

**BETWEEN MARGINAL REBELS AND MAINSTREAM CRITICS: JEWISH
ROMANIAN INTELLECTUALS IN THE INTERWAR PERIOD**

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ABSTRACT

My research aimed at answering a few questions related to the first group of Jewish intellectuals born and growing up within Romanian culture and thus deeply acculturated. Chronologically, I followed their activity from slightly before WWI, during the interwar period, before and after the long-belated Emancipation, until anti-Jewish legislation in late 1930s marginalized and then excluded them from Romanian society and cultural life. The main problems which the current study tried to answer were why this group of intellectuals chose some specific identity models, who they were and how they articulated their public discourse in connection with their Jewish identity and Romanian cultural canon. Thus my research focused first on the socio-cultural and political context determining their options and shaping their later discourse, then it moved to a socio-cultural analysis of their intellectual and private individual paths and finally it analyzed their works in terms of identity discourse and integrative approach.

Following the theoretical level of research organized by concepts such as “conflict” and “inclusion”, defined in turn by “identity construction” and by “strategies of integration”, my research identified a series of conclusions for the study of acculturated Jewish intellectuals in the process of redefining their position in order to penetrate a

conservative cultural milieu. Thus, among the factors influencing the profile of the intellectuals and their identity, the tension between advanced acculturation and persistent marginalization and exclusion set the background for a strong conflict explainable through Robert Merton's theory. Acquiring solid Romanian education, the young intellectuals were justifiably acting as insiders of the local culture, but due to the legal and social context they remained social outsiders, generating a high amount of individual frustration. This frustration materialized in the emergence of a rebellious group, which found in the marginal yet non-canonic modernist and avant-gardist trends the most suitable option reflecting their outsider position and saving them from a national cultural repertoire incompatible and unable to accommodate to their values. In this context, the long belated Emancipation finally legally secured a space for the assertion of Jewish identity within the Romanian space, manifested through the emergence of a "Jewish literature" in the Romanian language focusing mainly on social criticism. Deleuze and Guattari's theoretical demonstration supported my analysis, but a reverse of this theory had to be employed in the sense of "reterritorialization." The construction of the "Jewish literature" represented the belated cultural reflection of a social reality neglected for a long time by a conservative culture and consisted in a spin-off replica of a nation-wide intellectual debate searching for the essence of "Romanian identity" while constructing a "minority's culture" within the Romanian language. While analyzing the identity representation within their works, a constant integrative position was adopted by all, despite their affiliation to rebellious avant-garde or to "Jewish literature," aiming at a transformation of the cultural canon in order to include the new reality of multi-cultural Romanian society within its borders.

To the enduring support of my mother,

Prof. Camelia-Doina Crăciun,

to whom I dedicate this work

To the loving memory of my father,

Eng. Nicolae Crăciun,

and of my maternal grandparents,

Maria Varvarikis-Gál and András Gál,

who taught me the first lessons on multiculturalism

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NOTES FOR THE READER

Most of the works mentioned in the current research were never translated into English. The Romanian original versions appear here in my English translation and I do hope the beauty of the original pieces was not destroyed by my too-close-to-the-original version. The second note is related to the work and profile of Beniamin Fudoianu, internationally known as Benjamin Fondane. Due to the fact that my current research focused on the activity of the Jewish intellectuals of Romanian language, I preferred using his Romanian pseudonym, Beniamin Fundoianu, throughout the text.

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Introduction

Despite the strong Jewish presence within the social and economic life of the Romanian Regat (4.5% of the population in 1899, reaching 10,5% in the Moldavian area, concentrated in crafts and trades and living mainly in the semi-rural *shtetls*¹ and urban settlements), the Romanian cultural milieu resisted reflecting this reality until very late. With the remarkable exception of playwright and poet Ronetti-Roman, it was only in the second decade of the 20th century that a significant number of acculturated Jewish intellectuals emerged within Romanian intellectual life within the still marginal modernist and avant-garde cultural movements. Nevertheless, Jewish life as a legitimate literary topic had to wait until early 1920s to be represented, if we ignore the anti-Semitic stereotyping literature. The current research project aims at investigating the long-belated process of inclusion of the Jewish identity within Romanian culture during the first decades of the 20th century by analyzing social mechanisms such as marginalization, conflict and integration, and focusing on cultural descriptions of identity construction and inclusion strategies.

The current analysis represents a case study concerning the larger process of interaction between ethnic groups and the state in which conflict and integration function as key concepts. In more specific terms, the current research aims at analyzing the group of Jewish intellectuals acculturated to the Romanian milieu, actively present in Romanian culture from slightly before WWI and during the interwar period until the anti-Jewish

legislation imposed their silence. Born in the last years of the 19th century and the first of the 20th century, they preserved a solid Jewish identity, but (also) used Romanian for writing their works before and after Emancipation granted in 1923, thus while facing a significant social and cultural exclusion, followed by a legal symbolical inclusion in the body of the nation. Being the first generation of Jewish intellectuals growing up within Romanian culture as the result of a process of profound acculturation, the group manifested a strong identity crisis manifested within their works and public discourse when facing marginalization and exclusion, eventually overcame through the adoption of different identity models and inclusive strategies. Within this framework, the process of identity construction, the significance with which it is invested, as well as the discursive structure of identity in connection with the majority's position, became crucial for the communication and relations established between groups.

In this context, the current study plans to answer a few questions such as why this group of intellectuals chose some specific identity models, who were the actors analyzed and how did they articulate their public discourse in connection with their Jewish identity and Romanian cultural space. While integration could be the result of relative identification with the other group through adherence or adoption of similar sets of values, conflict is the outcome of incompatible identity constructs and the sets of values supporting them. In order to analyze the process of conflict and inclusion, a description of the self-defining strategies is necessary, followed by an analysis of the identity development in relation with other groups and a deconstruction of the mechanisms of conflict and integration eventually determining the process of shaping the identity strategy for the individual and for the group. Thus, the focus of research falls on identifying an explanation for their specific identity options through an analysis of the

socio-cultural and political context determining and shaping their later discourse. Therefore, the dissertation plans to follow a socio-cultural analysis of their individual background and intellectual paths and to research their works in terms of identity discourse and integrative strategies. Thus, the current research plans to explain the mechanisms determining the cultural and identity options, following further the individual profiles with their specific characteristics and finally the strategies of socio-intellectual inclusion and cultural integration that the writers employed in the newly generated context before and after the Emancipation and the creation of Greater Romania. Especially the way the intellectuals negotiated their Jewish identity representation in the intellectual and literary milieu of Romanian language represented a key element for the analysis.

My research attempts to recuperate from the perspective of the Eastern European Jewish intellectual history a whole group of intellectuals assimilated by the post-1945 communist Romanian culture as Romanian writers while ignoring the ethnic element which was essential for their public discourse. Developing rapidly after the 1989 Revolution, the historiography of the Jewish community in Romania started rediscovering their works and profiles, but stagnated into an exclusively ethnic histories' approach, while Romanian cultural historiography was hardly receptive to integrate this newly developed research area. Due to their intermediary position between Romanian and Jewish culture, the group of Romanian-language Jewish intellectuals functioned as a bridge of communication, and thus has a great relevance for both areas of research. As a result, the task of my research is to connect Jewish history and Romanian culture into an integrative comprehensive approach able to clarify, explain and reintegrate these ignored or deliberately "forgotten" episodes of Romanian cultural history. Eventually, for the

interwar period, my study plans to open up the discussion on the importance of Jewish identity within Romanian culture, for a long time ignored by a national literary canon, as well as the debate of the cultural impact of the experience of Jewish life in Romania.

Although the group was large and demonstrated fluctuating borders, the selection of the analyzed intellectuals followed the criteria of visibility within the Romanian literary and cultural canon, as the current research focused on the best-known Romanian Jewish intellectuals active within Romanian cultural life during the interwar period. Chronologically, the research started with the emergence of the first Jewish acculturated intellectuals within avant-garde in mid-1910s, continued with the Emancipation and the publication of the first collections of stories inspired by Jewish life in early 1920s and finally mid-1930s presenting the best works of “Jewish literature in Romanian”, ending with the failure of the double identity model and of the integrative efforts in late 1930s. Marked by these sign-posts, the period of roughly two decades analyzed here represented the length of activity of these intellectuals before the outbreak of WWII and anti-Jewish legislation.

A. Historiography of the Topic. The historiography of the Jewish community in Romania is currently in its early stages, following the communist period when discussions about ethnicity, anti-Semitism and the Holocaust were forbidden. Although an increasing number of studies analyzed the legal, educational, intellectual and economic² situation of the community during the end of the 19th century until WWII, major gaps still exist in terms of political and social history of the community and historical periods covered by research. Although the history of the Jewish community in Romania within the larger history of Eastern European Jewry represents a great

contribution and a frequent topic of research in Romania and Israel, its contribution to Romanian historiography would be also extremely important. In this sense, the most problematic issue is the marginal interest and the lack of integration of these studies into Romanian historiography, which is still slow in changing its Romanian nation-based approach in order to open up and include the historiography of minorities. Nevertheless, the history of Romanian Jewish intellectuals profited greatly from recent works by Leon Volovici, Liviu Rotman, Măriuca Stanciu, and Simona Fărcășan coming from the field of Jewish history, but an integrative approach into the larger studies of Romanian culture to which they belonged is still missing. My research plans to contribute to this major gap and out-dated understanding of national historiography.

Iconic figures, such as Mihail Sebastian and Beniamin Fundoianu, were largely researched, but they were approached differently. Benefiting from the *Cahiers Benjamin Fondane* series, as well as several monographs and extensive studies (Olivier Salazar-Ferrer, Gabriella Farina, Monique Jutrin), the profile and the work of Fundoianu recuperated after the fall of the communism also its Jewish component, programmatically neglected by pre-1989 Romanian scholarship (for example, Mircea Martin). Sebastian's work gained popularity only after 1996 when his *Jurnal* (Diary) was published. Due to the gravity of the political problems it raised, polemics opened up the topic of Jewish intellectual identity and anti-Jewish persecutions in late 1930s, culminating recently with a deliberately provocative and academically questionable study by Marta Petreu, aiming at recasting the "Sebastian file" in a contestable demonstration. Studies by Dorina Grăsoiu, Cornelia Ștefănescu and Leon Volovici came to offer a more complex and balanced perspective.

Although the amount of studies on Romanian modernism and avant-garde written in Romanian was substantial³, these analyses preferred exploring the general phenomenon from a strictly literary and aesthetic perspective, never questioning the socio-historical motivations behind the emergence of such a large cultural and social phenomenon, able to justify the specificity of the Romanian case. These studies avoided any reference or discussion of the origin of the writers involved, deliberately preferring a textual analysis lacking socio-historical background. Only after the fall of the communist regime in 1989, followed by the process of historical reevaluation in terms of approaching Romanian history and culture, studies on the Romanian avant-garde started to abandon the exclusively literary and stylistic approach and focused on the socio-political and cultural factors triggering the phenomena and thus a special interest in the contribution of the Jewish intellectuals emerged. In 2001, literary historian Ovid S. Crohmălniceanu dedicated a study to this phenomenon, *Evreii în mișcarea de avangardă românească*⁴ (Jewish Intellectuals in the Romanian Avant-garde Movement), focusing only on the presentation of the most visible profiles and failing to actually provide a plausible hypothesis for the substantial interest that these young intellectuals took in the modernist movements. In 2005, Ovidiu Morar published *Avangardismul românesc* (Romanian avant-gardism), a study concentrating more on the non-literary aspects determining and repositioning the avant-gardist trends from a historical perspective. A more elaborated perspective on Romanian avant-garde, including the presence of Jewish intellectuals and the international contextualization of the process, was offered by Paul Cernat in his *Avangarda românească și complexul periferiei* (The avant-garde and the periphery complex) (2007), a comprehensive study that approached systematically and historically the complexity of the literary-artistic phenomena focusing mainly on the previously

ignored context from the perspective of cultural and social history. Nevertheless, studies dedicated specifically to the contribution of the Jewish intellectuals to the avant-garde came mainly from the international scholarship through the works of two historians, Swedish Tom Sandqvist and American art historian Steven Mansbach. According to Mansbach, the essential element in determining the massive Jewish presence in these avant-garde artistic groups was the profound self-consciousness of Jews as being “outsiders.” Continuing the demonstration, Tom Sandqvist dedicated a whole book to the Romanian and Jewish roots of the Dadaism movement and its members⁵. But, if the main argument confirmed and enforced empirically previous contributions to the marginal condition of the Jewish population as a determining factor for the emergence of the modernism and avant-garde among Jewish intellectuals, his allegations planning to show that the Eastern European Jewish cultural tradition and Judaism were sources of inspiration for avant-gardism need further demonstration. If the avant-garde enjoyed a privileged position for the interest and reputation of Romanian culture and thus a greater attention in terms of analysis, the case of the writers of “Jewish literature in Romanian” was less fortunate. Apart from being included in the general literary and cultural histories of the interwar period (initially E. Lovinescu and G. Călinescu, and Ov. S. Crohmălniceanu after 1945), the works and the profiles of the writers were sadly forgotten (as it is the case of Ury Benador) or little researched (I. Peltz’s only monograph, Rodica Lăzărescu’s *Viața cu haz și fără a numelui Peltz* (The funny and not-so-funny life of citizen Peltz)). Thus, my research also plans to recuperate the contribution of these writers, as well as their profile, which is significant for the Jewish intellectual history and for the larger context of Romanian literary studies of the interwar period.

