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The Constitutive Other
Topical and Tropical Phanariot in Modern Romania

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> "The vitality of one culture depends on its power
> to persuade her devoted that it represents the only
> way to satisfy and accomplish their aspirations.
> Its power depends on its capability to convince
> that its fictions are nothing but truths."
>
> Hayden WHITE

Few episodes in Romania's history are as heatedly debated, disputed, and instrumentalized for political, ideological, educational, and entertainment ends, as the *Phanariot Century*. The bulk of scholarly studies notwithstanding, for most Romanians this period represents the paradigmatic "Dark Age" of decadence, and the icon of the "Ancien Régime" of their national history. Due the univocal nature of the topic, the too strong and restrictive focus on aspects that are not necessarily essential and illustrative, the abused and misused *Phanariot* was gradually turned over the last two centuries into a trope[1].

Historians hardly ever attempted to defend the Phanariots and their Epoch. Arnold Toynbee's utopian reconstruction of a multi-racial and multi-confessional Balkan State ruled by Phanariots that was to replace the former Ottoman Empire, and as to solve the problems of the region, transformed in late 19th early 20th century in a maze of national states in permanent conflict, is rather an exception[2]. Romanian historiography, starting by late 19th century, with A.D. Xenopol, V.A. Urechia, and Nicolae Iorga, only reconsidered the *Veacul Fanariot*, rejecting previous black and white depictions, prejudgments, and labels imposed by the 1848 Generation while bringing some lights to the plot[3]. Stressing the idea of consensus, and downplaying the notion of a permanent conflict within the 18th century "Romanian" society, they simply replaced the former, rather simplistic ideal type of *Phanariot* with a more complex one[4]. Yet, despite these efforts, and more recent

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[1] The Phanariots (term derived from the name of the Phanar or Faner district of Istanbul) were members of the Greek elite, reinvented aristocracy, merchants and official translators (*tălmaci*) of the Ottoman Empire. They became famous in history mainly as appointed, between 1711 and 1821, ruling princes of the Principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia.

[2] See Neagu DJUVARA, *Între Orient și Occident: Țările Române la începutul epocii moderne*, Humanitas, București, 1995, p. 93.

[3] Ștefan LEMNY, *Sensibilitate și istorie în secolul XVIII-lea românesc*, Editura Meridiane, București, 1983, pp. 8-12.

[4] Alexandru ZUB, *De la istoria critică la criticism*, Editura Academiei, București, 1980, pp. 235-243. The new (ideological) orientation was meant to liberate the Romanians from the complex of inferiority generated by the long dependence on the Western role model. For Iorga, the idea of a unifying space represented by the Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman empires was decisive in purging the Phanariots of all their sins. Agents of a "Byzance après Byzance" cultural identity, and representatives of a common legacy, they were nonetheless to provide the Romanian cultural nationalism with a shield against the Western type of modernity.

ones – Alexandru Zub, Alexandru Duțu, Ștefan Lemny, Daniel Barbu, Neagu Dju-vara, Andrei Pippidi, and Bogdan Murgescu – are but the most prominent Roma-nian scholars that approached the topic at large, the academic, encyclopedic, and scientific discourses are often ineffective in their attempt to eliminate the long-term side effects of the late 18th and early 19th century anti-Phanariot discourse and to deconstruct the everlasting, powerful Phanariot myth[1].

Reflecting on the above matter, my intention is to analyze in the nexus created by text and context a particular set of written works and historical events relevant to the process of shaping Romanian modern historical culture and national iden-tity[2]. My aim is to reconstruct the intrigue behind the conflict flanked by the anti-thetical role models of the *Good Romanian* and *Evil Phanariot*. In this sense, I will trace and analyze the emergence and evolution of the specific, anti-Phanariot dis-course. Following Vlad Georgescu's approach, my focus is on the origins of that theme, its dynamic, and frequency, the way it was used, abused, and misused by the Romanian elites during the 19th and 20th century[3]. Thus, my emphasis is not on political and social themes but rather on issues closer to cultural history, with the *Phanariot* as a literary artifact making my chief attention. I will not cover the exist-ing body of literature, a too rich and diverse raw material produced over the last two centuries, wholeheartedly. Inspired by Hayden White's "archeology of ideas"[4], I will consider and analyze only some of the most representative and popular rep-resentations of the *Phanariot*. Consequently, the final result will consist in a collec-tion of artifacts that might illuminate the reader on the complex cultural pedigree of a constitutive, in many respects fictional, *Otherness*.

A product meant to cultivate intimacies, curdle communities, strengthen the sentiment of belonging, and insure loyalty toward community, the political dis-course of the 19th century is by its nature topical and tropical. Promoting non-inno-cent images as to exalt ideals and common values, and inculcate them in individuals circumscribed to targeted groups, its "sermons" are extremely seductive when fo-cus on the issue of political power, and dreadful when capture the icon of internal and external enemy.

In South East Europe, the political and cultural context of the late 18th and early 19th century triggered a radical transformation of *Otherness*. With Europe re-discovered, the Christian elites behind the Ottoman "iron curtain" began to define themselves, in an ostentatious manner, in antithesis with the Orient. An extension of the clash between local, organic patriotism, and loyalty toward an external po-litical power, the brand new *Ex Occidente Lux* was endorsed by the ideas of the French revolution, the new *Question Orientale*, and the spread of nationalism as the

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[1] IDEM, "History and Myth in Rumanian Society in Modern Period", *International Journal of Rumanian Studies*, no. 2, 1987, pp. 38 and the following.

[2] In this sense, I will follow the classic, three stages model used by Miroslav Hroch for the 19th century process of national rebirth. See Miroslav HROCH, *Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1984.

[3] See Vlad GEORGESCU, *Istoria ideilor politice românești. 1368-1877*, Jon Dumitru-Verlag, München, 1987.

