen, but little internationalist spirit, some children even tried to sell the folk costumes and badges that were supposed to be extended as gifts to other delegations. Incapable of either speaking or understanding English, the delegation leader avoided interaction with the hosts and forbade Romanian children to speak to other delegations. By the end of the camp, he had completely lost control over the children and resorted to blackmail, threatening to send bad reports to have them expelled from the Pioneer Organization and the Youth Union.

Despite the significant disagreements in camping pedagogies between the Romanian Pioneers and its western allies, youth exchanges across the Iron Curtain were mutually beneficial, continuing unabated throughout the 1970s and 1980s. Progressive youth organizations were important allies in the Romanian Pioneers' symbolic fight for international assertion against Soviet hegemony, advancing its mission of becoming "a catalyst of progressive, antiimperialist, and anticolonialist forces around the world."<sup>777</sup> Youth organizations in the West reached out across the Iron Curtain for ideological inspiration, financial support, and institutional legitimacy. "As socialists attempting to educate children for social change in a capitalist world," many

---

<sup>775</sup> YMA/WF FH42, "Report of Visit of Roumanian Pioneers to Crayheath District and to International Camp, Malvern, 1979," Violet Davis, 1-2.

<sup>776</sup> Ibid.

<sup>777</sup> ARP, file 24/1974, "Informare cu privire la activitatea internațională in anul 1973," 12.

children's organizations envisioned postwar relations with the Soviet Bloc as opportunities to overcome their ideological isolation and benefit from exchanges and inspiration in a climate of socialist solidarity.<sup>778</sup> For financially challenged leftwing organizations that depended on member contributions and grassroots fundraising, state-sponsored international pioneer camps provided opportunities for internationalist encounters they could not otherwise afford.

Despite their occasional criticisms of pioneer camps in eastern Europe, members of the Woodcraft Folk, for example, described their annual participation in international camps in Romania throughout the 1970s and 1980s enthusiastically:

We made many friends from the English speaking CISV which included Japan, America, Denmark, Sweden, Luxemburg, West Germany, Belgium, Italy and Norway. These delegations each had 4 eleven year olds with them. We received a gift from the Cuban Pioneers of a record of their songs, and of course received Badges from the Eastern Democracies. We should like to mention that the Vietnamese children at the camp were all orphans and all had been involved in killing and this exercise was in hope that they would see another side of life. The International Spirit became more pronounced as the holiday drew on and we all felt our motto [Span the World with Friendship] was a living thing.<sup>779</sup>

Besides the warm hospitality of their Romanian hosts, they emphasized the opportunities to strengthen existing ties with Soviet Bloc organizations, reconnect with long-time friends such as the left-wing IFM and the apolitical CISV, and establish contacts with non-European children's organizations from embattled war zones or hotbeds of postcolonial conflict.

### **Performing Romanianness**

Whether it broke new ground in youth exchanges with progressive organizations in western Europe or continued its participation in traditional pioneer camps in the Eastern Bloc, the Romanian Pioneers remained true to its mission of securing international visibility and

---

<sup>778</sup> ARP, file 31/1973, Untitled evaluation letter, Kate and Syd Crawley, 60.

<sup>779</sup> YMA/WF FH50, Box 3, "The Woodcraft Folk in Romania, 1976," Pat and Al Knight.

national recognition. Irrespective of the geopolitical dynamics of the organization's youth exchange, travel reports indicate that children's general performance in international camps - their individual and collective behavior, interactions with other delegations, or participation in camp activities - was key to the mission of putting socialist Romania on the world map. No other camp activities, however, offered more opportunities for national assertion and pride than the ubiquitous National Day celebrations that encouraged children to familiarize their foreign friends with cultural traditions specific to their country and sports competitions such as the Artekiads or the Mini-Olympics.

To ensure their successful representation of socialist Romania in these camp activities, pioneers ambassadors followed an intensive three-day training program before departure. Previously unacquainted youth from diverse counties gathered at the Pioneer Palace in Bucharest, where they met their adult leaders for the first time, took on assigned roles in the pioneer collective, and elected their leader. Youth activists in charge of the training devoted only a few hours to the country about to be visited and even those were restricted to basic conversation classes and familiarization with vaguely defined aspects of geography and everyday life to be addressed by a geography teacher.<sup>780</sup> By contrast, children were amply trained in a set of self-presentation strategies that they were expected to deploy abroad. They took a crash course in the political, economic, cultural, and touristic highlights of Romania, attended informative sessions on the status and mission of the Pioneer Organization, formed teams to train for sports

---

<sup>780</sup> ARP, file 12/1967, "Programul de instruire a pionierilor români care își vor petrece vacanța de vară în taberele internaționale," Vicepresident [Elena Popard], 132-133; file 32/1971, "Indicații privind selecționarea și pregătirea pionierilor în vederea trimerii în taberele internaționale din țară și din străinătate," Elena Popard, 2-9; file 21/1972, "Criterii privind selecționarea pionierilor în vederea trimerii în taberele internaționale," Virgiliu Radulian, 4-13; file 22/1972, "Programul de pregătire a pionierilor care pleacă în tabere externe," 100-101.

competitions, practiced folk dances, pioneer songs, rituals, and camp games, and were instructed in rules of good conduct and pioneer discipline.<sup>781</sup>

Despite their different ideological agendas and camping pedagogies, all international youth camps engaged children in physical activities and sporting events. Very few international camps outside the Eastern Bloc, however, matched the Soviet tradition of organizing sports festivals after the highly competitive model of the Olympic games. Sports competitions in pioneer camps consequently involved a set of daily elimination and challenge rounds leading up to final sports festivals such as the Soviet Artekkiads (by association with “Spartakiad”) or the Mini-Olympics (*mica olimpiada*) organized in Romanian camps.<sup>782</sup> Travel reports indicate that no matter where they travelled, Romanian delegations approached sports events in the competitive spirit of national affirmation and pride they had rehearsed for decades in exchanges with fraternal socialist organizations.

Rooted in the ideological distinction that defined “socialist competition” as an alternative to market based capitalist competition, a great majority of pioneer camp activities were organized as contests, routinely pitting national delegations against each other. Child participants in international pioneer camps vied with each other for a variety of individual prizes for best singer, best instrument player, or best carnival costume as well as collective awards that ensured public recognition for the most popular delegations, delegations exhibiting the greatest initiative, cooperation, self-management (keeping bedrooms clean), and originality. In his ethnographic study of the Giorgi Dimitrov camp organized in Kranevo, Bulgaria, in the mid-1960s, Peter

---

<sup>781</sup> Ibid.

<sup>782</sup> The term “Spartakiad” was coined to denote an international sports event first organized in the Soviet Union in 1928 as an alternative to the “bourgeois” Olympic Games and “the so-called reformist games organized by the Social Democratic Sports International.” See Robert Edelman, *Serious Fun: A History of Spectator Sports in the USSR*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 37-38. Inspired by the Spartacus, the rebellious slave of the ancient world believed to have united the slaves, the term “Spartakiad” was meant to symbolize proletarian internationalism. It remained in use even after the Soviet Union joined the Olympic movement in 1952 and most likely inspired the term “Artekkiad” used for sports competitions organized at Artek.

Georgeoff emphasized the ideological underpinnings of this camping pedagogy in an interview with the camp director, who argued that: “Socialist competition is healthy, it is not a divisive force; it is, rather, a productive and creative one. National animosities are not encouraged by such a technique, for all children realize that they are part of a larger whole – the international socialist movement.”<sup>783</sup> Despite the organizers’ investment in the creative potential of socialist competition to foster a sense of team spirit, cooperation, and a broader internationalist identification in camp participants, many western guests of leftist persuasion found the competitive spirit in pioneer camps to be incompatible with a genuinely internationalist education, focusing their critique on sports competitions.

In the 1970s, Woodcraft Folk participants in Romania’s Navodari camp complained that sports competitions disqualified less athletic or competitive children from participation and left them unengaged for the entire duration of the camp, thus contradicting the principle of friendly cooperation and communal life. In his recollections of the international camp at Artek in the 1950s, Paul Thorez, the son of the longtime leader of the French Communist Party, Maurice Thorez, reflected on the prevalence of sports, arguing that “the quest for absolute dominance through sports” rendered “the ‘good half’ of the world much more like the ‘bad half’” in the eyes of a child who used to experience summer vacations in the Soviet Union as his “communist paradise.”<sup>784</sup> For Thorez, the constant focus on physical activity and competition at Artek inevitably encouraged rivalry, a phenomenon he saw as an expression of the broader Soviet educational system, which was based on “the encouragement of rivalry between the ‘good’ and the ‘best.’”<sup>785</sup> Much like Woodcraft Folk members, Thorez argued that the sports festival of the

---

<sup>783</sup> Peter Georgeoff, *The Social Education of Bulgarian Youth*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1968), 142.

<sup>784</sup> Paul Thorez, *Model Children*, 57.

<sup>785</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.



Artekiad brought children together “only superficially,” engaging them as representatives of their home countries in games “riddled with chauvinism under a thin veneer of internationalism.”<sup>786</sup>

For their part, Romanian delegations embraced sports competitions such as the Mini-Olympics or the Artekiads as opportunities for national self-affirmation, loyalty, and pride, recognizing the ideological promise of a camp activity that promoted national competition without violating the discourse of internationalist friendship and solidarity. A majority of youth activists concluded their travel reports with a litany of prizes and medals won during volleyball, handball, soccer, running, or swimming competitions. Such awards were opportunities to showcase children’s healthy and athletic bodies, their leadership skills, and team spirit as embodiments of the success of Ceaușescu’s socialist regime in educational opportunities and welfare provisions for the young.

So high were the stakes of winning sports competitions that a significant number of youth activists felt the need to justify their mediocre results. Leaders in this category typically complained about their teams’ modest athletic abilities, recommending higher selection standards and criticizing the organization’s local councils for their lack of responsibility in selecting pioneers who lacked the stamina, practice, and talent necessary for the extremely demanding sports competitions in international camps.<sup>787</sup> Some children, adult leaders argued, were simply too young to compete with highly trained teams of older pioneers representing other

---

<sup>786</sup> Ibid.

<sup>787</sup> ARP, file 8/1967, “Informare privind unele aspecte din activitatea detașamentului de pionieri români în tabăra internațională Artek,” Stoica Anghel and Sintimbreanu Gheorghe, 103; file 12/1968, “Informare cu privire la participarea delegației de pionieri români în tabăra internațională din R. P. Ungară,” Gâță Dumitru, 15; file 9/1969, “Informare asupra activității desfășurată de grupul de pionieri români în tabăra internațională din Cehia,” Dinu Ștefan Constantin, 92; file 10/1970, “Informare privind activitatea desfășurată de grupul de pionieri români în tabăra internațională Artek,” Pavelescu Aurel and Pop Teodor, 121-122; file 31/1971, “Informare privind activitatea desfășurată de delegația de pionieri români în tabăra internațională ‘Sitno’ din R. S. Cehoslovacia,” Ciuca Teodor and Prepeliță Grigore, 82-3.

countries.<sup>788</sup> Others lacked the ambition, motivation, and strong will necessary for self-affirmation or team mobilization. Poor performance in sports competitions as well as physical activities such as the occasional hiking and camping trips was most often attributed to the fact that schools failed to engage children systematically in sports training and physical effort, assigning only a marginal role to physical education.<sup>789</sup>

It was not just children's failure to achieve athletic excellence, but also their weak and unhealthy bodies or their vulnerable constitution that triggered adult criticisms. Delegation leaders reported that children on their team suffered from a variety of health problems, ranging from less serious conditions such as tonsillitis, minor skin infections, broken limbs, and exhaustion after long train trips, to grave and diplomatically embarrassing conditions such as underweight and malnutrition, heart problems, or suspicion of meningitis.<sup>790</sup> Such serious conditions necessitated long periods of hospitalization, preventing pioneers from enjoying the camp experience or bolstering their team's chances of success in sports and artistic competitions. They also disqualified children from the ambassadorial mission of embodying the socialist regime's nurturing care for its young.

The competitive climate of international pioneer camps also played out in National Day celebrations, which constituted another important venue of national affirmation for Romanian delegations. Western observers present as researchers in international pioneer camps during this period noted that "the national nights, in which the delegates present a program of their national

---

<sup>788</sup> ARP, file 12/1968, "Informare cu privire la activitatea grupului de pionieri români în tabăra de la Kranevo, Bulgaria," Bărăian Traian, 35; file 9/1969, "Informare, tabăra internațională din Cehia," Dinu Ștefan Constantin, 92.

<sup>789</sup> See ARP, file 12/1968, "Informare, tabăra internațională din R. P. Ungară," Gâță Dumitru, 15; "Informare, tabăra de la Kranevo, Bulgaria," Bărăian Traian, 35; file 24/1974, "Informare privind activitatea grupelor de pionieri participante la taberele internațional din R. S. Cehoslovacia," Traian Bărăian și Margareta Telbis, 45-46.

<sup>790</sup> See ARP, file 12/1968, "Informare, tabăra de la Kranevo, Bulgaria," Bărăian Traian, 36; file 10/1970, "Informare în legătura cu activitatea delegației de pionieri care au petrecut vacanța în tabăra internațională din Cehoslovacia," Gligor Hașa and Elena Irimie, 47; "Informare, tabăra internațională Artek," Pavelescu Aurel and Pop Teodor, 121-122.

folklore, songs, and dances, likewise whet the children's competitive spirit. 'Let us do our best,' the children are told by their leaders, 'so that our delegation will receive first prize at the end of the camp period.'<sup>791</sup> Romanian youth activists showed a similarly strong concern with being first and bringing honors to themselves and their socialist nation, repeatedly singling out their performance as "the best" or "most appreciated show" of the camp in travel reports. In addition to the competitive spirit best epitomized by sports festivals, however, National Days also offered Romanian delegations the opportunity to stage national culture for international audiences.

In preparation for participation in international camps, Romanian pioneers were encouraged to invest their artistic energies in elaborate National Day performances and exhibitions, being trained to perform standardized displays of Romanian folk traditions and socialist achievement. Official guidelines specifically instructed local councils of the organization to recommend winners of prestigious national awards in folk competitions such as "The Cultural and Artistic Festival for Pioneers and School Children" or, starting with 1976, finalists of the "National Festival of Socialist Education and Culture 'Singing Romania'" (*Cîntarea României*), a large-scale competition widely popularized in print and broadcast media throughout the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>792</sup> Engaging amateur and professional artists from all professional backgrounds and ages, including pioneers and school children, on an unprecedented scale, "Singing Romania" featured an inexhaustible range of "cultural productions" - theatre, dance, music, handicrafts, puppetry, etc. - that sought to revalorize traditional peasant culture as the "culture of the people." The festival set in motion an active process of folklorization of traditional culture as folk dance, music, ritual, dress, and artifacts were removed from their

---

<sup>791</sup> Peter Georgeoff, *The Social Education*, 142-3.

<sup>792</sup> ARP, file 32/1971, "Indicații privind selecționarea și pregătirea pionierilor," Elena Popard, 3. In this text, the vice-president of the Romanian Pioneers makes specific mention of "Festivalul cultural-artistic al pionierilor și școlărilor."

original milieus, being not only secularized, but also reduced to spectacular elements to be displayed for entertainment and standardized according to the time and space constraints of stage performance.<sup>793</sup>

Youth activists who directed and choreographed artistic programs for National Day celebrations drew on socialist practices of staging peasant culture as spectacular enactments of progressive traditions of national continuity and unity.<sup>794</sup> Integrating folk art, pioneer ritual, patriotic song and poetry, as well as classical and popular music, the performances prepared by pioneer ambassadors for foreign audiences in international camps exhibited the fashion of folk stylization and genre syncretism popularized by festivals like “Singing Romania.” During their training in Bucharest, children put together their own orchestras and spent hours practicing the national anthem, a series of traditional folk dances such as “hora,” “sârba,” “Perinița,” “Ciobănașul,” folk dance and musical adaptations for children,<sup>795</sup> solo performances of folk music, stylized folk dances on classical Romanian music such as George Enescu’s “Romanian Rhapsody,” so-called “thematic dances,” poetry recitals dedicated to world peace, as well as pioneer rituals, marches, and “patriotic songs” specific to their organization.<sup>796</sup> Some delegations would occasionally enrich their repertoire with traditional music from the host country and

---

<sup>793</sup> For a discussion of strategies of “folklorization” in the “Singing Romania” festival, see Anca Giurchescu, “The National Festival ‘Song to Romania:’ Manipulation of Symbols in the Political Discourse,” In C. Arvidsson and L. E. Blomqvist (eds.), *Symbols of Power. The Esthetics of Political Legitimation in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe* (Stockholm, 1987), 163-72. For a more recent study of the festival that draws on interviews with expert-participants in the competition, see Vintila Mihailescu, “A New Festival for the New Man: The Socialist Market of Folk Experts during the ‘Singing Romania’ National Festival,” In Vintila Mihăilescu, Ilia Iliev and Slobodan Naumovic (eds.), *Studying Peoples in the People’s Democracies: Socialist Era Anthropology in South-East Europe*, vol II (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2008), 55-80.

<sup>794</sup> The tradition of exhibiting and staging peasant culture as national identity dates back to the prewar period. Scholars have noted various historical precedents, among which the huge festivities organized under Carol II or the “Arts and Crafts” movement of the 1920s. See Vintila Mihailescu, “A New Festival” and Ioana Popescu, “L’‘Art national’ chez les Roumains,” In *Ethnologie Francaise* XXV (1995): 394-409.

<sup>795</sup> The most popular folk songs and musical adaptations were “La oglindă,” “Românașului îi place,” “Alunelu,’ alunelu,’ hai la joc” “Drag mi-e jocul românesc,” “Cucule, pasăre sură.”

<sup>796</sup> Pioneer songs included “Pionierii României,” “Drag pământ românesc,” “Suntem zorii noi,” “Tot înainte,” “Noi, copiii României, vrem pace.”

international hits or protest songs such as “Blowing in the Wind,” but, in most cases, the focus remained on Romanian songs and folk culture.

Travel reports emphasized the elaborate process of staging and standardization that went into the production of National Day celebrations. Reporting on their artistic programs, youth activists emphasized the choreographic ingenuity of their productions: “

Organizers and spectators agreed that Romanian pioneers put up the most successful show. The beauty of our folk costumes and dances as well as our exquisite stage presence (even performances by soloists were enhanced by group dances) delighted the eye. Organizers broadcast our entire show.<sup>797</sup>

Other adult leaders focused their descriptions on the ideological and aesthetic use of stage props such as the map of Romania or Nicolae Ceaușescu’s portrait flanked on both sides by the national flag and that of the Pioneer Organization. Besides folk performances, Romanian pioneers were also in charge of putting up exhibitions and making slide presentations that featured Romania’s historic sites, socialist achievements, and touristic attractions (art and folk museums, seaside or mountain resorts), folk costumes and artifacts, as well as the insignia, propaganda brochures, and photo albums illustrating the activities and mission of the Romanian Pioneers. Bringing the aesthetics of the Romanian leader’s cult of personality to international stages, exhibitions were increasingly organized during the late 1970s and 1980s around Nicolae Ceaușescu’s portrait, being as much an homage to the socialist leader as they were to the socialist nation. Finally, ethnic food could also complete the spectacle of national tradition. Depending on the resources made available by host organizations abroad, Romanian teams played traditional music in the camp’s common areas and cooked ethnic food, serving an assortment of stuffed cabbage (*sarmale*), cheese pie, and gem doughnuts (*papanasi*).

---

<sup>797</sup> ARP, file 9/1969, “Informare asupra activității desfășurată de grupul de pionieri români în tabăra internațională din Cehia,” Dinu Ștefan Constantin, 91.

Despite the fact that pioneer delegations traveled by train to most European destinations and changed campsites several times a month, they were expected to carry symbolic gifts such as folk art (rugs, pottery, engraved wooden boxes, dolls), samples of folk music, brochures for major tourist destinations, and insignia of their organization.<sup>798</sup> Some delegations also packed recently published statistical yearbooks of socialist Romania and documentaries of the 1966 inauguration of the National Council of the Romanian Pioneer Organization. In addition to these “propaganda materials” provided by the organization’s headquarters in Bucharest, pioneers brought musical instruments and folk costumes representing their respective ethnographic areas to enhance the performance of traditional music and dances.

Travel accounts focused obsessively on the beauty and diversity of Romanian folk costumes, noting foreign delegations’ admiration for the exquisite embroidery and their requests to record the team’s shows or to be photographed with Romanian pioneers dressed in folk attire.<sup>799</sup> To invoke the foreign hosts’ enthusiastic reactions to these recognizable manifestations of cultural heritage and national specificity was to conjure up scenarios of national recognition and diplomatic visibility. The selection and display of folk attire in international camps reflected another widespread folklorization strategy characteristic of national festivals such as “Singing Romania.” In order to enhance the spectacular character of stage performances, costume designers adapted traditional dress, emphasizing vivid ornaments and strong colors that were visible from afar and could be featured as regional styles.

Echoing the festival’s broader message of national unity in (ethnographic) diversity, youth activists participating in an international camp in Poland in 1971 remarked: “It was

---

<sup>798</sup> For the lists of objects bought by the National Council of the organization for its delegations, see ARP, file 12/1967, 117-122, 135-136. In addition to materials provided by the organization, pioneers were also expected to buy folk artifacts as gifts for their hosts.

<sup>799</sup> ARP, file 8/1967, “Informare privind activitatea desfășurată de grupa de pionieri români care au petrecut vacanța în tabăra internațională din Polonia ‘Malta ‘67,’” Fl. Firan and I. Sălăjan, 94.

extremely important that the nineteen pioneers on our delegation were each from a different county. Given the variety of their folk costumes, they turned every cultural or artistic camp activity into a parade of Romanian folk dress.”<sup>800</sup> Performing folk culture dressed in traditional attire, Romanian children were seen as embodiments of national identity, standing out among indiscriminate groups of foreign children, rendered invisible by the absence of national markers: “On this day [National Day], Romanian pioneers wore pioneer uniforms in the morning and folk costumes in the afternoon. Since other children did not wear either pioneer uniforms or folk costumes, you could always spot ‘a Romanian folk costume’ standing out in a group of foreign children.”<sup>801</sup> As more distinctive markers of national specificity, folk costumes were preferred to pioneer uniforms, which were inevitably read as symbols of internationalist solidarity with socialist youth from other countries despite designing efforts to nationalize them: pioneer scarves sported the three colors of the Romanian flag while the belt featured the official state insignia.

So common was the practice of exhibiting folk attire from diverse ethnographic areas as markers of national identity that a few pioneer delegations found it surprising to learn that folk costumes were virtually useless in some children’s camps in western Europe organized by left-wing organizations that did not place a premium on National Day celebrations.<sup>802</sup> Similarly, western European organizations such as the Woodcraft Folk, which attended the Romanian camp at Navodari, seemed less familiar with the practice of exhibiting national specificity. As their reports indicate, child delegations from political traditions less invested in the preservation of national heritage through folklorization learned the processes of selection and stylization necessary to the spectacular staging of traditional culture:

---

<sup>800</sup> ARP, 31/1971, “Informare privind activitatea pionierilor care și-au petrecut vacanța în R. P. Polonă,” Panait Lucian and Bănescu Constantin, 111.

<sup>801</sup> ARP, file 9/1969, “Informare, tabăra internațională din Cehia,” Dinu Ștefan Constantin, 91.

<sup>802</sup> ARP, file 29/1981, “Informare privind participarea delegației CNOP la tabăra internațională din Franța,” Ioan Lamatic, 46.

We knew we would need a National Costume and this is difficult in England so we decided we would use the Morris costume for both purposes [national costume parade and folk dance competition]. So everyone made a coat and tatters, bought a pair of white trousers and a white shirt, whilst the Morris team had bell pads for each leg in addition. Pam learned to play the piano accordion and we were all set for entertainment.<sup>803</sup>

Delegation leaders typically emphasized children's remarkable artistic talents, indicating that a significant number of them were "professional" singers, instrument players, or dancers with previous experience of participation in national festivals. In certain cases, foreign audiences seemed surprised by children's composure and mastery on stage, detecting a certain familiarity with stage performances:

Regarding Panduru Virginia's performance as a singer, I was often asked whether she had sung in front of adult audiences before, because they found her body gestures during the performance of folk songs unnatural (*nefirești*) [for a child]. I replied that she performed for adult audiences as a participant in the 'The Cultural and Artistic Festival for Pioneers and School Children' and I explained how this festival is organized.<sup>804</sup>

In his account of the Romanian team's activity in the international camp in Bulgaria in 1967, the leader singled out a girl from Bacau "who was a true revelation, being capable of performing entire shows and winning sports competitions single-handedly."<sup>805</sup> Similarly, youth activists boasted that a pioneer from Hunedoara impressed the delegation's Swedish hosts in 1969 with her exquisite performance of folk music, being invited to sing during the official inauguration of the camp and being featured in the local newspaper.<sup>806</sup> The most successful performances were those that won the hosts' attention and admiration, becoming camp hits, being adopted by foreign delegations, or being recorded for radio and television broadcasts.

---

<sup>803</sup> YMA/WF FH50, Box 3, "Romania 1974 Report," Jim Miles, 1.

<sup>804</sup> ARP, file 9/1969, "Informare, tabăra din Hemmenhög, Suedia organizată de CISV," 98.

<sup>805</sup> ARP, 8/1967, "Informare" (Gheorghii Dimtirov Camp in Kranevo, Bulgaria), D. Andone, 51.

<sup>806</sup> ARP, file 9/1969, "Informare, tabăra din Hemmenhög, Suedia organizată de CISV," 97-98.



By contrast, pioneers who either lacked artistic talent and practice or who were deemed to be “mediocre,” “average,” and “short of exceptional” were considered liabilities.<sup>807</sup> Their failure to give socialist expression to cultural traditions cost their country much craved awards and prizes, all of which were read as signs of diplomatic recognition and visibility. Occasionally, delegation members representing Hungarian or German minorities also proved unqualified for ambassadorial roles. Their inability to converse in Romanian or perform popular Romanian folk songs and dances, however, signaled more than personal inadequacy, raising the specter of national disloyalty. Youth activists leading a pioneer delegation to Mongolia in 1969 concluded their report in a critical tone: “Some children could not contribute to any camp activities. Pioneer Traxler Gavril from Maramureş didn’t know any Romanian songs and couldn’t even dance the *hora unirii* (unity round dance) or follow the steps of the *sîrba*.”<sup>808</sup> Similarly, the delegation leaders visiting Czechoslovakia remarked: “We feel compelled to point out here a truly untenable situation: despite the fact that he cannot speak Romanian, pioneer Szava Antal from the Harghita county was still nominated for participation in an international camp.”<sup>809</sup>

Although the organization complied with the Soviet model of ethnic representation, its inclusion of ethnic minorities on pioneer teams was never envisioned as an expression of cultural diversity or multicultural coexistence that could be featured in the performances of Romanian delegations. On the contrary, the presence of Hungarian, German, or Serb pioneers on the team was conditional on their cultural integration as reflected in their expected participation in standardized displays of Romanianness. When their linguistic and cultural incompetence

---

<sup>807</sup> See for example, ARP, file 10/1970, “Informare în legătura cu activitatea delegației de pionieri care au petrecut vacanța în tabăra internațională din Cehoslovacia,” Gligor Hașa and Elena Irimie, 46; ARP, file 10/1970, “Informare cu privire la participarea noastră în tabăra internațională din Norvegia,” Constantin Diaconu, 60.

<sup>808</sup> ARP, file 9/1969, “Informare privind activitatea delegației de pionieri care a participat la tabăra internațională din R. R. Mongolă,” Ion Ionașcu and Iliuț, 78.

<sup>809</sup> ARP, file 10/1970, “Informare, tabăra internațională din Cehoslovacia,” Gligor Hașa and Elena Irimie, 47.

disqualified them from successful performances, the presence of Hungarian or German pioneers on ambassadorial Romanian teams seemed inconceivable.

Inspired by domestic practices of staging folk art as progressive national culture in late socialist Romania, the National Day celebrations put up by Romanian pioneers only took root in internationalist contexts such as youth camps because they found fertile ideological ground. In their artistic performances, Romanian delegations seized upon a traditional Soviet form designed to enhance socialist internationalist education and invested it with national meaning and sentiment. A standard activity in Soviet camps, the institution of the National Day, was essential to the Soviet model of integrating delegations of foreign children in the union of Soviet pioneers at Artek. The strategies of integration employed at Artek reproduced the logic informing the Soviet nationality regime and, much like this regime, they ended up perpetuating the very national forms they sought to overcome. The distinctive character of the Soviet nationality policies was their “thoroughgoing state-sponsored codification and institutionalization of nationality and nationhood exclusively on a sub-state than a state-wide level.”<sup>810</sup> While these policies constituted ethnocultural groups as nations and endowed the largest of them with political territory in the form of Union Republics, they subordinated ethno-national identity to a supranational, state-wide Soviet identity.<sup>811</sup> The process of institutionalizing nationality as a form, but filling it with socialist content was meant to eventually lead to the withering away of the nationality principle in social life.<sup>812</sup>

Much in the same way, pioneer delegations at Artek were conceived as groups sharing ethnocultural and territorial commonalities and were provided with various forms to express

---

<sup>810</sup> Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 26-7.

<sup>811</sup> *Ibid.*, 26-40.

<sup>812</sup> *Ibid.*

these cultural specificities in camp life. Official Soviet brochures and published memoirs indicate that performances of national specificity and cultural diversity such as folk costume parades, folk dance and music shows, as well as the cooking and serving of ethnic foods were common activities at Artek throughout the camp's existence. Somewhat weary of the focus on folk traditions during his vacations in the early 1950s, Paul Thorez noted that foreign pioneers "usually presented something from their native culture," coming to Artek "with a special costume for the occasion, despite the extra weight in their camp luggage." "So I saw Czech, Hungarian, German, Polish, Rumanian, Bulgarian, Chinese, and Vietnamese dances during my days at Artek – surely enough for more than one lifetime."<sup>813</sup> The tradition took root in later decades, when the displays of cultural diversity were completed with Asian, African, Latin American and Middle Eastern costumes, songs, and dances.

Not only were foreign delegations typically assigned a "National Day," but Union republics were also allocated a so-called "Day of the Republics" for displays of cultural diversity. In preparation for this "colorful festivity," Soviet brochures informed potential visitors, children "rehearse[d] the songs and dances of the Union republic, sew national costumes and prepare[d] souvenirs."<sup>814</sup> Treated to an assortment of "Ukrainian *borshch*, Byelorussian *draniki* (potato pancakes), Uzbek *plov* (meat and rice), Lettish whipped cream," foreign guests enjoyed a lively folk show:

Wearing rainbow colored costumes, Estonians, Kirghis, Armenians, Russians and Uzbeks join hands in a circular dance. Soon the infectious Ukrainian *hopak* begins, replaced by the precise rhythms of the Caucasian *lezginka*, and then Kazak, Tajik, and Turkmen girls seem to float as they perform their national dances. The rolling trills of the balalaikas and the sound of wooden spoons played by an amateur Russian group can be heard coming from a lacework wooden house.<sup>815</sup>

---

<sup>813</sup> Thorez, *Model Children*, 152.