B. Theory. Several theoretical works will support my research in terms of conflict mechanisms and strategies of inclusion. In terms of explaining the mechanisms of conflict and inclusion of the modern Jewish intellectual, Robert Merton's theory focuses on the social and cultural sources of "anomic stress"⁶ applied to the specific category of recently emerging groups in the reading of Paul Mendes Flohr functioned as a starting point. Mendes-Flohr applied Merton's theory on the group of Jewish intellectuals who were already acculturated on the eve of modernism and functioned as "cognitive insiders", but who were approached as "social outsiders", a contradiction which mounted the intellectual and social frustration. According to Merton, anomie is

...a breakdown of the cultural structure, occurring particularly where there is an acute disjunction between the cultural norms and goals and the socially structured capacities of the groups to act according to them.⁷

As a consequence, Merton identified five types of reactions to this fundamental disjunction out of which Mendes-Flohr considered only two as being specific to the Jewish intellectual case, namely escapism and rebellion. In this context, "escapists" and "rebels" find marginality in profession and intellectual pursuits attractive; the adoption of marginal careers represented a consequence of their exclusion from and also rejection of these structures, their alienation and option for ideologies contesting the ossified canon and social organization. For my study, Merton's theory in Mendes-Flohr's reading provides the deconstruction of conflict and integration processes.

Searching for a theoretical approach to inclusion strategies, the theoretical demonstration of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari developed in their work *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* appears as a productive perspective of research. Based on the

concept of “deterritorialization”, their theory basically analyzes the process of subverting the dominant culture or literature from within, separating a trend within the majority’s discourse and opening a new space for the discourse of the minority. Thus the creation of “minor literature” is not a process of absorbing multiculturalism within the cultural canon, but rather placing the minority’s trademark within the majority’s culture and literature in order to appropriate it.

In his inspiring book on Central European Jewish intellectuals, *Rédemption et utopie: le judaïsme libertaire en Europe Centrale. Une étude d’affinité élective*, Michael Löwy elaborated the theory of intellectual polarization between Romantic utopia and restitutive messianism. While preparing his demonstration of the specificity of the Central European Jewish intellectual model, he also elaborated a categorization of the main differences grouping the Western and Eastern European Jews in different intellectual genealogies. According to him, Eastern European Jews were characterized by a large domination of Yiddish culture rooted in the *shtetl* life with its communal outlook, by a massive participation in revolutionary movements due to the extreme poverty, the existence of a working class, high social persecution and anti-Semitism shaping the image of a pariah group. Also, the rationalist perspective supported by atheism and the refusal of religious values perceived from the left as obscurantist was specific for the group. On the contrary, Western European Jews were defined by a more integrated and acculturated identity determining a lower revolutionary interest and a rather liberal attitude, a weaker Jewish identity without an interest in Zionism or religious renewal and finally, a large attraction to liberalism and rationalism in the line of the French Revolution’s ideals. Finally, between the pariah condition of Eastern European Jews based on large exclusion (Poland and Russia) and the Western integrative model, Central European Jews were

supposed to bring in a third type, previously ignored, of semi-excluded, semi-pariah individuals, based on their semi-integration and generating a stronger religious and cultural Jewish identity, rather than a national one. It is in this general theoretical framework that I intend to place the specificity of my research, planning to identify the exceptionalism and commonality of the Romanian Jewry placed on a space of cultural interferences.

C. Concepts. A definition of the concept of “identity” with its largely used category of “Jewish identity” will not be included in my work. The complexity of the issue and the extensive debate behind it exceed the aims and limits of my research as an energy-exhausting effort of clarifying already largely used concepts which by now became familiar and function as a general reference for the readers. Instead, I consider that, due to the specificity of my work, a clarification of the less familiar concepts of “Jewish intellectual” on one side, as well as “Jewish writer” and “Jewish literature” is compulsory.

A consequence of the modernity, the appearance of the Jewish intellectual was connected to a series of factors such as the Haskala (Jewish Enlightenment), the large process of acculturation and secularization and the socio-economic advancements. Naturally, an extensive literature on the topic emerged. From Hannah Arendt’s “Jew as pariah”, to Isaac Deutscher’s “non-Jewish Jew”, George Steiner’s “meta-rabbis”, Daniel Bell’s “prophets of alienation” or John Murray Cuddihy’s “uncivil Jew”, many intellectual historians, sociologists and literary researchers were fascinated with the case of the Jewish intellectual, approached as a modern phenomenon and as a category of individuals severing ties with the community and original Jewish culture due to

secularization. The manner in which thinkers evaluated the positive or negative aspects of this estrangement from Judaism and Jewish life varies from enthusiastic attachment to conservative exclusion.

Isaac Deutscher considers the Jewish intellectual the one “transcending Jewry” and, as a consequence, a “non-Jewish Jew,” although in a positive sense:

The Jewish heretic who transcends Jewry belongs to a Jewish tradition. (...) Spinoza, Heine, Marx, Rosa Luxemburg, Trotsky, and Freud. (...) They all went beyond the boundaries of Jewry. They all found Jewry too narrow, too archaic, and too constricting. They all looked for ideals and fulfilment beyond it, and they represent the sum and substance of the most profound upheavals that have taken place in philosophy, sociology, and politics in the last three centuries. (...) Yet I think that in some ways they were very Jewish indeed. They had in themselves something of the quintessence of Jewish life and of the Jewish intellect. They were a priori exceptional in that as Jews they dwelt on the borderlines of various civilisations, religions and national cultures. They were born and brought up on the borderlines of various epochs. Their mind matured where the most diverse cultural influences crossed and fertilized each other. They lived on the margins or in the nooks and crannies of their respective nations. Each of them was in society and yet not in it, of it and yet not of it. It was this that enabled them to rise in thought above their societies, above their nations, above their times and generations, and to strike out mentally into wide new horizons and far into the future.⁸

Thus, bridging cultures and transgressing specific paths of thinking as Deutscher enthusiastically showed, the Jewish intellectuals using a non-Jewish intellectual tool-kit were and were not part of Jewish culture anymore while not being entirely part of the Gentile one either.

Beyond the beauty of essayistic demonstrations, Paul Mendes-Flohr captured the two perspectives on the topic in a synthetic account. First of all, he noticed that the intellectual in the Jewish society is a modern invention:

Dans la société juive traditionnelle, le gardien par excellence de la vie spirituelle et culturelle était le *talmid hakham*, le sage et l'érudit. L'autorité et la sagesse du *talmid hakham* sont fondées sur sa connaissance de la Tora. Dans la société moderne, le *talmid hakham* est de plus en plus remplacé par l'intellectuel, dont l'autorité et la sagesse sont d'un sécularisme affirmé. Cette mutation radicale reflète des changements profonds dans la nature de l'existence juive.⁹

Lacking the previous *talmid hakham's* authority (the wise and learned man), contesting tradition, acknowledged values and hierarchies, the modern intellectuals were an innovation, cutting (or being excluded) their ties with the traditional community. They were perceived negatively as the “dépassement de leur judéité” takes them out of the community, or positively, as we have read already in Deutscher's text, as those who, by cutting their close ties to Judaism, could serve humanity and truth better. Obviously, the two possible paths depended also on the capacity of maintaining the connections with the life of the community and with Judaism, at the same time as being a modern intellectual immersed in the secular debates; Mendes-Flohr's examples are Spinoza and Moses Mendelssohn for the two mentioned cases. For my current research, the concept of “Jewish intellectual” is relevant in the sense of belonging to modernity and managing to bridge two cultures and communities through its border identity.

The debate becomes even more complicated when discussing concepts such as “Jewish literature” and “Jewish writer” as the language marker has the quality of excluding or including formally the work from a certain corpus of cultural products. Literary histories in general consider that the totality of artistic works produced in a certain language belong to the respective culture, regardless of the origin of their authors who, by choosing a specific language, made also a clear statement on their cultural affiliation. As an exceptional case, the specificity of the Jewish literature is given by “the

absence of a common language, territory, culture”¹⁰ perceived as essential markers of culture and literature in general. Thus, technically, the Jewish languages restrict the corpus of literary texts to creations in Yiddish, Hebrew and Ladino. Nevertheless, after Haskala, more and more intellectuals modernized and started to participate in the social and cultural life of the Gentile society, producing valuable texts in the local languages. The great debate around the capacity of Jewish culture to integrate these works started from the premise of the writer’s identity and identification; many works were inspired by Jewish life and by the origin of the author and expressed this attachment, but some others simply ignored these cultural references while the author did not identify himself / herself as Jewish writer. Beyond all these exceptions, literary historians and sociologists attempted to clarify the issue; the conclusions usually depended on their definition of Jewish culture as an open or closed construct, able to integrate or not the social and cultural reality of Diaspora existence, adapting to the changes and surviving in different other cultures, while altering its status as a multi-cultural / multi-lingual construct. Thus, implicitly, the acceptance of the works of Jewish writers in non-Jewish languages as part of Jewish culture determined also the recognition of a Jewish literature of the Diaspora, fundamentally defined by non-Yiddish and non-Hebrew creations during modernity.

In a comprehensive overview of the varieties of definitions on Jewish literature, Hana Wirth-Nesher¹¹ listed a series of criteria which were used in time in order to categorize the texts ranging from the origin of their authors to the employment of some specific “Jewish themes,” to include finally the usage of Jewish languages, religion, history and traditions. To Wirth-Nesher, all these definitions had justifications and disadvantages, suggesting that the process of defining such an elusive, complex and varied phenomenon did not generate an ideal conclusion. Thus, in a debate on the essence

of the Jewish literature, Aharon Appelfeld¹²'s answer is rather clear; he listed the usage of a Jewish language and the creation from within Jewish culture, including "the collective soul or the collective memory" with its religion, folklore, myths, legends, culture and language together with the self-identification of the writer with his or her Jewish origin. Referring to the multitude of writers of Jewish origin creating in non-Jewish languages, he considered that

...most of those brilliant minds belong to their social and cultural environment, to the main literary streams of their countries. If there is some Jewishness in their writing, it is hidden. The hidden, even if it is deep and meaningful, does not make them Jewish writers.¹³

To the opposite, the integrative vision of Jewish culture included the totality of manifestations concerning Jewish existence in their specificity. This fact could be synthetically expressed through the declaration of one of the Polish-Jewish writers from the interwar period, Maurycy Szymel, who considered that "I am a genuine son of my nation, and I express my Jewishness in one of the many tongues it uses."¹⁴ Opposing Appelfeld in the debate, Eugene Goodheart considered that Appelfeld and his closed cultural vision were based on a "static.... not susceptible to change, that can't encounter experiences that are non-Jewish and be affected by these experiences" religious type of Jewish identity. The disadvantage of this strict definition consisted in the exclusion of the very essence of the modern Jewish life with its secular aspects, in which "the writer comes into the large world and is affected by the world, and is not simply defined by the Jewishness, through the Jewishness, is part of what he is"¹⁵. Reinterpreting Jewish identity, tradition and culture and adapting it to the modern context seems to define the modern Jewish experience.

As a result, the open concept of multicultural Jewish literature and culture appears as essential for modernity. Actually, even earlier, the Jewish world fully benefited and included works in non-Jewish languages such as the Aramaic Talmud, the Greek works of Philo of Alexandria, and the Arabic writings of Maimonides and Yehuda Halevi. Apart from all debates and definitions, the open culture perspective appears to make even more sense in the modern period, thus the perspective of a multicultural, pluri-linguistic Jewish reality was mostly supported by contemporary research. Thus Ruth R. Wisse approached this perspective when discussing *The Modern Jewish Canon*, declaring from the beginning that “this book tries to explain the phenomenon of a multilingual Jewish literature,” because “an adequate study of modern Jewish literature would have to be as polyglot as the people who wrote it.”¹⁶ Obviously, this approach supported Wisse’s “sense of literature as the repository of modern Jewish experience”¹⁷ and thus necessarily including the languages in which the Jewish community lives and creates. Aware of the anomaly of the concept, Ruth R. Wisse noticed that

...a multilingual Jewish literature violates, on the one hand, the concept of a national literature in a national language and, on the other, the traditional Jewish concept of a received literature that alone requires on-going interpretation.¹⁸

Continuing this direction of approaching the concept, Eugenia Prokop-Janiec discussed the case of Jewish literature in Polish in a very convincing manner, especially useful for my research due to the Eastern European affinity between the Romanian and Polish cases of Jewish culture. According to her,

...as a literary phenomenon, Polish-Jewish literature may be viewed from two different perspectives. On the one hand, it may be treated as an integral, though peculiar, part of Polish literary output. On the other hand,

it may be treated as a part of the polysystem of Jewish culture in Poland, a polysystem consisting of the creative activity in all the languages spoken by Polish Jews. Thus, we may talk about the “Jewish School” in Polish literature or, alternately, the “Polish School” in Jewish literature. It seems rather obvious that both these approaches are equally valid and not mutually exclusive.¹⁹

In this way, a double approach can be envisaged when recuperating these creations as part of both, Jewish and Gentile culture, with equal rights. A critical approach that follows a double identity appears to be the ideal solution for my research as well.

Due to the theoretical affinity that I identified in and agree with Ruth R. Wisse and Eugenia Prokop-Janiec’s perspective, I chose to define for the purpose of my current work the concept of Jewish literature as “in Jewish literature the authors or characters know and let the reader know that they are Jews”²⁰ and, more formally, that “Polish-Jewish literature: works written in Polish on Jewish themes by authors who identify themselves as Jews”²¹. As for the concept of “Jewish writer”, I prefer to let “my” intellectuals decide through their own autobiographical and self-identification pieces as identity self-representation became basically an area of personal choice. In this sense, although my research focuses on acculturated Jewish intellectuals, only a part of them could be defined as “Jewish writers” as this concept also determines specific choices of belonging to a cultural ideology. For example, I. Peltz whom I would have gladly considered a “Jewish writer” due to his inspiration from Jewish life and biographical elements declared openly as being a “Romanian writer” in a literary survey, due to his inclusive approach to Romanian culture and linguistic affiliation. As for the concept of “Jewish intellectuals”, I find no problem in identifying them as such due to the fact that for all their Jewish origin comes up at a certain point in their work in a more or less

prominent position. Therefore I took the liberty of considering all the intellectuals analyzed in my dissertation as “Jewish intellectuals” based on a sociological definition suggested by the similar approach of Michael Löwy. For the case of “Jewish writers” I tend to be more cautious and allow the individual authors to speak for themselves in terms of cultural definition and literary identifications.