[4] Hayden WHITE, "The Forms of Wildness: Archaeology of an Idea", in IDEM, *Tropics of Discourse. Essays in Cultural Criticism*, Baltimore and London, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993, pp. 151-152.

new ideology and "engine" of European politics[1]. The desire of the Eastern elites to follow the superior norms of Europe led to the rejection of the traditional norms of the "Ancien Régime", now perceived as a differently organized, oriented, and mentally shaped world. Not even the orthodox clergy could oppose for too long this geo-political and ideological process of reconciliation with the schismatic West. Subordinated to the new political structures of the national state, headed by progressively secularized elites, the clergy finally had to submit to the new spirit. However, as the process of modernization did not follow in the East the very same pattern and political agenda as in the West, nationalism, perceived as a sufficient and not just indispensable premise, was limited in this part of Europe to the struggle for independence as the most direct way in forging the nation, and the quest for arguments meant to legitimate the new order and its representatives[2].

The Romanian case does not differ in a substantial way from that of other South East European nations. Taking the French revolution as a reference but not as a role model, the Romanians were to develop an ambiguous, often contradictory and fluctuating relation with the ideals of 1789[3]. As they had to choose between revolution and reforms, the Romanian elites built around these ideas an entire verbal strategy that allowed them to translate economic, social, and political issues in terms of nationalism, at the same time strengthening their legitimacy on the basis of "patriotic zeal"[4]. What makes the specificity and crucial peculiarity of the Romanian case is the strategic substitution of the Ottoman Empire with the powerless, after 1821, Phanariots, a fictional, both external and internal form of otherness that were not only at hand but also in impossibility to defend themselves, to respond to any provocation, or worst, to attack.

A cultural by-product of the Moldo-Wallachian enlightened "suppliant elites" and westernized Romanian intelligentsia, the anti-Phanariot discourse starts its successful carrier in late 18th, early 19th century[5]. Once the option for Europe as a new spiritual pole and political role model was made, the emerging modern Romanian elites decided to break with the Phanariots and their epoch, with the grasp of persistent values, ideas, norms, and practices of what they end up labeling as *Phanariotism*[6]. Yet, they did so not before transforming them into a Constitutive

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[1] Stéphane YERASIMOS, *Questions D'Orient: Frontières et minorités des Balkans au Caucase*, Éditions La Decouverte, Paris, 1993, pp. 12-13.

[2] Liah GREENFELD, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity*, Harvard University Press, Harvard, 1992.

[3] See Pompiliu ELIADE, *Influența franceză asupra spiritului public din Principate*, Editura Univers, București, 1982.

[4] Alexandru ZUB, *La sfârșit de ciclu. Despre impactul Revoluției Franceze*, Institutul European, Iași, 1994, pp. 53-55.

[5] The term (Phanariot) as such was used for the first time at the end of the 18th century, and became popular only after 1824, when Marc Zallony published in Marseilles his "Essai sur le Phanariotes". Before that moment, the terms used to nominate them were "Tzarigradean Greek" (the Romanian boyars) and "Greek from Phanar" (the Western travelers). The Romanian boyars adopted the new term as it allowed them not to blame the Greek nation, also to avoid the delicate issue of an intimate connection between the two aristocracies, so intimate that in 1821, Grigore Ghica, the first re-appointed Land Lord (Domn Pământean) said that he can not make a crystal clear distinction between the two rival groups.

[6] Toader NICOARĂ, "Le discours antigrecque et antiphanariote dans la société roumaine (XVIIᵉ et XVIIIᵉ siècles)", in Ladislau GYEMANT (ed.), *Etnicitate și religie în Europa Centrală și de Est*, Editura Universității Cluj, Cluj, 1995.

Other and a perfect scapegoat, responsible for all their failed attempts to take-off and catch-up with the more advanced West.

Born out of the confrontation of mimetically imported Western political philosophy with the factors that restrained progress, anti-Phanariotism is based on an extremely simple yet very efficient discursive technique, namely the artificial foment of an idea in order to insure, by means of contrast and comparison, the vigor and success of another. An unequivocal attitude toward the recent past, its traumatic experiences and memory, anti-Phanariotism benefited from the mood, the mythology, and the messianic spirit generated by the process of discovering the enlightened Europe. Altogether, a mixture of inferiority and superiority feelings, illusion and lucidity, propagandistic infatuation and ideological militant disposition, were to create the realm needed for the emergence and perpetuation of a theme whose frequency with political disputes and academic debates, generated in times of crises and social, cultural, and political stress, indicate its role as an indispensable de-nomination threshold, a suitable *ersatz* of viable criteria essential for the positive self-identification and authentication of the opposite group, the Romanians[1].

Historians often use, sometimes without even being aware, 19th century fictions as to explain and describe concrete, measurable historical accounts[2]. In our particular case, the anti-Phanariot discourse continues to be approached as a by-product of the 18th century, sometimes even 17th century[3], though, the absence of the term at that time, and the emergence of Phanariotism as a specific issue in the 19th century were repeatedly stressed by some well-known scholars[4].

While addressing the anti-Phanariot discourse as specific to the 19th century, growing up from and as to replace the previous anti-Greek discourse, I will focus here on the works of some Moldavian and Wallachian chroniclers (*cronicari*) from the 17th and 18th centuries as they might offer some valuable insights. I will not insist on the too numerous and well-known reasons that shaped the defensive, bitter reactions from the part of the native boyars confronted with the massive infiltration of south-Danube elements that were altogether labeled as Greeks[5], and only insist on the intellectual and linguistic strategy used as to distinct the former as a group with a particular political and cultural identity.

In the North-Danube Principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia, the first anti-Greek reactions surfaced in the 17th century. In the 1631, and than 1668 *Așezăminte* (laws), the Greeks coming from Epir, the islands, and the Pera, not Phanar, district of Istanbul, are labeled by the native boyars as *Causa Malorum,* and made responsible for the deplorable situation of the two countries[6]. The new wave of Balkan, not necessarily Greek immigrants, too numerous, with a strong identity and thus resisting assimilation, and extremely dynamic, was soon to enter in an open conflict with the still hegemonic group of natives as well as with other ethnic groups: Greeks, Bulgarians, Serbs, Albanians; that were already part of the Moldavian and

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[1] Vlad GEORGESCU, *Istoria ideilor politice românești…*cit., pp. 60-61.

[2] Peter BURKE, *History and Social Theory,* Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1993, pp. 126-127.