<sup>814</sup> See Soviet propaganda brochures such as *Artek, Mir, Drujba*, (Kiev: Mistetstvo Publishers, 1987), 27-29.

<sup>815</sup> *Ibid.*

By organizing camp activities such as the Day of the Republics and the National Day, Soviet administrators effectively institutionalized nationality as a form. They also sought to infuse it with socialist content so as to eventually render it obsolete. Described as “a colorful festivity,” the expression of nationality was reduced to highly standardized displays of cultural traditions meant to be visualized in the “rainbow colored costumes” or externalized in “the rolling trills of the balalaikas” rather than internalized as a source of identity. Much like other joint activities and competitions in the camp, folk performances were supposed to familiarize pioneers from diverse corners of the Soviet Union, eastern Europe, and the world with each other’s cultures in order to enhance their friendship and forge a supra-national identity as pioneers or vanguard socialist youth.

With the standardization of the Soviet model after the Second World War, the institution of the National Day became a staple of pioneer camp life throughout the Soviet Bloc. For national delegations such as the Romanian Pioneers, National Days provided a ready-made template for performances of national specificity and assertions of sovereignty. Romanian performances, however, were equally welcomed outside the Soviet Bloc as a great number of youth camps around the world encouraged children to share traditions specific to their culture with international audiences as a way to fight off prejudice bred by ignorance and promote cultural diversity, tolerance, and world peace.

The many camps that Romanian pioneers attended in western Europe and North America as guests of the International Summer Villages, for example, featured “Dedication Days” for children to present traditional dances and songs dressed in folk costumes or put up national exhibits in order to sell or auction traditional artifacts. In the spirit of mutual cultural understanding, youth camps organized by leftwing children’s organizations in western Europe

also featured activities for the promotion of cultural traditions. Being openly avert to competition and sensitive to the danger of reinforcing national barriers and differences, these organizations focused, however, on giving children the opportunity to practice other people's songs and dances or finding alternative grounds of solidarity by raising children's awareness of forms of discrimination and global economic inequalities.<sup>816</sup> Far from being the unique characteristic of the Romanian Pioneers, the seemingly incompatible mix of national values and internationalist principles informed the very structure of international youth camps. A great number of camp activities that pitted national delegations against each other or solicited performances of cultural traditions contributed to the strengthening of national differences even as they sought to promote an internationalist ethos of friendship and solidarity.

## **Conclusions**

While internationalism remained a rhetorical fixture on the Romanian Pioneers' agenda throughout its existence from 1949 through 1989, it underwent significant changes of conception over time. During the organization's founding years in the late 1940s and early 1950s, "internationalism" was synonymous with the "Soviet-Romanian friendship," which was meant to guarantee that Romanian children would be educated in the revolutionary Soviet tradition. Meant to mobilize children of the vanguard working class, the first Romanian pioneer units were encouraged to maintain correspondence with Soviet pioneers, write letters to Stalin to express gratitude for their country's liberation from fascism by the victorious Soviet Army, learn Russian

---

<sup>816</sup> In its 1979 international camp, for example, the Woodcraft Folk invited children to visit one of its camp centers, "People of Other Lands," in order to learn other people's "games, songs and dances, practice their crafts," "cook their traditional foods," and better understand "why people leave their original countries to live and work elsewhere, taking their culture and customs with them." During their 1983 camp, Woodcraft Folk organizers designed a board game (that could be played as a pavement game) entitled "No Chance" to better acquaint children with the problems of economic underdevelopment affecting countries in the Third World. See YMA/WF FH42 International Camps, "Brochure International Camp, Malvern 1979."

in school, celebrate Romanian-Soviet friendship weeks, read pioneer magazines based primarily on translations of Soviet material, or receive symbolic gifts of patronage such as red pioneer flags and scarves from Soviet delegations who attended the Romanian pioneers' ceremony of induction in the organization.<sup>817</sup>

Reflecting the increased ambitions of political autonomy of the Romanian Workers' Party as well as its resistance to the wave of destalinization that challenged the entrenchment of its leadership in the wake of Stalin's death, public references to the friendship between the Romanian and Soviet peoples lost gradually in intensity in the 1960s. Criticized as symptoms of paternalist internationalism in the inner circles of the Romanian leadership, manifestations of Soviet hegemony were also denounced under Gheorghe Gheorghiu Dej in public statements such as the regime's so called "declaration of independence" of 1964:

There is not and there cannot be a "father" party and a "son" party, "superior" parties and "subordinate" parties. There is only the big family of communist and workers' parties enjoying equal rights. No party has or can have a privileged position, no party can impose its party line and opinions on others.<sup>818</sup>

The critique of paternalist internationalism grew increasingly vocal during Ceaușescu's leadership, eventually giving way to an emerging notion of fraternal internationalism. Partly evidenced by its strategic challenges to Soviet hegemony in the Comecon and the Warsaw Pact throughout the 1960s, the leadership of the party envisioned its participation in the economic and political community of socialist states in terms of equal standing rather than of Soviet patronage. The Romanian Pioneers strove to articulate this vision in international youth work. In her report

---

<sup>817</sup> Not only did *Gazeta Învățământului*, the official publication of the Ministry of Public Education (Ministerul Învățământului Public) and the Teaching Staff Union (Uniunea Sindicatelor Corpului Didactic) publish regularly translations of Soviet material, but it also featured a section entitled "The USSR Teaches US" to familiarize educators with Soviet educational institutions, teaching methodologies, and ideological agendas. See also ANIC, Fond C.C. al P.C.R. - Organizatorică, file 83/1949, "Pionierii Republicii Populare Române," M. Colnacova, 32-36; file 32/1950, "Raport asupra activității organizațiilor de pionieri din luna iunie 1949 pîna în prezent," 31-47; file 52/1951, "Material adresat conducerii școlii," 1-38.

<sup>818</sup> "Declarație cu privire la poziția Partidului Muncitoresc Român în problemele mișcării comuniste și muncitorești internaționale," *Scînteia*, April 26, 1964.

on a Komsomol conference in the Soviet Union in 1967, for example, the vice-president of the organization criticized the Polish, Czech and Bulgarian delegates to the conference for supporting the hegemonic Soviet position and singled out the Polish representative for openly asserting the subordinate character of “small organizations,” which “look up to the V. I. Lenin Pioneers as to a bigger brother that will always have something to teach them.”<sup>819</sup>

Consistent with these efforts to reassert national autonomy, the mission of the Pioneer Organization changed to focus on the socialization of children in the spirit of socialist patriotism, shifting the intended locus of children’s pride and loyalty from the Soviet-dominated community of socialist states to the socialist nation. Although it remained an ardent advocate of socialist internationalism and youth exchanges throughout Ceaușescu’s rule, the Romanian Pioneer Organization conceived internationalism in narrow terms as the logical corollary of socialist patriotism, reducing it to the mutual recognition of national sovereignty on an international stage that was no longer restricted to the Soviet Bloc. Assimilated to a broader discourse of world peace and mutually advantageous economic cooperation, the principles of socialist internationalism were invoked to emphasize the role of youth in countering hegemony and domination in global relations.

In keeping with its mission of putting socialist Romania on the world map, the Romanian Pioneers approached international youth camps as stages for the performance of a highly idealized and standardized version of socialist Romanianness. Meant to embody the progress made by Ceaușescu’s socialist regime in welfare and educational provisions for children, the few hundred pioneers attending international camps every year during the last few decades of Romanian communism were carefully chosen and trained to be “ambassadors” of the socialist

---

<sup>819</sup> ARP, file 7/1967, “Informare asupra lucrărilor conferinței organizate de Comitetul Central al Uniunii Tineretului Comunist Leninist din Uniunea Sovietică pe tema ‘Octombrie și copiii,’” Elena Popard, 165.

way of life.<sup>820</sup> Before they embarked on trips to various destinations in the Soviet Bloc, western Europe, the United States and Canada, Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America, socialist Romania's small envoys followed a three-day training program. Focusing exclusively on performative efforts of self-presentation in sports competitions and displays of folk culture, the official preparation in Bucharest was not meant to train children's gaze for the world of difference and diversity they were about to experience, but to cultivate a high degree of self-consciousness in Romania's small envoys, who were taught to see themselves first and foremost as epitomes of Romanianness.

Reflecting a more general characteristic of collective travel abroad during socialism, participation in international children's camps was not supposed to be transformative, but performative. In her analysis of representations of the West in Bulgarian travel writing during socialism, Rossitza Guentcheva noted: "Travel, especially to the capitalist West, was not supposed to transform the socialist citizen, who had to return from the enemy territory unaltered, unaffected by novel ideas, experiences and values."<sup>821</sup> For activists representing the Romanian Pioneers in youth exchanges during late socialism, the imperative to resist transformation was not restricted to travel to the West, affecting also the parameters of travel within the presumably ideologically safe space of the Soviet Bloc.

Despite the unprecedented broadening of their organization's international relations, only a minority of youth activists indicated that they found travel abroad instructive, recommending that the Romanian Pioneers should adopt a set of alternative camp activities or progressive camping pedagogies. Even in those cases, there is no indication that positive camp experiences were integrated in internationalist education for children in Romania. On the contrary, travel

---

<sup>820</sup> ARP, file 32/1971, "Indicații privind selecționarea și pregătirea pionierilor în vederea trimerii în taberele internaționale din țară și din străinătate, Elena Popard, 2-9.

<sup>821</sup> Rossitza Guentcheva, "Images of the West," 358.



reports that documented visits to traditional destinations both within and outside the Soviet Bloc continued to exhibit a tone of novelty and curiosity throughout the 1970s and 1980s. An indication that youth activists were not encouraged to either draw on or contribute to a shared body of knowledge on alternative camping pedagogies, adult delegation leaders wrote their reports as if they were first timers who discovered such places anew every year.

While some activists' showed occasional concerns with broadening children's horizons and enhancing their familiarity with diverse world cultures, the organization did not envision international youth camps as essentially transformative experiences for pioneer ambassadors. Children's internationalist education derived from the organization's diplomatic mission, being restricted to efforts of self-presentation for foreign gaze. At a time when adult and expert intervention were justified by the assumption that children and adolescents had an endlessly plastic, impressionable, and educable nature, pioneers were believed to be highly susceptible to unhealthy foreign influences and thus, in need of adult ideological protection and guidance. As ideological guardians, pioneer activists had to ensure that travel abroad did not fundamentally change children's worldview, but confirmed the ideological convictions that exemplary pioneers were expected to entertain as they set out on their trips: an undying loyalty to and pride in the socialist nation and an abstract sense of internationalist friendship for the children of the world.

As the youth activists leading a delegation of Romanian children to Britain concluded:

We are convinced that, in helping them understand the realities of a capitalist country such as England from the perspective of our party, we further fostered their love for the socialist motherland and helped them understand that, under the leadership of the party, we fight a brave fight to raise the living standards of the entire people.<sup>822</sup>

---

<sup>822</sup> ARP, file 21/1972, "Informare asupra deplasării în Anglia cu un grup de pionieri," Rada Mocanu and Mircea Ștefan, 114.

Engaging in a peculiar version of internationalism without contamination, Romanian delegations that claimed successful participation in international camps presented themselves as self-contained or self-sufficient groups that remained ultimately unaffected by foreign influences, even influences considered progressive or democratic.

## Chapter VI

### Pioneers into Bloggers and Public Intellectuals:

#### The Politics of Generational Memory and Childhood Nostalgia in Postsocialist Romania

*We too had our 1789, a year which split our destinies into two fragments that were never truly sutured. We are trapped half melancholically half ironically in this footnote that our biography imagines in the history of the last century. I relieved this feeling of being an amphibious creature, which communicates with the past in a manner incomprehensible to those born later than me, when I read Chateaubriand's "Memoirs from beyond the grave." My old regime, our old regime, is an epoch that contemporaries can only reconstruct archeologically. (Ioan Stanomir, *The Lost World*, 2004).*

*"I, for one, am uncomfortable with these artificial notions about how people lived in the 'former' regime, as if it's been eons since we became capitalists." "These questions about people under communism are a bit confusing: How did they live? How did they eat? What did they wear? What were their habits? You get the feeling that they are talking about creatures from planet Zorg." (Blog replies to an official invitation to participate in the production of a documentary on "the communist man," 2008)*

During the past decade, an increasing number of collectively authored memoirs, public blogs, Facebook groups, oral history projects, museum exhibits, TV shows, documentaries, and magazine articles have been busy reviving late socialist childhood in Romania. The renewed interest in the everyday experiences and material world of childhood is fueled by generational dynamics since most of those who spent their formative childhood years during Nicolae Ceausescu's rule, a period popularized by state propaganda as the "Golden Age" of Romanian socialism, came of age in the 1990s. At the same time, the phenomenon is part of a broader set of practices of memorialization and muzealization that revive the social and cultural dimensions of everyday life under socialism in a diversity of sites, be these socialist style restaurants such as *La Scanteia*, an establishment that bears the name of the regime's former official daily, retro parties that feature popular music of the 1980s, advertising campaigns that seek to revamp socialist products, or successful films such as Cristian Mungiu's "Memories of the Golden Age" that

foreground the socialist regime's quaint aesthetics and urban legends. In contrast to other Eastern European contexts, postcommunist Romania witnessed a comparatively late and modest revival of socialist goods and aesthetics. Much like the more prominent and more extensively researched cases of *Ostalgie* (nostalgia for the East in post-Wall Germany) or *Yugo-nostalgia* (in former Yugoslavia), however, the comparatively late revalorization of material culture and emergence of memory practices deemed nostalgic of socialism in Romania also entailed the commodification, democratization, and popular appropriation of the recent past.<sup>823</sup>

This chapter will trace the emergence of a hegemonic framework of remembrance of the socialist past back to the contentious climate of public debates and political struggles of the 1990s, exploring the uneasy relationship between the gradual entrenchment of this discourse and the subsequent democratization, diversification, and fragmentation of memory practices during the second decade of post-communism. Focused primarily on the generational dynamics of the process of remembering communism, the study will explore how personal narratives of socialist childhood are informed by collective frameworks of remembrance and how, in their turn, they shape those frameworks in a post-communist context dominated by the authority of personal experience and the reclamation of youth as an agent of moral renewal. Juxtaposing a series of collectively authored memoirs of socialist childhood by aspiring intellectuals against a set of virtual communities of bloggers that grew around shared experiences of socialist childhood, my work will ask why some social actors engaged in the repossession of cultural memory gain recognition as producers of history, while others are divested of (scientific) authority and

---

<sup>823</sup> For analyses of the relation between the transvaluation of material culture and the repossession of cultural memory, see Daphne Berdahl, "Re-Presenting the Socialist Modern: Museums and Memory in the Former GDR," In *Socialist Modern: East German Everyday Culture and Politics*, edited by Katherine Pence and Paul Betts (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008), 345- 363. Paul Betts, "The Twilight of the Idols: East German Memory and Material Culture," in *Journal of Modern History*, 72 (2000): 731-65.

dismissed as mere “socialist nostalgics.”<sup>824</sup> Informed by the growing literature on the revival of socialist material culture and its ambivalent relation with socialist nostalgia, I will further examine how social media are appropriated as alternative venues for the expression of positive associations with the past, dwelling on the constraints and possibilities that emerge out of participation in potentially more democratic, but also heavily scripted, anonymized, and commodified virtual spaces such as blogs, websites, and Facebook groups.

This chapter draws on anthropologies and cultural histories that approach the remembrance of communism as a process of reassessment of the past on which the dynamics of the transition bear as much, if not more, than the past. Anthropologists such as Daphne Berdahl and Gerald Creed have argued convincingly that people’s relation with the past, including their support for socialist values, was significantly altered by a shift in the experience of the transition from “a temporary inconvenience on the road to capitalism to a seemingly permanent discomfort.”<sup>825</sup> Attending to the dynamics of postcommunism, my analysis suggests that memories of the past are ostensibly about the present and the future, being instrumental in the creation of social communities, be these public intellectual circles informed by a sense of moral, civic, and historic duty or virtual communities cohering around a shared sense of ownership over the socialist past. While these communities of memory are, to a great extent, grassroots phenomena, their memory practices are nevertheless mediated by phenomena of real existing capitalism such as emerging publishing houses competing for reading publics and the fast growth of virtual communication networks.

---

<sup>824</sup> Daphne Berdahl argues convincingly that dismissals of *Ostalgie* as trivial in post-*Wende* Germany are part of a “politics of significance” that validates some memory practices as “history” while invalidating others as “mere nostalgia.” Daphne Berdahl, “‘(N)Ostalgie’ for the Present: Memory, Longing, and East German Things,” *Ethnos* 64 (1999): 204-5.

<sup>825</sup> Gerald Creed, “Deconstructing Socialism in Bulgaria,” In *Uncertain Transition: Ethnographies of Change in the Postsocialist World*, eds. Michael Burawoy and Katherine Verdey, (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1999), 224.

## Public Intellectuals and the Emergence of the Dominant Mode of Remembrance

The years immediately following the fall of the communist regime in Romania witnessed a testimonial drive dominated by the victims of communist atrocities in a series of polarizing accounts that pitted victims against perpetrators, the latter being associated with the main arenas of communist power: the party-state and its Secret Police. Coming in the wake of decades of state dominated public discourse that served to articulate regime interests and truths, the flood of testimonies denouncing communist repression - TV documentaries based on interviews with victims of political prisons, labor camps, forced collectivization campaigns, and secret police torture and surveillance,<sup>826</sup> published memoirs and histories of the recent past, public statements and debates engaging prewar political leaders or intellectuals returning from exile or emerging from under the ban of censorship - cohered into a post-revolutionary attempt to counter the official “falsification” of communist history. While most Romanians in the 1990s had little knowledge of the violence that the generations of their parents and grandparents had experienced in the Stalinist decades, they still had vivid memories of the everyday struggle, economic deprivation, and humiliation of the last decade of communism that had led to the explosion of popular anger against the regime in December 1989. Memories of early postwar and late communism thus converged to strengthen the authority of personal experience, particularly the experience of suffering and victimization, in bearing witness to the recent past.<sup>827</sup>

---

<sup>826</sup> The most prominent was Lucia Hossu-Longin’s TV series “Memorialul durerii” [*Memorial to Suffering*].

<sup>827</sup> Even prominent members of the former communist *nomenklatura* joined in the euphoria of testimony in the 1990s, somewhat complicating the ethical dimensions of post-communist memory. Despite the fact that their claim to suffering lacked the moral weight of survivor testimonies, the selling point of their memoirs was the potential to lift the veil of secrecy that had for decades concealed the highest arenas of communist politics. See, for example, the volume of interviews and the series of four memoirs of Dumitru Popescu, one of the regime’s most powerful ideological producers who held the offices of Secretary of the Central Committee and member of the Executive Committee of the Romanian Communist Party. See also Silviu Brucan, *Generatia irosita* (Bucharest: Editura Univers, 1992).

Against the background of the testimonial drive of the 1990s, public intellectuals and representatives of the political “opposition,” many of whom enjoyed a significant cultural capital of suffering derived from state harassment under communism or active participation in the 1989 events, have been prominent in articulating the main tenets of what was to become the mainstream memory discourse on communism.<sup>828</sup> Ironically, the post-communist intelligentsia revived the totalitarian paradigm that had dominated Western Cold War scholarship well into the 1980s, but had been seriously challenged by “revisionist” social histories since the 1970s.<sup>829</sup> Employing a heavily pathologizing language, the dominant discourse about the past charged that the communist regime’s totalitarian grip on Romanian society engendered an essentially “sick society” and “traumatized nation” that suffered from a series of social ills.<sup>830</sup> In this scenario, socialist subjects are often conceptualized as atomized, polarized, and schizoid selves (divided between an authentic private self and a compliant public persona), as brainwashed automatons lacking any spirit of initiative and being exclusively driven by herd instinct, or as duplicitous personalities.<sup>831</sup> Similarly, socialist societies are either portrayed as homogenized and undifferentiated masses or as infantilized citizenries dominated by paternalist states.<sup>832</sup>

---

<sup>828</sup> The term “opposition” emerged around the first free elections after the collapse of the communist regime in May 1990. While the political platforms and ideological agendas of the “opposition” parties were quite varied, they all shared criticism of the ruling coalition. Partly because the coalition that consolidated its monopoly on power in the 1990s was dominated by the National Salvation Front (FSN), the main party of second-tier communist bureaucrats, the self-legitimizing rhetoric of the “opposition” was declaredly “anti-communist.”

<sup>829</sup> For an analysis of totalitarianism in Western Cold War literature, see Abbott Gleason, “‘Totalitarianism’ Among the Sovietologists” and “The Russians Call Themselves Totalitarian,” In *Totalitarianism: The Inner History of the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 121-142 and 211-216. On the role of political science in the success of the totalitarian paradigm and the challenges posed by “revisionist” social history in the 1970s and 1980s, see, for example, Sheila Fitzpatrick, “The Soviet Union in the Twenty-First Century,” *Journal of European Studies* 37 (2007): 51-71.

<sup>830</sup> For an overview and critique of this widespread discourse, see Daniel Barbu, “Destinul colectiv, servitutea involuntară, nefericirea totalitară: trei mituri ale comunismului românesc,” In *Miturile comunismului românesc*, ed. Lucian Boia (Bucharest: Nemira, 1998) 175-197. For a more detailed example of this discourse, see also page 36 of this chapter and footnote 71.

<sup>831</sup> Ibid.

<sup>832</sup> Ibid.

While providing a reassessment of the past that turned the communist regime's self-congratulatory rhetoric of "the new man" on its head, the dominant memory discourse was equally concerned with the post-revolutionary present. In particular, it was essential to the self-description of intellectuals as an elite whose unique cultural competencies, moral standing, and national responsibilities put it in a privileged position to rehabilitate the society and individual mutilated by communism, thus making it essential to democratic public life. Indeed, the authoritative discourse about the past was inextricably tied to the ambition of public intellectuals to return Romania to Europe by constituting a strong "civil society" that would derive its moral capital and political force from an openly anticommunist stance, entailing both the injunction of the former communist regime and of the political actors perceived to continue the regime's policies and antidemocratic traditions after its collapse. Ranging from established writers of diverse disciplinary and professional backgrounds (whether philosophers and historians or literary critics and poets), to artists, university professors, researchers, pundits, journalists, and opposition politicians, some of those active in producing and reproducing this discourse have systematically migrated between cultural and political life.<sup>833</sup>

To insist on approaching the intelligentsia as a social category defined by the nature of its claims to power and status is not to minimize its critical role in postcommunist societies or to doubt its genuine commitment to certain values and symbols (such as "civil society," "Europe," "nation" or "anticommunism"). It is to insist, in the tradition of Bourdieu, on the inherently political nature of knowledge about the social world and of intellectuals' participation in the

---

<sup>833</sup> For an account of how Romanian elites routinely crossed the border between intellectual and political work while participating in a common discourse both before the Second World War and the during socialism, see Katherine Verdery, *National Ideology Under Socialism: Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceausescu's Romania* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991). My emphasis on the elites' self-identification as public intellectuals aims to draw attention to the fact that this category sees membership in the intelligentsia as their overriding identity, often conceiving of political roles as secondary, and thus as responsibilities deriving from their intellectual status.



articulation of values and categories through which the social world is perceived and hence reproduced or transformed.<sup>834</sup> This approach is also inspired by Bauman's observation that "Any attempt to define intellectuals is an attempt at self-definition."<sup>835</sup> While public intellectuals' own self-descriptions typically invoke educational credentials, critical vocation, or ability to transcend narrow political interests, my analysis would be better served by conceptualizing the cultural elites as a category defined by its strategies of self-legitimation, by its self-assigned role in leading a traumatized nation on the way to becoming a healthy society.

The post-communist intelligentsia came in the long tradition of national(izing) East European elites that Zygmunt Bauman traced back to the nineteenth century and described as a social class emerging out of the gentry and seeking legitimation in terms of "pastoral power," of power allegedly exercised for the benefit/enlightenment of the dispossessed and illiterate masses of peasants.<sup>836</sup> Anticipating Bauman, Hungarian scholars Konrad and Zselenyi reflected on the historical specificity of Eastern European elites, including those of the ruling communist parties, and insisted on their "teleological" nature, on their tendency to justify aspirations to power in terms of defense of certain values and beliefs rather than deployment of technical or procedural expertise.<sup>837</sup> The American anthropologist Katherine Verdery argued convincingly that the teleological nature of intellectual elites dovetailed nicely with the increased political currency of "moral capital – a capital rooted in defining certain values as correct and upholding them" in the specific postcommunist context.<sup>838</sup> Whether derived from defending the ideals of "civil society"

---

<sup>834</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, "The Social Space and the Genesis of Groups," *Theory and Society* 14, 6 (Nov 1985): 729.

<sup>835</sup> Zygmunt Bauman, "Love in Adversity: On the State and the Intellectuals, and the State of the Intellectuals," *Thesis Eleven* 31 (1992): 81.

<sup>836</sup> Zygmunt Bauman, "Intellectuals in East-central Europe: Continuity and Change," *East European Politics and Societies* 1 (1987): 177.

<sup>837</sup> George Konrad, Ivan Zselenyi, *The Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1979), 16-17, 30, 85-87, 203-219.

<sup>838</sup> Katherine Verdery, "Civil Society or Nation? "Europe" in the Symbolism of Postsocialist Politics," In *What Was Socialism, and What Comes Next* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 106-7.

or “nation” against the party, from resistance to the regime, suffering under communism, or active participation in the 1989 events, moral authority carried into the political debates of the 1990s, legitimizing former dissidents and public intellectuals.

In the eyes of this post-communist elite, who projected themselves as the leaders and teachers of the nation, what was required of the young society born out of the revolution was a clean break with the communist past that could only be accomplished through a Romanian version of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, the untranslatable German term that captures the distinctive postwar process of struggling to come to terms with the Nazi past and the Holocaust, a process that involves both the reassessment of the past and a sense of retribution.<sup>839</sup> Romanians, it seemed, had yet to learn how to become citizens of a brave new democracy and the intellectuals’ task was to call upon them to shake off the shackles of the authoritarian past, embrace European values, and develop democratic traits such as public participation in free elections, critical spirit, and an appreciation for free markets and private property. The process of overcoming the “burdensome communist legacy” did not only target “perpetrators” (whether secret police officers or party *nomenklatura*), who made the object of political lustration claims precisely because they were considered ideologically irredeemable, but also ordinary Romanians seen as “bystanders” and encouraged to take responsibility for their complicity with the regime.

It is important to point out that the dominant discourse on the socialist past was not the result of a top-bottom imposition by a politically powerful and solidary intellectual elite as the term “hegemony” might suggest. On the contrary, the hegemony of representation was the outcome of contentious struggles for symbolic power and institutional resources waged by intellectual elites and civil society groups occupying the political margins of an increasingly

---

<sup>839</sup> For an account of how *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* functions as a normative framework of remembrance in post-communist Eastern Europe, see Maria Todorova, “Introduction: The Process of Remembering Communism,” In *Remembering Communism: Genres of Representation* (New York: Social Science Research Council, 2010), 11.

divided Romanian society. Although they enjoyed moral capital and social prestige, these forces faced an uphill battle against a politically victorious party composed chiefly of former communist bureaucrats. For much of the early 1990s and 2000s, they lacked the political power and financial or institutional resources to popularize their national pedagogy beyond urban centers or the college-educated. Moreover, oppositional groups were not monolithic, branching off into competing factions that might have agreed on the goal of decommunization and the pedagogical mission of healing society, but disagreed over how best to accomplish these goals.

Paradoxically, it was these very struggles that ensured the ideological hegemony of the intellectual representation of the past. The fact that the political resistance to the process of lustration prevented civil society organizations and research institutes from accomplishing much of their ambitious agendas helped radicalize the anti-communist discourse and strengthen the consensus over the urgency of memory as a form of justice. Most importantly, even as they pushed against attempts of decommunization, politicians of communist extraction left the dominant view of the traumatic past largely unchallenged because they did not deem it expedient to reclaim socialism at a time when Ceaușescu's regime was so widely reviled.<sup>840</sup> The intellectual representation of the past as a national trauma dovetailed, in the early 1990s, with a widespread resentment of communism rooted in the recent experiences of generalized economic scarcity and political repression of the 1980s and reinforced by fresh revelations of communist atrocities. The broad consensus and social base of this perception of communism began to thin out significantly by the late 1990s, when the economic recession and rampant unemployment

---

<sup>840</sup> As anthropological studies of the period suggest, members of the ruling coalition embraced instead a rhetoric of national values with a long tradition in Romanian culture that allowed them to challenge public intellectuals' vision of a democratic future premised on Europeanization as an act of unpatriotic capitulation to foreign interests and imperial powers rather than as an anti-communist stance. See Verdery, "Civil Society," 104-129.

plaguing the rule of the liberal-conservative alliance triggered a shift in the perception of the “transition,” which came to be experienced as “a seemingly permanent discomfort.”<sup>841</sup>

Even as it lost its social appeal, the normative discourse about the past has received growing institutional and state support as well as European funding, being reproduced by a host of research institutions, museum exhibitions, documentaries, and educational projects including school curricula and textbooks. While the proliferation of research institutes and commissions attracted a growing number of scholars, encouraging research on the recent past and the opening of politically sensitive archives of the communist party and its secret police, it also subordinated research to understandable concerns with the condemnation and criminalization of the communist regime, contributing to the mainstreaming and entrenchment of a normative discourse about the past. Major research centers such as the Institute for the Investigation of the Crimes of Communism and the Memory of the Romanian Exile (IICCMER), the Romanian Institute of Recent History (IRIR), or the National Council for the Study of the Secret Police Archives (CNSAS) were specifically designed to aid in the processes of political lustration and social catharsis.<sup>842</sup> One of the main goal of the IICCMER is “to make public the acts of violence, abuse, and the crimes perpetrated by direct order of the Romanian Communist Party,” while CNSAS is entrusted with the administration of secret police archives in order to verify the quality of agent or collaborator for individuals running for public office.<sup>843</sup> The fact that there

---

<sup>841</sup> Creed, “Deconstructing Socialism,” 224.

<sup>842</sup> The Institute for the Investigation of the Crimes of Communism and the Memory of the Romanian Exile (IICCMER) was created in 2009 out of the merging of two distinct research institutes: the Institute for the Investigation of the Crimes of Communism and the National Institute for the Memory of the Romanian Exile. Envisioned as an independent and non-profit organization, the IRIR was created in 2000 at the initiative of the Dutch ambassador in Bucharest, who acted as its director for ten years, and was initially funded by Holland’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs through programs designed to facilitate processes of democratization in postcommunist countries. CNSAS was created in 2000 to administer the archives of the former secret police and support political lustration, exposure of past abuses, and public transparency.