D. Methods. Placed at the interference of the history of intellectuals, literary studies and sociology of culture, my analysis will focus on individuals, cultural products and processes analyzed against the larger background of socio-economic and politic history. Aiming to explain socio-cultural mechanisms and conflicts within the intellectual milieu, the processes shaping certain cultural ideologies and the emergence of message-based artistic products, the study will involve different strategies of analysis. Among these strategies, intellectual and social biographies of the protagonists, literary and sociological analyses of their discourse and historical reconstructions of concepts and syntagms are prominent. Methodologically, the specificity of research will impose three main directions according to the structure of the demonstration. As the study will start with an analysis of the factors determining the context responsible for shaping certain identity models of the Jewish acculturated intellectuals, the first chapter will follow a selective reconstructive historical approach, able to emphasize the socio-cultural mechanisms leading to defined identity options within the group. The second component will focus on the individual background of the intellectuals, as well as on their formative period and cultural interactions, adopting a social history of intellectuals’ discourse. The last three chapters consist in a discourse analysis of their works focusing on identity representation inspired by the literary analysis.

E. Comparative Dimension. Due to the common Ashkenazi heritage and relatively similar economic and social conditions, I am interested in other Eastern and Central European cases of Jewish identity models articulated in connection with Gentile cultures which could function as an inspirational source and comparative support for such a complex and under-researched field. A detailed bibliographical list could be found in the end of the dissertation collecting all comparative sources. However, a summary of case studies and researchers who should be mentioned for Russian-Jewish literature, include the works of Alice Stone-Nakhimovsky, Lvov-Rogachevsky and recently, Zsuzsa Hetenyi. For the Czech case with the whole scholarship on Kafka, the works of Hillel Kieval, Scott Spector, Marthe Robert and Sander Gilman, aside from the seminal theoretical approach by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari could provide significant material. The similar Polish case could be documented through the works of Eugenia Prokop-Janiec and Chone Shmeruk. The works of Michael Brenner, Paul Mendes-Flohr and George Mosse could offer significant information for the German case. Finally, for the Austro-Hungarian model, Michael Löwy's work on Jewish intellectuals could function as a reference point. Although I will not approach my research as an openly comparative study, the whole construction of my demonstration would be articulated with a thorough knowledge of the other cases in the region and an implicit parallel analysis in order to emphasize the originality and similarity of the Romanian case within the larger Jewish experience in Eastern Europe.

Notes:

¹ *Shtetl* is the term used to denominate the small urban Jewish-inhabited settlements inhabited mostly by traditional religious communities, thus preserving the Jewish culture especially in pre-Holocaust Eastern Europe (Russia, Poland, and Romania).

² A list of the most important works on the historiography of Romanian Jewry is included in the bibliography of the dissertation.

³ Main critics were Ion Pop, *Avangardismul poetic românesc* (București: Editura pentru Literatură, 1969); *Avangarda in literatura română* (București: Minerva, 1990) and Marin Mincu, *Avangarda literară românească* (București: Minerva, 1983).

⁴ Ovid S. Crohmălniceanu, *Evreii în mișcarea de avangardă românească*, (București: Hasefer, 2001).

⁵ Tom Sandqvist, *DADAeast. The Romanians of Cabaret Voltaire* (Cambridge, Mass: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 2006).

⁶ Robert Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure* (New York, 1957).

⁷ Ibid., 162 quoted in Paul Mendes Flohr, *Divided passions: Jewish intellectuals and the experience of modernity* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1991), 42.

⁸ Isac Deutscher, "The non-Jewish Jew" in *The non-Jewish Jew and other Essays*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1981), 26-27.

⁹ Paul Mendes Flohr, "L'intellectuel juif moderne" in Shmuel Trigano ed., *La société juive à travers l'histoire*, volume 1, (Paris: Fayard, 1993), 239.

¹⁰ *What is Jewish Literature?* A symposium with Israeli writers Aharon Appelfeld and Yoav Elstein moderated by Sacvan Bercovitch, The Max and Irene Engel Levy Memorial Lecture, March 31, 1992, (Cambridge: Massachusetts 1993), 2.

¹¹ Hana Wirth-Nesher ed., *What is Jewish literature* (Philadelphia, Pa: Jewish Publication Society, 1994).

¹² Aharon Appelfeld is the author of more than twenty books of prose, novels and short stories, widely acclaimed and translated in many languages (*Badenheim 1939*, *The Immortal Bartfuss* or *Tzili, the Story of a Life*).

¹³ *What is Jewish Literature?* 4.

¹⁴ Maurycy Szymel, "Kij", part 3 quoted in Eugenia Prokop-Janiec, *Polish-Jewish Literature in the Interwar Years*, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2002), 30.

¹⁵ *What is Jewish Literature?* 15-16.

¹⁶ Ruth Wisse, *The modern Jewish Canon: a journey through language and culture* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), XV.

¹⁷ Ibid., 19.

¹⁸ Ibid., XV.

¹⁹ Eugenia Prokopowna, “The Sabbath Motif in Interwar Polish-Jewish Literature” in Yisrael Gutman, Ezra Mendelsohn, Jehuda Reinharz and Chone Shmeruk, eds., *The Jews of Poland Between Two World Wars* (Hanover: Published for Brandeis University Press by University Press of New England, 1989), 413.

²⁰ Wisse, 15.

²¹ Prokopowna, 413.

Chapter 1.

Between Marginal Rebels and Mainstream Critics: Identity Options of Romanian Jewish Intellectuals

The current chapter aims at identifying and analyzing the factors responsible for the shaping of certain identity options among the group of Jewish acculturated intellectuals. More precisely, the main question the current chapter plans to answer concerns the mechanisms of articulation of identity options and intellectual models among the group of Jewish acculturated intellectuals. In order to answer this question, the analysis focuses on the specificity of the Romanian context in connection with the Jewish community in terms of legal treatment, socio-political attitude and cultural discourse, but also on the characteristics of the Romanian Jewry with its distinct origins, structure, socio-economic and cultural evolution. After presenting the Romanian and Jewish context from which the Jewish acculturated intellectuals emerged with their specific cultural traits, an analysis of the possible identity models and intellectual paths shaped by this context will try to answer why acculturated Jewish intellectuals chose a certain specific direction of cultural discourse. Therefore, the current chapter consists of two sections, focusing first on the factors determining the context of the emergence of the Jewish acculturated intellectuals on the eve of WWI, and secondly concentrating on the articulation of intellectual discourse with its variants.

A. Between Marginalization and Exclusion. The Romanian Context. The second half of the 19th century until the eve of WWI represented probably the period with the most accelerated changes in Romanian history causing the profound modification of the economic, social and political structure of the state with obvious consequences for the cultural life. The unification of the Principalities in 1859, followed by the brief reformist leadership of Al. I. Cuza, led to the transformation of the state into a monarchy starting from 1866. The decisive steps towards independence from the Ottoman Empire finalized in 1877/1878 and the proclamation of the Romanian Kingdom led by King Carol in 1881 secured the general political framework for the internal development of the society within stable political structures. This general framework secured stability and continuity for the country until the WWI and the unification of the Regat with the historical provinces. The creation of the modern Romanian state and society was initiated during these decades and it overlapped with the emergence of a nationalist xenophobic discourse manifested on the legal, socio-political and cultural levels.

The Legal Factor. In political and legal terms, the main element defining the situation of the Jewish community before WWI was the lack of civic rights due to the long belated Emancipation. Living on Romanian territory for centuries, the Jewish community went through several stages of effort, political struggle and rapprochement with the Romanian authorities and political class in order to obtain equal individual and collective rights. Towards the mid-19th century, “in the politically agitated context of a young national state (as the Romanian one), whose territorial aspiration were not yet accomplished and in the context of backward economic structures, the problem of

national minorities was extremely important.”¹ Quoting Victor Place, the former French consul in Iași, Carol Iancu stressed the rise of Romanian nationalism based on xenophobic reactions against foreigners and other ethnic groups. Due to the failure of the 1848 Revolution which gave hopes for Emancipation, the situation of the Jewish community remained marginal. Although most of them were born on Romanian territory and had no other citizenship, they were subjected to discretionary expulsions, lack of civic rights, not being allowed to settle in the countryside, being excluded from the public positions and being treated as foreigners due to the lack of civic rights. Even more, the Constitution of 1866 stipulated that Romanian citizenship would be granted exclusively to Christian subjects, worsening the situation of the Jewish community which was restricted from owning properties, settling in the countryside and was exposed to expulsions as any foreign citizen. Eventually, the stipulations of the Berlin Congress in 1878, which imposed the recognition of the Jewish minority in Romania, were converted into the possibility of individual naturalization starting from 1879. Despite this new change, by 1913, apart from the 883 Jewish combatants enrolled in the 1877 war who received citizenship through a block law, only 529 Jews were naturalized, mainly due to a special law granting political rights in a block for the population in Dobrudja².

Due to the political changes brought by the end of WWI and its aftermath, the new Minorities' Law finally granted Romanian citizenship to the Jewish individuals in 1919 and was later included in the 1923 Constitution, finally including the community in legal terms in the national body. But, despite the recent emancipation, the relationship between the Jewish population and the Romanian state did not resemble a honeymoon-period after this moment. The Mârzescu Law of 1924 was created to revise citizenship for the Jewish population, soon after the adoption of Constitution of 1923; the principle of

indigenate (permanent residence on Romanian territory by the time of Unification for the cases of the newly acquired territories) also referred to Regat Jews obliged to prove with official documents that they had been registered in their localities of origin, a fact often impossible to be done for bureaucratic reasons. Between 16 000 and 20 000 Jewish families from the new territories lost citizenship and thus a great number of civic rights, including professions, public functions, access to public education, property rights, while being subjected to possible expulsion.³ The Law for Employing Romanian Personnel in Enterprises issued in 1934 and consolidated by a series of subsequent dispositions in 1935 forced any enterprise to have minimum of 80% of Romanian employees, while in the areas concerning the safety and defense of the state the situation was even more restrictive.⁴ From now on, in many cases, the distinction due to ethnicity and religious origin started to be implemented; in many cases starting with 1937, documents of ethnic origin were required, such as for the enrollment at the Cluj Science Faculty as well as Letters and Philosophy Faculty.⁵ In some other cases, Romanian ethnicity was bluntly specified as a criteria of participation as in the text of several laws issued in 1937 or when applying for diplomatic positions at the Foreign Affairs Ministry. In the artistic and educational field, these regulations started excluding non-Romanians from certain activities and privileges such as the process of being awarded prizes in visual arts which was only for Romanians as well as the access to courses, exams and contests for professional training and practice in crafts.⁶

The new Goga-Cuza government of strong radical composition started a more aggressive anti-Jewish campaign immediately after its creation in December 1937. As a result, they suspended democratic “Judaized” press as *Dimineața* (The Morning), *Adevărul* (The Truth) and *Lupta* (The Struggle) led by Jewish journalists such as C.

Graur, Emil Fagure or Saniel Labin, and excluded Jewish journalists from the rest of the press, thus nationalizing the whole field. This radical decision was followed soon by a whole controlling legislation directed against the press as the main ideological platform of democratic values, of promotion of integration and equality. A new law project was initiated in 1939 regulating journalism as a profession and excluding Jewish journalists from working in the Romanian press, limiting their activity only to journals destined for the Jewish community. Anti-Jewish legislation became an important part of the state regulations and discriminated and excluded officially the Jewish individuals from almost the entire social, economic and cultural life. In a collection of anti-Jewish legislation,⁷ the section dedicated to the collection of anti-Jewish legislation contained more than one hundred reports, resolutions, legal decrees, and council of ministers sessions concerning the status of the Jewish population in Romania. The legislation limited more and more the rights and areas of public manifestation of the Jewish population starting from 1938 until 1944 when the legislation ceased to be applied, practically condemning to extinction a population deprived of property, forbidden to work and subjected to labor camps regulations.

The exclusion of the elite and intellectual groups from Romanian social and cultural life was particularly relevant for the topic of my research, together with the treatment of Jewish journalists. Laws excluding Jews from national theatres, opera houses, private theatres and all artistic companies and institutions were followed in 1940 by a resolution eliminating Jews from trade unions and professional organizations, as well as from being free-lance artists and by the Romanization of film-making studios, and motion-picture theatres. Also other categories of the Jewish elite were excluded from social participation and membership in professional organizations such as lawyers,

doctors, engineers, and pharmacists. Therefore restrictions were applied to the Jewish members of the Bar regarding practicing law (apart from cases when the beneficiary was also Jewish), engineers were excluded from the Council of Engineers, doctors were excluded from the Doctors' College and thus were unable to practice medicine, also banning the lease of pharmacies, drug warehouses, laboratories and drug factories to Jews was issued. Eventually, Jewish students of all grades were expelled from state-run education institutions. Basically, the culmination of legislation led to the marginalization and exclusion of the Jewish citizens from Romanian society.