[3] See Eugen STĂNESCU, "Prephanariotes et Phanariotes dans la vision de la société roumaine des XVIIe-XVIIIe siècles", *Actes du symposium greco-roumain sur "L'Époque des Phanariotes"*, Thessalonique, 1974, pp. 35-43.

[4] Andrei PIPPIDI, "Fanar, Fanarioți, Fanariotism", *Revista de studii sud-est europene*, no. 2, 1975, p. 235.

[5] Bogdan MURGESCU, "Fanarioți și pământeni. Religie și etnicitate în identități distincte", in Ladislau GYEMANT (ed.), *Etnicitate și religie în Europa Centrală și de Est*, cit., pp. 196-197, 206.

[6] Andrei PIPPIDI, "Fanar, Fanarioți,…cit.", pp. 236-237.

Wallachian societies. Western onlookers, such as Anton Maria del Chiaro, personal councilor of the last native Wallachian lord Constantin Brâncoveanu, were to perceive and describe them as different, while Constantin Cantacuzino Stolnicul, thought Greek by origins, was to compare and contrast them with both the "good Greeks" and the "good Natives", with the declared intention to stress the difference between the first and the second wave of Greek immigration[1]. The conflict was that acute as to render any attempt, such as the one made by Antim Ivireanu, to reconcile the two camps on the basis of Christian solidarity: "In Christ we are all the same...as God made the world free for us all"; unsuccessful[2]. Conversely, as long as a direct identification with the ordinary people, the peasants, and the use of *rumân* as a category was still "unthinkable" and "unspeakable", with *rumân* (serf) having strong pejorative connotations at that time, the idea of *landes patriotismus* became more and more popular, as it allowed natives to eliminate ambiguity and distinct themselves from the "New Greeks". Spontaneously elaborated on the basis of new symbols, values, traditions, and memory as recurrent dimensions of the community, at a time when the idea of Christian solidarity faded away, the reframed identity of the native boyars was designed as to eliminate the blurs generated by religious criteria, the only relevant and important from the point of view of the Ottoman Empire[3]. On a long term, some of these texts were to offer the ground basis for the 18th century, relatively stable and structured, canon of the anti-Greek discourse.

The issue of a pressuring group of undesirable foreign elements within domestic politics was to gradually gain significance, as to entirely replace the question of decline of the two Principalities due to external causes, from the 1720s onward[4]. However, Ion Neculce's work, a cognitive map traced in isolation, appealing numerous symbolic elements, ambiguous in its message elaborated under fear and in deep despair is the only worth noticing[5]. Though less skilled and educated than other "historians", such as Grigore Ureche and Miron Costin, extremely subjective when compared with Axinte Uricariul, Nicolae Muste, Ienache Kogălniceanu, and Ioan Conta, coming close to Radu Greceanu and Radu Popescu, Neculce, *spătar* (councilor) of the last native lord of Moldavia, Dimitrie Cantemir, a close "watcher" of the "Tzarigrad Greeks,…and their alien lord (*domn strein*), ...that do not know the 'laws' of this country…and want to rule with the same greatness as the *Poarta* (Ottoman Empire),...a curse that will disappear only… when God will remove the rust from iron, the Turks from Tzarigrad…when the wolfs will stop eating lambs"; provides us the most illustrative, vivid and colorful sample of the native anti-Greek discourse[6].

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[1] Constantin CANTACUZINO, "Istoria Țării Românești", in Mihail GREGORIAN (ed.), *Cronicari munteni*, vol. II, Editura Academiei, București, 1984, pp. 90-203.

[2] Antim IVIREANU, *Opere*, Editura Academiei, București, 1972, p. 231 and the following. Spontaneously elaborated on the basis of new symbols, values, traditions, and memory as recurrent dimensions of the community, at a time when the idea of Christian solidarity faded away, the reframed identity of the native boyars was designed as to eliminate the blurs generated by religious criteria, the only relevant and important from the point of view of the Ottoman Empire (our transl.).

[3] Bogdan MURGESCU, "Fanarioți și pământeni…cit.", p. 197.

[4] Vlad GEORGESCU, *Istoria ideilor politice românești…*cit., pp. 61-62.

[5] Ștefan LEMNY, *Sensibilitate și istorie în secolul XVIII-lea românesc…*cit., p. 14.

[6] See George CĂLINESCU, *Istoria literaturii române. Compendiu*, Editura pentru Literatură, București, 1963, pp. 23-25 (our transl.).

Extremely polemic, voicing dissatisfactions rather than justifying pretensions, Neculce offer his reader a grasp of attributes and features of the generic *Phanariot* in the making, a portrait of a rapacious and vainglorious *Other*, of Greeks as an external group of pressure with hegemonic claims, envisioned by the natives as an apocalyptic punishment and implacable calamity. Not so much the Greek lord draw his attention, but the "cohort of petty followers" and servants that accompany him, "small traders and publicans in Tzarigrad,...greedy and merciless...courageous like rabbits", yet that many that the "Phanar district remains a desert…only their women were to live there". Playing an increasing role in the administration, they are to Neculce's eyes responsible for the deterioration of the relations between the two groups, discrediting, as councilors (*sfătuitori*), even what was good in the intentions and policy of "their master". Lastly, the attitude of some of the *boierii moldoveni* that were to join the *greci*, "…drink coffee with them and their lord, and discuss Great Politics with them", taking stipends for their ranks (*slujbe*), and thus becoming Greeks in mores, duplicitous and hypocritical, was to make his attention and later on, after 1821, provide strong arguments to those who intended to incriminate the native *boieri* as a group of "collaborationism"[1]. To conclude, the main elements to differentiate the natives from the aliens are to Neculce's mind: land tenure, the solidarity and stability of the group (a necessary yet not sufficient condition for Neculce), language (as the Greeks do not speak *moldoveneasca*), and a specific, noble and ancient form of morality[2].