<sup>843</sup> See the institutional statements of objectives at [http://www.iiccr.ro/en/about\\_iiccr/institute](http://www.iiccr.ro/en/about_iiccr/institute) and [http://www.cnsas.ro/fosta\\_securitate.html](http://www.cnsas.ro/fosta_securitate.html). Last accessed 12/03/2012.

was significant political opposition to the process of political lustration that affected directly many of those holding higher offices and that, as a result, the research institutes did not accomplish much of their ambitious agenda only strengthened the consensus over the urgency of memory as a form of justice.<sup>844</sup> The normative memory discourse was further enforced by the creation of a “presidential commission for the study of the communist dictatorship” which brought together renowned Romanian and foreign scholars to produce a report that served as the evidentiary basis for the president’s official condemnation of the communist regime as “illegitimate and criminal” in the Romanian Parliament in December 2006.<sup>845</sup>

As a result of its institutionalization, the authoritative discourse about the past crystallized into morally appropriate frameworks of remembrance. No longer open to revision and contestation, the collective frameworks of remembrance acquired a primarily normative function as evidenced by the fact that they now provide the blueprints for the intergenerational transmission of historical memory. They inform a great number of public projects, ranging from museum exhibitions of the recent past to history textbooks and educational programs with a civic thrust that are meant to teach generations of Romanians born after the collapse of the communist regime how to appropriately remember the communist past of their parents and grandparents. The Institute for the Investigation of the Crimes of Communism, for example, secured the approval of the Ministry of Education to include an elective course in the history of Romanian

---

<sup>844</sup> For an analysis of how the intended public debate about the role of the Securitate (Secret Services) as a political police devolved into politicized “media rituals that delivered scapegoated individuals for public consumption,” see Ioan Stanomir, “‘Dincolo de dosare. Partid, Securitate si Constitutie,’” *Revista 22*, September 15, 2009.

<sup>845</sup> Although there is strong disagreement among various scholarly factions on how best to achieve “decommunization” - the process of cleansing public life of former communist officials, institutional legacies, and mentalities, - they all share the assumption that the process of remembering communism should be subordinated to concerns with justice and retribution. Thus, some public intellectuals consider the president’s official condemnation of communism to be the catalyst of this process, while others criticize the presidency and its supporters for doing too little too late. Adversity among intellectual groups sharing the basic premise of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* is undoubtedly fomented by the fact that research institutes are not only sponsored by, but also directly subordinated to the Romanian government (itself politically divided between the office of the prime minister and that of the presidency), which administers resources and appoints the leadership of these institutions.

communism, celebrating its introduction in Romanian high schools as a “European premiere.”<sup>846</sup>

The Institute further authored a textbook that reproduces the normative discourse on the past, hosted teacher training seminars in the methodology of communist history classes, and organized annual competitions meant to engage youth in the process of memorializing the past.

In 2008, the Institute launched a national competition in creative writing and graphic art under the title “Students Under Communism” that encouraged high school participants to draw on family and local history to imagine what their life would have been like as students before 1989.<sup>847</sup> Partly because the organizers’ overriding goal was to enlist generations born after 1989 in “Romania’s moral recovery,” the outcome was a collection that reproduced faithfully the normative discourse about the communist past, featuring paintings that employed classic symbols of imprisonment, torture, and mind-control as well as essays bearing titles such as “I am Nobody,” “The Diary of an Anticommunist,” or “Letter to the Beloved Leader.”<sup>848</sup> According to the selection committee, the published essays were featured because they showed evidence of “creativity” and “personal input” in their decision to foreground “the criminal nature of the communist regime.”<sup>849</sup> At the same time, the committee indicated that it disqualified roughly fifty percent of the submitted essays for glaring evidence of lack of originality and critical spirit in the representation of the past.<sup>850</sup> The disqualified category included essays that expressed nostalgia or positive identification with the socialist past, a sign that served as proof that students

---

<sup>846</sup> Luciana Marioara Jinga, ed., *Elev in communism* (Bucharest: Curtea Veche, 2009), 12.

<sup>847</sup> Continuing this trend, the institute’s most recent projects include “Childhood Under Communism” (launched in 2011 in order to engage high school students in the production of oral history on the topic) and a series of essay and graphic art competitions: “My Family Under Communism” (2010), “1989: Gateway to Freedom?” (2009), and “What does Communism Mean to Me?” (2007). The awards range from computers, digital cameras, iPods, and encyclopedias of universal history, to free participation in a summer school on the history of communism.

<sup>848</sup> *Elev in communism*, 14.

<sup>849</sup> The introductory comments to the volume emphasize the fact that only fifteen percent of the materials submitted met the commission’s criteria of originality and independence of thought and that the published essays were selected from this category. *Ibid.*, 8, 10.

<sup>850</sup> *Ibid.*

failed to treat their informants' memories critically, allowing the latter's voices to articulate a history "where good and evil lie side by side, without being truly distinguished and understood."<sup>851</sup> Although they are designed to stimulate intergenerational communication about the past, educational projects enlisted in the project of memory as justice often end up prescribing the parameters of appropriate remembrance, teaching students that there are "good" and "bad" memories by discrediting as "naïve" or "distorted" those remembered experiences that are at odds with the normative discourse of suffering and victimization.

### **The Second Memorial Wave**

The increasing institutionalization of the hegemonic discourse about the past, coupled with financial and symbolic support by the government, generated a memory landscape traversed by asymmetrical power relations that endowed some social actors with scientific and moral authority as well as financial and institutional resources to represent the past, while ignoring or disputing competing attempts to reassess the past. Given its prescriptive character and focus on the domains of state politics and repression, the dominant discourse also became increasingly divorced from the remembered experiences of everyday life under socialism, which found alternative sites of expression. By comparison to the 1990s, the last decade of Romanian post-communism has witnessed a proliferation of autobiographical recollections that veer away from the conspicuous arenas of political history, documenting the social and cultural dimensions of everyday life under communism.

With this second stage, the process of remembering communism seems to join in the global drive to memorialize the past that scholars such as Pierre Nora and Andreas Huyssen

---

<sup>851</sup> Ibid.

claim to define our attitudes towards the past in contemporary societies.<sup>852</sup> The commemorative drive in postsocialist Romania echoes the larger trend of “democratization” and “fragmentation” of history, which has linked the reappropriation of memories and experiences of dispossession to the assertion of identity in contemporary societies over the past thirty years.<sup>853</sup> In their efforts to counter the official lies of communist propaganda with the experiential truth of the regime’s victims, the ambitious memory projects of the 1990s were premised on the belief in the possibility of a unified national vision of the communist past. The past decade did not so much challenge the original divide between victims and perpetrators as it exposed the limits of a unified narrative of the past, ushering in memories divided along generational, gender, ethnic, or class lines. Scholars, writers, journalists, or movie directors unraveled a communism experienced and remembered differently by women, ethnic minorities, distinct social categories (villagers, workers, intellectuals, high ranking or mid-level party bureaucrats), or generational cohorts.<sup>854</sup>

The memorial drive of the last decade also displays an anxiety with the “acceleration of history,” experienced not only as the collapse of a widely resented political regime, but also as

---

<sup>852</sup> Andreas Huyssen, *Present Pasts, Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 14. See also Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Mémoire*,” In *Representations* 26 (1989): 7-25.

<sup>853</sup> In a more recent piece, Nora attributes the current “upsurge in memory” to a diversity of factors, among which the simultaneous “democratization” and “fragmentation” of history in Western and decolonizing societies as well as in former communist countries which have undergone a process of “ideological decolonization” after the collapse of communism. See Pierre Nora, “The Reasons for the Current Upsurge in History,” In *Tr@nsit online* 22, 2002. Similarly, Huyssen reflects on the challenge that “fragmented memory politics” pose to “collective consensual memory” in *Present Pasts*, 17.

<sup>854</sup> For gendered experiences of Romanian communism, see the volumes of testimonies edited by Radu Pavel Gheo and Dan Lungu, eds., *Tovarase de drum: experienta feminina in comunism* (Bucuresti: Polirom, 2008) and Zoltan Rostas and Theodora Eliza-Vacarescu, eds., *Cealalta jumatare a istoriei: femeii povestind* (Bucuresti : Curtea Veche, 2008), and the impactful documentary on the criminalization of abortions, *Children of the decree*, broadcast on national television. For histories of ethnic minorities under communism, see the oral history and web projects coordinated by Smaranda Vultur at <http://www.memoriabanatului.ro/index.php?page=surse-memoriale>. For studies and oral histories of low -level party bureaucrats, see Zoltan Rostas and Adrian Momoc, eds., *Activistii marunti: istorii de viata* (Bucuresti: Curtea Veche, 2007).



the sudden dissolution of the familiar universe of everyday life under socialism.<sup>855</sup> Aided by technological innovation and the increasing availability of new media, the sense of loss engendered by this anxiety is often compensated by what Nora called “stockpiling” and defined as an essentially indiscriminate, fragmented, and atomizing process of memorializing. Although post-communist stockpiling often has the opposite effect of atomization, it is true that the perception of dramatic change rendered virtually every aspect of life under socialism, whether pertaining to the realm of perceptions and emotions or to that of material culture, worthy of remembering, musealizing, digitizing, or blogging.<sup>856</sup>

The enlarged scope of social memory is also directly linked to the revalorization of “experience” as the most credible form of historical evidence in the post-communist years. While the 1990s revalorized the heroic experience of suffering, the following decade captured the seemingly marginal and irrelevant, but instantly recognizable, experiences of everyday life. Much like other postcommunist contexts that witnessed the repossession and privatization of cultural memory, the second memorial wave of post-communist Romania is no longer confined to official practices of remembrance orchestrated by state institutions such as schools or museums, being activated by a diversity of social actors in a variety of memory sites that range from personal autobiographies, group memoirs, oral history projects, and documentaries to films, theatre plays, musical performances, blogs, websites, retro parties, or TV commercials. No longer driven by a concern with justice and retribution and a relative consensus among its

---

<sup>855</sup> Nora traces the acceleration and democratization of French history back to the 1970s, arguing that these processes led to the loss of an integrated (national) past, eventually generating the historical shift from *milieux* to *lieux de memoire*.

<sup>856</sup> Post-communist stockpiling often takes the form of archiving socialist material culture and forms of socialization. The very lack of differentiation of socialist products or the standardization of socialization practices (in schools, children’s and youth organizations, etc.) makes them instantly recognizable and thus the basis of communities of shared experiences.

protagonists regarding the moral urgency of setting the historical record straight, the second memorial wave is rather polyphonic, accommodating various social voices and political interests.

Childhood memories of the last two decades of socialism are quite prominent during the second memorial wave in part because their authors came of age during the 1990s and were among the main users and beneficiaries of the digital revolution. While some members of this generational cohort enjoy public visibility as published journalists, writers, and researchers and thus as an emerging post-communist intelligentsia, others engage in less prominent, but no less popular, forms of remembrance by designing blogs such as “In the Past,” which was launched in 2006 and has grown significantly over the past six years, creating Facebook groups such as “Nostalgia for our Childhood in the Golden Age,” or organizing retro parties that feature socialist memorabilia. Much like the media of their recollections, their narratives of the past are far from monolithic, ranging from views that echo the image of the victimizing totalitarian state, to self-declaredly apolitical reminiscences, and finally, to alternative visions that reclaim socialist ideals and forms of sociability even as they remain critical of state socialism’s record of political repression and disregard for individual freedoms.

Memories of socialist childhood are part of a broader generational trend as attested by the similarly timed appearance of internet projects or publication of coming-of-age memoirs in other post-communist countries, most prominently in Germany with journalist Jana Hensel’s bestselling *Zonenkindern* (2002),<sup>857</sup> and most prolifically in Poland, where the last decade witnessed a veritable upsurge in initiation novels of socialist childhood, including a recent graphic memoir.<sup>858</sup> In most cases, these projects of memorialization and musealization of

---

<sup>857</sup> Jana Hensel’s memoir was translated into English as *After The Wall: Confessions from an East German Childhood and the Life That Came Next*, (New York: PublicAffairs, 2004).

<sup>858</sup> See, for example, Svetlana Vassileva-Karagyozyova’s “Voluntary social marginalization as a survival strategy in Polish postcommunist accounts of childhood,” In *The Sarmatian Review*, 29 (1), 2009. Last accessed Sept 22, 2012

socialist childhood were fueled by a sense of generational exceptionalism, clearly articulated by Hansel for post-*Wende* Germany:

The fall of the Wall had transformed each of us into something akin to a child prodigy, upon whom great expectations were placed. The GDR had lost to the West and now all East Germans were expected to assimilate into West German society. (...) We, the children of the first “immigrants,” were expected to achieve that goal. To achieve [it], our gazes had to be directed ahead and not behind. We had to become flexible, adaptable.<sup>859</sup>

In the Romania of the 1990s, a similar generational discourse grew out of public discussions over the centrality of youth and their privileged relation to both the past and the future. The imperative of moral renewal that sought to combat relentless communist legacies and mentalities increasingly acquired the characteristics of a generational discourse that pitted older generations, often referred to as “dinosaurs” in the press because of their alleged inability to unlearn communist mentalities, against younger generations, seen as the guarantee of redemption from communism. If the thoughts committed to paper for a national writing competition by a seventeen year old in 1999 are any indication, the discourse was so successful that youth socialized in the 1990s could hold the view that democracy will only come to pass when older generations who had experienced communism died out: “Although I only lived under communism for seven years, the ten years that passed since the revolution of 1989 have taught me that communism will only die out when all of those who lived under communism will cease to live.”<sup>860</sup> Even as late as 2005, a popular Romanian daily continued to affirm this polarization, featuring two hundred young professional elites in domains as varied as the arts, sciences, sports,

---

<http://www.ruf.rice.edu/~sarmatia/109/291vassil.htm> Marzena Sowa’s graphic memoir of childhood in socialist Poland, *Marzi*, was translated into English in 2011.

<sup>859</sup> Hensel, *After the Wall*, 71.

<sup>860</sup> The quote comes from one of a few hundred essays submitted for a nationwide writing competition on the question “What do I know about communism?” and was selected to illustrate the “optimistic” message of young generations in a volume published in 1999. Organized by the Civic Academy Foundation, a civil society organization, the competition targeted teenagers who did not personally experience communism. See Cezar Barladeanu, “Cateva lucruri despre comunism,” In *Exercitii de memorie [Excursions into Memory]*, ed. Romulus Rusan, (Bucharest: Fundatia Academia Civica, 1999), 198.

religion, economics, and politics as part of a project entitled “The Long Awaited Generation.” Recommended as a catalyst of democratic change by their success, but above all by their youth, this cohort was predictably set in contrast with “the generation of dinosaurs (...) whose compromises and ineptitude kept Romania backward.” “They are under thirty-five. They are dynamic, smart, talented, fresh and rejuvenating, well trained professionally. They have nothing to hide in their past. (...) They are the first free generation since the interwar period.”<sup>861</sup>

Drawing on the dichotomous language of communist legacies and democratic renewal, print and broadcast media as well as civil society organizations were successful in popularizing the idea that there was a section of Romanian society that straddled the border between the communist past and the transitional present, being old enough to remember communism and young enough to start anew. As the generational guarantee of redemption from communism, this so-called “generation of transition” was represented as the engine of progress that would offset the reactionary attitudes of their parents. Much like Hansel’s cohort in unified Germany, Romanian youth was entrusted with a mission to happiness: to build democracy, civil society, and market economy by effecting a clean break with the past.

The fact that “the young generation” was at the center of public discussions on the political future of Romania thus opened the symbolic space for young writers, scholars, and bloggers to appropriate the discourse of the “redeeming,” “long awaited” or “transition” generation and claim public relevance by virtue of a fortunate historical positioning endowed with moral capital. Romanians who are now in their thirties and forties joined the debate about the communist past during the last decade, drawing on their socialist experiences of growing up in the intensely politicized climate of Ceausescu’s rule to change the parameters and stakes of the debate. Approaching socialism through the prism of childhood, young authors and Internet

---

<sup>861</sup> “Generația așteptată,” *Cotidianul*, July 2007.

users tended to explore the developing personality of the child under the impact of socialist ideology and the subsequent formation of socialist subjectivities.

### **Pioneers into Public Intellectuals**

The majority of autobiographical projects that make the object of this chapter are collectively authored memoirs of socialist childhood published from 2004 to the present by a generation of young writers, journalists, literary critics, historians, anthropologists, and college professors born in the late 1960s and the early 1970s. While most of these projects emerged in university and research centers, the trend was popularized by prestigious publishing houses with nationwide distribution such as Polirom, which saw a market opportunity in the publication of autobiographical genres, devoting several new collections - “ego-prose” (Ego Proza), “ego-documents” (Ego Grafii), or “ego-journalism” (Ego Publicistica) - to this endeavor. Polirom continued the autobiographical trend pioneered by one of the major publishing houses of the 1990s, Humanitas, whose first collections - “Memoirs/Diaries,” “Totalitarianism and Eastern European literature,” and “Civil Society” - reflected the main concerns of intellectual elites after the fall of communism. By comparison to the 1990s, which were dominated by a “retrieval trend” responding to the market demand for previously banned books during communism, however, Polirom inaugurated the new millennium with an ambitious editorial policy of “niche.”

Editors started from the premise that reading publics are essentially “fragmented” and relied on market studies to determine prospective readers’ preferences, identify unexploited market niches, and actively fashion new reading publics.<sup>862</sup> Hailed as “the Hollywood of the Romanian book market,” Polirom owes its success, in the opinion of journalists and literary critics, to “an aggressive editorial policy” described as “a predatory American style: No day

---

<sup>862</sup> Emilia Chiscop, “Polirom, cartea pe care a pariat Silviu Lupescu,” *Ziarul de Iași*, May, 16, 2005.

passes without some new titles. It does not matter when, what, how much, or to whom you're selling; all that matters is to continuously tease the market, never let it fall asleep, and thus extend its absorptive capacity."<sup>863</sup> Having successfully taken over a significant portion of the academic book market with scholarly publications in social sciences and the humanities that attracted a small but loyal audience, Polirom became increasingly interested in an emerging reading public that, according to the editorial director, ended up "absorbing over 300 Polirom titles."<sup>864</sup> Branding it "the generation without nostalgia," editors targeted a postcommunist cohort that they anticipated would be interested in a fresh perspective on the recent communist past.<sup>865</sup>

This policy dovetailed with the attempt to attract promising young authors - the so-called "Polirom generation" - expected to revive the field of domestic literature and scholarship and make it competitive on the Romanian book market.<sup>866</sup> Following a "western recipe" of "wooing readers," the works of promising authors were launched by a marketing campaign run under the banner "Vote for Young Literature" at the Bookarest book fair in 2004.<sup>867</sup> In contrast to its major competitor, Humanitas, which established a reputation as a highly selective, European-style publishing house likely to publicize consecrated authors and classics of high culture, Polirom prides itself on democratizing the book market by facilitating the debut of young Romanian authors rather than "cultivating the spirit of coterie in Romanian culture."<sup>868</sup> While the investment in "novices" was generally considered "financially risky," Polirom recognized that "an editorial strategy cannot rely exclusively on best-sellers," or established writers.<sup>869</sup> As Polirom's editorial director readily admits, the young generation and its anticipated fresh look at

---

<sup>863</sup> Mimi Noel, "Ce se intamplă cu cartea românească?", In *Money Express*, April 18, 2011.

<sup>864</sup> Chiscop, "Polirom."

<sup>865</sup> Ibid.

<sup>866</sup> Silviu Lupescu, "Polirom joacă la risc," In *Cotidianul*, January 7, 2006.

<sup>867</sup> Ibid.

<sup>868</sup> Chiscop, "Polirom."

<sup>869</sup> Lupescu, "Polirom joacă la risc."

the past were not solely valued for their culturally stimulating and democratizing potential, but also for their marketability, i.e. their potential to satisfy a market demand for the genre among a certain generational niche. Selling the “Polirom generation” to “the generation without nostalgia” proved a successful business strategy, one of the many that “transformed a provincial publishing house, which only joined the book market five years after its major rival, *Humanitas*, into the largest publishing house in Romania, with 4,2 million euros in income (in 2010).”<sup>870</sup>

One of the first market hits in the ego-documents collection of Polirom was *The Lost World. Four Personal Histories* (2004), a co-authored volume that brings together the childhood narratives of a promising group of young Romanian writers, effectively launching their scholarly careers.<sup>871</sup> Another co-authored volume, *The Pink Book of Communism* went on the market the same year under the aegis of a less prominent publishing house from Jassy (Versus), featuring a set of loosely connected stories of childhood, adolescence, and youth under communism from writers and journalists around the country. Some of these original autobiographical pieces have since migrated to other genres, being published, for example, in the ego-prose collection of Polirom as full-fledged novels that juxtapose fact and fiction, reading like fictional biographies of Romania’s last socialist generation.<sup>872</sup> Publicized by another consecrated publisher (Curtea veche), *The Book of Selves*, an experimental collection employing a variety of autobiographical and archival sources as venues into socialist childhood was published in 2005 by a group of young anthropologists mentored by Irina Nicolau, a prominent Romanian ethnologist at the Museum of the Romanian Peasant in Bucharest.<sup>873</sup> Most recently (2008), a college professor in

---

<sup>870</sup> Noel, “Ce se intampla cu cartea romaneasca?”

<sup>871</sup> While the authors - Paul Cernat, Ion Manolescu, Angelo Mitchievici, and Ioan Stanomir - were by no means “novices,” they had only published one collaborative volume before their Polirom debut: *În căutarea comunismului pierdut* (Pitești: Editura paralela 45, 2001).

<sup>872</sup> See Radu Pavel Gheo, *Noapte bună, copii* [*Good night, children*], (Iași: Polirom, 2010).

<sup>873</sup> Sorin Stoica, Calin Torsan, Cosmin Manolache, Roxana Morosanu, Ciprian Voicila, *Cartea cu euri* (Curtea veche, 2005).

Bucharest engaged his students in a similarly autobiographical enterprise that came out under the Orwellian title *1984. The Last Generation of Romanian Communism*. Finally, my analysis includes the work of a young journalist, a rather atypical autobiography published in 2007 in the ego-journalism collection of the Polirom publishing house. Drawing extensively on interviews with relatives and former neighbors, Eugen Istodor's *The Book of My Life* is not only an autobiography, but also a fascinating family and community history.

The tendency to publish autobiographical writings in collectively authored volumes is dictated by the experimental character of the genre, the conventions of historical significance, and the sense of generational belonging. To a great extent, the diverse groups of writers coauthoring collective volumes came together out of an interest in experimentation with the relatively new genre of socialist childhood memoir, making both its content and its loosely defined generic conventions the subject of dialogue and scholarly collaboration. The outcome is rather eclectic, ranging from classic stories of growth and development in the tradition of the Bildungsroman to autobiographical narratives written in the style of school compositions or as chronicles of events, dictionary entries, urban ethnographies, and oral histories.

As suggested, collective volumes also reflect the authors' ambitions to make history. While isolated recollections could easily be disqualified as idiosyncratic, insignificant, or "merely" nostalgic trips down memory lane, collective acts of remembrance can claim to uncover patterns and express shared experiences of socialist childhood. Published collectively, rather than as isolated pieces, individual autobiographies become integrative parts of a larger generational biography, contributing to the creation of a generational profile. It is true that even when they are thus collectively legitimized, memories of childhood continue to reside in the interstices of big history, producing a qualitatively different historical narrative. Distinguishing



themselves openly from traditional studies of communism that abide by the imperatives of objectivity, archival evidence, and high politics, the authors describe their life narratives as fragmentary and inevitably plural microhistories retrieved through the deeply subjective and even “self-fictionalizing” lens of personal memory.

It is precisely the subjective recourse to memory and experience that, the authors argue, endows their life narratives with historical relevance. The coauthors of *The Lost World* justify their autobiographical project in terms of its documentary and testimonial value, one rooted in the strategic location of a generation that “lived at the dramatic crossroads of history,” being “the last to witness the twilight of communism.”<sup>874</sup> The historical positioning between “the young,” who have nothing to remember, and “the old,” who choose to survive by forgetting is one of both testimonial strength and vulnerability or humility. In the absence of intergenerational communication with older cohorts intimately familiar with communism, the history of the recent past eludes the “transition” generation’s efforts of full comprehension:

I am thirty. Like many of my generation, I feel caught between two worlds. I lived my childhood and adolescence in the former and I entered adulthood in the latter. The sense of being caught in the middle leaves me with the strange feeling of being nowhere. Those younger than me show no interest in what happened and have no reference point for the world I lived in. “The old,” on the other hand, know it, have always known it, but do not care to remember. I’ve lost many of those who could have taught me something about the past. A certain part of me will only communicate with those few similar to me.<sup>875</sup>

Framed as a moral duty of great collective significance, the autobiographical effort to make sense of one’s personal past (*travail de mémoire*) is valued for its unique ability to provide insights into the intimate experiences of communism as a political regime: the structures of identity it generated, the spectrum of emotions and anxieties it produced, the range of practices and sensations associated with its distinctive material culture, the inner worlds it both

---

<sup>874</sup> Paul Cernat, Ion Manolescu, Angelo Mitchievici, and Ioan Stanomir, “Pseudo-Prefață,” in *O lume dispărută: patru istorii personale* (Bucharest: Polirom, 2004), 7-8.

<sup>875</sup> Angelo Mitchievici, *O lume*, 171.

constrained and enabled. These minutely reconstructed “personal histories” are meant to function as windows into the process of growing into a socialist citizen (or failing to do so) and to document the emergence of personal identity at the intersection of subjective experience, family relations, and regime pressure. The developing personality of the child becomes a valuable historical source in memoirs concerned with exploring communism as a totalitarian regime best defined by its distinctive form of social organization. While the regime’s political and economic dimensions are mentioned occasionally, it is the regime’s ambition to create “a new man” that captures the authors’ imagination. Far from being a thing of the past, the regime’s large-scale experiments in social engineering are felt to have outlived its political collapse, surviving in “mentalities” and behaviors and justifying the urgency of coming to terms with the past.

The connection between the figure of the child and the adult’s sense of interiorized subjectivity is not coincidental. Cultural historians have suggested that, over the past two centuries of European thought, the sense of self or interiority was personified as a child.<sup>876</sup> Natural sciences, psychoanalysis, literature, and social movements alike relied on the child-figure to represent the belief that identity emanated from within and to capture the elusive and intangible aspects of subjectivity. Being informed as much by Freudian psychoanalysis as by totalitarian theories, the memoirs discussed in this chapter also come in the Romantic tradition that associates childhood with the core of psychic individuality and thus, the forgotten origin of selfhood. Consequently, the effort to retrieve the haunting past of childhood becomes an essential component of the adult authors’ process of self-discovery and sense of identity. For memoirists of socialist childhood, this process is further complicated by an acute sense that the sources of selfhood were held hostage by a repressive political regime and can only be released

---

<sup>876</sup> Carolyn Steedman, *Strange Dislocations: Childhood and the Idea of Human Interiority, 1780-1930*, (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1995).

from its grip through the act of remembrance.

This might explain why, at the level of narrative structure, the memoirs that make the object of this chapter lack both the teleological drive and the sense of closure implicit in the (auto)biographical form.<sup>877</sup> In part, the sense of biographical discontinuity is explained by the authors as the direct effect of the larger historical rupture generated by the collapse of communism. Most often, however, the absence of biographical conclusion is attributed to the frustrating effect that the large-scale social engineering projects of the communist regime had on the development of subjectivity. Rather than gradually growing and maturing with each new experience, the child's personality emerges distorted after each encounter with the communist regime. Some authors pointedly remark that their childhood experience was not one of formation, but one of "de-formation."<sup>878</sup> Given the pervasive sense that one's natural development was somehow frustrated and distorted, the genre of these autobiographies can best be characterized as an anti-Bildungsroman and their protagonists as anti-heroes.

Even a cursory look at the dominant tropes of socialist childhood in the selected memoirs indicates that these are narratives of troubled childhoods and distorted identities. In his *Survival under a Glass Bell*, Paul Cernat uses the metaphor of autistic childhood to tell a grim story of individual survival in a political universe that turns children of kindergarten age into brainwashed automatons and obedient informants of the regime. Shot with echoes of nostalgia, Ioan Stanomir's *The Mornings of a Good Boy* paints the picture of a childhood that remains happy and carefree only as long as it is sheltered and isolated from the outside world of the socialist regime. Harboring an unresolved tension, Eugen Istodor's *The Book of My Life* is simultaneously a family history devoted to the painstaking reconstruction of the author's

---

<sup>877</sup> Carolyn Steedman, "Forms of History, Histories of Form." In *Past Tenses. Essays on Writing, Autobiography and History*, (London: Rivers Oram Press, 1992), 159-170.

<sup>878</sup> Cernat et al., *O lume*, 8.

childhood home and neighborhood and an adopted child's autobiography of orphaned childhood.

Testifying to the autobiographical impossibility of extracting the self from the perverting influence of the socialist system, these distorted child-figures – *the autistic, sheltered, and orphan child* - emerge as progenies of the distinctive economic, social and political developments of the socialist regime. In both Stanomir's and Cernat's autobiographies, for example, the child's experience of growing into a socialist subject is illustrated by a spatial contrast, the contrast between an idyllic *old* world and the intrusive *new* world of socialist modernity ushered in by fast paced urbanization and industrialization:

I lived the first three years of my life in total “wilderness” in my “grandparents’ house”, spitting, biting and swearing at other children or guests who had found their way into the paradisiacal garden where I vegetated dreamily. At three, my parents took me back to our apartment building in Bucharest. The autistic paradise was brutally destroyed, making room for a new world, from which I could find no escape. Scared of the concrete buildings, I tried to run away, but I was slowly domesticated. I had not fully lost the connection with the old world, where I would retreat during summer vacations, escaping from Mircea Santimbreanu's world of pioneers to dwell in Ionel Teodoreanu's universe.<sup>879</sup>

The spatial contrast is further reinforced by literary references to popular works of Romanian children's literature such as Mircea Santimbreanu's characteristically socialist fables of civically-minded pioneers and Ionel Teodoreanu's interwar novels of idyllic childhood on the countryside estate. While both these childhood classics enjoyed a wide readership among the memoirists' generational cohort throughout the 1970s and 1980s, their models of ideal childhood are ideologically incommensurate. Symptomatic of the structures of subjectivity of socialist modernity, Mircea Santimbreanu's morality tales with pioneers celebrate the virtues of socialization in the socialist collective. By contrast, Ionel Teodoreanu's interwar bestseller, *The Medeleni Estate*, locates idyllic childhood in the patriarchal universe of the country estate that

---

<sup>879</sup> Ibid., 13-4.

served as the preferred retreat of the French-speaking Romanian gentry between the wars.<sup>880</sup>

Drawing on these popular literary motifs, the autobiographies situate socialist childhood on the border between the pre-communist and communist worlds.