The Socio-Political Factor. In terms of social life, the presence of a fluctuating politically motivated anti-Semitism worsened the situation of the Jewish community. In a study on the anti-Semitism in cultural life during the 1930s, Leon Volovici stressed the fact that anti-Semitism was employed starting from the last decades of the 19th century as a part of the process of shaping national conscience. He argued that “political circumstances related to the reactions against international pressure and traditional xenophobia determined ‘the Jewish problem’ to become the catalyst for the consolidation of nationalism, a stimulus for the ‘national awakening’.”⁸ This process actually expanded further in time and the “Jewish question” was often used as an instrument for manipulating mass conscience. According to Carol Iancu, “the ideological platform of Romanian anti-Semitism was elaborated during the Berlin Congress”⁹ when the “Jewish question” became extremely important in the public and political debate. In the same line, *Raport Final* (Final Report) considered that “the roots of Romanian anti-Semitism blended with the origins of the modern national Romanian state and with the emergence of the rich national cultural tradition which accompanied the unification of the

Principalities, the Independence and the creation of Greater Romania.”¹⁰ During the debates on the 1866 Constitution, the Romanian elite perceived the Jews as being the main obstacle against independence, prosperity and culture in Romania, opinion which radicalized due to the open conditioning of international recognition of the Romanian state with the Jewish citizenship granting during the Berlin Congress. Although the Constitution of 1866 did not grant citizenship, the next decades exposed the Jewish community to more abuses as expulsion from rural areas, as the new political elite launched a discriminative political discourse through Ion Bratianu, Mihail Kogălniceanu or Cezar Bolliac. Also the indignant intellectual elite such as philosopher Vasile Conta, poet Vasile Alecsandri, novelist Ioan Slavici, historian Al. D. Xenopol and future national poet Mihai Eminescu, reacted drastically to the Berlin Congress conditions. Thus, 19th century anti-Semitism coincided with the efforts and accomplishments of the Romanian modern state and generated a strong and violent discourse and language often claimed and reshaped later in the interwar period by the new political and intellectual elite. Thus, from the mid-19th century on, intellectual currents and anti-Semitic ideological trends generated a fluctuating anti-Jewish attitude on the social level which maintained a climate of precariousness, instability and lack of safety for Jewish individuals, property, activity and production of cultural goods which continued after Emancipation and during the interwar period.

In the 20th century, the anti-Semitic discourse started to be articulated more and more as part of large ideological trends and movements targeting the Jewish population and into organized forms of aggressing and harassing it. Reputed historian Nicolae Iorga and Iași University professor A. C. Cuza created in 1910 the National-Democratic Party, the first openly and programmatically anti-Semitic party in Romania. Separating from

Iorga, A. C. Cuza created the National-Christian Union in 1922 with renowned biologist and professor N. C. Paulescu, openly adopting the swastika as a symbol, even before the Nazis. Created in 1923 by the same Cuza with his racial anti-Semitism, the LANC (the League of the National-Christian Defense) became an important movement and ferment generating the student's anti-Semitic manifestations from early 1920s. Cuza's godson, C. Z. Codreanu would later separate from the LANC and found the Iron Guard movement in 1927 which, renamed and reorganized under different forms outlived him in the country and later in exile until after the end of WWII. Theologians Nichifor Crainic and Nae Ionescu introduced the political and economic anti-Semitism into cultural life and influenced large categories of young intellectuals while educating them at the University. An important characteristic of many ideologists was that they were also academics, thus their influence and ideological power of propagation was even larger, instigating masses of students and initiating youth movements and rebellions. Another significant element in creating an anti-Semitic atmosphere was generated by the creation of a negative image of the Jew in Romanian literature which emerged in the second half of the 19th century in the works of popular writers such as Vasile Alecsandri or Mihai Eminescu. Such a strong anti-Semitic mass direction articulated from the level of the intellectual elite created a natural background for the rise of extremist groups to power in the mid-late 1930s, often finding inspiration in the 19th century anti-Semitic intellectual discourse.

The Romanian Cultural Milieu. Towards the end of the 19th century, Romanian culture and literature were dominated by two intellectual trends shaping the larger Romanian intellectual life. These trends reflected the political preoccupations of articulating a strong nation-based identity after the recent unification of the two

Principalities and emerged on the eve of the intensive efforts of gaining the rest of the territories to be acquired after WWI, namely Transylvania, Bukovina and Bessarabia. In this cultural, political and social unification effort, a strong Romanian ethnic identity was articulated arguing for the historical and cultural connection with the rest of the Regat while sharing the same language, ethnicity, history and religion. *Poporanism* and *sămănătorism* were two literary and cultural trends emerging during the last decade of the 19th century and the first decade of the 20th century in Romania around two literary publications, *Viața românească* (Romanian life) and *Sămănătorul* (The Sower). Both were promoting a revitalization of Romanian culture through the inspiration from the rural life, folklore, national traditions and peasantry. Inspired by Russian *narodnik movement*¹¹, filtered through the contribution of C. Dobrogeanu-Gherea and promoting a strong leftist orientation, the *poporanist* cultural trend made Jewish identity representation impossible due to its conservative Romanian ethnic and religious focus. The involvement of the nationalist-conservative and future anti-Semitic movement leader, N. Iorga, with his *Sămănătorul* publication, focused basically on the same elements and factors, but from a rather conservative, as well as national perspective. The rather feeble modernist direction, emerging in the first decade of the 20th century and represented by the influence of Symbolism with its international, especially French, affiliations, had a history already with Al. Macedonski's activity and his review *Literatorul* (The Man of Letters), starting in 1880.

Serious adjustments to the political and social reality were deeply needed after the changes produced by the unification of the newly acquired territories in 1918 and because of their social and economic inequality. The ideological disputes within the Romanian intellectual and political milieus were related mostly to this lack of correlation

between the new geo-socio-political “substance” and the old ideological “forms”. Thus, the main directions within political and intellectual thought were significant; thus, first, the pro-modernist direction favoring European cultural and political integration through the synchronization with the rest of the European world advocated for the marginalization of the old “peasantist” conservatism. The orientation heavily relied on the appreciation of the existence of multiple political options, and of the promotion of democracy and constitutionalism. The second orientation traced back the conservative attitudes from the past in a traditionalist direction ignoring modernity and asserting that the specifically “peasantist” Romanian social and political organization was the most appropriate one. The critical attitude against innovative influences refused any modernist attempts towards European integration, ignoring the new reality after the WWI and denying the importance of these major changes. From this perspective, any new attempt at change was perceived as dangerous for the identity of the Romanian people as a nation. In order to support the rights of such a conservative attitude in local terms, the traditionalist direction articulated the Romanian specificity by reducing it to the Orthodox element. At the same time, the lack of tolerance for other religious denominations was implicit. At the expense of democracy, the totalitarian regime was appreciated as the only appropriate form for restructuring the nation. The rejection of the Occidental values by praising the self-centered conservative orthodox Orient transformed the ideological debates in geo-cultural oppositions¹².

Reflecting and prolonging the ideological confrontations of the political milieu, the Romanian cultural scene between the two world wars was deeply influenced by the dynamic relationship between tradition and modernity. The tension between these two tendencies was even more visible at the cultural level where the two directions

represented distinct forms of creativity and cultural debates. According to these ideological trends, the Romanian cultural picture of the interwar period displayed three directions: “traditionalism-spiritualism”, modernism and “liberalism-rusticism.”¹³ The “traditionalist-spiritualist” trend gathered around the old literary review *Sămănătorul*, the rest of the “traditionalist” publications influenced by it such as *Gândirea* (The Idea) (led by Nichifor Crainic) or the 1927 Generation group writing for *Cuvântul* (The Word) (directed by Nae Ionescu), connecting the “traditionalism” of *Sămănătorul*, the “spiritualism” of *Gândirea*, and the Romanian existentialism of the 1930s. Projecting itself as a sort of protector of the concept of “Romanianess” by promoting the national history and folklore, the direction created a justifying transcendental dimension for the former rigid and backward traditionalism. Defending Romanian culture from the “danger” of internationalism and modernism, this trend stressed the specificity of the Romanian spirit as related to the values of Orthodoxy. The traditionalist orientation polarized a part of the Romanian intellectuals, but some of them only partially accepted the cultural nationalism promoted by them. Beginning with 1928-1929, while the right-wing ideology developed in Romanian society, *Gândirea* and the rest of the publications initiated a campaign against democracy, praising the totalitarian regimes of Europe at the time, stressing the irrationality, the messianic nationalism, the spiritualism and the ethic element in culture. When this extreme ideology of fascist orientation became obvious, some of their collaborators left the publication.

The modernist trend was represented by literary reviews *Sburătorul* (The Incubus) or *Revista Fundațiilor Regale* (The Review of the Royal Foundations) and its main theoretician was E. Lovinescu, director of *Sburătorul* literary society. Synchronism with the Western cultural trends and ethic values, together with the intellectualism

emerging from the appreciation of aesthetics instead of the ethnic element made the modernists the leading figures in Romanian literary criticism. Without a distinct esthetic program, except for the promotion of real talents, the modernist ideas advocated for a wide and rapid assimilation of the Western cultural values in order to synchronize the Romanian cultural life with the rest of the world's culture and to overcome the provincial conservative trend. The political democratic views were also central. The concept of synchronization with the latest intellectual trends in an attempt to extract Romanian culture from the rural tradition and social backwardness was hostile to the "peasantism" and "ethnicism" of the traditionalist trend. The traditionalists accused *Sburătorul* of destroying the national specificity and spirit in the artistic field, arguing that real patriots should be interested in ethnic preservation, archaism, ruralism, folklore and provincialism. Continuing the modernist direction in the intellectual life, the avant-garde took the political option through a short transition to the leftist socialist group. The avant-garde direction in Romanian culture was supported by a series of cultural publications such as *Contimporanul* (The Contemporary), *75 H.P.*, and *Integral* (Integral). Tristan Tzara and Marcel Iancu, the first promoters of this direction, were the initiators of the Dada movement together with other European artists from different fields. Founded by I. Vineanu, Beniamin Fundoianu, Tristan Tzara and Marcel Iancu, *Contimporanul* would express the young intellectuals' aversion to the conservative spirit, the refusal of acknowledged values while the world culture was practically demolished by their criticism. Since most of them were promoted in their pre-avant-garde period by E. Lovinescu and by *Sburătorul*, they also related to the modernist poll through their innovative spirit. Although many of them left the country before 1930s, their intermittent presence and written collaboration added dynamics to the intellectual life.

The third trend originated in the leftist thought and cut ideologically across both “liberalism” and “rusticism.” A form of mediation between traditionalism and modernism, this trend appeared as a combination of “populist ideology and cultural sociology.” The central promoter, the group of *Viata românească* gathered within its pages practically all the important intellectuals of the moment. Under the leadership of M. Ralea, Ibrăileanu and C. Stere, the publication enjoyed the collaboration of the majority of the leftist artists of rational orientation and with progressive ideas, promoted a clear *poporanist* direction and a democratic attitude. Facing the rise of the rightist groups, the publication took a clear position against them and openly promoted democracy.

In this context, the identity options within Romanian culture were limited and extremely restrictive for the young Jewish acculturated intellectuals. The traditionalist camp, focusing on national identity and cultural preservation would have been theoretically appealing for a potential program of building a Jewish Romanian literature, but the basic definition of the “Romanian nation” fundamentally excluded the existence of any non-Romanian group. Still, the new political context after 1919 and especially the few laws which enforced Jewish education in 1928 and the Mosaic cult in 1925 created a theoretical framework on the political and social level for the emergence of a parallel discourse on Jewish collective cultural identity within the Romanian nation. On the other hand, the modernist option could have offered a more appealing alternative through its neglect of ethnicity, national specificity and a leftist or apolitical orientation.

B. Between Acculturation and Identity Preservation. The Jewish Community.

The Jewish community started a profound process of modernization, self-emancipation and acculturation stimulated by the program of the Haskala permeating Romanian Jewry in the early-mid 19th century, by the enlightened ideas of 1848 where Jewish Emancipation was listed among the objectives of the Revolution, as well as due to the successful participation of the Jewish population in the process of economic modernization, industrialization and urbanization of the country. Due to the mostly recent origin of the Romanian Jewry, mainly consisting of 19th century migrants from Galicia, to the consequent low community cohesion, and to the specific character of Romanian society, archaic, traditional and practicing non-proselytizing Orthodox Christianity, the Jewish community felt no pressure to assimilate. Nevertheless, the community had incentives to rapid acculturation. In this context, the preservation of a strong Jewish identity was possible and it harmoniously coexisted with Romanian acculturation.

A Portrait of the Romanian Jewry. The general demographic data quoted in YIVO Encyclopedia states that in 1772, more than 95% of the Eastern European Ashkenazi Jews lived in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth while the tiny remainder lived in Moldavia, Wallachia and Hungary. After a series of political restrictions imposed in Austro-Hungary, the overpopulated Galician Jewry started massively to migrate in large numbers towards rural Hungarian and Romanian territory during the second half of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century. In this context, the Romanian Jewry secured a strong Ashkenazi structure connecting it to the Eastern European religious traditions (Hassidic and Orthodox), linguistic (Yiddish and Hebrew) and cultural patterns (education, communal institutions, and lifestyle). Despite the old existence of a Jewish

community in Romania, the relatively recent massive migration waves and the incorporation of new territories inhabited by a significant Jewish population transformed it into the fourth largest Jewish community in the world during the interwar period (after the US, Russia and Poland).

In 1899, 72.4% of the Regat Jewry were living in Moldavia, representing 10.5% of the whole local population, while in the cities of the Northern part such as Iași it reached even 50.5% of the population. In Wallachia the population was mainly present in Bucharest, while in the rest of the province and in the countryside the population was insignificant. In terms of urbanization, the Jewish population in Moldavia was living predominantly in urban communities and cities due to restrictions which limited inhabiting in the rural areas, but was still less urbanized than in Wallachia. The 1930 census contained great changes due to the unification of the Regat with the historical provinces. Thus more than a half million Jews joined the Regat community due to the new territories included within the Romanian borders, causing the total Jewish population to rise to 756,930 which represented 4.2% of the general population (according to the religious affiliation). In terms of nationality, only 4% of the total population declared to be ethnically Jewish and 2.9% declared having Yiddish as a mother tongue. The 0.2% difference between the total Jewish population percentage among the general population and the one representing the nationality represented the assimilated individuals, while the lower percentage of Yiddish speakers within the general number of Jewish population signaled a significant level of acculturation. From these numbers it became obvious that the Jewish population was not interested in assimilation, but signaled a relatively high degree of acculturation, speaking less Yiddish, in favor of Hungarian, German, Russian, Romanian and Hebrew. The urban Jews were mainly concentrated in the Regat with

94.8% of the regional Jewish population as a result of the previous restrictions for rural settlement. Most of Wallachia's Jews were living in Bucharest, representing 11.8% of the city population. In Moldavia, the situation was different as together with compact urban communities there were also many *shtetls*, small communities, Jewish *tîrgs*¹⁴, which were even stronger represented in Bessarabia and Bukovina.