To late 18th century, when "anti-Phanariotism" became the very core of the political program of the "national party" (*partida națională*) of the native, patriotic boyars[3], the discourse is following the path opened by Neculce, lacking internal logic and abstractions, elements that define modern ideology and national identity[4]. Illustrative in this sense is the 1797 text entitled "Words of a Peasant to the Boyars" (*Cuvânt a unui țăran cătră boiari*), with a message structured mainly at the level of local sensibility, including few social reflections and moral values, remarkable only for the anti-modern and anti-cosmopolitan attitude of its anonymous author, whose only concern is to present the 17th century as the "Golden Age" in the history of his country, and the way in which the author threats the boyars with an imminent peasant up-rising:

> "Enough. There is no more patience. Make us justice or we will make it on our own…wake up boyars...return to your ancestors values… do not let them (the Phanariots) destroy the country…stop being weak and do not let the *venetici* (aliens) command you"[5].

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[1] Ioan NECULCE, *Letopisețul Țării Moldovei. O samă de cuvinte*, ed. by Iorgu IORDAN, Editura de Stat pentru Literatură și Artă, București, 1955, pp. 252, 308-309, 335, 351-353, 355, 382-383 (our transl.).

[2] Significant for our discussion is the fact that Neculce does not point out a sudden, radical political change brought by this alien group, defined as Greek not so much in ethnic, but linguistic, cultural, ethic, geographic and political terms, with 1711. It was only later for some authors to claim, in a somewhat arbitrary yet persuasive manner, that the "Phanariot Epoch" started with 1711 in Moldavia, and with 1716 in Wallachia. See Neagu DJUVARA, *Între Orient și Occident*…cit., p. 31.

[3] Andrei PIPPIDI, "Fanar, Fanarioți,…cit.", p. 234.

[4] Anthony D. SMITH, "The Formation of National Identity", in Henry HARRIS (ed.), *Identity*, Claredon Press, Oxford, 1995, pp. 129-147.

[5] "Cuvânt a unui țăran cătră boiari", in Alexandru DUȚU (ed.), *Sud-Estul european în vremea Revoluției Franceze,* Editura Academiei Române, București, 1994, pp. 221-225 (our transl.).

A major form of protest of the native boyars against the alien usurpers, the "anti-Phanariot" 18th century discourse, Manichean and much too reactive, often detrimental to its logic, structure, and arguments, finds its explanation in the "every day" insults and not so much the "traumatic, psychological experience, with huge implications...of the Phanariot regime"[1]. As some authors suggest, other major transformations, crisis, and altered perceptions of time and history might better explain why the Moldo-Wallachian elites perceived the 18th century as a "Dark Age"[2].

A genuine anti-Phanariot discourse, including the notion as such, is evident only with the eve of the 19th century, in the works of Western travelers reaching the North Danube Principalities and the Ottoman Empire. An external, *pineal* eye, willing to observe at the level of every day life, and isolate in a lasting and profound way aspects that are generally ignored by the locals, those subjective bystanders imposed their own canon, shaped accordingly to their own expectations and perceptions, well delimited and impermeable[3]. Faithful to their *mission civilisatrice*, discovering, beyond Turks and Greeks, new Balkan nations, shocked by the discrepancies between the self-constructed, at home, often idealistic images, and the nude and gruesome reality met on the ground, they were to identify the causes, explain the deplorable situation of the two Principalities, and the feeble national character of the Moldo-Wallachians while resorting to Orientalism and anti-absolutist western political philosophy[4]. What makes our special interest with their works is precisely the fact that they are extremely subjective, inaccurate in their judgments, ostentatious in their language, living us the image of the two countries as a "Peru of the Greeks", and of their people as "noble savages" enduring at the hands of the tyranny of "savage nobles".

The Moldo-Wallachian appear to Luis Alexandre Andrault Langeron, a French aristocrat in the service of Russia, to Parrant, a citizen of the French Republic, to Ignatius Raicevick and Lionardo Panzini, catholic priests, to Thomas Thorton, William Wilkinson, Adam Neale and many others; as victims of the "inhuman art of government of the Phanariot Greeks...sophisticated Turkish excrements... that changed a country destined to be a haven on earth into hell". Consequently, the Phanar Greeks are a "kin of ignorants and fanatics", "dishonest conspirators… serfs of the Turks", "slaves of the barbarous Ottoman tyranny…and malefic autocrats of the Romanian Provinces", "foreign ruler… who rob together with his ministers"[5]. To their eyes and minds, the fact that Romanians have lost their "national identity" and their "public spirit" was to be explained in terms of long-term poverty, humiliations, uncertainty and confusion generated by the Phanariot rulers,

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[1] Vlad GEORGESCU, "The Romanian Boyars in the 18th century: their political ideology", *East European Quarterly*, vol. VII, no. 1, 1984, pp. 31-32.

[2] Daniel BARBU, *Scrisoare pe nisip. Timpul și privirea în civilizația românească a secolului al XVIII-lea*, Editura Antet, București, 1996.

[3] Larry WOLF, *Inventing Eastern Europe. The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1994; Bernard M. GRANE, *Beyond Anthropology. Society and the Other*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1989, p. 43 and the following. See also Nicolae IORGA, *Istoria românilor în chipuri și icoane*, Humanitas, București, 1992, pp. 140-141.

[4] Maria TODOROVA, *Imagining the Balkans*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1997, pp. 150-154.

[5] See Nicolae IORGA, *Imaginea românilor prin călători*, Editura Academiei, București, 1978; see also Dan A. LĂZĂRESCU, *Imaginea României prin călători,* Editura Enciclopedică, București, 1985, pp. 10-28, 53-55, 66-69, 80, 133-135, 204, 211-213 (our transl.).

blind instruments of the outdated Ottoman government[1]. Influenced or not by the French revolution, offended by the post-Napoleon *Galophobia* of some of the Phanariot lords, or their sudden reorientation toward or against Russia – those elements might explain to a certain extend, in some cases, the adversity, disgust and biter hate of those European onlookers – all travelers insist on the psychological dimension of the Phanariots. Members of a nation unable to gain her independence, suddenly promoted in the imperial Ottoman administration, predisposed toward collaborationism and corruption, a "caste of rapacious and immoral petty Greeks", they were but the representatives of a world of hypocrisy and vice, lacking any moral goal and honorable feelings[2].