The pre-communist past is recurrently evoked throughout the memoirs by the endurance of intergenerational bonding, the attachment to urban landscapes of bourgeois villas and fin-de-siècle neighborhoods that are increasingly replaced by standardized apartment buildings, and the predilection for the prewar literature of merchant towns, country estates, and old *boyars*.<sup>881</sup> The object of childhood nostalgia in these life narratives is most decidedly *not* the socialist regime, but the pre-communist past that grandsons intimate in early childhood in their aging grandparents or in the architectural traces and literary representations of a richer and more differentiated social life that preceded the social homogenization initiated under socialism. Interestingly, both Cernat and Stanomir describe their early childhood in terms of a historical and political symbiosis across generations with their grandparents, precisely because the latter are survivors of a world untainted by communism. Identified with the paradisiacal garden of the grandparents' house, the old world seems to occupy a different time zone, functioning as an oasis in the brave new world of socialist modernity. The child-protagonists are in a symbiotic relation with the old world, experiencing its seemingly atemporal character as a natural extension of their being. While he inhabits the old world, the child is in a natural state of "wilderness." Hence his wild, asocial behavior (biting, spitting, and swearing). To become a social persona, the child has to go through a process of socialization likened to an "unnatural" act of domestication.

---

<sup>880</sup> Much like the long-term hold of Tolstoy's literary articulation of childhood on Russian imagination, the enduring power of Teodoreanu's vision of childhood derives from its presumably universal and transhistorical character. That might explain why, despite its ideological impropriety, Teodoreanu's idealized vision of childhood survived into the communist period and continued to fuel associations of happy childhood with pastoral visions of natural surroundings and the peasantry, the harmonious relationship between the gentry and their servants, and the sheltering presence of grandparents and the extended family. On the role of Tolstoy in the Russian context, see Andrew Wachtel, *The Battle for Childhood. Creation of a Russian Myth* (Stanford University Press, 1990).

<sup>881</sup> The landowning elite of the nineteenth century Old Kingdom.

The experience of growing into a socialist citizen begins for Paul Cernat's protagonist in *Survival Under a Glass Bell* at age three, when he is ousted from his grandparents' paradisiacal garden into the new world. The new world is defined as much by an alienating urban landscape of apartment buildings as it is by socialist rituals of socialization, which, in the author's assessment, aim at dissolving the child's personality into the collective. Assaulted by propagandistic attempts to control his thoughts and loyalties in kindergarten and primary school, the child responds by withdrawing defensively from such attacks. Consequently, his identity is polarized between a public persona (an actor in a mask who dissimulates loyalty in order to meet social expectations) and an authentic self (which is critical of communist propaganda and manifests itself exclusively in the safe space of the family):

As a result of my pathological fear of the Party and the Secret Services, I developed a hypertrophied inner life. This sense of fear inhibited my spirit of initiative, prevented me from truly expressing myself, turned me into a fearful, secretive and suspicious child, and made me dependent on an authority which I preferred to obey formally in order to conserve my inner freedom and contemplative comfort. Inner freedom was the only, even if relative, protection from the aggressive intrusion of the communist world.<sup>882</sup>

By comparison, in Ioan Stanomir's *The Mornings of a Good Boy*, the initial isolation experienced in the old world survives the transition to the city. Sheltered by his family, an intergenerational chain of parents and grandparents to whom he has reserved all his loyalties, the protagonist does not fully integrate in socialist society. Never completely outside its reach, the child fails to internalize the regime's inextricably mixed socialist and nationalist propaganda:

Like any good child and proper young man, I became first a Fatherland's Falcon,<sup>883</sup> then a pioneer, and, finally, a member of the Communist Youth Union. I was a child of socialist Romania, who never loved the country in his school textbooks. (...) The only "motherland" I ever truly loved, with a mystic devotion, was my grandparents' street in the town where I was born.<sup>884</sup>

---

<sup>882</sup> Cernat, *O lume*, 46-7.

<sup>883</sup> Children's organization for four to seven year olds created in 1976.

<sup>884</sup> Ioan Stanomir, *O lume*, 46-7.

Besides the protective role of the family, the early immersion into reading also sheltered the protagonist from the regular mechanisms of social integration. That explains why the reading room grows exponentially in importance after the banishment from the grandparents' house. In fact, books and the passion for reading are central to the creation of a sense of identity in all the four autobiographies in *The Lost World*, drawing a tentative profile of the socialist nerd, an identity exploited for its potentially asocial and subversive nature.

Memoirists with a postmodern sensibility reflect on the transformative power of literature, which was experienced as more immediate, indeed more real, than the protagonists' everyday existence. They recollect "childhoods lived bookishly through the magic lens of literature," exploring how "the world came to resemble [their] readings" and how "fiction became self-sufficient, colonizing [their] world."<sup>885</sup> The act of reading is invested with the urgency of a survival strategy: "I read chaotically, indiscriminately, I read whatever I could get my hands on."<sup>886</sup> The protagonists' escapism found satisfaction in fairy tales and adventure/travel novels, among which Jules Verne, Alexandre Dumas, Mark Twain, and Jack London held pride of place, but other genres, whether Greek mythology, detective or historical novels, romance literature, or science fiction, also served the desire to evade. What was important was the subversive power of reading, the realization that "fantasy worked in ways the Party could not fathom."<sup>887</sup> Even those few memoirists who acknowledge a fascination with particular genres of socialist literature, such as the Soviet *proletkult* science fiction of the 1950s, focus on how intended ideological messages often backfired.<sup>888</sup> For idealist teenagers fantasizing about a utopian world of progressive aliens proficient in Marxism Leninism or of "communist

---

<sup>885</sup> *O lume*, 14, 35, 352-3.

<sup>886</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>887</sup> *Ibid.*, 353.

<sup>888</sup> Radu Pavel Gheo, *Cartea roz a comunismului*, ed. Gabriel Decuble (Iași: Versus, 2004), 88-90.

Supermen” who colonized the galaxy, for example, the really existing socialist present of Ceausescu’s rule was disappointingly lacking.

Not all childhood memoirs reflect the valorization of a sheltered world identified with the grandparents’ garden, the reading room, and the escapist potential of literature. A number of autobiographical narratives, among which Eugen Istodor’s *The Book of My Life*, locate childhood squarely in a communal site that is also the quintessential space of socialist modernity: the apartment building. For Istodor, it is not the idyllic grandparents’ house but the kitchen that emerges as the site of his most poignant childhood memories. Dominated by his mother’s presence, the red kitchen functioned as a threshold between the intimate world of the family and the larger community of neighbors. Opened to neighbors willing to chat over a cup of coffee and a cigarette (rare commodities in a socialist economy of scarcity), the red kitchen enabled the communication between the private and the public, eventually becoming a metaphor of the impossibility of intimacy and privacy in a totalitarian society. For the child-protagonist, the kitchen is the site of maternal betrayal, the place where the secret of his adoption was shared casually during a “gossip session” with neighbors:

A two-bedroom apartment. The doorbell rang. Mom never checked who it was. It was either Ileana, or aunt Sanda, or aunt Vicky, or aunt Tanta, or aunt Bunescu. They walked straight into the red kitchen, sat on the red stools between the table and the cupboard, and treated themselves to a fragrant Wiener coffee and a Kent cigarette. I was “in her way” so my mom sent me “away” to the living room. (...) The picture of my mom, with an expression of boredom on her face, is still vivid in my memory. She played with her cigarette and, before she even lit it, she spat fire into the prosaic kitchen: “He’s not even my child!” How could one believe those words? My mom sold me during a gossip session. Not only could she not keep fact and fiction apart, but she could no longer keep our private lives away from the prying eyes of others.<sup>889</sup>

Unlike the autobiographical pieces in *The Lost World*, the socialist society that Istodor portrays in his autobiography is not the result of an imposition of totalitarian power from above,

---

<sup>889</sup> Eugen Istodor, *Cartea vieții mele: Șulea 31, N3, sc.2. Cu ocazia comunismului* (Bucharest: Polirom, 2007), 32, 224.



but an elaborate network of dependencies, loyalties, and betrayals reproduced in everyday interactions, be these exchanges of products and services or gossip and rumor. The communism recovered through personal and communal memories is thus a disturbingly intimate communism that cannot be confined outside the safe borders of the family.

Istodor's oral history challenges one of the most pervasive dichotomies deployed after the collapse of communism in order to rationalize social life under socialism: the distinction between the private sphere of the family (or the close circle of friends), where individuals allegedly expressed themselves freely and authentically, and the state-controlled public arena, where citizens acted as "actors in masks."<sup>890</sup> Departing from this entrenched representation, *The Book of My Life* joins a small number of childhood memoirs that read like family dramas, positioning the family at the ambiguous juncture between the private and the public, and representing it as the first incarnation of the system or the first manifestation of disciplining authority in the child's life. Gabriel Decuble's "Parents Made the Mistakes, And Children Suffered the Consequences," for example, depicts personal growth as a two-fold act of resistance against the father, "a true Communist," and the logic of the communist regime that the father insinuated daily into his son's life.<sup>891</sup> Much in the same way, the parallels between the domineering mother and the paternalist socialist state abound in Istodor's text. Before the socialist state could demand his loyalty as a member of the Pioneer Organization and the Communist Youth Union or as an informant of the Secret Police, it is the young boy's family, epitomized by the figure of the mother, who claims his loyalty and obedience.

---

<sup>890</sup> For a critique of the deployment of the public/private dichotomy in both Western and domestic scholarship on the former Soviet Bloc, see Alexei Yurchak, "Late Socialism: An Eternal State," In *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 1-35.

<sup>891</sup> Gabriel Decuble's "Parinții au mâncat agurida, iar copiilor li s-au stripezit dinții," In *Cartea roz*, 196-225.

Echoing Paul Cernat, Eugen Istorod represents the process of growing up as a series of encounters between the child and disciplining authorities. Both authors account for the emergence of socialist subjectivity in terms that are reminiscent of Freud's structural model of personality development, focusing on the clashes between the *id* and the *superego*, between primitive impulses (whether sex, anger, or hunger) and ethical constraints. Cernat's model of autistic childhood is essentially a victory of the *id* over the *superego* since the child's most primitive self-defensive and survival impulses win over the ethical and political imperatives of the communist regime. By contrast, Eugen Istorod's narrative of childhood is a complete victory of the *superego* that begins with the child's internalization of norms and ends in the total loss of identity. With the gradual repression of the *id*, valorized here as the source of authenticity and genuine desires, individuals turn into brainwashed automatons inhabited by the regime, its laws, and its constraints. The process of growing up is one of progressive alienation. The more the child grows up, the less he is his authentic self:

Since I was very little, I struggled to forget what I did not like, the trespassing that violated the rules of the system, all the things that my mother disapproved of. This game turned me into a little boy without memories. When I did not disobey my mother, it turned out I disobeyed my schoolteachers, and I lived with a permanent sense of guilt. So I thought up this invisible monster who ruled over my world. He took me by the hand when I stepped out of mom's home, walked me to school, sat me down, handing me over to the primary school teacher. He watched over me and fed on my mistakes. Then, he would take me back to mom. I was the child of the authorities. I was a child nobody talked to or listened to, I was born into the system and I had to keep growing with it.<sup>892</sup>

In a memoir like Istorod's, which repeatedly encourages the audience to read collective destiny in the coordinates of personal biography, the boy's relation to his mother replicates that of an infantilized citizenry to a paternalist state. On a personal level, the process of growing into one's person is only achieved in the violent separation from the mother, a process that begins with the retrieval of repressed memories, including the protagonist's recognition that he was an

---

<sup>892</sup> Ibid. 13-4.

adopted child, and is completed with the incineration of his dead mother, a mirror metaphor of the execution of the presidential couple in 1989. The “little boy without memories” morphs into a responsible adult who faces the demons of his childhood, coming to terms with the past by way of memoir and community history. Much like the protagonist of Istodor’s autobiography, who discovers the long held secret of his adoption in the process of writing his life story, the author suggests that Romanian society has to go through a similar process of demystification of origins, a separation from the political father figure in order to reach social and historical maturity. Writing one’s memoir is the final coming-of-age act: the act of exorcising the communist past and rendering oneself ripe for democracy.

To the extent that they articulate an unflinching indictment of the socialist regime, the collaborative autobiographies of emerging intellectuals occupy an ambivalent position in the memorial drive of the last decade. They share the decade’s spirit of democratization and fragmentation of memory as well as its methodological experimentation and playful irreverence for factual and objective history. When it comes to their larger interpretive framework, however, intellectual evocations of socialist childhood are surprisingly consistent with the picture of the communist regime that emerged during the first memorial wave. While childhood memoirs complicate this picture, giving insights into the inner mechanisms of socialist society and the ways in which ordinary Romanians were implicated in the reproduction of the regime, their emphasis on the distortion of individual and collective identity reinforces it. Given the memoirists’ ambition to write the story of their childhood as the collective history of communism, the figures of the *autistic*, *sheltered*, and *orphan child* cannot be read as individual idiosyncrasies, emerging instead as deliberately elaborated metaphors of socialist subjectivity. With a few notable exceptions, the majority of childhood autobiographies also represent the

family as the only realm of authentic expression, in direct opposition to the state-controlled public sphere, thus reproducing the notion of an atomized society and polarized individual.

The few autobiographical incursions that complicate this ideological stance represent a comparably small and marginal category. Some, such as Radu Pavel Gheo's memoir of childhood in a small village in Banat, *Letter from a Heated Age*, reclaim socialist values and principles, while simultaneously discrediting Ceaușescu's "Golden Age" as the ultimate failure of real existing socialism. Gheo's memoir is the story of a continued interest in socialist ideals and utopian worlds that starts with the childhood immersion in Soviet science fiction, continues with the teen fascination with the popular and political culture of Yugoslav socialism trickling across the border into Banat, and culminates, in the late 1980s, with a risky political project co-founded with his best high school friend, a "Neocommunist Romanian Party" meant to incite a popular revolt and realize the socialist principles of "general welfare and equality" so blatantly violated by Ceaușescu's regime. Paradoxically, the young protagonist nurtures an ideal(ized) communism creatively anticipated in fictional universes, foreign countries, or utopian political projects in the midst of a failing communism of daily life. Rendered by the mix of nostalgia and irony, the autobiographical tension at the heart of Gheo's memoir captures both the failure and appeal of communism. Such morally and ideologically ambivalent autobiographies that refuse to give readers an unambiguous view of the past are often discredited as "socialist nostalgia."<sup>893</sup>

By contrast, the great majority of intellectual memoirs focus squarely on the human, political, and economic failures of the regime. Childhood recollections rarely dwell on the exceptional experience of victimization associated with dissidents or political prisoners during

---

<sup>893</sup> Not least because of its provocative title, the autobiographical collection *The Pink Book of Communism* was often the target of such accusations, prompting the editor to react to the unexpectedly critical reception of the volume in an interview: "I am still amazed at how many sophisticated Romanian intellectuals missed the bitter irony in our title, and, having failed to actually read the volume, discredited our memories as 'nostalgic.'" Mihail Vakulovski, "Interviu cu Gabriel Decuble," In *Tiuk*, Jan 2005.

the first memorial wave, but they bring forth the normalized, generalized, and homogenized suffering of late socialism. Whether attributed to ideological pressures or economic distress, post-Stalinist suffering seems to affect most socialist citizens, becoming evidence of a state that waged war on its citizens, and reproducing “an underlying assumption that socialism was based on a complex web of immoralities.”<sup>894</sup> It is this perception that ultimately justifies the mission of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* even as the authors seek to overcome the “memory as justice” approach of the previous decade: “These episodes of childhood and adolescence are not meant to justify communism. Nor are they meant to condemn it. Our only intention was to free ourselves from the burden of the past by remembering it, by facing the past so that we can better understand its present day metamorphoses.”<sup>895</sup>

This phenomenon is indicative of the entrenched nature and persuasive power of the post-1989 discourse that casts communism as a totalitarian regime that generated long-term social ills and identity pathologies. At the same time, it is important to point out that this is a discourse produced and reproduced by a social category defined by a self-assigned sense of mission in mastering the past, that of public intellectuals. To the extent that they reaffirm the spirit of moral responsibility, childhood narratives facilitate the young authors’ entry into the postcommunist intelligentsia. This is all the more so since the autobiographical projects of emerging intellectuals are instrumental in locating the seeds of oppositional identity in childhood.

Written in a self-ironic register, childhood memoirs draw a tentative profile of the socialist nerd, emphasizing the protagonists’ early immersion into reading, their rather asocial tendency towards withdrawal, and inclination to view the world through the fictionalizing lens of literature. Readers learn that, as children of urban intellectuals, child-protagonists were exposed

---

<sup>894</sup> Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever*, 8.

<sup>895</sup> Cernat et al., *O lume*, 7.

to an eclectic array of readings, which they devoured indiscriminately in an attempt to conjure up fictional universes that could compensate for the stifling socialist reality and the equally stale state propaganda. Consistent with the idea that the family was the only source of authentic identity during socialism, the passion for reading was cultivated by parents and grandparents rather than by educational institutions. The protagonists' early isolation in the reading room is often contrasted with the homogenizing and brainwashing effect of collective education in state kindergartens and schools. The child's furtive, but voracious, reading habits become metaphors of the emergence of a critical and analytical spirit that carries the promise of oppositional intellectuality waiting to be reclaimed by adult memoirists in the postcommunist period.

Some autobiographies are even cast as stories of a "prematurely lost political innocence," of a childhood precociously endowed with a critical political consciousness otherwise only attributed to educated adult urban audiences in post-1989 accounts. They feature child protagonists who actively and creatively resist the regime's social engineering efforts, child heroes who do not only read avidly, but who also read state selected "educational" texts (whether books, films, or TV shows) "between the lines" and "against the grain" for messages that could subvert the seemingly monolithic ideology of the regime:

Very early on, I became a meticulous "reader" of ideological messages in radio and TV shows. I made passionate political comments "against the grain" in daily conversations with my parents at home, eventually becoming more radical than them. I watched TV shows in two speeds: while one eye would naively enjoy itself, the other remained suspicious and sober, ready to detect emotional manipulation. I spontaneously identified with and rooted for "dangerous" characters in these movies: the capitalists, the lowlifes, the cunning, all those "negative examples."<sup>896</sup>

The emphasis on critical consciousness sets intellectual memoirs apart from the majority of childhood memories popularized in oral history volumes, magazines, or blogs, which feature a

---

<sup>896</sup> Cernat, *O lume*, 28.

politically naïve child protagonist doubled by a politically critical adult narrator, whose role is to disavow moments of socialist allegiance to the regime as childish innocence.

The process of reclaiming oppositional intellectuality cannot be understood outside the metanarrative context of the production and consumption of socialist childhood memoirs that further facilitates the authors' socialization into public intellectuality. The collaborative processes of writing, publishing, reviewing, and debating memoirs of socialist childhood generated new intellectual networks and expanded the boundaries of intellectual sociality. The idea of collectively authored childhood autobiographies emerged out of scholarly dialogue among likeminded writers who shared both a strong sense of generational belonging and the same institutional spaces, being colleagues in university centers, research institutes, and museums or publishing in the pages of the same journals and magazines. In many cases, these tentative autobiographical experiments inspired or complemented larger collaborative projects in the areas of historiography, anthropology, urban ethnography, and oral history. The childhood memoirs of aspiring public intellectuals rarely stand alone, becoming legible in this larger intertextual landscape. Following the publication of their life writings in *The Lost World*, the authors collaborated on three volumes of interdisciplinary essays that drew on their respective backgrounds in the history of mentalities, literary criticism, and political science to explore the social and cultural dimensions of communism. Much in the same way, the authors of *The Book of Selves* envisioned their autobiographical experimentation as a way of developing an unconventional methodology for an anthropological study of everyday life under socialism.

Nowhere did the memoirists' reclamation of oppositional intellectuality occur more forcefully than in the public space generated by reviews published in prominent journals and by public debates organized in major academic centers in Bucharest, Cluj, Timisoara, and Jassy.

Whether they responded to published reviews of their memoirs, gave interviews, or participated in round tables, young authors enjoyed a significant amount of public visibility, engaging actively in the process of interpreting both their autobiographies and the communist past. Intergenerational conversations with consecrated public intellectuals were an integral part of the process of socialization facilitated by discussions over personal memoirs. The concluding chapter of *The Lost World*, for example, reproduces a fascinating intergenerational dialogue between the young authors and Horia-Roman Patapievici, a prominent public figure of the postcommunist period widely known for his rallying calls for intellectual leadership and moral responsibility in the process of coming to terms with the communist past. The dialogue is indicative of the discursive affinity between aspiring and consecrated public intellectuals, both of whom invoke the communist regime's successful strategies of social engineering - "infantilization," "brainwashing," and "mental slavery" - to explain Romanians' political yearning for authoritative and paternal(ist) leaders in the postcommunist period.<sup>897</sup> As one of the volume's co-authors noted in an interview, the dialogue also effectively frames the memoirs, "providing the interpretive lens/key for our stories."<sup>898</sup>

The childhood memoirs analyzed in this chapter testify to the successful process of socialization of new generations of writers, scholars, and journalists in the cultural ethos of post-communist intellectuality. This is all the more so since the register of intellectual responsibility has dovetailed nicely, throughout the post-communist period, with a generational discourse ascribing tremendous social powers of redemption to Romanian youth. Appropriating the discourse of the "transition generation," aspiring intellectuals articulated the contours of a generational identity uniquely committed to *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* by virtue of its

---

<sup>897</sup> Cernat et al., "Dialog cu H.-R. Patapievici," In *O lume*, 383-462.

<sup>898</sup> Ioan Stanomir (interview), *Cotidianul*, March 26, 2004.



historical location. The sense of historical exceptionality played a major role in the dramatization of intellectual identities, i.e. “amphibious” identities that require a sustained intellectual effort of remembering and self-reflection in order to integrate the sources of the self.

## **Pioneers into Bloggers**

While aspiring intellectuals enjoy visibility as published writers and public scholars, most members of the transition generation turn to the Internet in their quest for widely reaching forums for their collaborative memory projects. The first postcommunist decade coincided with a digital revolution and a mood of enthusiastic celebration of the Internet as “an electronic agora” with “democratizing potential.”<sup>899</sup> Studies of the social role of the Internet celebrated its power to revitalize participatory democracy, empower the weak and the marginal, end monopolies on communication and information, promote dialogue and understanding, foster communities, and facilitate identity experimentation.<sup>900</sup> Over the past decade, Internet studies ranged from downright skepticism of its democratizing potential to more balanced critiques of its erosion of traditional communities and forms of communication, facilitation of increased government and corporate surveillance, excessive commercialization, and reproduction of social inequalities despite promises of democratization and “widespread” access.<sup>901</sup>

---

<sup>899</sup> Howard Rheingolds, *The Virtual Community: Homesteading on the Electronic Frontier* (Reading: Addison Wesley, 1993), 298.

<sup>900</sup> Celebratory studies that envisioned a technological utopia, where the tyranny of space and time would be overcome by a citizen-designed worldwide communications network, dominated the 1990s. See Rheingold, *The Virtual Community* or Sherry Turkle, *Life on Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995). Some recent studies continue in the celebratory tradition, exploring, for example, the centrality of “networking” in the recent revolutionary movements of the Arab Spring: Manuel Castells, *Networks of Outrage and Hope: Social Movements in the Internet Age* (Polity Press, 2012).

<sup>901</sup> See, for example, Flis Henwood & all, *Technologies and In/equality: Questioning the Information Society* (London: Routledge, 2000), James Slevin, *The Internet Society* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000). Another recent study considers the democratizing potential of the internet in the context of the political economy of capitalism, exploring the increasing control of internet access by commercial monopolies and government or military agencies in the US: Robert McChesney, *Digital Disconnect: How Capitalism is Turning the Internet Against Democracy* (New York: The New Press, 2013).

As these latter approaches warn, a major obstacle to democratic participation is access to the World Wide Web. Although internet use in Romania has, according to recent European Union statistics, increased from 22% of the total number of households in 2007, to 38% in 2009, and 47% in 2011, access remains significantly limited by age, gender, urbanity, technological know-how, and networking cost and availability.<sup>902</sup> Statistics provide little reliable information on how the percentage of internet users breaks down by age, gender, or along the urban-rural divide, but the few existing studies suggest that the profile of the typical internet user in Romania remains, like in much of the world, that of a young, (white), urban, and university-educated male.<sup>903</sup> Age, however, overrides gender distinctions, which tend to be significantly smaller in the age range of sixteen to twenty-four.<sup>904</sup>

How, then, do predominantly young, urban, and college-educated men and women, who were the main beneficiaries of the Digital Revolution, appropriate social media for practices of remembrance? By contrast to public intellectuals' claims to historical relevance, the virtual communities of bloggers showing a growing interest in the shared experiences and material culture of socialist childhood seem to blatantly disqualify themselves as producers and adjudicators of history. One of the most popular sites dedicated to socialist childhood, "In the Past," has run since its launching in 2006 under the motto "Naïve memories of the red period."<sup>905</sup>

Its original creator and current administrator, Cristian Vasile, insists on the apolitical nature of

---

<sup>902</sup> See the statistics for 2012 published by the European Union Center of Statistics at [http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY\\_OFFPUB/KS-SF-11-066/EN/KS-SF-11-066-EN.PDF](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_OFFPUB/KS-SF-11-066/EN/KS-SF-11-066-EN.PDF) Last accessed March 25, 2013. For the gap in internet access gap separating rural from urban areas in Romania, I relied on the report of the Romanian National Institute of Statistics. In 2007, 3% (rural) vs. 33% (urban) households had access to Internet. Although the percentages changed in the last few years, the gap remains significant: 7% vs 43% (2008); 13% vs 58% (2009); 22% vs 59% (2011). See <http://statistici.insse.ro/shop/index.jsp?page=tempo3&lang=en&ind=TIC102D> Last accessed March 25, 2013.

<sup>903</sup> Graham Thomas and Nod Miller, "Access is Not the Only Problem: Using and Controlling the Internet," *Technology and Inequality*, 28.

<sup>904</sup> See "Gender Differences in the Use of Computers and the Internet" (2007) at [http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY\\_OFFPUB/KS-SF-07-119/EN/KS-SF-07-119-EN.PDF](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_OFFPUB/KS-SF-07-119/EN/KS-SF-07-119-EN.PDF) Last accessed March 25, 2013. The study shows how gender differences vary by country, but does not include Romania.

<sup>905</sup> *La trecut*, accessed at <http://www.latrecut.ro/>

the enterprise in a number of interviews. A web designer in his thirties, Vasile tells reporters that the site does not have any political stakes, being intended as an innocuous exercise in the collective retrieval of “catalysts of memory” such as “socialist toys, sweets, common places, music, and films.”<sup>906</sup> Similarly, the page of a recently created Facebook Group, “Nostalgia for Our Childhood During the Golden Age” (*Nostalgia copilăriei noastre din Epoca de Aur*), welcomes its current and prospective members with a strong disclaimer: “This group is not political in nature; it does not aim to justify either the communist regime or Ceausescu, being exclusively dedicated to the child within, whose life during that period remained untouched by political influences.”<sup>907</sup> Initiated in 2008, “Nostalgia for Our Childhood” is a Romanian-language group that functions as a forum for sharing “memories, stories, and pictures of socialist childhood.” Consistent with its self-description, the group was listed under the Facebook generated category “Just for fun.”

Such self-descriptions are not only indicative of the tendency to use the Internet for entertainment rather than social activism, but also of the politically charged character of the process of remembering communism. In a post-communist context that makes any expression of socialist nostalgia suspect, it is not surprising that many users and administrators of new media feel compelled to legitimate their memory practices by invoking the allegedly apolitical character of childhood reminiscences that might exhibit nostalgic tinges. It is not uncommon for those who initiate or administer blogs to make personal disclaimers, providing detailed personal information or testifying that their immediate family did not include members of the communist

---

<sup>906</sup> Ionela Ilie, “Nostalgia lui Igu,” In *Esquire*, December 2007. “Igu” is Cristian Vasile’s username.

<sup>907</sup> *Nostalgia copilăriei noastre din Epoca de Aur*, Facebook Group, this original description included under the rubric “About” is no longer accessible. Updated in July 2012, it now reads “This is a discussion group strictly focused on childhood/youth during the Golden Age. Posts that do not adhere to the group’s focus will be deleted. Individuals who use vulgar and offensive language in communications with others will be denied access to the group. The same rule applies to those who post SPAM messages.”

party *nomenklatura* or the Secret Police. A contributor to an online amateur radio club, for example, prefaced his childhood recollections of membership in the radio club at the former Pioneer Palace in Bucharest with a disclaimer addressed to those who would label him “former” or “nostalgic,” posting online an official declaration from the CNSAS that cleared him of association with the Secret Police.<sup>908</sup> In a similar vein, the initiator of the Facebook Group devoted a significant part of the group description to his family background:

My parents were never involved in communist politics; they were genuine and humble members of the working class. They were not persecuted by the old regime, at least no more than the majority of Romanians were ‘persecuted.’ Their only concern was to raise their children and ensure they have a relatively carefree childhood somewhere in a town in a communist country. My respect and compassion goes to those who had more troubled childhoods and whose parents suffered more at the hands of the regime. This might not be the right forum for you.<sup>909</sup>

Despite their declaredly apolitical status, however, sites dedicated to socialist childhood are deeply informed by the politics of memory. Not only do on-line chats often break out into contentious ideological discussions on the merits of socialism and capitalism, the “Tismaneanu Report,” the ideas of Marx and Lenin, or the wave of *Ostalgie* in post-Wall Germany, but the politically charged context of remembrance makes it possible for even seemingly innocuous memories to be (mis)read ideologically. At a time when no assessment of the past, least of all nostalgic recollections, is value neutral, bloggers remain alert to the possibility of socialist reclamation or the probability of being discredited as “socialist nostalgics.” Furthermore, public blogs dedicated to socialist childhood often become informal sites of intergenerational transmission of memory as computer-savvy generations, who have not personally experienced socialism, turn to their preferred platform of communication, the Internet, to educate

---

<sup>908</sup> See

<http://www.qsl.ro/yo3ccc/60%20de%20ani%20de%20la%20infintarea%20Palatului%20pionierilor%20din%20Bucuresti/index.html> Last accessed on January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2013.

<sup>909</sup> Ibid.

themselves on the topic. Young contributors, who often come across the site while doing on-line research for various school assignments on Romanian communism, express an interest in communism as a political regime and find the personal recollections and digitized collections on public blogs more compelling than traditional accounts in history textbooks.

Political disclaimers on such sites are also articulated in response to the concerns of journalists and public intellectuals who warn that blogs and Facebook groups could become breeding grounds of nostalgia for a criminal political regime. Recent scholarship on postcommunist nostalgia exhibits some of the same anxieties. Svetlana Boym's concept of "restorative nostalgia" aims to capture precisely the category of reactionary memory practices that exhibit an uncritical longing for the past and invoke "absolute truth and tradition" in order to restore it.<sup>910</sup> Seeking to assuage suspicions of "restorative" nostalgia, the recurrent claims to apolitical status should be read as strategic attempts to create an alternative memory space by circumventing the stringencies of public discourses on the communist past.