The level of acculturation to Romanian was significant mainly in the Old Regat, varying from 82.9% in Oltenia to 79% in Wallachia and 32.3% in Moldavia. In terms of assimilation, the Moldavian communities declared 97.6% to be ethnically Jewish, while in Wallachia the percentage was lower, reaching 91.8%. Thus, despite the variable level of acculturation, the assimilation to Romanian was extremely low in all regions, but nevertheless higher if compared with Bessarabia, Bukovina and Transylvania where the Jewish national feeling was stronger. Those not speaking Yiddish in Transylvania were speaking Hungarian and German as mother tongues. Acculturation was lowest in Bessarabia, where a great majority was still Yiddish speaking, while the Regat (for Romanian) and Transylvania (for German and Hungarian) were the most acculturated. Bukovina had a small, but strong Jewish elite acculturated to German.

According to Ezra Mendelsohn, in interwar Romania one could speak of at least five distinct Jewries. The Wallachian Jewry, a relatively small group, corresponding basically to the Western type of Jewry in terms of significant acculturation to Romanian, high urbanization and concentration in the capital Bucharest, was long established. Even before Emancipation, the community acquired a high degree of acculturation, although they were reluctant to assimilate. The Moldavian Jewry was much larger, more recently migrating from the Eastern lands. More prominent in the urban life and more proletarian than the Wallachian one, Yiddish speaking in its majority and influenced by Hassidism

and traditional lifestyle, Moldavian Jewry was in many respects closer the Galician Jewry and to the Eastern type. After the WWI settlements and the creation of Greater Romania with new territories, new communities joined the old Regat Jewry. Thus the Jewry in Bessarabia and Bukovina were both of the Eastern type under Galician influence, but quite different due to their former belonging to different political units. Thus Bessarabia was part of the Russian Empire with its restrictive and marginalizing legislation and had closer contact with Russian culture and intellectual life, while Bukovina was part of the more tolerant Austro-Hungarian Empire and had significant Germanized Jewish elite in Cernăuți. In Transylvania, the situation was even more complex as the region consisted of three main parts, each with its own specificity. Thus, in the northern region of Crișana-Maramureș, the Jewish group was similar to the Galician one and of Eastern traditional Yiddish-speaking type, while in historic Transylvania and in the Banat, the Jewry was mainly of Hungarian and German acculturation, more modern and of Western type. Given the specific focus of the current dissertation on Romanian acculturated Jewish intellectuals, further analysis will concentrate on the Wallachian and Moldavian Jewry, as the ones naturally choosing Romanian culture.

Political Orientations. The political options of the Romanian Jewry varied from region to region according to the community specificity and changed dramatically after WWI, according to the cultural adhesion of the newly joined communities. Therefore, the political options varied from Jewish nationalism under its different manifestations to assimilationism in its many varieties, as well as Zionism and Socialism. The most significant element within the political life of the Romanian Jewish community during the interwar period was the struggle for dominance between the former Regat Jewry and the

newly joined Jewish communities from the rest of the territories. This naturally involved tension between the national Jewish politics practiced in the territories and the non-national “assimilationist” tendency dominant within the former Regat Jewry.

The most important political force in the Regat was the ideologically vague Uniunea Evreilor Pământenii (Union of Native Jews - UEP) founded in 1910 and gathering Bucharest Jewish bourgeoisie and professionals favoring the Romanization of the Regat Jewry, at the same time struggling for Jewish legal equality, acculturation and civic emancipation. Accused of being a prolongation of the “assimilationist” ideology active before WWI, UEP was placed politically in the middle, between assimilationists and Zionists. Redesigned after WWI as the Union of Romanian Jews (UER), the organization failed repeatedly to create a following in the new territories, its adherence being limited to the Regat. UER declared a civic and political identification with the Romanian interests, but also a clear articulation of Jewish ethnic and religious-cultural identity as well as a definite political agenda struggling first of all for Jewish rights within Romanian society. Thus, UER’s leaders declared in 1927 to be “d’origine juive, de nationalité roumaine, de religion mosaïque,” thus advocating political, but not cultural, assimilation.

At the opposite pole, the national Jewish movements, especially Zionism, emerged as an important post-WWI force, better represented in the new territories than in the former Regat, where UER was dominant. The main goal of the movement was represented by the need of recognition of the Jewish nationality in Romania through complete political, cultural and religious autonomy, having as a final purpose the creation of the Israeli state. Zionism had a strong position in Bessarabia, Bukovina and Transylvania. In the Regat, Zionism raised a smaller interest, concentrated mainly in

Moldavia, but it also increased in Wallachia during and after the interwar period under the influence of the new Jewish groups, rising anti-Semitism and the Zionists migrating to the region. The main voice in the interwar period was A. L. Zissu, writer and industrialist, who founded the first Zionist daily in Romanian, *Mântuirea* (Redemption), in 1919. The creation of a Jewish Party in Romania requested by Zionists took place only ten years after Emancipation. Nevertheless, grounds for national Jewish politics existed only in the new provinces as in the Regat the efforts were rather channeled for alliances with parties in power.

Leftist movements and ideology attracted a significant part of the Jewish population as well as the democratic intellectuals in Romania. Still, unlike the new Romanian territories such as Bessarabia, in the Principalities

...l'option socialiste, marxiste, aura, elle aussi, ses adeptes parmi les milieux intellectuels juifs, mais elle n'était pas perçue comme une possibilité 'politique juive', telle celle préconisée ailleurs par le Bund. Elle fut souvent un choix individuel, fondée sur la conviction que le socialisme et la victoire des idées internationales pouvaient contribuer à résoudre le problème juif.¹⁵

Socialism had a relatively stable representation within the Romanian society and intellectual life starting from the last decades of the 19th century through the "Russian *narodnicist* channel"¹⁶ created by the persecuted Russian revolutionary immigrants. Despite these factors, its success was limited as it was subjected to the resistance of a rather conservative society. Being banned from 1924 until the end of WWII, communism had no real possibilities of mass adherence and larger collective discourse. The main socialist ideologist, Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea (1855-1920) was a Russian-Jewish refugee who settled in Romania and became one of the most notable intellectuals of the

end of the 19th century. Due to his complicated ideological, personal and cultural situation justifying his political option, Gherea was the first in the series of intellectuals who “prefer to abandon totally and ignore their Jewish identity and, together with it, any interest in the fate of the community he originally came from.”¹⁷ Even if the socialist and communist political ideologies were poorly represented due to the lack of adherence and general political hostility to leftist ideologies, many of the members were coming from the Jewish community and this was especially visible in the case of the intellectuals. Socially and economically, a large group from the Jewish community consisted of the urban proletariat and the semi-rural artisans and craftsmen living on the verge of survival. Intellectually, the Jewish society was ready for such a doctrine through its opening to Haskala ideas as “the two movements had in common their care for the ‘lower masses,’ the attempt to spread among them instruction which they missed. In this context the adherence to the Socialist movement of an important number of Jewish intellectuals could be rightly approached.”¹⁸ Also, the ideological confluence between the “messianic idea and the camouflage of the socialist rhetoric”¹⁹ appealed to larger groups who found in the socialist agenda a realization of their own discontent.

Economic and Social Structures. The economic development after the Adrianopol Treaty, involving exchanging the feudal system for the emergence of capitalism, determined the *voivods* (political leaders) of the Principalities to invite Jewish merchants to fill in the socio-economic gaps left under-developed. Thus they started populating a great number of small towns or founded semi-rural *shtetls* in Moldavia transforming them into prosperous settlements. For the second half of the 19th century, Liviu Rotman noticed the increasing Jewish migration to the urban space as “a favorable

economic environment and town development encouraging large numbers of Jewish artisans and merchants to settle in the big cities, which in turn intensified, by their activities, the further economic growth of the towns.”²⁰ After a period when the migration to the Regat was accomplished on economic grounds at the initiative of the local political leaders, soon the economic development produced an increased process of urbanization to which the Jewish craftsmen, artisans, merchants and professionals greatly contributed. All these economic developments and changes altered the social structures as both the outlook of the Romanian economy and society, as well as the structure of the Jewish community, developed and modernized.

Due to the fact that before 1919, Jews from the older Regat did not have Romanian citizenship, they had no right to settle in the countryside, to own rural property, to practice agriculture and were also excluded from more than 200 professions connected to public offices and administration. For example, the only liberal professions accessible were medical doctors, pharmacists and veterinary doctors, and the Jewish professionals represented 23.3%. As a consequence, they were mainly forced to live in the urban areas and practice only a certain number of professions ranging from commerce to industry, focusing more on crafts and trade. The innovations and creativity of Jewish merchants and artisans offered new opportunities for business, but also opened new forms of economic development within the country. New professions emerged on the market on demand in a real trend towards Europeanization and modernization and they blended with the traditional occupations within the Jewish economy and society. The Jewish agglomeration in some limited areas imposed by lack of civic rights generated also an overrepresentation in these fields and thus an increased visibility and competition prompting economic anti-Semitism.

In terms of social analysis, Jewish life at the turn of the century changed dramatically in the process of urbanization. The former “Jewish quarters,” usually present in Romanian towns, suffered alterations due to the town development and due to the variety of new economic structures, while growing numbers of Jews left the initial areas for other parts of the city such as commercial center or the suburbs with industrial activity. Thus, this movement of “conquering the cities” was caused by “the process of urban reorganization.”²¹ Due to economic development and industrialization, new social realities emerged, such as the “Jewish industrialist” and the “Jewish workman,” together with the introduction of new occupations and new fields of activity which contributed to the transformation of the Romanian urban landscape. Basically, in the end, “Jews identified themselves strongly with the process of modernization.”²² Thus,

... there was an intimate bond between the changes in social structures and those in the mental and cultural structures. (...) it became necessary to do so (opening up the *shtetl*) as the position of the Jews in Romanian society changed. Instead of being passively involved – tolerated or discriminated against – the Jews were called on to take an active role.²³

These changes also affected the new structures in education and culture, from the *heder*²⁴ to the Israelite-Romanian schools with secular modern education facilitating the access to local society and thus guiding Jewish community to the European model of civilization.

In the new context of Greater Romania, the professional structures changed due to the specific Romanian state’s policies concerning ethnic groups (mainly the Romanization policies). Thus after 1918 and Emancipation, new areas opened up for the Jewish population as public administration and educational training schools. Commerce became now an even stronger professional outlet than before Emancipation. In the field of

liberal professions, medical doctors represented a privileged liberal profession during the interwar years (34% of the liberal professions, aside from engineers, pharmacists, lawyers, architects, veterinaries). Overall, the Jewish contribution to the predominantly agrarian economy of the country determined its newly mixed character of commerce, crafts and textile. In his study on the Jewish contribution to the Romanian economy, Avram Rosen concluded that the modernization and development of industry in the interwar period was due a great extent to the Jewish activity. In this context of extreme professional involvement, modernization and urbanization, the acculturation and integration increased, and the need for a cultural representation of the new reality shaping the Jewish Romanian identity on the social and intellectual level also became necessary.

Educational Life. Until the mid-19th century, for the Jewish community in the Regat education identified with religious knowledge, taught within *hadarim*, which satisfied the needs of a traditional, typically Eastern European Jewish population. Practiced within the community, Jewish education was focused on the preservation of identity, religion and culture. As *YIVO Encyclopedia* defined it, the *heder* was “the most authentic reflection, as well as the most effective guardian, of the traditional Jewish ethos and way of life.”²⁵ Even if, due to economic reasons, not all children could continue studying after *heder*, they acquired at least some basic Hebrew knowledge and familiarity with the Talmud and Biblical sources. The quality of education declined in time, as the system was practiced in poor conditions, with *melameds* (teachers) with limited educational abilities and in low hygienic premises, with no standardized forms of evaluation or criteria for teaching qualifications. By the end of the first half of the 19th century, modern Jewish intellectuals in Romania such as Iuliu Barasch²⁶ had already

started criticizing this traditional education and expressed the need for new modernized elite abandoning the traditional models of education and searching for more updated variants according to their new identity. The changes within Jewish life, modernized and opening up the conservative pattern of lifestyle, getting closer to the surrounding environment and becoming economically more active and publicly involved, determined the transformation of the society which, in turn, wanted to change also the traditional education. Nevertheless, despite modernization and changes within the educational life, the *heder* “remained a central component in the Jewish educational system,”²⁷ especially in conservative circles and in the Hasidic society and even coexisted with such modernized forms as the Israelite-Romanian School due to the fact that it responded to the needs of a modest social category of conservative Jews pressing for a greater representation of the Jewish subjects within the teaching process.

According to Liviu Rotman, the education in the second half of the 19th century underwent three distinct stages within its process of modernization. The first, “abandoning the *hadarim*” started in 1851 when the first public Jewish school was created in Bucharest and thus the modern Jewish educational system started. The new system proposed a community-supported school promoting a balance between Jewish subjects (Hebrew, notions of Judaism, Jewish history) and secular subjects (Romanian, Romanian history and geography, mathematics, English and later French) following a larger European model. Despite its modern character, it was not able to attract many students as the majority entered the Romanian public system, especially in Moldavia. Nevertheless, the period lasted until 1885 when the anti-Semitic ideology emerged and the legal framework for the limitation and exclusion of Jews from the educational system started. The name, as well as the concept of the school demonstrates the integrationist

attitude of the Jewish community, determined to acculturate. The second stage, characterized by stagnation, lasted between the 1870s and 1883 and it represented a period of crisis for the Jewish public schools as the Jewish community itself was undergoing a severe organizational crisis. Due to modernization and to the lack of effectiveness of the traditional organization and structures, the Jewish community had to face a funding crisis. Also, until 1892 Romanian schools were open for Jewish children where they were encouraged to study. Thus the modernization of the Jewish education was rather slow as not stimulated by significant students' demand, demonstrating also the success of the assimilationist policies of the Romanian state. The last stage took place starting in 1893, when the Romanian legislation limiting the presence of Jewish children in Romanian schools started to be implemented, forcing the rapid expansion of the Israelite Romanian School. The process of rejection coming from the Romanian society generated the activation on the social and educational levels of the Jewish community regarding the problem of education, supported also by the great international Jewish organizations AIU and JCA. Despite growing anti-Semitism, the integrationist ideas persisted even when the new system consolidated and started to have results. Thus in 1909, an important intellectual as M. Beck was discussing plans to return to the Romanian public schooling system²⁸ if the legislation would have been cancelled, suggesting the existence of strong integrationist ideas within the Jewish intellectual milieu until the beginning of the 20th century.