Travelers to a Terra Incognita, a land blessed by nature, or God, destined to be an earthly heaven yet deserted, as it was cursed with the rule of corrupt tyrants, petty and humble slaves of a bigger tyrant, the western onlookers not only indicate the Phanariots as the source of all evil and vice. Nor do they simply petty the hard working, moral natives, advocating to the eyes of civilized Europe their liberation from the yoke. They were also to teach the Moldavians and Wallachians that they are a nation, a distinct, homogeneous group, a particular race, or even a chosen people. Abandoning, some of them, the idea of recreating the former Byzantine Empire, they were at the same time to indicate the solution for a radical departure from the gruesome present: nationalism.

Later on, during their 19th century "pedagogical journey" to Europe[3], the Greek first, and than the Romanian nationalists were to discover these kind of contrasting and horrible, powerful though often inaccurate images in Western journals and serials, to mimetically import and use them in the process of shaping their own discursive strategy based on a manipulative, stigmatizing political and historical arguments.

Around 1821, the year of the Greek national revolution, Vranousilos Rigas, Athanasie Comnen, Dionisie Fotino, Daniel Philipide, Marc Zallony, and Alexandru Ipsilanti, all members of the Greek westernized intelligentsia, some of them former supporters of the Phanariot project and *Megali Ideea*, were to incriminate the "Machiavellian servants of the chimera of Byzantine empire", to divulge the secret of the tyrannical Phanariot aristocracy, and thus purify, at least to their minds and to the eyes of Europe, the Greek nation of past wickedness[4]. Talking to the Greeks and the Romanians alike they leave us with a clear message: the "Ancien Régime" is doomed; democracy is to triumph. Reinvented, fraudulent Byzantine aristocracy, humble servants to the Turks, dangerous as they claim for themselves the role of representatives of the Greek nation, surviving the revolution, the cunning Phanariots still aim to take over control with the help of the Ottomans, disregard the real needs of the people, and rule the country (Greece) to their benefit. In order to make the Greek nation and patriots aware of the dreadful consequences of this peril, Zal-

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[1] Neagu DJUVARA, *Între Orient și Occident…*cit., pp. 34-35, 87-88, 331.

[2] Pompiliu ELIADE, *Influența franceză asupra spiritului public…*cit., pp. 35, 73-99, 161-169, 211-213.

[3] Dinicu Golescu, the first westernized Romanian boyar, was to read, translate, and publish, in 1824, in Budapest, the works of Thomas Thorton.

[4] See Eudoxiu HURMUZAKI (de), *Documente privitoare la istoria românilor*, vol. II, București, 1888, pp. 177-178, Ștefan PASCU, Liviu MAIOR (eds.), *Culegere de texte pentru istoria României*, vol. I, Editura Didactică și Pedagogică, București, 1977, p. 136, Alexandru DUȚU (ed.), *Sud-Estul european…*cit., pp. 248, 272.

lony offers them an irrefutable and vivid argument, the catastrophic situation of the two Romanian Principalities after one century of Phanariot government[1].

On their turn, the Romanians (in the making) were not to remain indifferent to such powerful arguments, imported and used them whenever necessary. After 1821 the Romanian elites abandoned all previous attempts to assimilate the Phanariots. Conversely, while following the discursive model and political-philosophical arguments offered by the Western travelers and Greek nationalist intelligentsia, they were to demonize the Phanariots as different, a group of foreigners defined in political, cultural, ethic, and lastly ethnic terms. Forced to silence and dispersion, the Phanariots had no other chance but to accept the new political strategy of the native elites[2].

The "Memorandum of the Wallachian Boyars", elaborated in Brașov during the 1821 up-rising (*zavera*) of Tudor Vladimirescu[3], and sent to the Russian Emperor, a potential protector at the time, insisted on the culpability of the "kin of savage Greeks, rebellious and disloyal, too proud…unfaithful, greedy…(responsible for) destroying the political harmony". The judgment is unequivocal: "*let* their kin disappear for ever".

Hardly grasping some of the modern, West European political ideas[4], abusing their (recently discovered) Latin origins, and the virtues of the Roman ancestors, the Moldo-Wallachians were to stress their superiority and offer convincing arguments for their political struggle against the foreign rulers[5]. In 1822, the author of *Ithicon* was the first to contrast the two models of "ancient Rome" and "decadent Byzance". Similar images are easy detectable in other *boieri* writings from that period:

> "Phanariots, the source of our backwardness,…grasshoppers destroying our crops…throwing the descendants of the Great Caesar, of Glorious Aurelius and Brave Traian from their imperial palaces into Dark misery, from mastership into slavery…"[6].

Though rarely, the misery and despairing situation of the peasants is invoked by the *boieri*, as they were also to discover by that time that being civilized means to bear responsibility for your subjects as well.

The anti-Phanariot discourse mimetically imported from the French revolutionary discourse images relating institutional malfunction, political incapacity, and a corrupt and cynic administration. Thus, not only the individual, or the group, but the system and its political philosophy were now blamed as a reversal

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[1] Marc ZALLONY, *Despre fanarioți*, Institutul de arte grafice Carol Göbl, București, 1897.

[2] Vlad GEORGESCU, "The Romanian Boyars in the 18th Century…cit.", pp. 38-39.

[3] Tudor Vladimirescu is not even mentioned in this memorandum. It was only one decade after the events for some "revolutionaries" to invent and impose his myth within the hegemonic matrix of the 19th century Romanian nationalism. Moving from "written matter" to the "spoken word", the myth of the martyrized leader was to inspire generations of revolutionaries of modern Romania, offer them in the form of a grasp of qualities and attributes the portrait of "a Good Romanian", and stress the idea that "*the peasant not the boyar, the Romanian not the alien…*" represents the future of the nation. See Milviuța CEAUȘU, "Tudor Vladimirescu, între mit și realitate", in Lucian BOIA (ed.), *Mituri istorice românești*, Editura Universității din București, București, 1995, pp. 130 and the following.

[4] Daniel BARBU, *Scrisoare pe nisip…*cit., pp. 136 and the following.

[5] Pompiliu ELIADE, *Influența franceză asupra spiritului public…*cit., pp. 255-258.

[6] Quoted in Emil VÂRTOSU, *1821. Date si fapte noi*, Editura Cartea Românească, București, 1932, p. 183 (our transl.)

of the natural order[1]. A whole century, including some modern achievements was completely denied. The reforms introduced by the Phanariot princes were considered negative and insignificant[2].