Primarily concerned with retrieving aspects of the past that often remain unaccounted for in institutionalized memory practices (the personal, the everyday, the material culture) and making room for nostalgia for the socialist past of one's childhood as a legitimate emotion, social media projects seem satisfied with occupying the margins of the memory landscape. Cristian Vasile attributes his decision to launch "In the Past" to the realization that the corner shop of his childhood had vanished. With the slow disappearance of the material culture of socialism, the memory of one's (socialist) past also vanished: "I created *In the past* because I forgot my childhood and I needed a collective effort to retrieve it."<sup>911</sup> Indeed, the site began its life with a few isolated pictures of socialist memorabilia – a latch key, a siphon bottle, a dial

---

<sup>910</sup> Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, (New York: Basic Books, 2001), xviii, 41, 49-50, 57-71.

<sup>911</sup> *Ibid.*

telephone, and an old radio – framed by question-like captions: “Are you a latchkey child?” “Are you among those who used to wear the house key on a latch when your parents were at work?,” “What were your favorite radio shows?,” etc. In a matter of days, the approximately 30,000 bloggers who would access the site monthly for the next few years both from Romania and the diaspora had posted numerous comments in response to the questions and inundated the blog with pictures of recovered childhood artifacts: shampoo bottles, pencil boxes, candy, chocolate, or chewing gum wraps, favorite childhood books, comic strips, pioneer journals, school textbooks, outdoor games, socialist board games, and pioneer insignia.

The phenomenon is indicative of how socialist material culture came to function as a catalyst of social and generational memory in postsocialist contexts. Before it was embraced as a privileged marker of socialist experience, socialist consumer culture had to undergo a significant *transvaluation* in the perception of former socialist citizens. As the meanings of material culture shifted away from associations with backwardness, consumer want, and frustration, socialist artifacts came to symbolize dignity in transition and facilitate the transformation of personal memories into collective history.<sup>912</sup> Studies of socialist nostalgia argue that the endemic scarcity and “the aesthetics of sameness” - the standardization and lack of product innovation or differentiation - characterizing socialist production can account for the fact that socialist goods help bridge the gap between individual and society, private and public memory, rather than encourage fragmentation.<sup>913</sup> Indeed, personal experiences that revolve around shared fixtures of socialist life and childhood - whether of domestic, broadly socialist (Polish, Cuban, Chinese, etc.), or Western provenance - are immediately validated in blog discussions as representative generational memories in a process of mutual recognition and acknowledgement.

---

<sup>912</sup> Katherine Pence and Paul Betts, “Introduction,” *Socialist Modern*, 1-36; Betts, “The Twilight of the Idols,” 739-743.

<sup>913</sup> Betts, “The Twilight of the Idols,” 754.

Excellent recent analyses of the catalyzing role of material culture have focused productively on the tension between the critical potential of socialist nostalgia and its relentless commodification.<sup>914</sup> In this view, the commercialization of nostalgia domesticates socialist contentment and trivializes capitalist discontent with neoliberal policies characteristic of the transition, thus stemming attempts to validate the socialist past.<sup>915</sup> Partly because the socialist past epitomized consumer frustration and economic scarcity in post-1989 Romania, the *transvaluation* of socialist artifacts was much more modest and emerged much later than in other postsocialist contexts, making the commercialization of former socialist products a much less attractive business opportunity.<sup>916</sup>

In the absence of a full-fledged industry of socialist nostalgia in Romania, blogs and Facebook groups that grew around digitized collections of socialist material culture emerged, in part, to fill the vacuum. To the extent that cyber-space inhabits a neoliberal culture of consumption, it contributes to the commodification of resistance: blogs abound in invitations to “retro-parties” featuring communist music and memorabilia, while lengthy price negotiations over popular socialist products such as pioneer uniforms, children’s comics, board games, or books turn blogs like *In the Past* into E-bays of sorts. Yet, while most businesses capitalizing on socialist nostalgia simultaneously discredit it as a reactionary emotion, trivializing the longing for an alternative past, blogs like *In the Past* neither fully commercialize nor trivialize socialist nostalgia. The blog’s motto, “Naïve memories of the red period,” might frame expressions of

---

<sup>914</sup> See, for example, Daphne Berdahl, “‘(N)Ostalgie’ for the Present” and Gerald Creed, “Strange Bedfellows: Socialist Nostalgia and Neoliberalism in Bulgaria,” In *Post-Communist Nostalgia*, eds. Maria Todorova and Zsuzsa Gille (New York: Berghahn, 2010), 29-45.

<sup>915</sup> Creed, “Strange Bedfellows,” 29-45.

<sup>916</sup> Articles on “communist brands” published on a business sites discuss the limited number of successful “rebranding campaigns” by foreign and multinational companies that “capitalized on socialist nostalgia” by turning the “notoriety” of socialist products into “consumer loyalty understood as the regular purchase of the product.” See Sabrina Răileanu, “Brand communist. Dar ma tratez!” December 22, 2009 at [http://www.money.ro/brand-comunist-dar-ma-tratez\\_458341.html](http://www.money.ro/brand-comunist-dar-ma-tratez_458341.html). Last accessed April 15, 2013.

socialist nostalgia as “childish” and apolitical, yet many recollections and conversations on the blog are openly articulated in the spirit of socialist reclamation. Nor does the site function as a business bent on marketing socialist nostalgia. Cristian Vasile, the creator of the blog has a successful career in advertising and web design. The popularity of the blog likely enhanced his on-line visibility in the Internet business community, but the blog itself remained free of commercial ads until its move to Facebook in 2009.

By comparison to the autobiographical projects of young intellectuals, which are informed by a sense of moral, civic, and historic duty, virtual communities of memory thus emerge around digital collections of socialist artifacts, being held together by a broader sense of ownership over the socialist past. In the case of public blogs such as *In the Past*, the most conspicuous manifestations of the sense of ownership were directly related to managing the site and reflected emerging post-socialist attitudes towards property. Some, such as buying a domain name (“In the past”) and creating a logo to brand the site, involved only the blog administrator. Others, such as the decision to copyright digital pictures of socialist artifacts posted on the site, engaged most blog users. Six months after the site was launched, the blog’s digital collection was already being reproduced by a number of publications and Internet users that failed to specify the source, prompting the administrator to cry “theft” and claim ownership by printing the site’s address on each individual picture. The strategy was discussed and vetted by most users, who agreed that their private pictures should be copyrighted to the site. Essentially, bloggers were called to resolve a dilemma of ownership that emerged out of the tension between private property and collective memory: Do digital pictures belong to the individuals who originally created and posted them or to the site to which they were submitted with the express purpose of being shared as evidence of collective history? Interestingly, the debate contributed to



the perception that the blog should function as a virtual museum or archival site, turning bloggers willing to cede their copyrights into participants in a collaborative memory project.

Questions of ownership in cyberspace extend to the broader process of reclaiming the past by assuming agency in its representation. Contributions to blogs and Facebook groups devoted to the recollection of socialist childhood can be seen as attempts to become the author of one's history and retain a sense of dignity in the face of a widely discarded socialist past. As we will see, while social media users are, in principle, resigned to their position of marginality vis-à-vis the mainstream memory discourse, claims to ownership as a form of agency are often triggered when bloggers' representations of the past are inadvertently challenged by social actors with more institutional resources and public visibility such as journalists, scholars at research institutes and museums, or documentary producers.

Despite the enthusiastic response to his blog, Cristian Vasile's attempt to assemble a virtual "inventory of perishables" was not singular.<sup>917</sup> In 2003, researchers at the Museum of the Romanian Peasant in Bucharest published a dictionary of everyday life and common places of the 1980s that opens with alphabetically ordered entries on "August 23<sup>rd</sup>," "activist," "school activities," "grocery store," "food" and concludes with entries as aleatory as "production," "prostitution," and "rumor." The result of an ambitious exercise in urban ethnography and oral history that mobilized roughly two hundred informants of diverse social backgrounds and generational cohorts, *Bucharesters in the 1980s* aimed at reconstructing the lived universe of late urban socialism.<sup>918</sup> Similarly, the press, now populated by journalists who grew up in the 1970s and 1980s, would occasionally feature articles on socialist childhood that read like personalized

---

<sup>917</sup> Ilie, "Nostalgia."

<sup>918</sup> Muzeul Taranului Roman, *Marturii orale: anii '80 si Bucurestenii* (Bucharest: Paideia, 2003).

lists of socialist memorabilia.<sup>919</sup> The world wide web was replete with inventory-like exercises of remembrance that bore titles such as “Dictionary for the post-89 child” and spoke to “insiders” in *lists* of instantly recognizable aspects of everyday life.

The revived interest in socialist material culture in Romania also echoed prominent efforts of collective re-collection in other Eastern European contexts. One of the most famous examples of its kind, the (post)-Yugoslav *Lexicon of Yu Mythology* was originally initiated by Dubravka Ugresic and fellow writers in 1989 in order to document Yugoslav identities through popular culture, was developed as a website in the late 1990s, and was published in three revised editions since 2000. In a recent analysis of websites focused on remembering and representing East Germany, Paul Cooke listed the figure of popular sites (i.e. the most visible on web searches and most often accessed) to over a hundred, noting that sites focusing on positive aspects of GDR culture and society amount to 67%.<sup>920</sup> Similar collective projects of re-collection - makeshift museums, displays at community centers, published oral histories, or online sites - emerged in many former communist countries since the collapse of communism.<sup>921</sup>

Whether they originated as institutional, journalistic, or individual projects, practices of remembrance that took the form of the list, the inventory, or the dictionary signaled a shift of priorities in the reassessment of the communist past. Lived experiences were now the focus of recollection, while the spheres of state politics and economics were relegated to the background as large, yet somewhat inconspicuous, forces that informed everyday life. Despite the heavy traffic on sites such as *In the past*, the figure of Nicolae Ceaușescu, for example, did not become

---

<sup>919</sup> See, for example, Adriana Oprea-Popescu, “Amintiri din copilărie,” In *Jurnalul național*, February 13, 2005.

<sup>920</sup> Paul Cooke, “Surfing for Eastern Difference: *Ostalgie*, Identity, and Cyberspace,” *Seminar: Journal of Germanic Studies* 40, 3 (Sept 2004): 211-213.

<sup>921</sup> For an analysis of the Bulgarian web-project, *I Lived Communism*, see Gerald Creed’s “Strange Bedfellows.” Maya Nadkarni explores the role of museum exhibition and books that catalogued socialist-era material culture in Hungary in “The Politics of Authenticity in Post-Socialist Hungary,” In *Post-Communist Nostalgia*, 190-214. For a discussion of makeshift museums and local displays in Germany, see Daphne Berdahl, “Re-Presenting the Socialist Modern.”

a distinct category for more than a year, and even when it finally did, it triggered only a modest number of comments, trailing far behind more enticing catalysts of memory such as “food,” “toys,” or “magazines.” Suggestively, during the site’s first year of existence, “Ceașescu” only figured as a subtheme in the larger category of “Decorative objects.”<sup>922</sup>

By comparison to the narrative arch inherent in plots of state oppression and surveillance, lists, lexicons, and inventories are aleatory, do not display any obvious hierarchy of relevance, and are decidedly open-ended. Especially when dictionaries and virtual museums are hosted on the World Wide Web in the form of blogs or Facebook groups, they invite ongoing addition, deletion, amendment, and collaboration. Jessie Labov makes a similar argument in her analysis of the *Lexicon of Yu Mythology*, when she suggests reading the Web page of the *Lexicon* as an “act of cultural transmission” resembling the “wiki,” where “the accretion and deletion of information never ends” and “can continue indefinitely” with a diverse mix of nostalgic reminiscences, fiery disagreements, and even instances of “web-vandalism.”<sup>923</sup> Revisiting the implications of this argument in a recent interpretation of the *Lexicon*, Aleksandar Bošković further links the open-endedness of the on-line *Lexicon* with the “infinity” of cyberspace.<sup>924</sup> By contrast to the published *Lexicons*, which are shaped by the “curatorial zeal” of the editors, the open-ended character of the web ensures that even political comments that are “both extremely nationalistic and highly negative towards the Yugoslav heritage” enjoy visibility.<sup>925</sup>

Being envisioned as inventories, collective blogs such as *In the Past* or Facebook groups such as *Nostalgia for Our Childhood* grew out of the outpour of digitized socialist objects and

---

<sup>922</sup> The development reflects both the stylization of ideological discourse in late socialism and the central role of visual propaganda, epitomized by the leader’s standardized textbook portrait, in bringing state politics into children’s everyday lives.

<sup>923</sup> Jessie Labov, “*Leksikon Yu Mitologije: Reading Yugoslavia from Abramović to žmurke*,” in *Mythistory and Narratives of the Nation in the Balkans*, ed. Tatjana Aleksić (Cambridge Scholars Press, 2007), 37.

<sup>924</sup> Aleksandar Bošković, “Yugonostalgia and Yugoslav Cultural Memory: *Lexicon of Yu Mythology*,” *Slavic Review*, Vol. 72, 1 (Spring 2013): 62.

<sup>925</sup> *Ibid.*

memories, unfolding much like a stream-of-consciousness narrative in its initial stages. Not only was the site accessible to anyone able to surf the web and sign up as a user, but there was little predictability in how new users reacted to already existing posts, what specific associations they made, what personal memories they shared, and what socialist objects they added to the growing collection. Surprised at the unexpected popularity of *In the Past*, the blog designer was suddenly faced with the challenge of curbing this democratic output by putting order in the otherwise messy flow of memory. As the “meta-comments” in a section dedicated to the administration of the blog indicate, by the end of the site’s first month of existence, the administrator had coopted some veteran users with experience in web design and computer programming to help him develop a set of rules and a comprehensive map of categories that would accommodate the bloggers’ recovered memories and fragments of material culture. According to these rules, new members were allowed to add comments to already existing “threads,” i.e. web conversations. However, bloggers who sought to initiate new discussions, propose additional categories, or add pictures the digital collection of socialist artifacts could only do so with the approval of the administrator, who took on the responsibility of moderating the blog. It was in this process of back and forth between the administrator and various contributors that the public blog developed gradually and collaboratively into a set of thematic categories of socialist material culture.

In keeping with the declaredly apolitical character of the site, the categories proposed by users focused on aspects of everyday life under socialism, including “Food and Drinks,” “Cosmetics,” “Money,” “Decorative Objects,” “Games and Toys,” “Readings,” “Places (movie theatres, theatre, streets, touristic resorts),” “Music,” “Radio-TV,” “School” (Activities, Objects, Uniforms),” “Social Life (Jokes, In the Family, At Work, Civic Duties),” “Sports,” and “Technology (Audio, Video, Photography, House appliances, Computers, Telecommunication,

Cars).” Since the rubrics were developed in a collective effort and were eventually arranged alphabetically, the site does not impose any apparent hierarchy of relevance. The resulting map of categories amounts to a loosely articulated morphology that makes the blog functional, but it fails to cohere into a syntax and thus impose an overriding narrative of Romanian socialism. Moreover, since personal memories develop in response to individual items of material and popular culture, personal recollections posted on blogs rarely amount to full-fledged autobiographies, articulating instead fragmentary and episodic childhood selves that further subvert the possibility of a master narrative. This ultimate failure of emplotment – both at the level of individual posts and of the blog as a whole - makes room for the expression of diverse visions of socialist childhood and, implicitly, of assessments of the past that have the potential to amend the master narrative of the communist past. A contributor to collective blogs or Facebook groups can articulate different narratives of childhood across various “threads” or web conversations, shifting among the visions of “hard-times,” “normal,” “idyllic,” or “working-class” childhoods which populate the world wide web, but which rarely appear in unadulterated form as absolute types.

Echoing public representations of communism, a significant number of bittersweet recollections of childhood focus on the everyday ramifications of state politics. Whether written in a tragic or ironic register, childhood memories of socialist hardship tend to privilege the economic scarcity, rationing, and deprivation of the 1980s over the lack of political liberties central to the life writings of aspiring intellectuals. While some narratives are built around the emblematic experiences of suffering and humiliation in late socialist Romania - queuing for hours for food, craving sweets or exotic fruits, suffering from cold in schools and apartments, writing and reading by candlelight or gas lamp, etc., - the majority of stories emphasize ingenuity

and survival: how parents “managed” to get food, how families “got by,” how block communities installed heating devices or makeshift antennas for foreign broadcasts, how children made their own toys or designed outdoor games, etc. Some childhood narratives echo intellectual memoirs, extending the notion of hardship beyond economic deprivation to aspects as diverse as the ideologization of school life and education, the general lack of personal liberties, the omnipresence of the secret police, and the destruction of (religious) traditions. Typical recollections in this category include stories of early encounters with the secret police or reflections on school rituals that included paeans to the presidential couple and “political study” classes. Many of these memories, including a few essay-long pieces originally written in diaspora for Western audiences and reposted on the website, elicited numerous reactions of identification among Romanian bloggers, drawing the contours of a community of suffering.

While social media feature memories of childhood as a time of economic hardship and political repression, the most common view of the socialist past posted on blogs and Facebook groups is that of “normal” childhoods. Memories of happy and carefree childhoods are replete with the recognizable repertoire of loving parents, friends, teachers, and outdoor games, seeming to unfold outside the political reach of the Ceausescu regime. Neither justified, nor condemned, real existing socialism is there like life itself. While it does not make life more joyous, nor does it seem to enjoy the totalitarian power to destroy lives and alienate selves. The secret police and its informants, the school and its authoritarian teachers or pioneer instructors, and even the daily humiliations and economic deprivation are either absent from such accounts or treated as naturally occurring facts of life. One of the many generational stories posted on *In the past*, for example, frames the routine of socialist childhood and early adolescence with opening and closing statements of normality: “We lived neither better nor worse than children do today. We

just lived our lives. We read Boccaccio in hiding and Jules Verne by daylight, ... we queued for food, ... we played with robots glued together out of cigarette packs and with angel-like dolls without gender, ... we ate our bread and butter before heading to school,... We lived neither better nor worse than children do today. We just lived our lives.”<sup>926</sup>

As in other former socialist contexts, the insistence on the “normality” of socialist life signals the fact that historical actors did not perceive themselves (or their parents) as either regime activists or dissidents, as either idealistically committed to the regime or opposed to it.<sup>927</sup> The initiator of *Nostalgia for Our Childhood*, for example, embraces this perspective as the organizing principle of his Facebook group: “My parents were never involved in communist politics; they were genuine and humble members of the working class. Nor were they persecuted by the old regime, at least no more than the majority of Romanians were ‘persecuted.’” It is here, between the extremes of activism and dissidence, that the administrator locates a sort of Everyman’s childhood described as “a relatively carefree childhood somewhere in a town in a communist country,” an experience of childhood that he expects would be easily recognizable to members of his generation. Implying that the majority of adult lives or childhoods were lived between the extremes of regime loyalty and resistance, and that suffering and persecution under socialism were the exception rather than the rule, some administrators thus see their blogs, forums, or Facebook groups as spaces where memories of “normal” life could finally be articulated. In their efforts to portray “normal,” i.e. full, meaningful, and interesting lives that were “not reduced to oppressed existence, ideological automatism, or idealist activism,”<sup>928</sup> memories of normal childhoods can be read as claims to personal dignity, as attempts to salvage

---

<sup>926</sup> *La trecut*, comments section for the post “Poveste de Craciun” under the category “Obiceiuri” on September 20<sup>th</sup>, 2006. <http://www.latrecut.ro/2006/05/poveste-de-craciun/#comments>

<sup>927</sup> Yurchak, “Normal Life,” 118-121.

<sup>928</sup> *Ibid.*, 118.

a usable biography from the discredited socialist past. Statements such as these are not uncommon on social media sites: “I was both a ‘falcon’ (soim al patriei) and a pioneer, but my only care in the world was to play or pull pranks on others with my friends. Just because I wore a mandatory uniform, it does not mean that I was either ‘brainwashed’ or a ‘propagandist.’ Most people did not take propaganda seriously.”<sup>929</sup>

These positions are not articulated outside the hegemonic discourse of remembrance, but in an implicit dialogue with it. To openly declare to have lived a “normal” childhood or youth, one must work within a frame of reference that has previously defined the past in terms of deviation and abnormality. Some bloggers engage in the “normalization” of the past in order to challenge the emphasis on identity pathologies and their undesirable generational legacies in the hegemonic memory discourse that bloggers often associate with official institutions advertising their museum exhibitions, workshops, or documentaries on the site. The national museum in Alba Iulia, for example, invited bloggers to contribute socialist artifacts for a planned exhibition on communism, the Romanian Peasant Museum in Bucharest encouraged them to join a workshop on the postsocialist meanings of socialist material culture, while the producers of a documentary on “Romanian Objects of Desire” welcomed bloggers to bring familiar socialist objects and participate in a filmed reconstruction of “homo comunismus romanicus.”

In their focus on the interactive musealization of the past and their interest in the changing meanings of socialist material culture, the museum exhibition, workshop, and documentary mentioned above share the innovative spirit of the second memorial wave. Judging by the responses they generated among bloggers, however, these projects are associated with normative representations of communism as an obsolete, virtually useless, and disposable past.

---

<sup>929</sup> *La trecut*, comments section for the post “Almanahul Șoimii Patriei” under the category “Literare” on May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2006. <http://www.latrecut.ro/2006/04/almanahul-soimii-patriei-88/#comments>



Emphasizing the modernizing project of the communist regime - infrastructural projects, urbanization, industrialization, and the attendant social dynamism and employment opportunities, - bloggers criticized “the attitude of ironic compassion towards a period of GENUINE CONSTRUCTION at a time of GENUINE DESTRUCTION.”<sup>930</sup> They detected such attitude of “ironic compassion,” for example, in the Peasant Museum’s invitation to bloggers participate in a collective effort to “collect communist objects and talk to them,” to “listen and record their stories and ask ourselves what their uses/meanings (rost) are in today’s world.”<sup>931</sup> Others took issue with how the discussion of communism was framed by documentary producers seeking to reconstruct the presumably extinct “Romanian communist man.”

These questions about people under ‘communism’ are a bit confusing: ‘How did they live?’ ‘How did they eat?’ ‘What did they wear?’ ‘What were their habits?’ You get the feeling that they are talking about creatures from planet Zorg. I was twenty-six in 1989 and I can tell you that the great majority of ‘communist’ youth in the 1980s drank, got loud, threw parties, wore jeans, listened to rock, loved, made love, broke up, contracted sexual diseases...in other words, they did much of what youth do in today’s ‘democracies’ (minus the marihuana and the Hustler magazines).<sup>932</sup>

“I, for one, am uncomfortable with these artificial notions about how people lived in the ‘former’ regime, as if it’s been eons since we became capitalists.”<sup>933</sup>

Partly because bloggers do not see themselves as equal participants, but merely as instrumentalized objects of research in these representations of the past, they criticize the perceived tendency to pathologize socialist subjects by treating them as an alien race of “communist men.” They also resist the attendant process of being historicized, musealized, and thus rendered obsolete as “communist men.” By contrast, internet users approach public blogs as sites where communism is not yet history, has not yet congealed in masternarratives about the

---

<sup>930</sup> *La trecut*, comments section for the post “Cântarea României. Ultima ediție. Recuperare, Recondiționare, Refolosire” on February 27, 2008. <http://www.latrecut.ro/2008/02/cantarea-romaniei-ultima-editie-recuperare-reconditionare-refolosire/>

<sup>931</sup> Ibid.

<sup>932</sup> *La trecut*, comments section for the post “Anunț important” on January 17, 2008 at <http://www.latrecut.ro/2008/01/anunt-important/#comments>

<sup>933</sup> Ibid. post on February 1, 2008.

past, being still alive in their own biographies. They propose an alternative representation of the socialist past as “normal,” i.e. as recognizably modern and contemporaneous as well as potentially superior to the (morally decadent) capitalist present.

For some contributors, however, the emphasis on normality is not so much a comment on the nature of real existing socialism, as on the allegedly universal character of childhood. It is rooted in the assumption that childhood, as a natural stage of innocence, fantasy and play, transcends the political, and that children are essentially apolitical and ahistorical actors. Such views are indebted to naturalized modern conceptions of childhood as a life stage free from adult responsibilities, nurtured in the domestic sphere, and sheltered by the family.<sup>934</sup> Even though bloggers do not picture the socialist family as self-sufficiently nuclear, but as an extended kin community, seemingly incomplete without the doting grandparents entrusted with childcare in late socialism, their narratives do emphasize domesticity as the privileged site of childhood. Ironically, the ambivalent rhetoric of Ceausescu’s regime, which both glorified the family as an incubator of future citizens and claimed children as the province of state intervention, might have fed associations of childhood with privacy and domesticity.<sup>935</sup>

Representations of “normal” or apolitical childhoods also build on a growing perception that intensified in late socialism, the perception of a widening chasm between the realm of state politics and that of everyday practice and experience. During this period, official propaganda sounded increasingly hollow and cynical to socialist citizens whose everyday lives unfolded under dire conditions of economic scarcity and food rationing. The assumption that there was a

---

<sup>934</sup> Such views are traced back to Rousseauian articulations of childhood as a state of nature and innocence as well as nineteenth century romantic ideals of domesticity and childhood, which took hold among the middle classes, being embraced by other social classes over time, and thus acquiring the aura of universality. See Hugh Cunningham, *Children and Childhood in Western Society Since 1500* (London: Longman, 1995).

<sup>935</sup> This association survived despite the regime’s fervent postwar attempts to counter “bourgeois” mentalities with pedagogies of collective life.

wide gap separating the realm of state politics from that of family life and childhood rests on the perceived dichotomy between the personal and the political as reflected by the image of a bipolar universe of “we” (regular people) and “them” (the party, secret police) that was so pervasive during socialism and so often invoked after its collapse.<sup>936</sup>

Much like contributors who envision “normal” socialist childhoods, a number of bloggers draw on generational comparisons between socialist and postsocialist youth to frame late socialism in terms of a deeply missed idyllic childhood. By contrast to the corrupting influence of technology, capitalist consumerism, and social dissolution on postsocialist youth, socialist childhood emerges as a pre-technological and socially harmonious universe. As befits any Arcadia, the self-sufficient world of socialist childhood is imagined as a place of idyllic nature and simplicity where children still lived in a state of nature, removed from the temptations of the Internet, video games, or cell phones. Apparently oblivious to the irony of using the World Wide Web as a vehicle to bemoan a pre-technological time of unmediated interpersonal communication, bloggers in this category recall a socialist universe where young people spent their time playing freely outdoors or vacationing in the countryside rather than firmly planted in front of a TV set or a computer, where friendship and love were still a matter of face-to-face interaction rather than of virtual communication, where youth read widely and voraciously, where children lived in a natural state of dependency, respectful of authority figures such as parents and teachers, rather than as prematurely emancipated consumers:

Children behaved like children. They lived their childhood in the countryside at their grandparents or in front of their apartment building with their peers, playing hide-and-sick, hopscotch, ducks and the hunters, the castle, and the leaf. They shared their ice cream and cakes; they ate fruit from trees; they played in the streets. They didn't waste

---

<sup>936</sup> Katherine Verdery, “National Identity and Socialism’s Divided Self,” In *What Was Socialism*, 92-97.

their childhood on messenger and did not have virtual friends. They were taught to live, feel, laugh, touch, get dirty, and be happy.<sup>937</sup>

Childhood lends itself to idealization and universalization more readily than any other life stage. As scholars have noted, since the eighteenth century, philosophers, philanthropists, educators, and national movements have been busy drawing the contours of modern childhood. Whether they envision children as innocent, prone to fantasy and play, vulnerable and dependent on adult care, or as small revolutionaries, entrenched ideals of childhood play a major role in how individuals make sense of their own childhoods. As much imagined as remembered, childhood is often discredited as an accurate and reliable lens to the past. It is thus no surprise that the category of idyllic recollections of childhood is rarely interpreted as an expression of genuine longing for socialism, being typically dismissed by postsocialist commentators as “mere” nostalgia for one’s idealized childhood and youth. Some bloggers embrace this rationalization, making references to a universalized personal past that could be socialist or not. Others, however, map their memories of idyllic childhood on the dichotomous distinction between the socialist past and the capitalist present, attributing the simplicity and civility of social life to socialism and the technological and social corruption to capitalist consumerism.

In addition to their focus on the general simplicity and civility of socialist life, a subset of narratives of idyllic childhood also take activities like reading and playing as evidence of a distinct quality of socialist time that enabled fulfillment and dreaming:

Although our memories differ in minor details, the general atmosphere was essentially the same. I remember fondly that, because of our way of life, there was TIME. There was time to waste, time to dream. ...Adults enjoyed the same sense of satisfaction as we [children] did. And today? If you want something, you work yourself so much that you rob yourself mentally of even the smallest possibility of enjoying the results.<sup>938</sup>

---

<sup>937</sup> *La trecut*, comments section for the post “Șoimii Patriei și Pionierii” under the category “Album Foto” on April 27th, 2007. <http://www.latrecut.ro/2009/01/soimii-patriei-si-pionierii/#comments>

<sup>938</sup> *La trecut*, comments section for the post “Ce mai vremuri” under the category “Altele” on February 27th, 2008. <http://www.latrecut.ro/2008/02/ce-mai-vremuri/#comments>

Bloggers share these implicit analogies between socialist and children's time with critics of socialist regimes, who equate economic backwardness with a distinctive quality of socialist time reflected by the sense of stagnation of late socialism: "Not to have to walk the treadmill of capital, not to have to produce, sell, consume, take care of things ASAP: that too, is the freedom of the East.... Because it [socialist time] is worthless, it can be passed by unused, unobserved, unnoticed, just like children's time, which is yet not measured in hours and minutes, but rather by what chances and moods happen to produce in the way of experience."<sup>939</sup> Unlike critics, however, bloggers reclaim the "unused" and "unnoticed" time as a cherished socialist value, implying that it was not only a childhood experience, but also one that informed adult life. Whether they reflect on their parents' or their own adult experiences under socialism, bloggers comment on the paradoxical effect of socialist time, which enabled one's freedom from the pressures and anxieties of a (capitalist) life of relentless production, consumption, and competition: "I could afford to buy books and I had time to read. As for the period when I worked, I would stop thinking about work the moment I stepped out of the office. I never talked to my friends about their jobs either. ... I enjoyed more mental freedom than I do now."<sup>940</sup>

Finally, blogs and Facebook groups feature a category of contributors who seek to salvage socialist values and experiences outside of the seemingly ahistorical framework of idyllic childhood. Bloggers in this category tend to reassess positively not only aspects of socialist sociality, culture, and education, but also the very hardships and politicization of childhood under communism, articulating an alternative narrative of "working-class childhood." They recall fondly the broader "civilizing" project of the socialist regime, emphasizing its commitment

---

<sup>939</sup> Martin Ahrends, "The Great Waiting, or the Freedom of the East: An Obituary for Life in Sleeping Beauty's Castle," in *When the Wall Came Down: Reactions to German Unification*, eds. Harold James and Marla Stone (New York: Routledge, 1992), 159-160.