Perceived as a bridge between the Romanian and Jewish worlds, the Israelite-Romanian School was a unique model enforcing the integrationist ideology, maintaining at the same time the Jewish identity through culture and education, reflected in the balance of subjects within the school program (Romanian subjects, Jewish subjects and

the German language). The slow development of the school before the 1880s was also justified by the fact that the Jewish Romanian society did not believe the Jewish public school was an option for the education of Jewish children, while the public Romanian school was a more attractive option, and the traditional Jewish education was sometimes reserved as complementary. The effects of the educational process accomplished within the Israelite-Romanian system changed the profile of the community through the increased level of Romanian language knowledge through systematic teaching offering advantages for the graduates to integrate into Romanian society and to find employment. The study of foreign languages was serving the same purpose, but also was beneficial for migration. Finally, the study of Hebrew and of Jewish subjects generated the context for the crystallization of a national Jewish consciousness after the emergence of anti-Semitism or after Emancipation, but was undertaken at the expense of Yiddish especially for the elite, which led to a more acculturated Jewish community than in the Polish or Russian cases. According to Rotman, the massive Jewish presence in cultural and social life in the interwar Romanian period was significantly stimulated by the values promoted by the Israelite-Romanian School.

Jewish Press. Jewish press was extremely important in shaping a larger collective identity, in popularizing ideological directions and in communicating to an even larger Romanian language public (in the case of the Jewish press of Romanian language) issues of interest for the Jewish community. Due to the specificity of the Regat Jewish community in the second half of the 19th century, with a great majority of Yiddish speakers, a small Western and Romanian educated elite and a strong traditionalist camp, the Jewish press in Romania was better represented in the early years in Yiddish for the

larger audience and also used Hebrew for the traditionalist groups. Therefore Romanian-language gazettes were mainly targeting the small educated modernist elite and the Romanian environment, as not many were able to read Romanian. Initially, the Yiddish press was popular due to its larger accessibility for the non-accultured masses, especially in Iași, where a compact community of Yiddish speakers existed, at least until the first decades of the 20th century. Thus, the first Jewish journal in Romania was published in 1855 in Yiddish, although it had a Hebrew name, *Korot Haitim*, “with the purpose of fighting for the Emancipation of Jews,”²⁹ thus being the first to set a trend of the Jewish press functioning as an instrument for the acquiring of the civic rights. Much less popular were the few publications in Hebrew as they were not accessible to the masses, but only to traditionalist groups. The first one in the Regat, *Di Tzait* appeared in 1872, again in Iași. Despite the general significance of Yiddish and Hebrew press, the current research will focus on Jewish press in the Romanian language in order to analyze the ideological discourses with their changes in time, as well as the process of shaping a Romanian Jewish identity.

The emergence and the development of the Romanian-Israelite schools, as well as the interest within the community for Romanian language education in schools and universities determined a rapid development of the Romanian language Jewish publications. The journalistic market expanded in terms of intellectuals able to work as journalists (famous Jewish journalists of Romanian language appeared now, for example the Schwarzfeld brothers, Elias and Moses, M. Beck, M. Rosenfeld, and later A. L. Zissu, I. Brucăr, Horia Carp, and I. Ludo) and as a Romanian acculturated readership. The first Jewish publications in Romanian (*Israelitul român* (The Romanian Israelite) (1857; 1869), *L'Espérance* (1866-1867), *Rumanische Post / Poșta română* (1871-1873)) were

bilingual, short-lived and issued during the 1850s and 1860s, initiated by intellectuals coming from abroad (Iuliu Barasch, Armand Levy, B. F. Peixotto). They introduced the press as a social, political and cultural means of struggle, meant to publicize the situation of the Romanian Jews for the national and international audience and to obtain Emancipation. In this context, the effort to articulate a civic identity for the Jewish community was significant as the publications were promoting the "social and political tendencies favoring acculturation and integration of Jews in Romanian life (...) showing also the sympathy of Jews for the Romanian nation and their identification with the fate of the country"³⁰ as *Israelitul român* wrote.

The larger Romanian language public within the Jewish community appeared in the last decades of the 19th century as an urban, literate population and it soon became a solid readership for the newly emerged press market counting already ten quality Jewish publications in Romanian by the end of 19th century (among them the reputed *Egalitatea* (Equality) and *Curierul israelit* (Israelite post)). Written by journalists born in the country and familiar with the local problems, the Jewish press preferred to use only Romanian and to concentrate on the problems of the local community, while attaining a high intellectual level through professionalization. The continuation of the struggle for citizenship, civic and political rights within the Romanian nation continued, but it also promoted Romanian patriotism, the demonstrative gestures of attachment to the country and its people, while being involved in the current Romanian politics or simply by promoting cultural adherence. Nevertheless, a significant trend of articulating Jewish identity within Romanian culture became visible through the initiation of scientific research on Jewish history and culture in Romania, following the same direction of common roots and the length of existence on Romanian territory and articulated against

the anti-Semitic discourses. The long-lasting journalistic ideological trend supporting citizenship rights and integration continued until the end of the second decade of the 20th century when the political project was finally attained, without abandoning the constant and profound dedication to the Jewish identity, history and culture. As a reaction to the increasing anti-Jewish attitude at the turn of the century, the tendency of focusing on Jewish culture and spirituality among the Romanian Jews increased, transforming the scientific trend from the last decades of the 19th century into a larger work of popularization, self-knowledge and “rise of national consciousness”³¹ in journals such as *Lumea israelită* (Israelite World) or *Cultura* (Culture) (1911; 1936-1940). In this context, the long-term agenda planned that

...we want that people, those among whom we live, to know us just as we are. And before all, we want to search within ourselves and get to know ourselves” through “the cultivation of the soul and education of the Jewish heart through Jewish art and literature”³²

as it was declared to be the plan of the publication *Cultura*.

The period following the end of WWI and Emancipation changed the image of the Jewish Romanian press as the main political project was accomplished through the granting of citizenship, but the variety of Jewish communities and the ideological competition inside it increased. Also, intellectuals felt stimulated to express their opinion freely and to design and explore new identity options, previously limited by the legal and political constrictions. The Zionist press was effervescent and very productive during the interwar period when it increased its journalistic quality and its appeal to the public, especially among the young generation, students and even among younger groups as well. The most important Zionist publication in the interwar period was the newspaper

Mântuirea (1919-1922), the first “Jewish national daily”, directed by A. L. Zissu, the main Zionist ideologue and political figure. Nevertheless, many young Jewish intellectuals read and wrote for *Știri din lumea evreiască* (News on Jewish Life) (1922-1938) issued by the Zionist Federation in Romania, or for the remarkable cultural and literary publication *Hasmonaea* (1915-1940), a Jewish students’ publication of the Zionist-oriented National Jewish Student Circle.

An important direction in the interwar Jewish press was represented by the efforts to establish a strong Jewish literary, cultural and intellectual environment and a Jewish Romanian identity. One of the first publications in this line, *Lumea evree* (Jewish life) (1919-1920), founded by I. Brucăr, planned to show the Jewish contribution to social and cultural progress of the mankind in order to theoretically legitimize the rights to citizenship, equality and inclusion as “Jews must remain Jews, they being at the same time good Romanians”³³. Later, this direction will abandon this “second-rank citizens” complex justifying their right to be part of Romanian society and would start shaping a strong Jewish cultural identity in the Romanian language. A peak of Jewish press in Romania, literary publication *Adam* (1919-1940) directed by I. Ludo, then by Idov Cohn and Miron Grindea, focused on the presence of Jewish culture:

...we want to make a purely cultural demonstration, culturally Jewish, of course, through *Adam*’s existence... We plan to group within the review everything Jewish in our journalism, everything that is a cultural element among Jews and everything which could be an important foreign contribution to our enterprise...”³⁴

Designed as a cultural publication for all Jews, *Adam* declared that “we managed to gather the most important Jewish writers and some of the best journalists in Romanian press... Collaborators from all political directions, all social currents, all literary schools.

This was our program”³⁵. The main agenda of *Adam* was basically to create a Jewish literature and intellectual environment in the Romanian language. This direction was essential for generating a Jewish Romanian emancipated, non-assimilationist identity in the context of the post-Emancipation society and culture, restoring the dignity of the Jewish identity and the rights of adhering to the Romanian language and culture.

The Emergence of Romanian Jewish Intellectuals. A result of acculturation to surrounding cultures and to secular modern values, the Jewish intellectual emerged after and as an outcome of the Haskala movement. The special case of the Greater Romania Jewish intellectuals included not only the Romanian Jewish intellectuals, already a social and cultural fact by the last quarter of the 19th century in the Regat, but also Hungarian, German, and Russian Jewish intellectuals from the newly acquired territories. This cultural complexity enlarged the picture and complicated the general problem. But due to the fact that the Hungarian, German and Russian acculturated intellectuals belonged to their respective cultures due to linguistic and educational factors, the current research focuses only on the Romanian Jewish intellectuals. Residing almost without exception in the former Regat areas, especially Wallachia with the capital Bucharest, but also more modern areas of Moldavia, Romanian Jewish intellectuals were the result of a long process of Romanization and acculturation. After Emancipation and the creation of Greater Romania, acculturation started to attract also Yiddish speakers from the more traditional Northern Moldavia.

The situation of Yiddish culture and literature in the new context evolved in a surprising direction. Bessarabia and Bukovina, territories with massive Yiddish speaking population and cultural production, were attached after 1918 to the larger Romanian

territory where Yiddish culture had not previously attained the same self-consciousness and development. Thus the Yiddish-speaking communities lost contact with the larger Yiddish culture groups in Galicia and the Tsarist Empire with which they previously and fruitfully communicated. Also, through administration, education and cultural policies, the minorities' population in general was subjected to a process of nationalization, Romanization and centralization which affected also the profile of Yiddish culture. Nevertheless, some reputed Yiddish writers migrated to Bucharest and set the context for the creation of a new Yiddish cultural center in Romania. Thus Itzik Manger, born in Cernăuți, one of the greatest Yiddish writers of the 20th century, Bessarabian poet Yankev Sternberg, Galician-born Shloyme Bickel, poet Eliezer Steinbarg, born in Bessarabia, moved for a while to Bucharest, together with other intellectuals coming from the newly acquired territories. They brought Yiddish culture and literature in an area where acculturation, urbanization and modernization were the strongest on Romanian territory. Basically, as Ezra Mendelsohn concluded, the "interwar period had the flourishing of the Yiddish culture in Romania and its appearance out of nothing in Walachia"³⁶. Iași, the cradle of the first Jewish publication, of the first Yiddish daily in the world, as well as the place of the creation of the Yiddish theatre in 1876 by Odessa-born Avram Goldfaden, slightly declined in the Yiddish cultural world. Quite a few talented young writers of the Yiddish language migrated from within the former Regat province to Bucharest and became acculturated Romanian writers. Such were the cases of Ury Benador and Ion Călugaru, transplanting their talents of future Yiddish writers to Romanian language intellectual life. Although Yiddish culture continued to flourish during the interwar years, the appeal towards acculturation or migration abroad for France or the US became more and more appealing for the young Jewish intellectuals.

The modern Jewish elite, providing the grounds for the emergence of future acculturated intellectuals, was by the end of the 19th century already consolidated. In the traditional Jewish community, the elite consisted of rabbinical figures and other individuals dedicated to intellectual religious occupations. From the second half of the 19th century on, a new type of elite appeared, consisting of individuals involved in economic life and prone to become secularized and acculturated to the surrounding environment due to their specific occupations. To this group, medical doctors, and educators would join, creating the new type of Jewish social elite, while towards the end of the 19th century, the emergence of university graduates manifested as a mass phenomenon. Thus, in a short period, Jewish society enriched with significant numbers of highly educated individuals who permeated the elite and a large intellectual group was articulated. Educated abroad and even in the country, mainly coming from the universities and liberal professions, the Jewish Romanian intellectual group became a reality at the turn of the century.

Although the general modernizing process of the Jewish community started in the last decades of the first half of the 19th century, the Jewish elite began its secularization process and interest into intense contacts with Romanian society only in the second half of the 19th century, when education, press, cultural institutions and works of Jewish intellectuals in Romanian started to appear. The influence of the Haskala imported through Galician immigrants or through the Jewish elite studying in the German-speaking world determined the appearance of modernizing voices able to offer new directions for a society which was changing traditional attachments for a modern and dynamic environment in the first decades of the second half of the 19th century. The double intellectual path of Dr. Iuliu Barasch (1815-1863), born in Brody, the first important

Jewish Romanian intellectual and the creator of Jewish Romanian press, but also a great contributor to Romanian scientific life, transformed him into a symbol of the first intellectual generations involved practically in Jewish community life and development, but also in the Romanian society. Born in Galicia and moving to Iași after 1848, Beniamin Schwarzfeld (1822-1896), a Maskil combining traditional education with Enlightenment ideas, was the creator of the first Jewish public school in Iași and initiated the modernization of the community's institutions. The special contribution of the Galician Jewish intellectuals bringing specific modernizing models and reforming ideas together with their Maskil profile was significant and determined the evolution of the community's modernization and its cultural development.