Paradoxically, in Moldavia and Walachia, the anti-Phanariot discourse became popular and wide-spread after 1821, in the complete absence of the Phanariot regime. Not so much the Phanariot prince, boyar, and bureaucrat, but the generic Phanariot was turned into a *leit-motive* of the political discourse, and an important ingredient of the nationalist ideology in the making. By 1802 only 12 texts refer the issue; by 1821 there are 25 political works mentioning the Phanariots, and the number was to grow continuously in time[3]. Furthermore, new dimensions were added to the "concept" of Phanariotism, as to make it fit in, and meet the challenges and needs of other shifting, revolutionary events in Romania's modern history: 1848, 1859, 1866, and so on. The continuous metamorphosis of the anti-Phanariot discourse, and its relevance for the Romanians, is due to the fact that the 1821 "revolution" did not eliminated the illnesses and numerous conflicts within Moldavian and Wallachian, and latter on Romanian society[4]. Completely disorientated in the aftermath of a too sudden and unexpected political change, the Romanian elites were to preserve and transform the anti-Phanariot discourse in a consistent and extremely persuasive political weapon. The great boyars were to use it as to incriminate the small, urban, cosmopolitan, "modern", French speaking, petitioner boyars that accepted to work in the administration, and worst, being paid from public finances (*visterie*) for this, for being a creation of the Phanariot rulers. On their turn the small boyars were also to accuse the great boyars of collaborationism with the *turco-fanarioții* and *grecii-fanarioți* – Ioan Tăutu is the first "Romanian" to distinct the Phanariots from the rest of Greek nation – for being anti-modern, and at least in part responsible for the stagnation and backwardness of the country. That fierce debate was to shape the "ambivalent" Phanariot model and transform this "constructed Other" into a powerful argument for the necessity of permanent reforms within society, nonetheless into a perfect scapegoat[5]. The Phanariots were to help the Romanians to come to terms with the past.

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[1] Vlad GEORGESCU, *Istoria ideilor politice românești…*cit., p. 62.

[2] The reforms of the Phanariot period, many of European inspiration, meant to modernize the society, strengthen the central power, and regulate the administration by replacing the "unmasterable" aristocracy of birth with a *noblesse de robe* was obliterated, while the venality of the Phanariots and their lack of "bureaucratic ethos" were stressed by the native boyars. Not even the Phanariot propaganda insisting on the idea of "patrida" was more successful, as it only hardly eliminated the negative images. See Emanuela POPESCU-MIHUȚ, "Ideologie politică și propagandă în atele cancelariilor domnești din Țările Române (1775-1821)", in Alexandru DUȚU (ed.), *Sud-Estul eropean...*cit., pp. 74-76.

[3] Vlad GEORGESCU, *Istoria ideilor politice românești…*cit., pp. 68-69.

[4] *Ibidem*, pp. 72-73.

[5] Outsiders and insiders at the same time, the Phanariots had to bear the vision of the sacrificer, and thus bring reconciliation among the rest of the members of the divided society. A post-revolutionary and post-political reaction, the anti-Phanariot discourse allowed the local elites to purge their sins while cursing the recent past, at the same time adhering to the new standards of the 19th century: Romanian, patriot, European. See Luca PIȚU, "Alteritate și strategie: excursuri etnologice", in Alexandru ZUB (ed.), *Cultură și societate,* Editura Academiei, București, 1991, pp. 462-467. See also René GIRARD, *Violența și sacrul*, Romanian transl. by Mona Antohi, Nemira, București, 1995, pp. 11-13, 14-18. The social function and the efficacy of the sacrificial act, the restoration of harmony and social peace, depends not only on the institutionalization of the

By 1840, in Eastern Europe, nationalism was still a luxury ideology that only few literati, poets, philologists, historians could afford in their quest for a brand new, often invented linguistic, cultural, historical, and political pedigree and identity[1]. However, with 1848, nationalism, now more demotic and less elitist, became increasingly popular and thus, relevant. Turning sacred entire communities, emancipating and purifying them of malevolent influences and actions of foreigners, it was soon to give way to xenophobia, targeting all forms of real and fictional otherness.

For the Romanian historical and political discourse of the 19th century, revolutionary in terms of ideology and nationalistic in terms of imaginary, dominated by the idea of rebirth and regeneration, aiming to forge a new identity in times of turmoil and yoke, anti-Phanariotism proved to be a perfect mean to achieve multiple ends[2]. Both traditionalists, such as Alexandru Beldiman, Naum Râmniceanu, and Zilot Românul, and the Westernized intelligentsia of 1848, exploited the memory of the tragic experience of the recent past. In order to surmount the new thresholds, and justify their position as a political class descending from the ancient local aristocracy, the boyars had first of all to eliminate any suspicion, and regain credibility in the eyes of both the Ottomans and their subjects. Thus, the traditional Romanian political elite consciously used the Phanariot discursive diversion. Expelled and sacrificed in a ritual manner, reintegrated afterward at a symbolic level, the Phanariot helped the boyars replace physical violence with a compensatory violent language. The success of this strategy was to transform the anti-Phanariot discourse and attitude not only into the founding secret of the new Moldo-Wallachian political class, but also into a key element of its social and political strategic logic.

Starting with the 1830s, the epoch of the Organic Regulations, the (anti-)Phanariot theme slowly went from political disputes to polemic history. Though based on a more critical approach, the portraits of the Phanariot "Ancien Régime" are extremely subjective, with "the former Greek government", representing but an useful ingredient, a descriptive etiquette used as to label past and present enemies, a boo word, a trope needed in order to underline recurrences, nevertheless succinctly present an entire grasp of negative marks. 18th century Romanian boyars approached the issue of a foreign, Greek government in terms of power, and translated the conflict in words of a permanent struggle for hegemony, social and political control, and preservation of balance. On its turn, the more skilled and persuasive generation of 1848 introduced new traits, as for them the anti-Phanariot discourse represented a mean to impose and legitimize a new set of norms and values[3]. Permanently obsessed by the idea of being "watched" by Europe, their role model, the emerging Romanian elites also had to face the drama of their country being libeled. Forced to formulate a rapid and concise response to this harsh provocation they made the first step in the direction of identifying and radically criticizing the very cause of this situation. The Phanariot century offered them a reliable starting point, and many historians only had to shift back to the recent past.