<sup>940</sup> Posted on [cafeneaua.com](http://www.cafeneaua.com) on September 21, 2005. <http://www.cafeneaua.com/nodes/show/5950/amintiri-din-iepoca-de-aur/1>

to and investment in culture and education rather than its censorship of cultural production or policing of childhood. Bloggers credit the years of socialist education with their immersion in “cultura generala” (“general culture”), a concept that echoes the Soviet notion of “kulturnost” in its encompassing references to a general body of knowledge, but also aesthetic appreciation, respect for culture, and civilized behavior. They comment on the educational character of socialist media for children, whether Romanian or broadly Eastern European, emphasizing its civilizational as well as ethical and moral messages, especially by comparison to the violence-ridden cartoons flooding the media after the collapse of communism.<sup>941</sup> Web conversations in this category focus on the affordability of cultural events or books as well as the widespread practice of reading, enhanced as much by the regime’s cultural policies as by its widely resented policy of economic rationing in the 1980s. With TV programming reduced to two hours of state propaganda per day, bloggers argue they had ample time for reading and playing outdoors: “My reading was out of control. At seven or eight, I was reading Elias Canetti ... I would read on and on, with a vengeance. It was my biggest happiness and pleasure, second only to French fries and the Tele-encyclopedia show on Saturday night!”<sup>942</sup>

As members of the self-described generation of “latchkey children” (*copii cu cheia la gat*), many social media users identify the absence of their parents, both of whom typically worked full-time jobs in the socialist economy, as the defining feature of their childhood:

Our parents worked in shifts: when one came, the other left. Sunday lunch was a holy tradition because that was the only time when we came together. We didn’t have ‘baby-sitters,’ ‘after-schools,’ or ‘internet-cafes.’ Every morning before we went to school, we

---

<sup>941</sup> The soundtrack of the popular Soviet cartoons, “Nu pogodi,” for example, is credited with introducing children to the international repertoire of classical music or autochthonous Russian creations through the ingenious use of sarcasm in animal representations of human typologies.

<sup>942</sup> Posted on [cafeneaua.com](http://www.cafeneaua.com), an online discussion site, on September 23, 2005. <http://www.cafeneaua.com/nodes/show/5950/amintiri-din-iepoca-de-aur/1>

ate our bread and butter with stoicism. We put on our backpacks, our white hairbands, and ritually hanged the house key string around our necks as we walked out the door.”<sup>943</sup>

Much like other socialist hardships, be these scarcity, rationing, or compulsory school activities, the lack of parental guidance and care assumed a character-building potential. Deprived of the comforting and sheltering presence of parents, children seemed to develop an early sense of self-reliance and responsibility: they learned to do their homework by themselves, queue for food, help with household chores, or take care of younger siblings.

The pioneer rituals, hierarchies of pioneer leadership, or sessions of (voluntary) labor also contribute to the development of precocious maturity in narratives of working-class childhood and early adolescence. Quite a few bloggers credit participation in sessions of civic/patriotic work (*munca patriotica* or *practica*) in cooperative farms, factories, or public parks with early familiarization with work, emancipation from parental authority, a welcome respite from school, and the opportunity to make friendships in informal settings:

Every year, between September 15 and October 1, we would attend work sessions (*practica*) to pick grapes. We lined up in the schoolyard and marched across the hills, where we each handled ‘our row.’ There was a norm but we didn’t sweat it. On the contrary, we would end up throwing grapes or boulders at each other. They would even pay us about 75 bani per bucket, and, by the end of the work session, we always had 50 or 75 lei, which we invariably spent on the 17-lei or 35-lei soccer ball and a pair of those Chinese sports shoes with an unmistakable stench of rubber and fabric.<sup>944</sup>

Those who frame their socialist experiences as working-class childhoods often argue that participation in pioneer activities gave them “a sense of purpose and fulfillment in life, of responsibility and self-respect” and that children on the whole received “a more harmonious

---

<sup>943</sup> The phrases “baby-sitter,” “after-school,” and “internet-café” are in English in the original post, emphasizing the Westernizing character of post-89 changes. *In the past*, comments section for the post “Poveste de Crăciun” under the category “Obiceiuri” on September 20<sup>th</sup>, 2006. <http://www.latrecut.ro/2006/05/poveste-de-craciun/#comments>

<sup>944</sup> *La trecut*, comments section for the post “Generatia X” under the category “Obiceiuri” on January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2007. <http://www.latrecut.ro/2006/12/generatia-x/#comments>

education for life.”<sup>945</sup> Despite its “mandatory” character, socialist education is valued because it appealed to children’s better nature and instilled moral and collective values in the young:

Falcons, pioneers, and communist youth were all mobilized in common activities, which were more or less propagandistic, more or less interesting, and generally mandatory, ... but I happen to think that these helped develop in a lot of us a sort of team spirit, a spirit of competition, morality, and, why not, ingenuity in a diversity of fields... (Yet far from me the idea of glorifying the regime!)<sup>946</sup>

Purposefulness, the sense of mobilization in the service of higher goals, often dovetails in working class narratives with a longing for the future-oriented perspective of socialist ideology. The web-conversation around an iconic musical creation for children, “We, the Children, in the Year 2000,” that was extremely popular in the 1970s and 1980s is a case in point. Reflecting on the inspirational impact of the song, most commentators bemoan the loss of “forward dreaming,” an attitude that envisioned the future as full of promise for the realization of socialism’s “good society”:<sup>947</sup> “We used to sing this song before the revolution and it would inspire us to conjure up the most amazing scenarios for 2000. What a huge disappointment 2000 turned out to be by comparison to the spaceships and cities on the moon we imagined.”<sup>948</sup> Measured against the shrinking horizons of expectation and fulfillment in the present, “forward dreaming” is valued despite its acknowledged utopian character: “We were so full of hope when we sang this song as children. In 2000, I actually lost my job and spent the entire summer going to interviews with shady employers.”<sup>949</sup>

Whether they fit into accounts of working-class, idyllic, or “normal” childhoods, recollections in social media often reclaim socialist values without advocating a wholesale return

---

<sup>945</sup> *La trecut*, comments section for the post “Almanahul Soimii Patriei” under the category “Literare” on June 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2008. <http://www.latrecut.ro/2006/04/almanahul-soimii-patriei-88/#comments>

<sup>946</sup> Ibid., Posted on November 6<sup>th</sup>, 2006

<sup>947</sup> Zygmunt Bauman, “Living Without An Alternative,” In *Intimations of Postmodernity* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 185.

<sup>948</sup> *La trecut*, comments section for the post “Noi in anul 2000” on April 25, 2008 <http://www.latrecut.ro/2008/04/noi-in-anul-2000/#comments>

<sup>949</sup> Ibid., June 15, 2008.



to socialism. It is often the pressures of the “transition,” experienced as a “permanent discomfort” increasingly attributed to an entrenched hierarchy of political and economic privilege on a national, European, and global scale, that trigger the reevaluation of socialist principles and experiences. The timing of web-nostalgia for socialism, which emerged more than a decade after the collapse of communism, overlapping with the debates preceding and following Romania’s joining of the European Union in 2007, is also an indication that socialist nostalgia is not only a reclamation of the past, but also a recognition of the impossibility of return or a resignation to the inevitability of present dynamics: “Nostalgia indexes a particular type of memory, one that is based on lived experience and thus not too old or too far back, yet one that despite being relatively recent is not reversible or restorable.”<sup>950</sup>

Much like social actors in other Eastern European contexts, the “socialist nostalgics” visiting Romanian blogs and Facebook groups are not only very discriminate about the socialist aspects and ideals they find worthy of reviving, but they remain largely critical of Ceaușescu’s socialist regime. While they acknowledge the propagandistic nature of communist education and culture, they nevertheless reclaim the sense of purposeful childhoods and meaningful lives enabled by the socialist civilizing project and built on early experiences of commitment and self-responsibility. While they remember the daily humiliations and economic hardships of late socialism, they also long for the lost sense of security (jobs, pensions, etc), the now devalued principle (if not always the historic realization) of the welfare state, and the promise of equality, unity, and national dignity. The fact that contributors can both reclaim and reject aspects of the past is proof that homesickness and sickness of home often coexist, a tension that scholars such

---

<sup>950</sup> Creed, “Strange Bedfellows,” 37.

as Svetlana Boym see as the mark of “reflective nostalgia,” of the critical, ironic, playful, and always changing relation with the remembered past.<sup>951</sup>

My contention is that socialist critique coexists with reclamation because social actors do not only revisit the past in search of what happened, but also of what might have happened, of a project of alternative social life. Measured against the presumed factuality and objectivity of history, memory has often been discredited by critics for fictionalizing the past. For writers and theoreticians of literature such as Milan Kundera, the main distinction between history and fiction is not merely one between fact and fabrication, but one that resides in the ability of literature to transcend factuality in order to explore the realm of human existence and possibilities: “An historian tells you about events that have taken place. (...) A novel examines not life but existence. And existence is not what has occurred, existence is the realm of human possibilities, everything than man can become, everything he’s capable of. (...) the Kafkan world is like no known reality, it is an *extreme and unrealized possibility* of the human world.”<sup>952</sup> Studies of “reflective nostalgia” have explored the “fictionalizing” role of memory in a variety of postsocialist contexts, emphasizing its ability to open up “a multitude of potentialities, nonteleological possibilities of historical development”<sup>953</sup> and even its “emancipating effect on a social body.”<sup>954</sup> Retrieved through the fictionalizing lens of nostalgia, the socialist past is thus not only a factual and teleological account of the myriad of daily hardships under communism, but also a rich realm of constantly anticipated if often unrealized possibilities: the promise of purposeful and meaningful lives, of social solidarity, equality, and unity, and the temporal politics of emancipation and “forward dreaming.”

---

<sup>951</sup> Boym, *Future of Nostalgia*, 50.

<sup>952</sup> Christian Salmon and Milan Kundera, “Conversation with Milan Kundera on the Art of the Novel,” trans. Linda Asher, *Salmagundi* 73 (1987): 133-34. Emphasis in the original.

<sup>953</sup> Boym, *Future of Nostalgia*, 50.

<sup>954</sup> Bošković, “Yugonostalgia,” 77.

While cyber-communities of memory certainly complicate normative representations of the past, they should not be uncritically envisioned as most of the celebrant studies of the 1990s did, as a Habermasian “public sphere,” a space for uncoerced and unmediated discussion premised on the idea that debate and disagreement are central to the democratic process. As it turns out, not all virtual spaces are created equal in their potential to enable practices of on-line collaboration and memorialization. Despite the initial enthusiasm with which the blog was launched in 2006, *In the Past* has ceased to be a dynamic site with “heavy traffic” for the past two years. Have bloggers run out of memories or interest in the past? Most likely not. The change occurred around 2009, when Cristian Vasile created a Facebook account for the site. While Facebook appeals to administrators as a “social utility” because it frees them of time-consuming responsibilities to mediate discussion or structure material in collaboration with contributors, it does so at the price of determining the forms of both memory and community. While all social networking sites use algorithms to manage our interactions, Facebook accounts come fully packaged with a built-in script or “algorithm” that precludes the collective determination of the form of memory.<sup>955</sup> Digitized artifacts are all grouped under “photos” making it harder to structure them into categories and rely on the emerging thematic map to archive collective memories. Premised on the idea of ongoing updates, the structuring device on Facebook - especially the “Timeline” algorithm introduced in 2011 - gives visibility to most recent comments, enabling “chats” – posts and brief reactions, - but precluding ongoing conversations that users on conventional websites can join and amend months or even years

---

<sup>955</sup> On the role of algorithms as “encoded procedures for transforming input data into a desired output, based on specific calculations” in mediating on-line exchanges and interactions, see Tarleton Gillespie, “The Relevance of Algorithms,” in *Media Technologies: Technologies: Essays on Communication, Materiality, and Society*, eds. Tarleton Gillespie et al. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2014), 167-195.

later. One might argue that the presentist bias of Facebook makes it particularly unfit for collective memory projects.

Another constraint of virtual communities of memory lies in social media's unfulfilled potential of democratization, in the ways in which the Internet might inadvertently curb the political potential of the very reclamations of the socialist past it enables. While new media functions as an alternative public site for the expression of social dissatisfaction, it can also enable the containment and trivialization of on-line discontent as mindless entertainment. The Internet does not only provide a forum for communities of memory whose experiences are not reflected by hegemonic memory discourses, but it can also preclude other forms of social mobilization or political organization, rendering them less urgent. Skeptics of the democratizing potential of the Internet have often argued that the digital revolution eroded genuine communities and face-to-face communication, promoting social anomie and consumption.<sup>956</sup>

The blogs and Facebook groups I examine in this chapter do not fit well into this deterministic view of technology, presenting a more ambivalent picture of how intense political debates and social dissatisfaction can coexist, however uneasily, with pervasive social and political disengagement. Scholars of memory practices in Eastern Europe have argued convincingly that socialist nostalgia should not only be interpreted "as re-action, but also as action," not only as fixation on the past, but also as "a politics of the future" invested in projects of social emancipation and right to future-determination.<sup>957</sup> While the on-line communities I studied are instrumental in envisioning an alternative world by reclaiming the progressive values of their childhood, they seem to lack the desire and motivation to mobilize the past for the creation of a better future. The bloggers' response to institutional invitations to participate in

---

<sup>956</sup> See, for example, Virginia Nightingale and Tim Dwyer, *New Media Worlds: Challenges for Convergence* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2007).

<sup>957</sup> Mitja Velikonja quoted in Bošković, "Yugonostalgia," 77.

shaping the narratives of the communist past, for example, an attitude that did not only reject collaboration, but also failed to cohere into an alternative project of remembrance with social impact can be read as an indication that cyber-communities require only “a minimal commitment” to cohere, making it much harder to translate virtual into actual communities of common political purpose or social activism.<sup>958</sup>

## Conclusions

Seen in the larger landscape of postsocialist memory practices, intellectual memoirs and social media projects centering on socialist childhood exhibit a series of innovative aspects more broadly characteristic of the second memorial wave. Reflecting the “archival fever” of the past decade, both practices of remembrance have successfully enlarged the scope of social memory, excavating the material culture, institutional organization, ideological structures, and everyday experiences of socialist childhood. They lay out in great detail generationally recognizable urban geographies, kindergarten and school rituals presided over by a rich gallery of educators, leisure pursuits and games, family life, and the growing economic scarcity of the 1980s, all throughout devoting painstaking attention to the discursive and visual culture of socialist childhood: textbooks, poetry recital drills, patriotic songs and paeans to the party, magazines, films, TV and radio shows, and above all, reading practices and literature.

Despite the fact that aspiring intellectuals place themselves at the center of debates about the past while cyber-communities gravitate towards the margins of the memory landscape, both social actors have questioned totalizing claims to historical truth. Neither intellectual memoirists nor virtual communities turn to the communist past for definitive and morally unambiguous

---

<sup>958</sup> Jessalynn Keller proposes the concept of “minimal commitment” in her article on “Virtual Feminisms: Girls’ Blogging Communities, Feminist Activism, and Participatory Politics,” *Information, Communication & Society* 15, 3 (2012): 9.

answers, engaging instead in a subjective, “self-fictionalizing,” and always-incomplete process of interrogation of the past. The shift to personal and family histories in intellectual memoirs is marked by openness to methodological and narrative experimentation doubled by a self-reflexive attitude that acknowledges the fragmented, partial, and subjective character of the process of remembrance. Cyber recollections in social media promote a similar fragmentariness of virtual memories and subjectivities. Not only are recollections structured as transient “posts” (comments) and contingent “threads” (web-conversation) on blogs and Facebook groups, but they also develop gradually and collectively as open-ended inventories or museums, often failing to impose a metanarrative of the past.

Their common concerns and methodological affinities notwithstanding, intellectual memoirs and virtual recollections relate differently to the hegemonic memory discourse on the communist past. In part because aspiring intellectuals claim historical relevance and moral authority on the past, published childhood memoirs share many of the premises of the dominant discourse. By contrast, virtual communities legitimize their memory work as “apolitical” and rarely affirm themselves as consequential participants in public debates on the past, emerging as an alternative to normative representations. While some bloggers and Facebook users reproduce the discourse of the 1990s, many contributors see cyber-communities as the only communal space where their alternative memories and social discontents can be voiced and heard.<sup>959</sup>

Having emerged at a time of democratization and fragmentation of memory, intellectual memoirs and social media centered on socialist childhood should also be read as exercises in community-building. Not only did childhood memoirs emerge as collaborative projects meant to articulate a broader generational profile, but they also facilitated an intergenerational dialogue

---

<sup>959</sup> Recent studies of *Yugonostalgia* have made analogous arguments about the role of the Internet in providing a virtual meeting place for ex-Yugoslavs who found themselves stateless and exiled in the 1990s. See Labov, “*Leksikon Yu Mitologije*”; Bošković, “Yugonostalgia” In *Slavic Review* 72 (1): 57.

between mentors and disciples in the growing community of the postcommunist intelligentsia. Much like memoirs of socialist childhood, which articulate a sense of generational belonging and broaden the circles of intellectual sociality, public blogs, websites, and Facebook groups envision childhood recollections as “collective efforts.” Virtual communities of memory emerge in the act of sharing memories of childhood and assembling digitized collections of socialist artifacts. The ongoing process of organizing websites, elaborating rules of participation, indexing personal recollections, and assigning them to collectively elaborated categories further engaged regular users as well as moderators and administrators in drawing the contours of virtual communities of bloggers. The process of remembering socialist childhood unfolded within these collectively defined parameters, creating veritable communities in anonymity held together by a growing sense of ownership over the socialist past.

While these communities of memory are, to a great extent, grassroots phenomena, both are located in the context of neoliberal capitalism, being significantly shaped and mediated by a competitive book market and an ever expanding but increasingly structured and commercialized world wide web. Although they are not altogether determined by the logic of consumption, memories of socialist childhood reach a wider audience, at least in part, because they were deemed marketable. This is all the more so since the 1990s witnessed the emergence of a so-called “experience economy,” an increasing awareness that businesses must stage memorable experiences for customers and that the memory, emotion, experience, or transformation associated with a product has a higher economic value than the actual goods or services enabling the experience.<sup>960</sup> To the extent that childhood memoirs and collective blogs revive the everyday

---

<sup>960</sup> The theory of “experience economy” was most famously articulated by Joseph Pine and James Gilmore in their article, *The Experience Economy* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1999). While the theory was criticized, among others, for relying on high profile examples such as Disney World or Nike, the principle of selling

history of socialism, its familiar tastes, smells, sounds, and images, publishing houses and the expanding blogosphere are engaged in an “experience economy,” either cashing in on their ability to reenact memorable emotions and experiences or framing on-line expressions of socialist critique and reclamation as trivial acts of consumption or entertainment.

Approaching comparatively two communities of memory which enjoy different degrees of moral capital, institutional resources, and public visibility, my study sought to examine how the post-communist present - with its cultural discourses as well as economic and political dynamics - shapes the generational process of remembering communism. Most anthropological studies that take the dynamics of the transition seriously tend to focus on the so-called “losers” of the transition and their reclamation of the socialist past in attempts to draw attention to loss of dignity, positions of disadvantage, and social inequalities in the post-communist period.<sup>961</sup> This chapter, by comparison, explored how young generations, universally declared the “winners” of the transition to democracy, civil society, and market economy throughout the former Eastern bloc, engaged in the process of reassessing the communist past. Articulating an identity that developed around the historical rupture effected by the collapse of communism, young writers, journalists, researchers, or bloggers felt they could contribute a distinctively transitional perspective on the communist past: the sense of straddling two political regimes.

To the extent that they personally experienced both socialism and the so-called “transition to capitalism,” members of “the transition generation” felt endowed with a comparative perspective and a sharper eye for social criticism that seemed to evade both older

---

experiences seems to be at the heart of much of the contemporary tourism, restaurant, or architecture industries, to mention but a few.

<sup>961</sup> See, for example, Gerald Creed, *Domesticating Revolution: From Socialist Reform to Ambivalent Transition in a Bulgarian Village* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998); David A. Kideckel, *Getting By in Postsocialist Romania: Labor, the Body, and Working-Class Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008).



generations assimilated to communism and younger cohorts born after 1989. Following the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe, sociologist Zygmunt Bauman cautioned against the self-congratulatory mood that proclaimed the superiority of market capitalism and democracy in the affluent West, warning about the intellectual and political dangers of “living without an alternative,” without “the ‘left’ tradition of disaffection, critique and dissent, of value questioning, of alternative visions.”<sup>962</sup> As trusted citizens of a “new democracy,” youth who were “old enough” to remember communism and “young enough” to start anew sought to articulate the socialist alternative, whether they did it to prevent a possible repeat of the mistakes of the past, heal a deeply wounded society, or salvage socialist ideals that might critique and improve the present by setting it in a comparative perspective.

---

<sup>962</sup> Bauman, “Living Without An Alternative,” 175-186.

## Conclusions

*Everyone agrees, of course, that the “new socialist person” (omul nou) was never truly born. But if the “new person” remains a self-evident utopia, the myth surrounding it seems to have materialized in ideological practices whose effects are unmistakable: leveled and homogenized mentalities, collectivist spirit, herd instinct, and a lack of appetite for liberal values. These are the maladies of Romanian society as they are articulated in the speeches of the democratic opposition, marked initially by the bitter aftertaste of (political) failure, as well as in the more sophisticated texts of our intellectuals. One might say that communism died in Romania because it won the game, achieved all its goals, and had nothing left to aspire to.<sup>963</sup>*

Many of the publicly aired concerns with the legacies of communism in the wake of its collapse revolved around its alleged transformation - or deformation - of socialist subjectivity and thus, of the prospects for liberal democracy in Romanian society. As suggested in this study, these concerns ranged from scholarly and journalistic reflections on social maladies, to autobiographical anguish over the communist contamination of the self, to more recent nostalgic reminiscences of purposeful socialist childhoods. While this dissertation was similarly driven by questions regarding the socialist regime’s agenda of social engineering, it aimed to examine this project in terms of its complex and ambivalent effects on people’s everyday lives and subjectivities rather than through the often reductive lens of postsocialist concerns with the totalitarian past and the danger it might pose to the future of democracy.

To this end, this study anchored its exploration of the formation and affirmation of late socialist subjectivities in young people’s daily practices and performances of socialist patriotism in school and after school institutions in Ceaușescu’s Romania. The introduction outlined the theoretical considerations that motivate my focus on the categories of practice and performance: an interest in the socially constituted character of subjectivity and possibilities of agency that can

---

<sup>963</sup> Daniel Barbu, “Destinul colectiv, servitutea involuntară, nefericirea totalitară: trei mituri ale comunismului românesc,” In *Miturile comunismului românesc*, ed. Lucian Boia (Bucharest: Nemira, 1998), 178.

circumvent the reliance on normative liberal models of autonomous and free-willed selves as well as conceptualizations of the relation between state and society in dichotomous terms of domination and resistance.

Simply put, the appeal of the categories of practice and performance lies in their ability to integrate analytically the mutually transformative intersections of structure and agency. Unlike the regime's totalitarian intentions and plans of patriotic upbringing of youth, "social practices are not so easily hammered or welded into place,"<sup>964</sup> being suggestive of the messiness and mundaneness of individual acts of performance, appropriation, and resignification of state norms and directives. But if social practices are often the sites of contestation and negotiation of social or political demands, it is equally important to point out that the ritual, discursive, and embodied practices examined in the previous chapters were neither invented nor chosen at will by young people and their teachers, being structured by the principles of collective life, socially useful labor, ritual participation, or competitive spirit informing the pedagogy of socialist patriotism. As chapter two argued, the very proliferation of "patriotic activities" in late socialism was indebted to the pedagogical emphases on activism and voluntarism in the profile of the new "man of action" and the corollary philosophy of manifest activism that cast observable deeds as the ultimate proofs of genuine feelings of patriotism and collective belonging.

Locating social practices at the intersection of structural constraints and the performative force of individual enactment, this dissertation explored how the regime's revolutionary agenda of social transformation was domesticated, translated, and negotiated in an array of everyday performances of socialist patriotism: whether mandatory (like pioneer rituals, sessions of civic work, or the writing of patriotic compositions) or elective (such as pioneer expeditions, patriotic

---

<sup>964</sup> Katherine Verdery and Gail Kligman, *Peasants Under Siege: The Collectivization of Romanian Agriculture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 445.

tourism, club activities, or leisure reading), whether constraining or enabling. If my dissertation echoes previous scholarship in acknowledging that many socialist citizens participated only perfunctorily in performances that invited formal compliance and evasion, it also examines the many instances when children and teachers rendered state-mandated practices meaningful, appropriating and resignifying socialist values and moral imperatives. In a range of state-sanctioned and funded institutional spaces – schools, pioneer palaces, or camping sites - collective life took the familiar forms of sociability and politeness, friendship, mutual help, and even romance. Actualized in pioneer expeditions or ritual inductions into the Pioneer Organization, socialist patriotism was translated into attachments to enduring historical values, national heroes, and archaic forms of life or regionalism and local pride. In literature classes, literary clubs, or creativity camps, ideological literacy often merged with forms of cultured life such as reading and literary creativity.

Furthermore, this dissertation argued that young people and their teachers did not only find opportunities for self-fulfillment and self-affirmation in strategies of evasion of state directives or small acts of resignification, but also in the very processes of inhabiting socialist norms and practicing or aspiring to socialist values. Chapters two, three, and four in particular asked the reader to contend with the paradox that children's submission to strict regimens of training in ideological literacy, public speaking, leadership skills, or precocious activism and scientific expertise could ultimately be enabling and empowering. Similarly, the much-despised collectivism promoted by the state through various forms of aligned life could invest young people with a sense of self-worth, social mission, and significance, enlarging rather than annihilating the self.

Emphasizing the modalities of agency and forms of meaningful life that socialist citizens could pursue in active engagement with the ideological and institutional structures of the socialist regime, this dissertation sought to complicate the dominant picture of late socialist societies in existing scholarship. When they do not investigate opposition and resistance, studies of late socialism examine the tenuous social contract of mutual cynicism and tolerance between entrenched regimes, characterized by corruption and stagnation, and “normalized” societies, whose citizens were structurally embedded in the socialist system but politically apathetic. Over the past decades, in particular, a growing body of literature on topics ranging from everyday life under socialism, to practices of consumption and leisure, forms of escape, or youth cultures and subcultures has been instrumental in exposing the limits of the socialist regimes’ agendas of social transformation and reinvesting socialist subjects with agency.<sup>965</sup> In the process however, some of this literature reintroduced the familiar public-private divide that associates official culture and the public sphere with popular cynicism and political apathy, carving out spaces for meaningful life and authentic selves either in opposition to or outside the reach of the socialist regime.

By comparison, the case studies examined in the previous chapters suggest that socialist citizens did not find the means of self-fulfillment and self-actualization only in opposition to the regime (such as dissident intellectuals), complicity with its structures of privilege (such as the *nomenklatura* and the swelling ranks of mid-level party bureaucrats), or the desire to escape it altogether (as studies on consumer cultures or alternative youth subcultures suggest), but also in direct engagement with state institutions and the very socialist values the regimes promoted. As

---

<sup>965</sup> See Kelly, “The School Waltz,” Fürst, *Stalin's Last Generation*; Raleigh, *Russia's Sputnik Generation*; Karin Taylor, *Let's Twist Again: Youth and Leisure in Socialist Bulgaria* (LIT Verlag, 2006); Cathleen Giustino, Catherine Plum, and Alexander Vari, *Socialist Escapes: Breaking Away from Ideology and Everyday Routine in Eastern Europe, 1945-1989* (Berghahn Books, 2013). Daniela Koleva, ed. *Negotiating Normality: Everyday Lives in Socialist Institutions* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2012).

suggested in the introduction, teachers, parents, and children resonated with a range of socialist and national principles actively promoted by Ceaușescu's regime during the last two decades of communism, among which professional fulfillment and self-realization, the ideal of cultured life, the role of education as an engine of upward social mobility, the centrality of children and youth to family and social life, the formative role of collective or communal life, as well as patriotism, national allegiance, and pride.

If socialist subjectivities were formed, this dissertation suggests, they emerged in the murky terrain of everyday practice where the individual aspirations and propensities of children and their parents intersected with the diverse agendas of schoolteachers, youth activists, and other party or state authorities charged with implementing the party leadership's directives, decisions, and educational policies. Rather than search for evidence of a monolithic socialist subjectivity or a latent liberal subjectivity waiting to be freed from ideological and political constraints, a processual and performative approach gives us insights into the forms of aligned life, modalities of action, national frames of vision, propensities for future-oriented dreaming that socialist pedagogies inscribed as possibilities, but which were only unevenly, contingently, and often creatively actualized in practice. As the active processes of memory making and constant revision of life stories in the postsocialist period suggests, subjects are not made once and for all, but continue to unmake and remake themselves in dialogue with changing political, social, and economic conditions as well as new ideals of subjectivity and citizenship. Measuring their socialist selves against an ideal model of autonomous subjectivity called upon to actively participate in the public sphere after the collapse of communism, some members of the last socialist generation focused on their efforts to overcome the constraining and damaging impact

of socialist pedagogies, while others sought to salvage those possibilities of being and action they found enabling or empowering.

### **A Modern Pedagogy of Aligned Subjectivity and Citizenship**

In Zygmunt Bauman's view, socialism was the most enthusiastic advocate of the Enlightenment dream of mastery over the natural and social environment. Given socialism's passionate commitment to the creation of a "carefully designed, rationally managed and thoroughly industrialized" society, Bauman described it as "modernity streamlined," as "modernity in its most determined mood and most decisive posture."<sup>966</sup> There is little wonder that the "new socialist person" anticipated by pedagogues and ideologues in postwar regimes in Eastern Europe was also created in the image of modernity, exhibiting consciousness and rationality, scientific and technological prowess, a commitment to social and economic progress, voluntarism, and the (self)-transformative power of activism. Defining themselves in opposition to liberal capitalism and thus, the bourgeois individualism and materialism plaguing it, socialist regimes also subordinated this recognizably modern person to the power of the organized collective. To the extent that it conditioned self-realization on integration in a broader collective with a historic mission, Hellbeck argued, the socialist project emerged as a variant of a broader twentieth century European fascination with ideologies of "aligned life" premised on "a twofold obligation, for a personal worldview and for the individual's integration into a community."<sup>967</sup>

As indicated in the introduction, the ideology of aligned subjectivity translated into socialist pedagogies of citizenship which combined totalizing procedures with individualizing

---

<sup>966</sup> See Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence* (Polity Press, 1991), 263 and *Intimations of Postmodernity* (London: Routledge, 1992), 167.