Two major institutions, the Israelite-Romanian school and the Jewish Romanian press, already presented within this chapter, were essential in shaping the profile of the first modern intellectual generation due to their collective and educative impact. This represented a new step away from the traditional patterns of living and thinking about Jewish identity in terms of religious and linguistic dimensions towards secular education and Romanian culture. Thus, the second half of the 19th century witnessed the emergence of a larger modern intellectual group due to the maturation of the first generations of students educated in the Romanian public schools and in the public Jewish schools, open to modern directions and avid readers of Romanian Jewish press, influenced by the new ideological trends, but also connected to the Jewish community and Judaism. Their efforts were subsumed to the same emancipation ideal, not yet accomplished. Familiar with Jewish heritage and never denying it, nourishing a solid double loyalty deliberately assumed which conferred dignity to their activities, they deliberately took over the mission of improving the life of the community as educators, leading to a profound

involvement in the community life. Focusing on education and the press, they were aware of the functionality of writing, using it in a militant way; thus they concentrated on scientific areas and knowledge dissipation activities, in order to inform and educate. Their discourse tended to replace symbolically the authority of the religious figures as opinion leaders, creating a secular audience mainly through journalism. In this second generation, the Schwarzfeld brothers occupied a central place as being the creators of the first great Jewish journals and the founders of professional Romanian Jewish historiography. Similarly, Moses Gaster (1856-1939) was a folklorist, linguist and literary scholar in the field of both Jewish and Romanian studies, while Lazăr (Șain) Șăineanu (1859-1934) and Hayman (Hariton) Tiktin (1850-1936) became specialists in Romanian philology.

In these conditions, the literary works were few and not very accomplished as the most energetic voices were enrolled in the political and social struggle for internal and external emancipation. The main areas of manifestation of the Jewish intellectuals from the 19th century were those able to support political ideas such as press, historiography, folklore, linguistics, capable of providing with arguments for the emancipation struggle. Thus valuable literature produced by Jewish Romanian intellectuals emerged only starting with the first decades of the 20th century. The only memorable exception for the Romanian literary canon, despite the great social and political opposition generated, was the work of Ronetti Roman (1847-1908). Originally from a Hassidic community in Galicia, Ronetti Roman had a solid Jewish education, but also a modern secular one acquired during his Berlin studies. His double cultural affiliation was expressed mainly in the topics of his creation and in the language used. Ronetti Roman's play *Manasse*, written in Romanian, illustrating the options at hand for the Jewish community within the modern world and the profound Enlightenment ideas of bridging oppositional worlds,

generated social protests by anti-Semitic groups when the play was produced on stage in 1901.

Despite the varied options and discourses, the group of modern intellectuals at the turn of the century could be defined as accepting a double “cultural citizenship.” This concept introduced the idea of a double belonging without internal crises and dilemmas and subsumed to the old ideas of Enlightenment and liberalism allowing for the preservation of Jewish identity in the larger context of universal and local adoption of culture, language and political ideals. Projects of integration and identity preservation defined their writings as well as their efforts towards emancipation in both political and socio-cultural levels. The last two decades of the 19th century when cultural adaptation and social integration were contested by rising anti-Semitism and social rejection represented the beginning of a period of identity crisis for the Jewish intellectuals in Romania. Despite the larger social and political hostile context and the community’s inner conflict, these intellectuals continued to perceive themselves as Romanians, but also as connected to Judaism and to the Jewish community, often involved in a sentimental rhetoric perpetuated also during the interwar period. Discussing the identity evolution of the acculturated Jewish intellectuals, Leon Volovici’s considerations proved to articulate the best synthesis of the general emerging situation as

...the Jewish intellectuals in Romania – a grouping still in the process of formation – were far from the level of spiritual and religious assimilation of the Jews of Western Europe. The status of ‘foreigners’ in the eyes of the law and public opinion alike prevented them from full integration in the Romanian cultural arena. The first prominent Jewish intellectuals – Moses Gaster, H. Tiktin, Lazăr Șăineanu and Ronetti-Roman – led a double life of sorts, as Jews and as Romanians. Ronetti-Roman was the first to transform the dilemma of the Jewish identity confronted by the temptations of total assimilation into a subject of literary thought and

writing. It was actually the next generation, that of H. Sanielevici and Ion Trivale, which emerged after 1900, that experienced these dilemmas to the fullest. Following WWI, the quandaries became an existential crisis for Aderca, Fundoianu, Sebastian, and many others after their complete, resolute integration into Romanian culture was rejected in the 1930s. Anti-Semitism and the response it engendered affected their self-definition as Jews, the intellectual and political options at their disposal, and at times, their literary oeuvre³⁷.

C. Identity Options and Cultural Discourses. Jewish Acculturated Intellectuals in the First Decades of the 20th Century. The specificity of the Romanian Jewish intellectual group in the beginning of the 20th century was given mainly by the complex conflict between a profound acculturation to the Romanian environment blocked by a multi-layered marginalizing attitude. A result of recent migration, the Jewish community in Moldavia and Wallachia dated back only a few generations, with a weak level of community cohesion and greater openness for a rapid acculturation. As a comparative reference, the Polish Jewry was an old, well-structured, cohesive community, with a strong traditional character, with a influential Jewish religious elite which generated a strong communal attachment for individuals. The fast economic and social advancement determined a drastic need for acculturation and secularization which was prompted by the economic elite supporting the creation of Romanian language education within the community, Jewish Romanian press and finally the emergence of Romanian acculturated intellectuals. Despite strong acculturation, the preservation of Jewish identity was strong, while assimilation never became a significant option. Before 1918 and the changes brought by Unification in terms of new ethnic and religious groups, Romanian society was defined by a strong rural, archaic, traditional character, profoundly attached to Christian Orthodoxy, a denomination not practicing proselytism, thus not interested in conversions or assimilation. Due to these characteristics, the pressure exerted

on the Jewish community to convert, to abandon Yiddish for Romanian or to acculturate was significantly lower than in other Western cases, thus making identity preservation easier. Thus, in the absence of external pressure, the preservation of Jewish identity was possible, while conditions for acculturation, greater in more modern urban Wallachia than in rural, more traditional Moldavia with its *shtetl* culture, were met with a fast acquisition of Romanian language and culture. Nevertheless, the attitude of the Romanian state, society and culture in relation to its Jewish community manifested in several directions, ranging from marginalization to exclusion and deepening the identity crisis for the most acculturated intellectuals. The long belated Emancipation and absence of civic rights and the persistence of social and cultural anti-Semitism shaped a constant socio-political context of a “hostile tolerance” (Șerban Papacostea) ranging from anti-Jewish attitude to strong anti-Semitism. Also, the Romanian intellectual milieu, based on the articulation of a national culture defined in an organic manner focusing on Romanian ethnic and Christian Orthodox religious values, was unable to accommodate the other non-Romanian groups not sharing this cultural heritage.

In this larger context shaped by the specificity of the Romanian society and Jewish community, the options at hand for the young Romanian-language Jewish intellectuals were not varied and all had serious limitations. The traditionalist camp, focusing on national identity and cultural preservation, placed at the center of its discourse the basic definition of the “Romanian nation” which fundamentally excluded the existence of any non-Romanian groups. On the other hand, in the first decade of the 20th century when Jewish acculturated intellectuals started to emerge, modernism was still a feeble presence in Romanian culture. The following section of this chapter focuses on identifying the mechanisms for choosing one identity model or cultural discourse. By

answering the question why intellectuals chose one specific intellectual discourse, this section aims at linking the determining socio-political factor with its culturally shaped consequences and direct manifestations.

From Social Revolt to Modernity as an Option. In this social and cultural milieu provided by the specificity of the Romanian context and by the distinct characteristics of the Jewish community in the first decades of the 20th century, a “rebellious” generation emerged. The deepening frustration was generated first by the refusal of Emancipation as a recognition of the educational and socio-economic achievements in the local code, and secondly the failure of the integrationist project and “assimilationist” ideology promoted by the previous generation which was able to sacrifice to a large extent identity in order to fit in. Professional and social marginalization and the presence of anti-Semitism accelerated the crystallization of rebellion and the rejection of a whole society with its conservative, ossified structures, unable to accept within its boundaries and integrate within its ethnically and religiously regulated norms a blatantly visible social and cultural reality. The incapacity of the Romanian society to integrate the non-Romanian non-Christian profoundly acculturated identity of the Jewish acculturated intellectuals, loyal to political and national ideals of the Romanian state, determined a strong reaction. Their marginal condition generated by exclusion made them available for revolt, especially for the radical contestation of cultural ideologies connected to consecrated order and hierarchy.

Sociologically, this generation of revolt was the result of certain socio-political mechanisms which explained clearly how a certain social group subjected to a series of factors from the sphere of politics, society and culture might develop a certain identity

and direction of discourse. In his work *Social Theory and Social Structure*,³⁸ well-known sociologist Robert Merton developed a convincing theory focusing on the social and cultural sources of “anomic stress” applied to the specific category of recently emerging groups. According to Merton, “anomie” is “a breakdown of the cultural structure, occurring particularly where there is an acute disjunction between the cultural norms and goals and the socially structured capacities of the groups to act according to them.”³⁹ In consequence, Merton perceived five types of reactions to this fundamental disjunction, namely conformism, ritualism, innovation, escapism and finally rebellion. In a fascinating theoretical demonstration, Mendes-Flohr employed Merton’s theory on the group of Jewish intellectuals who were on the eve of modernism already acculturated and functioning as “cognitive insiders,” but who were approached as “social outsiders,” a contradiction which mounted the intellectual and social frustration. Among the five types of reactions analyzed by Merton, Mendes-Flohr identified the last two as specific to the Jewish intellectual, namely escapism and rebellion, due to the “articulation of axio-normative dissent that seeks to maintain a moral community with one’s society”⁴⁰ (the intellectual being previously defined by the historian as an “axio-normative dissident”). In this context, “escapists” and “rebels” find marginality in profession and intellectual pursuits attractive. The adoption of marginal careers represented a consequence of their exclusion and also rejection of these structures. Their alienation and ideological option contested the ossified canon and social organization. Indeed, applied to the Jewish Romanian case, the situation of Romanian Jewish intellectuals in the beginning of the 20th century was similar, in the sense that they acquired Romanian culture and education which created a profound feeling and acting as insiders of the local culture, but due to the legal and social context they remained social outsiders, generating a high amount of

individual frustration as being refused by the society. This theory could be therefore able to explain the connection between modernism and the avant-garde on one hand and the modern Jewish intellectual in Romania on the other. By choosing largely these ideological directions, Romanian Jewish intellectuals basically expressed a form of revolt, rejection and protest against a certain social order and structure which used to exclude socially a group which was already deeply acculturated.

Given the theoretical sociological explanation, the initial question reappears: what elements of the avant-gardist doctrine appealed to Romanian Jewish intellectuals in the first decades of the 20th century? In theoretical terms, both Renato Poggioli and Peter Burger, major theoreticians of the avant-garde, considered that the complex of movements emerged within and as a reaction against bourgeois society. In this respect, Burger considered the “avant-garde as the self-criticism of Art in Bourgeois Society.”⁴¹ In this context, the avant-garde as a phenomenon manifested certain specific characteristics coming from its fundamental anti-bourgeois criticism and opposition. Poggioli identified the “antagonistic attitude”⁴² to be directed against tradition, history, but also against society, the ossified public and social order. A natural derivation of this revolt took the form of the conflict between generations and especially against the previous generation: “aesthetic radicalism often expresses itself by opposing that special category of society called the old generation, the generation of the fathers.”⁴³ The negation of a certain culture or set of values in exchange with a new one could take the form of such a conflict. A certain detachment from the traditional culture was naturally accompanied by a “feeling of historical alienation”⁴⁴ from the society, so familiar for the avant-garde repertoire of literary topics. Recently emerging, the avant-garde had the conscience of a

“minority culture”⁴⁵ opposing the “majority culture,” usually represented by the mass culture and bourgeois taste. Eventually,

...the task of avant-gardism (was) to struggle against articulate public opinion, against traditional and academic culture, against the bourgeois intelligentsia. (...) the necessity that forced it to do battle on two fronts: to struggle against two contradictory types of artistic (pseudo-artistic) production.⁴⁶

In this context, Poggioli identified a basic conflict of the avant-garde with “ethnic culture” as “modern society (had) broken all the links between artisan and artist, destroyed all the forms of folklore and ethnic culture.”⁴⁷

Although Renato Poggioli’s and Peter Burger’s theories were grounded on Western European socio-economical and cultural contexts and did not focus on the case of Jewish intellectuals, some elements of their work could provide some possible answers. The specific attraction that the modernist direction, as well as its extreme manifestation, the avant-garde, exerted upon the young intellectual generation could be justified through the commonality of social and political views. The avant-gardist and modernist trends undermined and severely criticized exactly these rigid structures, the conservatism of previous generations and a social organization which was unable to accommodate them. Also, modernism promoted a largely cosmopolitan, internationalist and urban discourse, ignoring the identity debates and the parochial ethnic and religious values on which the Romanian cultural canon of the time was based and which subjected the young acculturated Jewish intellectuals to a Procrustian test. The second factor determining the modernist option was, aside from this affinity with modernism based on common views, the fact that Romanian cultural life, intellectual trends and the general

resulted canon left little room, if any (I am referring here particularly to Symbolism and to the future emerging modernist ideas) to accommodate the specific group of Jewish intellectuals. For many of them, modernism and the avant-garde became a viable option in reaction to a culture which refused to integrate and accommodate the group which it already assimilated culturally. The ethnic-religious cultural model based on Romanian and Christian Orthodox identity reflected in Romanian literature fundamentally excluded any other ethnic and religious group and, based on historical and cultural identification, also the acculturated individuals. This incapacity to expand and update the literary repertoire basically expressed the lack of reflection on the social and cultural reality and the tendency to shape an ideal identity in search of an idealized body nation derived from anti-Semitic and xenophobic policies. Finally, the fact that the avant-garde represented a “minority culture” opposing and struggling against a “majority one” resonated with their social and political situation, despite Emancipation. Still, the lack of interest in “ethnic culture”, justified in the theory on the avant-garde through the distance from the artisan in the modern world, offered also an excuse for the public avoidance of group legitimation. Writing about the new poetry with its cosmopolitan and modern urban characteristics, Ilarie Voronca declared that

...the issue of poetry cannot be approached anymore on different levels (erotic, national, historical) as poetry suddenly became universally human, poetry-poetry, poetry cement, poetry cried by the engineer, brain, integrally living organism existing simply among natural phenomenon.⁴⁸

Eventually, the adoption of modernism and avant-gardism signaled a strong desire to integrate into the emerging canon, challenged, but finally including the contesting modern movements. Writing literature in the Romanian language, despite frustration and

revolt, represented an obvious declaration and the strong will to be included, even through a contested discourse, into a large discussion of interest for the establishment. Rejecting the canon, they eventually ended up becoming soon part of it through the modernist pole which in a short time became the trademark of Romanian interwar culture on the international level, promoted there exactly by the formerly intellectual rebels. Even in this convoluted existence, the discourse of the young intellectuals was shaped by the national debate between modernism and traditionalism and it approached the revolt against the canon as a way to be finally included in it. In the given context of legal exclusion, the other option available, which functioned largely in modern Central Europe (Buber, Rosenzweig), was a return to Jewish identity through a cultural revival within Romanian culture, distinct from the Hassidic and Orthodox Yiddish and Hebrew circles which continued their activity during these periods. First, such a project was impossible to be included in the larger Romanian cultural debates as it would have presupposed a preexisting Romanian Jewish culture. Secondly, the young intellectuals were mainly interested in integrative approaches and a version of such a project emerged later, only after Emancipation, on the legally secured grounds of citizenship and symbolic national inclusion. Basically, the essence of the revolt was based on an integrative approach which was solved through temporary rebellion. Thus, some modernists and avant-gardists evolved from an initial stage of excluded rebels to the one of internal critics involved in the creation of a literature inspired by Jewish life in Romanian (for example Călugaru and Sebastian) while rejecting the pre-WWI society and later reconstructing a Romanian Jewish cultural identity in the new context.