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ritual but also on the relation between the external yet not completely alien and also not indifferent victim, and the sacrificer.

Vlad GEORGESCU, *Istoria ideilor politice românești*…cit., p. 63.

[1] Philip LONGWORTH, *The Making of Eastern Europe,* The MacMillan Press, L.T.D, London, 1992, pp. 140-147.

[2] Adrian MARINO, *Pentru Europa. Integrarea României. Aspecte ideologice și culturale*, Polirom, Iași, 1995, pp. 161-167.

[3] *Ibidem*, pp. 175-179.

In the process of shaping the national identity of the Romanians, and imposing normative images and values as to sanction them as a European nation, the Phanariots represented for the Moldo-Wallachian *pașoptiști* the perfect, unable to fight back, enemy. The very essence of *evil* from which *good* is to be extracted, the Phanariots, totally distinct from the Greek nation, who was also to scorn them, were to Nicolae Bălcescu "one of the essential truths that reveals the wounds of a nation, souvenirs that have to be permanently recalled as to serve for future comparisons". Apart from the grasp of injurious epithets: corrupted, hypocrites, selfish, immoral and inhuman, and so on; the Phanariots, "…transforming robbery into an art of governing, predators of the country for the benefit of a tyrannical alien ruler, whose slaves they were…" represented for Bălcescu the very "... expression of a malevolent society that has to be regenerated"[1]. Moreover, their successors, the ruling political elite, a political party of Phanariot descend created in 1830, were the ones from whose domination the Romanians had to be emancipated as to give birth to a democratic state. Already an ambiguous and ubiquitous, depersonalized other by that time, the Phanariot was turned in the decades to come into a role anti-model and a perfect antithesis to the desired Romanian[2].

Educational systems, reproducing and spreading ideas, values and believes at the level of masses, turning loyalties unquestionable, played a crucial role in the process of nation-building in 19th century Europe. Between 1870 and 1914, the bulk of European governments and other political organizations strengthen the role and capacity of school in transforming the way individuals thought about themselves and the community they belonged to, imagined and articulated the national community[3]. The main goal and challenge was to design the educational systems and programs as to turn peasants into citizens[4]. In this sense national history was meant to give the country moral men, defenders of justice and truth, and above all good patriots[5]. From this narrow perspective the history textbook proved to be the cheapest and most efficient instrument simply by offering a whole gallery of national heroes, together with a set of values and norms, models and anti-models to identify or define in opposition with[6].

Structured by the charismatic, affirmative, and risorgimental nationalism of the previous period, which turned the Phanariot into a historical myth and codified it as a political expression, the anti-Phanariot discourse was once more to play a significant role, helping educators to train future Romanians, good Christians and citizens, with a distinct, common destiny, and a mission, loyal to the nation and the Fatherland. A short overview of two history textbooks edited by M.C. Florian in 1884, and Gr.C. Tocilescu in 1890, are illustrative in this sense.

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[1] Nicolae BĂLCESCU, "Mersul revoluției la Români", and "Trecutul și Prezentul", in IDEM, *Opere*, Editura Academiei, București, 1954, pp. 35-50, 77-100.

[2] Alexandru ZUB, *De la istoria critică la criticism*, Editura Academiei, București, 1985, p. 38.

[3] Erick HOBSBAWM, Terence RANGER, *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1993, p. 263 and the following.

[4] See Benedict ANDERSON, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Verso, London, 1983. See also Anthony D. SMITH, "The Formation of National Identity", cit, pp. 137-139.

[5] Jean LECUIR, *Enseigner l'histoire. Des manuels à la memoire*, Berne, 1984, p. 121.

[6] Mirela Luminița MURGESCU, "Galeria națională de personaje istorice în manualele de istorie din școala primară", in Lucian BOIA (ed.), *Mituri istorice românești*, cit., pp. 32-33.

> ″The Darkest Age of our history […] that of the Phanariot *bey* […] *Pașe*
> with Christian names, obedient tools of the *Poarta*, […] legion of phantoms
> headed by their greed and lacking consciousness [...] anti-national government
> […] transforming the sons of lions into lambs, a free nation into slaves […] swept
> by the 1821 revolution […] the beginning of the good times of order, peace, and
> prosperity […] after the moment when all vagrant aliens left″[1].

Fiction literature also contributed to the dissemination of the ″Phanariot model″ and anti-Phanariot discourse. To give but one example, Nicolae Filimon's *Ciocoii vechi și noi*, first published in 1872 sketches the generic portrait of a venal, hypocrite, coward, greedy, brutal to barbarity, extremely ambitious, and thus dangerous to the state and society member of the new elite in the making, a "creature trained to be a perfect flunky servant […] able to squeeze the rock as to get money from it". A conservative boyar and a patriot, Filimon was to endorse his arguments by presenting the new *ciocoii as* heirs of the old ones, on their turn a creation of the Phanariots[2].

Similar icons are provided at the time by works of popular science. Dumitru Drăghicescu's *Din psihologia poporului român*, published in 1907, a *meilleur*-ist project and an attempt to understand the Romanians, a ″Western race with Oriental habits″ is an illustrative example in this sense. The Phanariots, one of the many causes of the hindered evolution of the Romanians, are presented as ″epigones of a corrupt and decadent Byzance, […] teachers send to the Romanians by the Turks, […] the last semi-barbaric invasion, peaceful and thus persuasive″, that were to better succeed to inculcate upon the Romanians the most negative features of their character. Their legacy: deep wounds of human decadence and racial degradation, everything that is grotesque and ridiculous, the fatalist philosophy of the Orient, and so on.

An anti-Phanariot discourse and post-political attitude, Drăghicescu's work does not bring with it essentially new interpretations to the Past. Following the normative canon and political language of the Western travelers and the revolutionary Romanian generation of 1848, he stresses once more the rather universal theme of the conflict between the noble savage and the savage noble.

> ″Like the Peruvians, the people exploited by the Phanariot Greeks […]
> victims of an autocratic regime […] squeezed by taxes and over exploitation,
> the Romanians were to stagnate while the neighbors were to progress″[3].