<sup>967</sup> Jochen Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind: Writing a Diary Under Stalin* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006), 13.

techniques, urging young people to mobilize their resources of individualism, activism, or voluntarism in the service of the collective, be this the pioneer team, the ancestry of national heroes, or the socialist nation. To a great extent, the technologies of integrated subjectivity and socialist patriotism analyzed in the previous chapters can be attributed to the popularization of Soviet pedagogical orthodoxies and the creation of children's organizations of Soviet inspiration like the Pioneers in postwar Eastern Europe. Under Ceaușescu, however, the pedagogy of patriotic citizenship was significantly enriched and legitimized by domestic prewar precedents, making late socialist Romania an interesting case study in the appropriation of the Soviet model and enduring appeal of forms of "aligned life" in twentieth century Europe.

Unlike other socialist projects that relied primarily on the Soviet blueprint (such as the collectivization of agriculture), the Romanian communists' agendas of cultural enlightenment and patriotic upbringing of youth had plenty of prewar models. My focus in this dissertation has been on twentieth century traditions of youth socialization - the Romanian Scouts (*Cercetășia*) or the interwar mobilization of college students for civic actions in rural areas under the guidance of sociologist Dimitrie Gusti - that youth activists and party historians under Ceaușescu embraced openly and reclaimed as "progressive," i.e. advancing the twin causes of social and national emancipation of the people. However, as recent scholarship indicates, public life in interwar Romania was rich in critiques of liberalism and capitalism,<sup>968</sup> some of which generated pedagogies of patriotic and civic upbringing for youth that subordinated individual rights and interests to national needs and well-being or social utility, closely linking individual self-realization to national awakening and affirmation, communal belonging, or the realization of historical and natural laws of evolution.

---

<sup>968</sup> See, for example, Irina Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania: Regionalism, Nation Building and Ethnic Struggle, 1918-1930* (Ithaca, N.Y., and London: Cornell University Press, 2000), Maria Bucur, *Eugenics and Modernization in Interwar Romania* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2002).



Some traditions of youth mobilization for national causes popularized by right-wing extremist movements such as the Iron Guard articulated their critiques of individualism and materialism from a traditionalist, mystical-religious, and anti-Semitic position.<sup>969</sup> Mandatory state organizations for children and youth like *Străjeria*, founded by Carol II of Romania in an attempt to counter the growing impact of the Iron Guard, drew on the symbolism and methodologies of the Scout and Hitler Youth movements to forge similarly aligned subjectivities in a relation of loyalty to the monarchy, the state, and the Christian Orthodox Church.

Other forms of youth socialization are suggestive of the fact that “the spectrum of illiberalism was broader and less clearly identified with a marginal rightist position” in the early twentieth century and interwar period.<sup>970</sup> The conservative nationalist historian and politician Nicolae Iorga, for example, had called on Boy Scouts before the First World War to serve their people by conducting historical and ethnographic research in rural areas. The interwar eugenics movement sought to foster individual biological consciousness and responsibility for the health of present and future generations by introducing physical education in schools and creating a youth organization, the Carpathian Falcons, that promoted “contests, outdoor activities, and community involvement.”<sup>971</sup> Although eugenicists critiqued the liberal emphasis on individual autonomy over one’s actions for its disregard for “the hereditary factors that conditioned individual development and behavior,”<sup>972</sup> they also used the language of science and objectivity to distance their program of national development from the extremist alternatives of socialists, legionaries, or conservative nationalists.

---

<sup>969</sup> Having emerged as a student-based anti-Semitic group in the late 1920s, the Iron Guard expanded its base more broadly to intellectuals and peasants by the 1930s.

<sup>970</sup> Bucur, *Eugenics and Modernization*, 67.

<sup>971</sup> *Ibid.*, 184.

<sup>972</sup> *Ibid.*, 222.

Not least because the short-lived wave of revolutionary militancy and labor unrest at the end of the First World War in Romania generated a strong nationalist backlash before it was contained, there did not seem to be significant left-wing alternatives of child socialization between the wars.<sup>973</sup> Under pressure to unearth progressive domestic precedents in rewriting the history of the Pioneer Organization in the 1960s, party historians emphasized the impact of socialist thinkers on educational developments in the nineteenth century and the radicalization of youth under the guiding influence of the underground communist party in the interwar period.<sup>974</sup> Predictably, such studies made efforts to downplay right-wing extremism and emphasize the scope and impact of democratic – whether moderate or left-wing – forces. Even so, these studies focused primarily on the activity of organized youth – students and workers – than on forms of child mobilization or revolutionary pedagogies in the interwar period.

Whether they were publicly reclaimed or not under socialism, these prewar precedents might explain the enduring appeal of forms of aligned subjectivity that are rooted in national or social belonging in everyday school life under socialism. Although the political justification informing the pedagogies of aligned subjectivity had changed after the war, the socialist school and Pioneer Organization relied on a range of educational methods that must have been familiar to educators and youth socialized in the prewar period: military drills and ceremonial rituals, recitals of patriotic songs and music, patriotic tourism (excursions, trips, expeditions), physical education, competitions, and civic labor. What had changed in the postwar period was the sheer extent of youth mobilization in centralized state institutions and party organizations, enabled by

---

<sup>973</sup> For the cultural and political dynamics of nation-building in interwar Romania, see Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics*.

<sup>974</sup> See, for example, the series of articles on the topic: Mircea Ștefan, “Participarea elevilor la vechea mișcare socialistă,” In *Educatia pioniereasca* 1, 1969; “Despre primele grupuri de pionieri din tara noastra,” In *Educatia pioniereasca* 2, 1969; “Organizatia Pionierii Romaniei,” In *Educatia pioniereasca* 3, 1969.

both the gradual lowering of the appropriate age of political mobilization and the expansion of the educational system and state bureaucracy.

In this sense, the alternative modernity of Romanian socialism should be seen in the *longue durée* of modern processes of nation and state-building. In its capitalization on youth as the future of the socialist nation, commitment to universal literacy, secularization of instruction, expansion of “free and mandatory” state education, increasing integration of children in educational institutions as subjects of expert intervention (defined in simultaneously pedagogical and ideological terms), and standardization of the pedagogies of socialization and moral upbringing, Romanian communists did more than embark on a distinctively socialist agenda of cultural enlightenment and social engineering and homogenization. The postwar socialist regime also continued broader processes of modernization – institutional and bureaucratic expansion, national and cultural homogenization, educational centralization, and socialization into loyal nationhood and citizenship - that can be traced back to the emergence of the modern Romanian nation-state at the end of the nineteenth century. If we agree with Gellner that universal literacy, cultural homogeneity, and a “school-transmitted” (rather than “folk” or local) culture that ensures “the manufacture of viable and useable human beings” are among the most distinctive markers of a modern (i.e. industrialized) society, then the socialist regime significantly furthered prewar processes of cultural modernization.<sup>975</sup>

---

<sup>975</sup> Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006).

## Appendix

### Chapter III: The Socialist Nerd: Discursive Practices of Socialist Patriotism

**Text I:** Cosmin Manolache, “Love of Country”<sup>976</sup>

Love for one’s country is a noble, strong feeling that defines the relationship between an individual and his motherland – man grows with age and participation in the work for the flourishing and defense of the country. Any human being is born in a country, which he loves and without which he cannot feel whole. Love for one’s country begins with the respect and love for parents, for sisters and brothers, from the love for the house in which we live with those we love. A wise adage says that the man without a country is like the lark without a song. *Before his people, man loved his family, before the world, man loved his people and piece of land, whether big or small, where his parents lived and were buried, where he was born, where he spent the sweet years of childhood that never return.*<sup>977</sup>

(...) The school years are the years when man becomes proud and conscious of his mission. Studying and preparing, man himself develops, but at the same time, his training, the acquired knowledge are not only helpful to him, but also to the society and country in which he lives. We do not learn for school, but for life. The first school days, when we deciphered the mysteries of writing and reading remain memorable.

The feeling of motherland [sentimentul de patrie] is deeply rooted in the homeland. Far from it or far from our country, we will always be overcome by an unquenchable longing for the motherland. How nice it is in pioneer camps, at the seaside or in the mountains, but the longing for your parents’ home obsesses you every minute. For those who find themselves far from their country for whatever reasons, the longing for the homeland is everywhere overwhelming. Love for one’s country is respect for predecessors and devotion to socialist Romania.

The Bicaz Canyon, the Danube-Black Sea Canal, the hydroelectric plants at the Iron Gates I and II as well as the many thermal power stations on the country’s rivers are only the Romanian people’s aspiration to work and build. Romania has developed so much that today’s Romania is much different from the picturesque one of Vlahuta.

Love for one’s country is enthusiastic appreciation for everything our hardworking people achieved in socialism under the leadership of the Romanian Communist Party. “You do not serve your country with love declaration, but with honest hard work and sacrifice, if need be. [Patriotism] is not hate of other peoples, but duty towards our people, it is not the pretension that we are the worthiest people in the world, but the impulse to become a worthy and conscious people. It is not empty words but deeds of hard work, pure life, love of your fellow, the fulfillment of your duties, that prove patriotism” Mihail Sadoveanu reminded us in a quote.

---

<sup>976</sup> The text was published in Sorin Stoica, Calin Torsan, Cosmin Manolache, Roxana Morosanu, Ciprian Voicila, *Cartea cu Euri* (Curtea veche, 2005), 179-181.

<sup>977</sup> The italics mark an unacknowledged quote from Mihail Kogalniceanu.

To love one's country and motherland is to be a citizen of today's Romania, of socialist Romania.

"A golden future awaits our country  
And I predict her rise to peaks of glory over centuries."  
(D. Bolintineanu – Mircea the Great and the Envoys)

**Text II:** Otilia, fourth grade school composition (1987)

*How Beautiful and Rich You Are, My Country!*

My country is the most beautiful! You ask why?

Come with me to cross the enchanting Carpathians with white peaks: the tall Fagaras, the curiously shaped Bucegi, the Apuseni which hide gold in their depths, the Ceahlau – "a giant with a sunny forehead."<sup>978</sup> Let us sip from the clear and cool waves of springs that cross wooded hills and fields to the old Danube and "the grand Sea" (*Marea cea mare*). They bring light to all the corners of the country thanks to the necklace of hydroelectric plants (*salba de hidrocentrale*) adorning the rivers: Bistrita, Arges, Olt, Mures, Lotru, Motru, Sebes.

My country is the most beautiful! You ask why?

Let us dance the round dance of the fertile rich-crops (*holde mănoase*) that surround the hills heavy with fruit trees and grape vine. Let us pick the harvest of vegetables from the large garden of Romanian fall.

In my beloved country, 'men bear the names of leaves and look like laboring deities. They often marry flowers, whom they call women.' They raise their children with thoughts of peace and friendship, but ready to defend their ancestral land (*glia strămoșească*) with their life. This is the richest treasure of my country!

We learn, the love of country from Stephan, from Michael, from Mircea, from Balcescu, from Cuza, from the communist heroes.<sup>979</sup>

Imagining ~~Remembering~~ the native land, any Romanian can repeat the words of the poet Nenitescu: "This is where my country lies/ and my Romanian people/ it is there that I would like to die, /and there I would like to live!"<sup>980</sup>

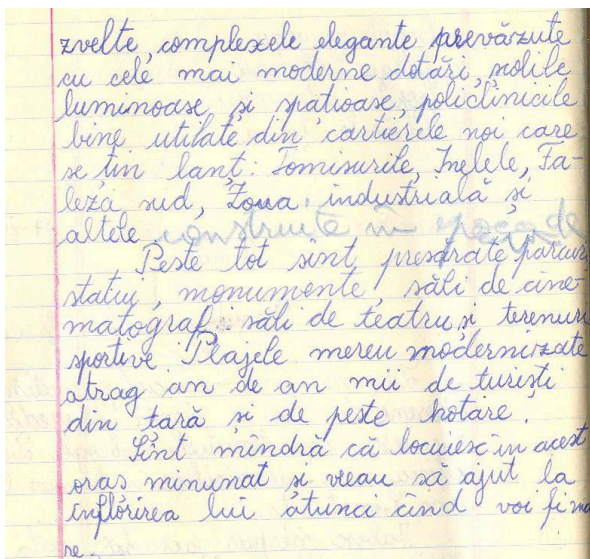
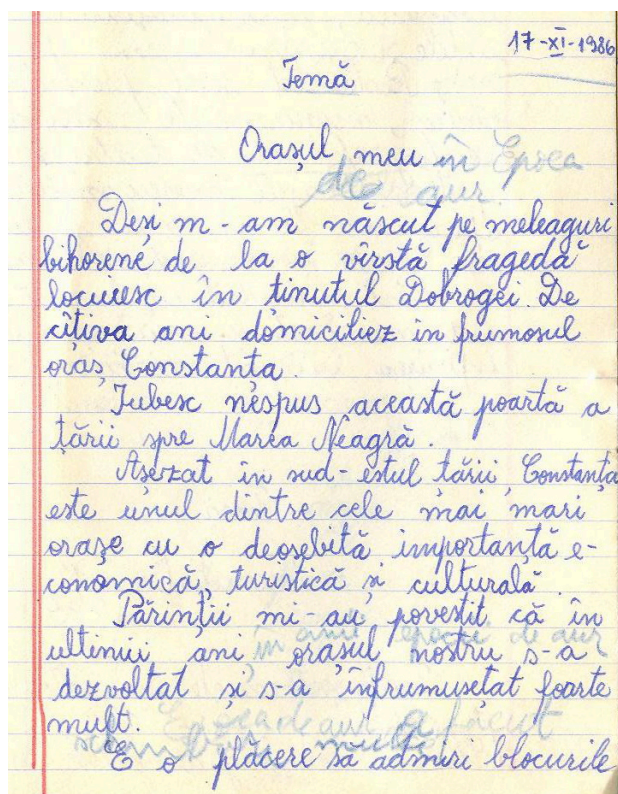
---

<sup>978</sup> Fagaras, Bucegi, Apuseni, and Ceahlau are mountain ranges in the Carpathians.

<sup>979</sup> Stephan [the Great], Michael [the Brave], and Mircea [the Elder] are medieval rulers who were featured prominently in literary texts and historical legends for primary schoolers. A militant 1848-er (*pasoptist*), [Nicolae] Balcescu was similarly featured in literature textbooks with excerpts on Michael the Great from his Romantic historiography of French inspiration. A symbol of national union, [Alexandru Ioan] Cuza was elected ruler of the Romanian Principalities in 1859 and was similarly portrayed in several short stories by nineteenth century writer Ion Creanga in school textbooks.

<sup>980</sup> Ioan Nenitescu was militant writer of the 1848 generation. Written while the author was studying abroad in Germany, this poem of longing for the ancestral land was often reproduced in textbooks.

**Text III:** Edited composition, *My City*, in Otilia's fourth grade notebook (1986)



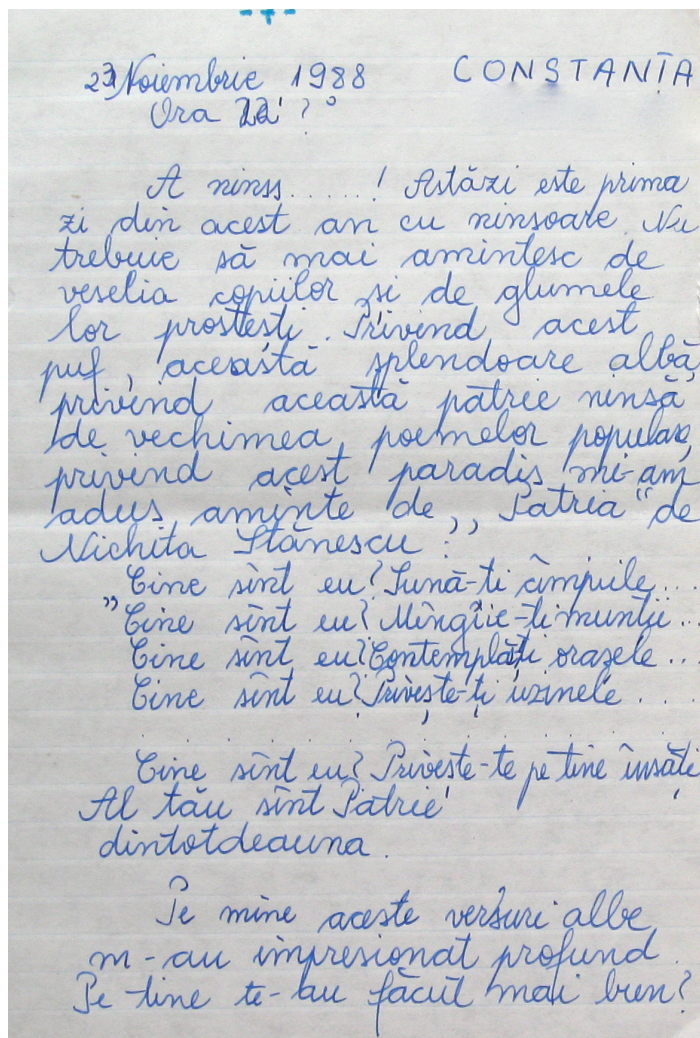
Editing interventions are marked in blue

“My City in the Golden Age

(...) My parents told me that during the last years, **the years of the golden age** our city was developed and beautified very much. **The golden age made many changes.**”

It is a pleasure to admire the slim apartment buildings...the industrial zone and other **built during the golden age.** (...)”

**Text IV:** Otilia's experiments with patriotic writing in her diary (1988, 1989)

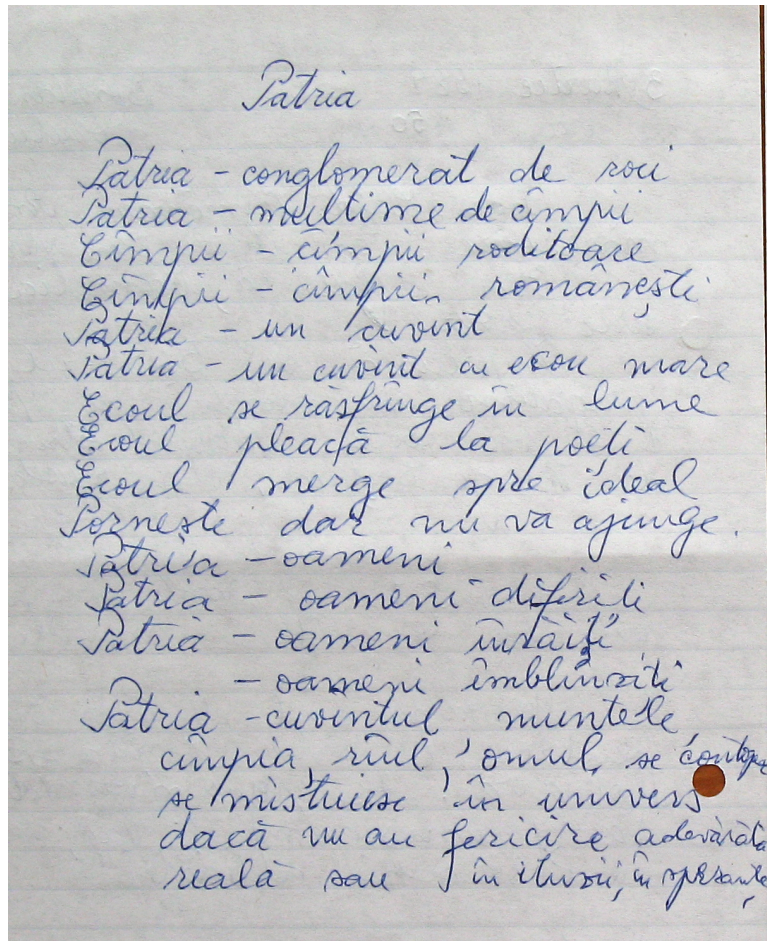


*Descriptions of nationalized landscape, entry of November 23, 1988*

“It snooooowed... ! This is the first snow day of the year. There is no need to mention the happiness of children and their silly jokes. Watching this fluff, this white splendor, watching this motherland snowed by old popular poems, watching this paradise, I remembered Nichita Stănescu's poem, ‘The Motherland:’

“Who am I? Sing your fields  
Who am I? Caress your mountains  
Who am I? Contemplate your cities  
Who am I? Look at your factories (...)  
Who am I? Look at yourself  
I have forever been yours, Motherland.”

These blank verses have impressed me profoundly. How about you? Have they made you a better person?”



“Motherland

Motherland – pile of rocks

Motherland – wealth of fields

Fields– fertile fields, Romanian fields

Motherland - Romanian fields

Motherland – a word

Motherland – a word that echoes into the world

The echo starts from the poets

It travels towards the ideal

It travels but never reaches its destination

Motherland – people

Motherland- different people (...)

Motherland – the word, the mountain, the field, the river, the man become one and melt into the universe”



**Text V:** Cosmin Manolache, “La Babele,” *Cartea cu Euri*, 185-6.

*In the Mountains [La Babele]* - seventh grade school composition (1985)

On a vacation, I went to the Bucegi Mountains to see the Old Ladies and the Sphinx, grand “miracles of nature.”<sup>981</sup> After watching [vizionare] these strange forms created by nature, I proposed to my friends to walk to Busteni by foot and through the forest.

Halfway on our trip, we saw a cabin and a small enclosure surrounded by a wire fence, full with papers, cans, and litter. Drawing near, we noticed a board with the message: “Don’t let us find this mess next year! Even so, we will come again because we love the mountains, we like nature, and this tonic air!”

While we were asking ourselves who could have written this board, an old man shows up. After we started the conversation, we learned that the group of children from Poiana Tapului did this thing [cleaning littered areas].

They, said the old man, learned this thing from an early age, from their parents and grandparents. This thing sank deeply into their soul. They love the environment.

But here they are, said again the old man.

There was a group of seven children. We had found out from the old man that they took care of a deer they found wounded. After a few moments, the old man said:

I imagine you would like to get to know each other.

Yes, we answered in unison.

After we got close to these children, the old man asked them smiling:

Hey, Andrei, what are you doing here? Don’t tell me you are doing research... or look for mushrooms for lunch.

Neither, answered Andrei. I just came to see if the ferns we planted are budding. If they are protected, they will grow.

Come here, let me introduce you to some children who were curious about your message, said the old man. After we met Andrei, Sandu, Gina, Costel, Rodica, Monica and George, we started helping them.

In the three weeks, that we spent, together with those children we created a nursery of fir trees and pines, we fought against pollution, we restored the natural equilibrium wherever necessary, and we also started to feel in our hearts this love of nature, this wish to breathe the cleanest air and listen to the waves of crystal clear and ice cold waters.

---

<sup>981</sup> Babele and Sfinxul are rock formations in the Bucegi Mountains.

**Text VI:** “Form for the Year 2000,” *Cutezătorii*, no 23, 1971.

Motto: “The school children of today will be the creators of material and spiritual values of the year 2000. The third millennium depends on their hard work and love of novelty/innovation.” (Henri Coanda)

*What do you want to be in the year 2000?*

*In what domains have you excelled so far? Mathematics, Literature, Drawing, Physics, Natural Sciences, Chemistry, Sports, others, none.*

*Have you received any prizes, awards, or distinctions in the past two years? In what domains? School performance (prizes), pioneer activity, Math and Physics Olympiad, Literature Olympiad, cultural-artistic competitions, technical contests, sports contests, others.*

*Have you ever considered making an invention? Describe it.*

*What contribution would you like to make to the welfare of humankind?*

*How do you spend your free time?*

*Who is your model in life?*

**Text VII:** “Form for the Year 2000” [The Golden Archive], *Cutezătorii*, no 12, 1973.

Motto: “The communist order of tomorrow will take the shape that we anticipate and forge today. I could say that the contours of the communist order in which you will work and live depends on you.” (Nicolae Ceauescu)

**I. The Future Begins Today**

*1. What do you want to be in the year 2000?*

*2. Are you familiar with brave deeds from the life of communists, communist youth, or pioneers around you? Describe them at length in the annex.*

*3. What heroes and personalities constitute a model for you? Why?*

**II. Pioneer Every Minute of the Day**

*4. What are some of the memorable moments of your pioneer activity? Why?*

*5. How do you imagine pioneer activity in 2000?*

**III. Horizon 2000**

*6. To what major problem of humankind would you like to devote yourself in 2000?*

*7. What sources of pollution did you notice in your village or town? How do you propose to protect the environment?*

*8. Considering that mechanization and cybernetics will ease human labor, how do you imagine a workday in the third millennium? What about a rest day?*

*9. What is your favorite game that would be worth teaching children in the year 2000?*

**IV. The Launch Tower**

*10. Are you considering making an invention or innovation? What do you have in mind? If possible, attach the project.*

*11. Attach to this form your contributions in the domain of your talent: Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, natural sciences, Geography, History, Literature (short story, poetry, reportage), plastic arts (drawing, comic strip, caricatures, photography).*

*12. If you were asked to design an economic or socio-cultural project or a monument in your city, what would you design? Why?*

**V. Olympic Rings**

*13. What sports do you practice? What level of performance have you achieved?*

*14. If you could participate in the Olympic games of 1976, what performances would you like to achieve?*

## Bibliography

### Archives

*Arhivele Naționale Istorice Centrale (ANIC)*, National Central Historical Archives, Bucharest

- Fond C.C. al P.C.R. – Propagandă
- Fond C.C. al P.C.R. – Organizatorică
- Fond C.C. al P.C.R. – Cancelarie
- Fond C.C. al P.C.R. – Cadre

*Arhiva Organizației Pionierilor din R.S.R.* - uncatalogued fund (1966-1985), Archive of the Romanian Pioneers (ARP)<sup>982</sup>

- dosare Constituirea Consiliului Național al Organizației Pionierilor
- dosare Tabere, Tabere externe
- dosare Corespondența externă, Corespondență cu Ministerul Educației și Învățământului
- dosare Materiale Trimise la C.C. al P.C.R.
- dosare Rapoarte statistice

*Arhiva Consiliului Național pentru Studierea Arhivelor Securității (ACNSAS)*, The National Council for the Study of the Securitate Archives, Bucharest

- Fond Documentar (fD) 8833, file 39, 410.

*Arhiva Clubului de sport și turism, Palatul Național al Copiilor*, Archive of the Sports and Tourism Club, National Children's Palace, Bucharest

*Arhiva Clubul de istorie și turism*, Archive of the History and Tourism Club, Năpradea, Salaj

*The Youth Movement Archive, Woodcraft Folk Organization (YMA/WF)*, Library of the London School of Economics, London

### Newspapers and Periodicals

22

*Cutezătorii*

*Cotidianul*

*Cravata roșie*

*Dilema Veche*

---

<sup>982</sup> At the time of my research, from August 2008 through August 2010, the archive was temporarily held in the basement of the Palatul Național al Copiilor in Bucharest and was not publicly open to researchers. I am thankful to Dorin Dobrinu, the director of the National Archives, who informed me of the right of access to information of public relevance, and to Radu Anghel Vasilescu, the director of the Palatul Național, who approved my petition to consult the archive.

*Educația pionierească*  
*Femeia*  
*Gazeta învățământului*  
*Gazeta literară*  
*Jurnalul național*  
*Luminița*  
*Pogonici*  
*Revista de pedagogie*  
*Scînteia*  
*Scînteia pionierului*

### **Other Printed Primary Sources**

- Almaș, Dumitru, and Ioan Scurtu. *Turism cu manualul de istorie*. Bucharest: Editura pentru turism, 1973.
- Anuarul Statistic al României*, 1990.
- Apostol, Pavel. *Omul anului 2000*. Iași: Junimea, 1972.
- Artek*. Kiev, 1955.
- Artek, Mir, Drujba*. Kiev: Mistetstvo Publishers, 1987.
- Berca, Ion. *Metodica predării limbii române*. Bucharest: EDP, 1971.
- Blideanu, Eugen, and Ion Șerdean. *Orientări noi în metodologia studierii limbii române la ciclul primar*. Bucharest: EDP, 1981.
- Bratu, Bianca. *Literatura și educația estetică a preadolescentului*. București: EDP, 1970.
- Bručan, Silviu. *Generația irosită*. Bucharest: Editura Univers, 1992.
- Caroni, Cecilia. *Metodica predării limbii și literaturii române*. Bucharest: EDP, 1967.
- Cărtărescu, Mircea, Traian T. Coșovei, Florin Iaru, and Ion Stratan. *Aer cu diamante*. Editura Litera, 1982.
- Ceaușescu, Nicolae. “Cuvântare la Consfătuirea de constituire a Consiliului Național al Organizației Pionierilor.” *Revista de pedagogie* 11 (1966): 5-10.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *România pe drumul desăvârșirii construcției socialiste*. Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1968.
- \_\_\_\_\_. “Cuvântare” [Address at the National Conference of the Pioneer Organization]. *Educația pionierească* 11 (1971): 2.

- \_\_\_\_\_. *Propuneri de măsuri pentru îmbunătățirea activității politico-ideologice, de educare marxist-leninistă a membrilor de partid, a tuturor oamenilor muncii – 6 iulie 1971*. Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1971.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *România pe drumul construirii societății socialiste multilateral dezvoltate*. Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1972.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *România pe drumul construirii societății socialiste multilateral dezvoltate*. Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1973.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Raport la cel de-al XI-lea Congres al Partidului Comunist Român*. Editura Politică, 1974.
- Cernat, Paul, Ion Manolescu, Angelo Mitchievici, and Ioan Stanomir. *În căutarea comunismului pierdut*. Pitești: Editura paralela 45, 2001.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *O lume dispărută: patru istorii personale*. Bucharest: Polirom, 2004.
- Chircev, Anatole. "Câteva aspecte ale educării patriotismului socialist la elevi." *Gazeta învățământului*, November 29, 1957.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Educația moral-politică a tineretului școlar*. Bucharest: EDP, 1974.
- Chircev, Anatole et al. *Pedagogia pentru institutele pedagogice*. EDP, 1964.
- Consiliul Municipiului București al Organizației Pionierilor. *Dintre sute de catarge*. 1969.
- Decuble, Gabriel, ed. *Cartea roz a comunismului*. Iași: Versus, 2004.
- Diaconu, Constantin, ed. *Expedițiile Cutezătorii*. Bucharest: Editura Ion Creangă, 1973.
- Ene, Elena, Georgeta Smeu, Silvia Bărbuleanu, Gloria Ceacalopol. *Metodica predării istoriei României*. Bucharest: EDP, 1981.
- Fleancu, Gheorghiuța, and Virgil Radulian. *Disciplina conștientă și educarea ei în școala medie mixtă*. EDP, 1962.
- Frazzei, Florian, Tudor Opreș, and Lucian Panait. *Pionier, cunoaște-ți țara! Ghid turistic*. Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1968.
- Furin, Stanislav, and Y. Rybinsky. *The Artek Pioneer Camp*. Moscow: Novosti Press Agency, 1975.
- Gafan, Tatiana. *Metodica predării istoriei*. Bucharest: EDP, 1968.
- Gheo, Radu Pavel, and Dan Lungu, eds. *Tovarășe de drum: experiența feminină în comunism*. București: Polirom, 2008.

- Gheo, Radu Pavel. *Noapte buna, copii*. Iasi: Polirom, 2010.
- Gherghuț, Sorin. “În apărarea timpului pierdut.” *Observatorul cultural* 74, July 2001.
- Ghiu, Bogdan. “Cenaclul de luni, Republica literelor: pentru o democrație estetică.” *LiterNet*, November 23, 2008.
- Ghidul Pionierului*. Bucharest: Întreprinderea Poligrafică “Bucureștii Noi,” 1985.
- Ghitera, Alexandru. *Organizația pionierilor: școală a educației comuniste, revoluționare, a copiilor*. Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1986.
- Gusti, Dimitrie, Constantin Orghidan, Mircea Vulcănescu, eds. *Enciclopedia României*, vol. 1. Bucharest: Imprimeriile Naționale, 1938.
- Hensel, Jana. *After The Wall: Confessions from an East German Childhood and the Life That Came Next*. New York: PublicAffairs, 2004.
- Iorga, Nicolae. *Cercetașii și monumentele noastre de istorie și artă*. Bucharest: Jockey Club, 1919.
- Istodor, Eugen. *Cartea vieții mele: Șulea 31, N3, sc.2. Cu ocazia comunismului*. Bucharest: Polirom, 2007.
- Îndrumător turistic. În ajutorul Secțiilor de Turism și Excursii din Întreprinderi*. Bucharest: Imprimeria Ministerului Căilor Ferate, 1954.
- Jinga, Luciana Marioara, ed. *Elev in communism*. Bucharest: Curtea Veche, 2009.
- Lubimova, Valentina. *Soviet Children at Summer Camp*. Moscow: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1955.
- Malita, Mircea. *Cronica anului 2000*. Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1969.
- Marin, Toma. *Limba româna, lecturi literare* (clasa a VII-a). Bucharest: EDP, 1977.
- Ministerul Învățământului. *Metodica predării istoriei în școala de 8 ani*. EDP, 1962.
- Ministerul Învățământului Public. *Limba romană: manual unic pentru clasa a VIII-a medie (noțiuni de teoria literarii)*. Editura de stat, 1949.
- Munteanu, Tanța. *Citire* (clasa a IV-a). Bucharest: EDP, 1987.
- Muzeul Taranului Roman. *Mărturii orale: anii '80 si Bucureștenii*. Bucharest: Paideia, 2003.
- Opriș, Tudor. *Copii-poeți*. Editura tineretului, 1969.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Copiii cânta România*. Bucharest: EDP, 1979.

Popescu, Dumitru. *Am fost și cioplitor de himere, Un fost lider communist se destăinuie*. Editura Expres, 1994.

Popescu, Ilie. "*Dacia Felix:*" *35 de ani de istorie si turism, 1972-2007*. Zalau, 2007.

Rostas, Zoltan, and Adrian Momoc, eds. *Activiștii mărunți: istorii de viață*. Bucuresti: Curtea Veche, 2007.

Rostas, Zoltan, and Theodora Eliza-Vacarescu, eds. *Cealaltă jumătate a istoriei: femei povestind*. București : Curtea Veche, 2008.

Rusan, Romulus. *Exerciții de memorie*. Bucharest: Fundatia Academia Civica, 1999.

Stanciu, Ilie. "Unele probleme ale literaturii pentru copii." *Revista de pedagogie* 1-3 (1954): 21-37.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Literatura pentru copii și îndrumarea lecturii copiilor*. Bucharest: Editura de stat, 1957.

Șchiopu, Ursula, and Viorica Piscoi. *Psihologia generală și a copilului (manual pentru liceele pedagogice)*. Bucharest: EDP, 1982.

Șerdean, Ion, Florian Dițuleasa, and Eliza Paveliuc. *Citire (clasa a III-a)*. Bucharest: EDP, 1987.

Thorez, Paul. *Model Children: Inside the Republic of Red Scarves*. Brooklyn, New York: Autonomedia, 1991.

Vlăduțiu, Ion. *Turism cu manualul de etnografie*. Bucharest: Editura sport si turism, 1976.

Vlăduțiu, Ion, ed. *Expedițiile Cutezătorii, școală a iubirii de patrie*. Bucharest: CNOP, 1988.

Vuia, Romulus. *Studii de etnografie și folclor*, vol 1. Bucharest: Editura Minerva, 1975.

Zaica, Dorel. *Experimentul Zaica*. Bucharest: Editura Meridiane, 2000.



## Secondary Sources

- Austin, J. L. *How To Do Things With Words*. Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1962.
- Bakhtin, Mikhail. *The Dialogical Imagination: Four Essays by Mikhail Bakhtin*. Edited by Michael Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. Edited by Caryl Emerson. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984.
- Banac, Ivo, and Katherine Verdery, eds. *National Character and National Ideology in Interwar Eastern Europe*. New Haven: Yale Center For International and Area Studies, 1995.
- Barbu, Daniel. "Destinul colectiv, servitutea involuntară, nefericirea totalitară: trei mituri ale comunismului românesc." In *Miturile comunismului românesc*, edited by Lucian Boia, 175-197. Bucharest: Nemira, 1998.
- Bauman, Zygmunt. "Intellectuals in East-Central Europe: Continuity and Change." *Eastern European Politics and Societies* (1987): 162-186.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Modernity and Ambivalence*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Love in Adversity: On the State and the Intellectuals, and the State of the Intellectuals." *Thesis Eleven* 31 (1992): 81-104.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Intimations of Postmodernity*. New York: Routledge, 1992.
- Berdahl, Daphne. "'(N)Ostalgie' for the Present: Memory, Longing, and East German Things." *Ethnos* 64 (1999): 204-5.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Re-Presenting the Socialist Modern: Museums and Memory in the Former GDR." In *Socialist Modern: East German Everyday Culture and Politics*, edited by Katherine Pence and Paul Betts, 345- 363. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *On the Social Life of Postsocialism: Memory, Consumption, Germany*. Edited by Matti Bunzl. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010.
- Betts, Paul. "The Twilight of the Idols: East German Memory and Material Culture." *Journal of Modern History* 72 (2000): 731-65.
- Boia, Lucian. *Miturile comunismului românesc*. Bucharest: Nemira, 1998.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Istorie și mit în conștiința românească*. Bucharest: Humanitas, 2010.
- Bošković, Aleksandar. "Yugonostalgia and Yugoslav Cultural Memory: *Lexicon of Yu Mythology*." *Slavic Review* 72, 1 (Spring 2013): 54-78.

- Bourdieu, Pierre. "The Social Space and the Genesis of Groups," *Theory and Society* 14, 6 (Nov 1985): 723-744.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Language and Symbolic Power*. Edited by John B. Thompson. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991.
- Boym, Svetlana. *The Future of Nostalgia*. New York: Basic Books, 2001.
- Branc, Simona. *Generații în schimbare. Modele de educație familială în Banatul secolului XX*. Iași: Lumen, 2008.
- Brandenberger, David. *National Bolshevism: Stalinist Mass Culture and the Formation of Modern Russian National Identity, 1931-1956*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002.
- Brandenberger, D. L., and A. M. Dubrovsky. "'The People Need a Tsar': the Emergence of National Bolshevism as Stalinist Ideology, 1931-1941." *Europe-Asia Studies* 50, no. 5 (1998): 871-90.
- Bren, Paulina. *The Greengrocer and His TV: The Culture of Communism After the 1968 Prague Spring*. Cornell University Press, 2010.
- Brock, Angela. "Producing the 'Socialist Personality'? Socialisation, Education, and the Emergence of New Patterns of Behavior." *Power and Society in the GDR, 1961-1979 The 'Normalization of Rule'?* edited by Mary Fulbrook, 220-254. New York: Berghahn Books, 2009.
- Brubaker, Rogers. *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- Bucur, Maria. *Eugenics and Modernization in Interwar Romania*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2002.
- Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge, 1990.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex."* New York: Routledge, 1993.
- Castells, Manuel. *Networks of Outrage and Hope: Social Movements in the Internet Age*. Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2012.
- Cărtărescu, Mircea. *Postmodernismul românesc*. Bucharest: Humanitas, 1999.
- Cernat, Paul, Ion Manolescu, Angelo Mitchievici, and Ioan Stanomir. *Explorări în comunismul românesc*, vols. 1, 2, and 3. Iași: Polirom, 2004, 2005, 2008.
- Cesereanu, Ruxandra. "Fenomenul Piața Universității 1990." 22, May 12, 2003.

- Chelcea, Septimiu. *Un secol de cercetări psihosociologice (1897-1997)*. Iași: Polirom, 2002.
- Childs, David, ed. *The Changing Face of Western Communism*. London: Croom Helm, 1980.
- Clark, Katerina. *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000.
- Constantin, Carmen. "Interviu cu Dan Lungu." *Adevărul*, March 2012.
- Cooke, Paul. "Surfing for Eastern Difference: *Ostalgie*, Identity, and Cyberspace." *Seminar: Journal of Germanic Studies* 40, 3 (Sept 2004): 207-220.
- Creed, Gerald. *Domesticating Revolution: From Socialist Reform to Ambivalent Transition in a Bulgarian Village*. University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Deconstructing Socialism in Bulgaria." In *Uncertain Transition: Ethnographies of Change in the Postsocialist World*, edited by Michael Burawoy and Katherine Verdery, 223-244. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1999.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Strange Bedfellows: Socialist Nostalgia and Neoliberalism in Bulgaria." In *Post Communist Nostalgia*, edited by Maria Todorova and Zsuzsa Gille, 29-45. New York: Berghahn, 2010.
- Cunningham, Hugh. *Children and Childhood in Western Society Since 1500*. London: Longman, 1995.
- David-Fox, Michel. "The Fellow Travelers Revisited: The "Cultured West" through Soviet Eyes." *The Journal of Modern History* 75 (2003): 300-335.
- Deac, Cristina. "Reformarea școlii, lumini și umbre." *Jurnalul Național*, September 18, 2007.
- Deletant, Denis. *Ceaușescu and the Securitate: Coercion and Dissent in Romania, 1965-1989*. M.E. Sharpe, 1995.
- Derrida, Jacques. "Signature Event Context." *Glyph* 1 (1977): 172-197.
- Diac, Florin. *O istorie a învățământului românesc modern*, vol 2. Bucharest: Oscar Print, 2004.
- Dobrenko, Evgheny. "'The Entire Real World of Children: The School Tale and 'Our Happy Childhood.'" *The Slavic and East European Journal*, 49, 2 (2005): 225-248.
- Dunham, Vera. *In Stalin's Time: Middleclass Values in Soviet Fiction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976.
- Edelman, Robert. *Serious Fun: A History of Spectator Sports in the USSR*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.

- Erdei, Ildiko. “‘The Happy Child’ as an Icon of Socialist Transformation: Yugoslavia’s Pioneer Organization” In *Ideologies and National Identities. The Case of Twentieth-Century Southeastern Europe*, edited by John Lampe, Mark Mazower, 154-171. Budapest: Central European University Press, 2004.
- Fabian, Johannes. *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1983.
- Falk, Barbara. *The Dilemmas of Dissidence in East-Central Europe: Citizen Intellectuals and Philosopher Kings*. Budapest: Central European University, 2003.
- Firlit, Elzbieta, and Jerzy Chlopecki. “When Theft Is Not Theft.” In *The Unplanned Society: Poland During and After Communism*, edited by J. Wedel, 95-109. New York: Columbia University Press, 1992.
- Fitzpatrick, Sheila. *Education and Social Mobility in the Soviet Union, 1921-1934* (Cambridge University Press, 1979).
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Cultural Front: Power and Culture in Revolutionary Russia*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1992.
- \_\_\_\_\_. “Making a Self for the Times: Impersonation and Imposture in Twentieth Century Russia.” *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 2, 3 (2001): 469-87.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Tear off the Masks! Identity and Imposture in Twentieth Century Russia*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005.
- \_\_\_\_\_. “The Soviet Union in the Twenty-First Century.” *Journal of European Studies* 37 (2007): 51-71.
- Foucault, Michel. “Two Lectures.” *Power/knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings 1972-1977*, edited by C. Gordon. Pantheon Books, 1980.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values*. Edited by Sterling McMurrin. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1981.
- \_\_\_\_\_. “The Subject and Power.” *Critical Inquiry* (1982), 777-795.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*, edited by L. H. Martin, Huck Gutman, and Patrick H. Hutton. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988.
- Friedlmeier, Mihaela, and Alin Gavreliuc. “Value orientations and perception of social change in post-communist Romania.” In *Intergenerational Relations*, edited by Isabelle Albert and Dieter Ferring, 119-130. Policy Press, 2013.

- Fritzsche, Peter. "On the Subjects of Resistance." *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 1, 1 (2000): 147-152.
- Fulbrook, Mary. *The People's State: East German Society from Hitler to Honecker*. New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 2005.
- Fürst, Juliane. *Stalin's Last Generation. Soviet Post-War Youth and the Emergence of Mature Socialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- Gellner, Ernest. *Nations and Nationalism*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006.
- Georgeoff, Peter. *The Social Education of Bulgarian Youth*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1968.
- Georgescu, Vlad. "Romania in the 1980s: The Legacy of Dynastic Socialism." *Eastern European Politics and Societies* 2 (1988): 69-93.
- Gillespie, Tarleton, Pablo Boczkowski, and Kirsten Foot, eds. *Media Technologies: Essays on Communication, Materiality, and Society*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Gillis, John. *Youth and History: Tradition and Change in European Age Relations, 1770 to the Present*. New York: Academic Press, 1981.
- Ginzburg, Carlo. "Latitude, Slaves, and the Bible: An Experiment in Microhistory." *Critical Inquiry* 31 (2005): 665-83.
- Giurchescu, Anca. "The National Festival 'Song to Romania:' Manipulation of Symbols in the Political Discourse." In *Symbols of Power. The Esthetics of Political Legitimation in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe*, edited by C. Arvidsson and L. E. Blomqvist, 163-72. Stockholm, 1987.
- Giurescu, Dinu C., ed. *Istoria României în date*, Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică, 2003.
- Gleason, Abbott. *Totalitarianism: The Inner History of the Cold War*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.
- Gorsuch, Anne. *Youth in Revolutionary Russia: Enthusiasts, Bohemians, Delinquents*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *All This is Your World: Soviet Tourism At Home and Abroad After Stalin*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Gorsuch, Anne, and Diane Koenker. *Turizm: the Russian and East European Tourist Under Capitalism and Socialism*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006.

- Grama, Emanuela. "Building Politics, Searching for Heritage: Archaeology, Architecture, and Imaginaries of Social Order in Romania, 1947-2007." PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2010.
- Grancea, Mihaela. "Retorica morții în epitaful revoluționarilor din decembrie '89," In *Revoluția română din decembrie 1989: istorie și memorie*, edited by Bogdan Murgescu, 45-78. Iași: Polirom, 2007.
- Guentcheva, Rossitza. "Images of the West in Bulgarian Travel Writing During Socialism, 1945-1989." In *Under Eastern Eyes: A Comparative Introduction to East European Travel Writing on Europe*, edited by Wendy Bracewell and Alex Drace-Francis, 355-78. Budapest: Central European University Press, 2008.
- Handler, Richard. "Is 'Identity' a Useful Cross-Cultural Concept?" In *Commemorations. The Politics of National Identity*, edited by John R. Gillis, 27-40. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994.
- Hedeșan, Otilia, and Vintila Mihăilescu. "The Making of the Peasant in Romanian Ethnology." *Martor* 11 (2006): 187-202.
- Hellbeck, Jochen. *Revolution on My Mind: Writing a Diary Under Stalin*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006.
- Hendrick, Harry. *Children, Childhood and English Society, 1880-1990*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- Henwood, Flis, Nod Miller, Peter Senker, Sally Wyatt, eds. *Technologies and In/equality: Questioning the Information Society*. London: Routledge, 2000.
- Higonnet, Anne. *Pictures of Innocence: The History and Crisis of Ideal Childhood*. New York: Thames and Hudson, 1998.
- Hoffmann, David. *Stalinist Values: The Cultural Norms of Soviet Modernity, 1917-1941*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003.
- Huyssen, Andreas. *Present Pasts, Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003.
- James, Harold, and Marla Stone, eds. *When the Wall Came Down: Reactions to German Unification*. New York: Routledge, 1992.
- Jowitt, Kenneth. "Inclusion and Mobilization in European Leninist Regimes." *World Politics* 28,1 (October 1975): 69-96.
- Judson, Peter. "Frontiers, Islands, Forests, Stones: Mapping the Geography of a German Identity in the Habsburg Monarchy, 1848-1900." In *The Geography of Identity*, edited by Patricia Yaeger, 382-406. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996.

- Jutteau, Katalin. *L'enfance Embrigadée Dans La Hongrie Communiste: Le Mouvement Des Pionniers*. Paris: L'Harmattan, 2007.
- Keller, Jessalynn. "Virtual Feminisms: Girls' Blogging Communities, Feminist Activism, and Participatory Politics." *Information, Communication & Society* 15, 3 (2012): 429-447.
- Kelly, Catriona. "'The School Waltz': The Everyday Life of the Post-Stalinist Soviet Classroom." *Forum for Anthropology and Culture* 1 (2004): 108-58.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Shaping the 'Future Race': Regulating the Daily Life of Children in Early Soviet Russia." In *Everyday Life in Early Soviet Russia. Taking the Revolution Inside*, edited by Christina Kiaer and Eric Naiman, 256-281. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Children's World: Growing Up in Russia, 1890-1991*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Defending Children's Rights, 'In Defense of Peace': Children and Soviet Cultural Diplomacy." *Kritika* 9, 4 (Fall 2008): 711-746.
- Kenney, Padraic. *A Carnival of Revolution: Central Europe 1989*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002.
- Kharkhordin, Oleg. *The Collective and the Individual in Russia: A Study of Practices*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999.
- Kideckel, David A. *Getting By in Postsocialist Romania: Labor, the Body, and Working-Class Culture*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008.
- Kirschenbaum, Lisa. *Small Comrades: Revolutionizing Childhood in Soviet Russia, 1917-1932*. New York: Routledge Farmer, 2001.
- Kligman, Gail. *The Politics of Duplicity: Controlling Reproduction in Ceaușescu's Romania*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998.
- Kligman, Gail, and Katherine Verdery. *Peasants Under Siege: The Collectivization of Romanian Agriculture*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011.
- Koleva, Daniela, ed. *Negotiating Normality: Everyday Lives in Socialist Institutions*. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2012.
- Konrad, George, and Ivan Szelenyi. *The Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power*. Brighton: Harvester Press, 1979.
- Kotkin, Stephen. *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as Civilization*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995.

- Krylova, Anna. "The Tenacious Liberal Subject in Soviet Studies." *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 1, 1 (2000): 119-146.
- Kubik, Jan. *The Power of Symbols Against the Symbols of Power: The Rise of Solidarity and the Fall of State Socialism in Poland*. University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994.
- Labov, Jessie. "Leksikon Yu Mitologije: Reading Yugoslavia from Abramović to žmurke." In *Mythistory and Narratives of the Nation in the Balkans*, edited by Tatjana Aleksić, 22-48. Cambridge Scholars Press, 2007.
- Lee, Christopher J. "'Gender without Groups': Confession, Resistance and Selfhood in the Colonial Archive," *Gender and History* 24, 3 (2012): 701-717.
- Lefter, Ion Bogdan. *Postmodernism. Din dosarul unei "bătălii" culturale*. Pitesti: Editura Paralela 45, 2002.
- Linde, Charlotte. *Life Stories: The Creation of Coherence*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.
- Livezeanu, Irina. *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania: Regionalism, Nation Building and Ethnic Struggle, 1918-1930*. Ithaca, N.Y., and London: Cornell University Press, 2000.
- Livschitz, Ann. "Growing up Soviet: Childhood in the Soviet Union, 1918—1958." PhD diss., Stanford University, 2007.
- Lovell, Stephen, ed. *Generations in Twentieth-Century Europe*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.
- Lovinescu, Irina. *Unde scurte*, vol 1. Bucharest: Humanitas, 1990.
- Mack, Phyllis. *Heart Religion in the British Enlightenment: Gender and Emotion in Early Methodism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.
- Mahmood, Saba. *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005.
- Manolescu, Florin. *Literatura S.F.* Bucharest: Univers, 1980.
- Manolescu, Nicolae. "Realismul socialist. Literatura 'nouă.'" *Revista literară Vatra* 9-10 (2004): 83-136.
- Mannheim, Karl. "The Problem of Generations." In *From Karl Mannheim*, edited by Kurt H. Wolff, 351-395. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1993.



- Mark, James. *The Unfinished Revolution: Making Sense of the Communist Past in Central Eastern Europe*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010.
- Massino, Jill. "From Black Caviar to Blackouts: Gender, Consumption, and Lifestyle in Ceaușescu's Romania." In *Communism Unwrapped: Consumption in Cold War Eastern Europe*, edited by Paulina Bren and Mary Neuburger, 226-249. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- McChesney, Robert. *Digital Disconnect: How Capitalism is Turning the Internet Against Democracy*. New York: The New Press, 2013.
- Mihăilescu, Vintila, Ilia Iliev, and Slobodan Naumovic, eds. *Studying Peoples in the People's Democracies: Socialist Era Anthropology in South-East Europe*, vol. 2. Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2008.
- Müller, Herta, and Gabriel Liiceanu. "Limba celor care nu scriu și 'tîmpita de patrie.'" *Dilema veche* 347, October 7, 2010.
- Nadkarni, Maya. "The Politics of Authenticity in Post-Socialist Hungary." In *Post-Communist Nostalgia*, edited by Maria Todorova and Zsuzsa Gille, 190-214. New York: Berghahn, 2010.
- Neculau, Adrian, ed. *Viața cotidiană în communism*. Iasi: Polirom, 2004.
- Negrici, Eugen. "Mitul patriei primejduite." In *Miturile comunismului românesc*, edited by Lucian Boia, 220-6. Bucharest: Nemira, 1988.
- Nightingale, Virginia, and Tim Dwyer. *New Media Worlds: Challenges for Convergence*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Nora, Pierre. "Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Mémoire*." *Representations* 26 (1989): 7-25.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Reasons for the Current Upsurge in History." *Tr@nsit online* 22, 2002.
- Opriș, Tudor. *Istoria debutului literar al scriitorilor romani in timpul scolii, 1820-2000*. Bucharest: Aramis, 2002.
- Passerini, Luisa. "Work Ideology and Consensus under Italian Fascism." *History Workshop* 8 (1979): 82-108.
- Peacock, Margaret. "Broadcasting Benevolence: Images of the Child in Soviet, American, and NLF Propaganda to Vietnam, 1965-1973." *The Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth* 3, 1 (Winter 2010): 15-38.

- Pence, Katherine, and Paul Betts. *Socialist Modern. East German Everyday Culture and Politics*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008.
- Petrescu, Dragos. "Communist Legacies in the 'New Europe:' History, Ethnicity, and the Creation of a 'Socialist' Nation in Romania, 1945-1989." In *Conflicted Memories: Europeanizing Contemporary Histories*, edited by Konrad Jarausch and Thomas Lindenberger, 37-54. Berghahn Books, 2007.
- Pine, Joseph, and James Gilmore. *The Experience Economy*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1999.
- Plum, Catherine J. "Summer Camp for Socialists: Conformity and Escapism at Camp Mitschurin in East Germany." In *Socialist Escapes: Breaking Away from Ideology and Everyday Routine in Eastern Europe, 1945-1989*, edited by Cathleen M. Giustino, Catherine J. Plum, and Alexander Vari, 98-126. New York: Berghahn Books, 2013.
- Popescu, Ioana. "L' 'Art national' chez les Roumains." *Ethnologie Francaise* XXV (1995): 394-409.
- Portelli, Alessandro. "What Makes Oral History Different." In *The Oral History Reader*, edited by Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, 32-42. London, New York: Routledge, 2006.
- Raleigh, Donald J., trans. and ed. *Russia's Sputnik Generation. Soviet Baby Boomers Talk about Their Lives*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006.
- Reid, Susan. "Khrushchev's Children's Paradise: The Pioneer Palace, Moscow, 1958-1962." *Socialist Spaces: Sites of Everyday Life in the Eastern Bloc*, edited by David Crowley and Susan Reid, 141-80. Oxford, New York: Berg, 2002.
- Rheingolds, Howard. *The Virtual Community: Homesteading on the Electronic Frontier*. Reading: Addison Wesley, 1993
- Riordan, James. *Sport in Soviet Society: Development of Sport and Physical Education in Russia and the USSR*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980.
- Rodden, John. *Textbook Reds: Schoolbooks, Ideology and East German Identity*. Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006.
- Roseman, Mark, ed. *Generations in Conflict: Youth Revolt and Generation Formation in Germany 1770-1986*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- Salmon, Christian, and Milan Kundera. "Conversation with Milan Kundera on the Art of the Novel." Translated by Linda Asher. *Salmagundi* 73 (1987): 120-35.
- Saunders, Anna. *Honecker's Children: Youth and Patriotism in East(ern) Germany, 1979-2002*. Manchester, 2007.

- Scott, James. *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*. New Heaven, Yale University Press, 1985.
- Scott, Joan. "The Evidence of Experience." *Critical Inquiry* 17, 4 (2001): 773-797.
- Simuț, Ion. "Canonul literar proletcultist." *Romania literară*, July 2008.
- Slevin, James. *The Internet Society*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000.
- Smith, Sidonie. "Who's Talking?/Who's Talking Back? The Subject of Personal Narrative." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 18, 2 (1993): 392-407.
- Stancu, Eugen. "Engineering the Human Soul: Science Fiction in Communist Romania, 1955-1989." PhD diss., Central European University, 2010.
- Stanomir, Ioan. "Dincolo de dosare. Partid, Securitate si Constituție." *Revista* 22, September 15, 2009.
- Stargardt, Nicholas. *Witnesses of War: Children's Lives Under the Nazis*. London: Jonathan Cape, 2005.
- Steedman, Carolyn. *Past Tenses. Essays on Writing, Autobiography and History*. London: Rivers Oram Press, 1992.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Strange Dislocations: Childhood and the Idea of Human Interiority, 1870-1930*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995.
- Suleiman, Susan Rubin. "Problems of Memory and Factuality in Recent Holocaust Memoirs: Wilkomirski/Wiesel." *Poetics Today*, 21, 3 (2000): 550.
- Suny, Ronald Grigor. "Stalin and his Stalinism: Power and Authority in the Soviet Union, 1930-1953." In *Stalinism and Nazism: Dictatorships in Comparison*, edited by Ian Kershaw, Moshe Lewin, 26-52. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- Ștefănescu, Alex. *Istoria literaturii române contemporane, 1941-2000*. Bucharest: Mașina de scris, 2005.
- Thompson, Paul. *The Voice of the Past. Oral History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978.
- Thomson, Alistair. "Four Paradigm Transformations in Oral History." *The Oral History Review* 34 (2007): 49-70.
- Tismăneanu, Vladimir. *Reinventing Politics: Eastern Europe from Stalin to Havel*. New York: Basic Books, 1992.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Stalinism for All Seasons: A Political History of Romanian Communism*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003.

- Todorova, Maria, and Zsuzsa Gille, eds. *Post-Communist Nostalgia*. New York: Berghahn, 2010.
- Todorova, Maria. "Introduction: The Process of Remembering Communism." In *Remembering Communism: Genres of Representation*, 9-34. New York: Social Science Research Council, 2010.
- Turkle, Sherry. *Life on Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995.
- Van Ree, Erik. *The Political Thought of Joseph Stalin: A Study in Twentieth Century Revolutionary Patriotism*. London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002.
- Van Ree, Erik. "Stalin as Marxist: the Western Roots of Stalin's Russification of Marxism." In *Stalin: A New History*, edited by Sarah Davies and James Harris, 159-180. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- Vassileva-Karagyozeva, Svetlana. "Voluntary social marginalization as a survival strategy in Polish postcommunist accounts of childhood." *The Sarmatian Review* 29, 1 (2009).
- Verdery, Katherine. *National Ideology Under Socialism: Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceaușescu's Romania*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *What Was Socialism, and What Comes Next?* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996.
- Volkov, Vadim. "The Concept of 'Kul'turnost': Notes on the Stalinist Civilizing Process." In *Stalinism: New Directions*, edited by Sheila Fitzpatrick, 210-30. London, New York: Routledge, 2000.
- Vučetić, Radina. "ABC Textbooks and Ideological Indoctrination of Children: 'Socialism Tailor-Made for Man' or 'Child Tailor-Made for Socialism'?" In *Childhood in South East-Europe: Historical Perspectives on Growing Up in the 19th and 20th Century*, edited by Slobodan Naumović and Miroslav Jovanović, 249-65. Belgrade and Graz, 2001.
- Wachtel, Andrew. *The Battle for Childhood. Creation of a Russian Myth*. Stanford University Press, 1990.
- Wertsch, James. *Voices of Collective Remembering*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Woronov, T. E. "Performing the Nation: China's Children as Little Red Pioneers." *Anthropological Quarterly* 80 (2007): 647-72.
- Yurchak, Alexei. *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006.

Zafiu, Rodica. *Limba și politica*. Bucharest: Editura Universității din București, 2007.

Zahra, Tara. *Kidnapped Souls: National Indifference and the Battle for Children in the Bohemian Lands, 1900-1948*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008.

Zerubavel, Eviatar. *Time Maps: Collective Memory and the Social Shape of the Past*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003.

Zimmer, Oliver. "In Search of Natural Identity: Alpine Landscape and the Reconstruction of the Swiss Nation." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 40, 4 (1998): 637-665.

### **Internet sources**

Tismăneanu et al., *Raport final*. Bucharest, 2006.

[http://www.presidency.ro/static/ordine/RAPORT\\_FINAL\\_CPADCR.pdf](http://www.presidency.ro/static/ordine/RAPORT_FINAL_CPADCR.pdf) Last accessed March 29, 2014

Legea educației și învățământului, December 1979.

[http://www.cdep.ro/pls/legis/legis\\_pck.htm\\_act\\_text?id=10480](http://www.cdep.ro/pls/legis/legis_pck.htm_act_text?id=10480). Last accessed March 2, 2014.

The European Union Center of Statistics

[http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY\\_OFFPUB/KS-SF-11-066/EN/KS-SF-11-066-EN.PDF](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_OFFPUB/KS-SF-11-066/EN/KS-SF-11-066-EN.PDF) Last accessed March 25, 2013.

The European Union Center of Statistics, "Gender Differences in the Use of Computers and the Internet" (2007) at [http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY\\_OFFPUB/KS-SF-07-119/EN/KS-SF-07-119-EN.PDF](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_OFFPUB/KS-SF-07-119/EN/KS-SF-07-119-EN.PDF) Last accessed March 25, 2013.

Institutul Național de Statistică

<http://statistici.insse.ro/shop/index.jsp?page=tempo3&lang=en&ind=TIC102D> Last accessed March 25, 2013.

[www.latrecut.ro](http://www.latrecut.ro)

<http://www.cafeneaua.com>