Considerable efforts by several historians to remove labels and de-mystify the Phanariots and their epoch were somewhat successful by late 19th, early 20th century. Yet, in public and political discourses, anti-Phanariotism continued its career unabashed. In 1857 Tudoriță Balș and Nicolae Vogoride, two Moldavian conservative great boyar, were labeled as Phanariot for their pro-Russian attitude. Years later, Gheorghe Panu in *Chestiunea regalității* and Nicolae Rucăreanu in *Principe străin sau domn român,* were to trace and stress parallels between the German Dynasty and the Phanariots. For them, as well as for Dimitrie Bolintineanu, Cezar Bolliac, and Eliade Rădulescu, the idea to bring to the Romanian throne a prince belonging to ″a race in

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[1] M.C. FLORIAN, *Istoria românilor*, Librăria Socecu & Compania, București, 1884, pp. 69, 83-90; also GR.C. TOCILESCU, *Istoria Română*, Imprimeria statului, București, 1888, pp. 209-221, 260.

[2] Nicolae FILIMON, *Ciocoii vechi și noi*, Editura Albatros, București, 1968 (our transl.).

[3] Dumitru DRĂGHICESCU, *Din psihologia poporului român*, Editura Albatros, București, 1995, pp. 71-5, 109-111, 166, 255-268 (our transl.).

a stage of war with the Latins, a Trojan Horse of the foreigners", was anti-national and of an utmost stupidity[1]. From 1876 to 1879, Mihai Eminescu was to recall the Phanariots as to make the Romanians aware of the peril represented by the "new, Semite invasion […] who (like the previous, Phanariot one, is but) […] a fifth column of a foreign power […] that will transform Romania into a European California"[2]. In his memoirs, written in the 1920s, I.G. Duca was to label

> "the conservative Moldo-Wallachian aristocracy" as "extremely atavistic in her Phanariot-Byzantine like mores and principles [...] an old political class of envy and frustrated *beizadele* [...] that uses to complain to the foreigners"[3].

In 1935 Nicolae Davidescu, a well known Romanian nationalist writer was to say that Ioan Luca Caragiale was "the last Phanariot invader" of Romania, while referring both the Greek origins and the "lack of patriotism" of the famous play writer[4]. Same year, Mihail Manoilescu, the "father of Romanian corporatism", while advocating in favor of a state administration and economy "liberated" from the "hegemonic Western rule and ideology", labeled the foreign (European) experts as "new Phanariots"[5]. Romanian fascists, presenting themselves as reincarnations of the *haiducii* and Tudor Vladimirescu, were to legitimate their actions in terms of struggle against the "corrupted, immoral and impure […] infected with the blood of the Phanariots, elites"[6].

Communist and national-communist Romania also exploited the Phanariot mythology with the help of textbooks and cinema, and as to stress social and national aspects of the continuous struggle of the Romanians for justice, independence, and so on. Post-communist Romania was to rediscover the Phanariots once more, and instrumentalized their case whenever needed. Political instability, corruption, nepotism, a mall-functioning state and administration, offered but few good reasons in this sense. Opting for Europe, rediscovered once more as a new spiritual pole and political role model, the emerging post-communist Romanian elites decided to break with the past, with the grasp of persistent values, ideas, norms and practices of communism. However, they also resorted to the powerful, suggestive, seductive, illustrative, piercing and mesmerizing *Phanariot* trope. This constitutive other, and perfect scapegoat, was made once more responsible for all failed attempts to take-off and catch-up with the more advanced West.

Both democratic opposition (Corneliu Coposu and Varujan Vosganian) and the extreme nationalists (Corneliu Vadim Tudor) attacked the government in 1995 while comparing its corrupt administration with the Phanariot one. Petre Roman, former prime minister, was labeled, due to his different ethnic origins, and the "anti-national policy" of his government, a "Phanariot prince"[7]. "Not even the Phanariots, who were foreigners, squeezed the country so hard and in such a short period".

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[1] Virgiliu ENE, *Adevărul despre regi*, Editura Ion Creangă, București, 1977, pp. 57, 59-60, 87-88 (our transl.). See also Vlad GEORGESCU, *Istoria ideilor politice românești…*cit., pp. 158-159.

[2] Leon VOLOVICI, *Ideologia naționalistă și problema evreiască în România anilor '30*, Humanitas, București, 1995, pp. 31-34.

[3] I.G. DUCA, *Memorii*, vol I, Express, București, 1992, pp. 102, 148 (our transl.).

[4] Quoted in Ion Luca CARAGIALE, *Despre lume, artă și neamul românesc*, ed. by Dan C. MIHĂILESCU, Humanitas, București, 1994, pp. 5-8.

[5] Quoted in Alexandru ZUB (ed.), *Cultură și societate…*cit., p. 118.

[6] Constantin PAPANACE, "Rasă și destin național", *Cuvântul*, 16 ianuarie 1941.

[7] See *Ziua*, 11 septembrie 1995, p. 2.

This headline belongs to an article published in 1996 in *România Liberă*, at that time the most popular daily of the democratic opposition[1]. When simply *Google*ing, in 2009, for *fanar* and *fanariotism*, one can realize that President Traian Băsescu has a "mentalitate fanariotă", that former prime minister Călin Popescu-Tăriceanu and business man Dinu Patriciu are also "fanarioţi", that Romanian diplomacy is "fanariotă", and so are central and local administrations, corruption, excessive taxation, abuses, and so on and so forth[2].

Connections are easy to make. What is relevant to me is that in time the Phanariot became one of main elements of the nation's morphology. Intimately connected with the idea of power and the strategies meant to preserve, or on contrary dispute it, part of a strategy of incriminating and then educating in a pedagogical manner the political rivals, the Phanariot belongs to that system of believes and practices that establish and consolidate individual and collective, obvious, natural, and normative identities.

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[1] *România Liberă*, 17 iulie 1996.
[2] See http://www.roportal.ro/stiri/stirea-802989.htm, http://www.cotidianul.ro/print.php?id=39542&pdf legacyhttp://www.romanialibera.com/forum.php?nr=6356&an=2006&luna=9 (accessed on 7.02.2009).