Creating Jewish Identity in Romanian Culture. Jewish legal Emancipation, rather than WWI, which was considered regularly as the final marker for “the world of yesterday” and the symbol for the “end of an era,” represented for the Jewish community a rupture line. By finally acquiring citizenship and equal rights, the Jewish community was included legally in the Romanian nation. Despite the persistence of anti-Semitism and against the limits of social and political inclusion, the significance of the Emancipation stipulated first in 1919 through the Minorities’ Treaty and later included in the 1923 Romanian Constitution marked a final official recognition of political inclusion in a multi-cultural state, which had to accept the new fact. Along with Hungarian, German, Greek, Armenian and other ethnic and religious groups, the Romanian nation became aware of its largely multi-national character ranging to almost 28% ethnic minorities, contrasting with the previous situation when in 1899, 92.1% of the population was ethnically Romanian while 91.5% Orthodox. If in the pre-WWI period, the Romanian state could press for assimilation or exclusion in terms of policies due to the largely national character of the population (the Jewish community represented 3.3% in 1912) and due to the dominance of Christian Orthodoxy even among other ethnic groups (Greeks, Armenians, Russians, Bulgarians or Serbs), the post-WWI context could not avoid this issue.

This new situation significantly changed the status of the individuals as well as their connection with the Romanian nation, society and culture from new grounds of defining the model of citizen or member of the nation, unable to be reduced to the typical Romanian peasant of Orthodox Christian denomination sharing the same language and history with the rest of his co-nationals. Romanians from the new territories bearing new heritages of cultural and historical affiliations, as well as different sizable minorities

altered the former definitions. Thus, for the Jewish community, even if anti-Semitism continued to exist and to manifest violently in the early 1920s and to persist into the next decade until radicalism transformed it into a central argument in the political discourse, the formal integration in legal terms was finally achieved and allowed a different cultural and social positioning inside the nation as equal citizens.

Still promoting a conservative canon which tended to reflect most of the social prejudice and limited integration, Romanian cultural life entered a new stage of the already familiar and long-lasting confrontation between modernity and traditionalism. Facing the problem of integration and identity search in the context of a multi-national state, dominated also by a strong regionalism and uneven economic and social development, Romanian intellectuals started to promote a neo-ethnic revival in the late 1920s through the “national specificity” and “Romanian essence” debate. The nationalizing and centralizing policies implemented during the interwar period were largely analyzed, together with their consequences, in works such as Irina Livezeanu’s *Cultură și naționalism în România Mare* (Culture and nationalism in Greater Romania).⁴⁹ The modernist pole, consolidated in time with new and refined variants, opened doors for Europeanization and cosmopolitanism against national parochialism and continued to gather around many talented Jewish intellectuals.

In this general context, the process of constructing a Jewish identity within Romanian culture became a natural option for several reasons. Romanian culture and literature started to reflect the beginnings of the articulation of a Jewish identity in Romanian language, encouraged by the political and legal grounds secured by Emancipation and following the social and political newly emerged realities. Romanian language writers of Jewish origin started to find an inspiration in their roots, in Judaism,

Jewish community and traditions as well as in the larger perspective on life shaped by the Jewish experience in Romanian lands. In this respect, the Romanian case contrasted to the Austro-Hungarian one where Emancipation generated an influx of assimilationist ideology. In interwar Romania, the legal inclusion performed rather the function of securing a civic space for the socio-cultural manifestation of “minority discourses” paralleling and replicating the mainstream Romanian national one, nevertheless from the perspective of integration and rapprochement. Asserting the Jewish social and historical presence in literature and culture, this discourse practically came to complete in cultural terms the reflection of an already historical social reality. Secondly, in the middle of these debates on “ethnic specificity,” Jewish identity discourse could be perceived as a spin-off of the ethnic revival presented in nationalistic terms by the Romanian establishment, recreating and replicating the Romanian soul-searching process with a Jewish perspective in the new context. A final proof in favor of this endeavor was the fact that after the WWI quite a few Yiddish writers and journalists shifted languages and the working environment to Romanian and moved to the capital, abandoning the formerly vibrant Yiddish cultural center of Iași. The peak of this cultural direction was represented by the mid-1930s when the most important works were written, immediately followed by the rise of right-wing radicalized politics, marginalization and exclusion.

Eventually, the combination of acculturation to the Romanian space and the affirmation of Jewish identity, values and lifestyle created a new model of identity for the Jewish community in Romania, as well as for the Romanian society transmitted through the same linguistic vehicle. The literature emerging on these grounds was an open construct including a non-Romanian ethnic reality for the Romanian cultural canon, but also a version of Diaspora life for the religiously and politically conservative Jewish

circles. Romanian literature with Jewish topics represented a border zone open to fluid influences coming from both cultures and transgressing on both sides in order to be largely integrated. It also became an indication of this new cultural state and of the modern conception of nation and culture on both sides, opening Jewish culture to non-Jews and integrating the Jewish life and community into the Romanian milieu in a multi-ethnic cultural project.

“Double Identity” as an Integrative Project. The intellectual profile of the acculturated group naturally prompted them to a modern, individual, double identity model, accompanied by a large and multi-faceted integrative project in socio-cultural terms. Maintaining strong roots in both cultures, being practically the first generation placed in the Romanian Jewish border zone, before assimilation and integration, but after self-emancipation, modernization and acculturation, the young intellectuals were already born in a mixed cultural background combining Romanian language and culture with Jewish traditions and religious values. Also, they were the first to overcome the “double path” model of the previous generation into a cultural synthesis, also exposed to a profound identity crisis on these grounds. Being the bearers of such complex cultural profiles and evolving in such socio-political circumstances, these writers manifested an existential necessity for the search for an identity model able to reconcile both the Jewish and Romanian sides. This was even more the case when they were prompted by Romanian intellectual debates engaged in an obstinate search for “national specificity” and for the “essence of Romanianness” challenging the Jewish acculturated intellectuals to define their place.

Representing the aspiration for normalization and socio-cultural inclusion of the Jewish community after Emancipation, a few intellectuals proposed the theoretical model of “double identity,” supported by a few articles by Ury Benador and by a debated novel by Mihail Sebastian. Without representing a real identity model within the group of Jewish acculturated intellectuals, the “double identity” project reflected the theoretical construct of a few intellectuals defining their identity in a civic, equalitarian, individual, modern, multi-cultural dimension. A materialization of the integrative approach identified behind the articulation of “Jewish culture in Romanian” as well as behind the massive avant-gardist enrollment, the “double identity” project would have completed the process of inclusion in cultural and social terms.

The appearance of such an identity model, even theoretically, on the intellectual scene prompted radical reactions and a heated debate, demonstrating that the “double identity” project functioned as a test-case for the cultural and social milieu, rather than as a real option for the writers. Formulating the “double identity” model in literary terms, Sebastian’s novel represented the climactic manifestation of a generation of acculturated and relatively integrated intellectuals who faced the limits of their emancipation only fifteen years after obtaining the civic status. Without being representative as a case-study for the interwar group analyzed, Mihail Sebastian’s discourse and story became significant for my research due to the fact that his unique work bears in a concentrated form all the tensions, contradictions, and dilemmas of the Romanian Jewish cultural space of his time and managed to elicit relevant reactions from all the important political and cultural orientations on both sides. Through the book with its debates, Sebastian rather proved to be the exception in showing the limitations of the integrative socio-cultural project.

The “double identity” model, proposed by the group of acculturated Jewish intellectuals during the first decades of the 20th century, had in the background a large integrative project of the Jewish community and culture into the Romanian space and society. Apart from the formal recognition of Jews as equal citizens in 1919, it appeared that substantial efforts for integration and inclusion were still to be done in the 1920s and 1930s, the analyzed period. Thus, the ideological model proposed was part of a larger project of approaching Romanian culture and life from within the Jewish space, while re-approaching Jewish identity from a new, unbiased perspective.

Conclusions. Emerging as a powerful cultural presence starting with the period around WWI and increasingly after Emancipation granted in 1919/1923, the Romanian-language Jewish intellectuals coming to maturity on the eve of WWI were subjected to a profound conflict between their advanced acculturation and acquisition of local cultural codes and persistent exclusion from the Romanian society. Unlike previous generations evolving on a “double path” from cultural and social perspective, the interwar intellectual group being born within both cultures experienced a deep identity crisis due to the limitations of their integration, a fact which separated and even opposed their discourse against their cultural ancestry with its political discourse. This identity crisis connecting the aesthetic ideological mechanisms behind their works manifested as a consequence of a series of social, political and cultural factors which shaped the creation, formation and evolution of the intellectuals. Also, the crisis found several forms of expression and resolution within their artistic and public discourse placed between the avant-garde, rejecting the traditionalist culture, and the emergence of a Jewish identity within Romanian culture. Manifested culturally through the massive presence within the avant-

garde and modernist trend, the intellectuals embraced revolt and rejection of ossified structures and traditional society. Following Emancipation and legal inclusion into the Romanian nation, the emergence of a “Jewish literature in Romanian language” expressed culturally the acknowledgment of a social reality through the emergence of a “minority culture” within the Romanian language. Articulating a commonality of integrative discourses towards the Romanian milieu, both the avant-garde and the “Jewish literature” options reflected the profound desire of integration and an active search for alternatives able to overcome the shortcomings of a conservative canon through innovative cultural strategies. The “double identity” model represented an ideal solution, but it eventually failed due to the basic incompatibility between identity definitions and political paradigms of thinking concerning the relation between the collective and the individual.

Notes:

¹ Carol Iancu, *Emanciparea evreilor din România (1913-1919)* (București: Hasefer, 1998), 20.

² Carol Iancu, *Evreii din România (1866-1919). De la excludere la emancipare* (București: Hasefer, 2006), 187 and 197.

³ Carol Iancu, *Evreii din România de la emancipare la marginalizare. 1919-1938* (București: Hasefer, 2000), 102.

⁴ *Legea pentru folosirea personalului românesc în întreprinderi* (București, Monitorul Oficial și Imprimeriile Statului, 1934), 3.

⁵ *Regulamentul Facultății de Litere și Filosofie din Cluj*, Law Decree no. 2584 of the Ministry of National Education, Monitorul Oficial no 179/1937 and *Regulamentul Facultății de Științe din Cluj*, Decree Law no 2114 of the Ministry of National Education, Monitorul Oficial no 108/1937 quoted in Iancu, *Evreii din România*, 253.

⁶ *Regulament de aplicare a Legii pentru pregătirea profesională și exercitarea de meserii*, Decree Law no 2899 of the Ministry of Work, Monitorul Oficial no 196/1937 quoted in Iancu, *Evreii din România*, 253.

⁷ *Federatia Comunităților Evreiești din România, Evreii din România între anii 1940-1944. Legislația antievreiască* (București: Hasefer, 1993).

⁸ Leon Volovici, *Ideologia naționalistă și “problema evreiască” în România anilor ’30* (București: Humanitas, 1995), 29.

⁹ Iancu, *Evreii din România*, 150.

¹⁰ Comisia Internațională pentru Studierea Holocaustului în România, *Raport Final* (Iași: Polirom, 2005), 19.

¹¹ *Narodniks* were the members of the *Narodnichestvo* ideology supporting “the people”, the cause of the peasants and the end of feudalism against landowners among 1860s and 1870s middle class Russians.

¹² For this synthetic presentation the sources were Irina Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania. Regionalism, Nation Building, and Ethnic Struggle, 1918-1930*, (New York: Cornell University Press. 1995), Zigu Ornea, *Tradiționalism și modernitate în deceniul al treilea*. (București: Eminescu. 1980) and O. Crohmălniceanu, *Literatura română între cele două războaie mondiale*, (București: Minerva, 1972; 1974; 1975).

¹³ The classification belongs to Marian Papahagi, “The ‘National Essence’ in Interwar Romanian Literary Life” in Ivo Banac and Katherine Verdery, *National Character and National Ideology in Interwar Eastern Europe* (Yale: Yale Center for International and Area Studies, 1995), 157-179.

¹⁴ *Tîrg* represented a small town, a form of semi urban settlement specific for Eastern Europe.

¹⁵ Leon Volovici, “Utopie, idéologie et littérature: Intellectuels et écrivains Juifs en Roumanie au vingtième siècle” in *Millenarismi nella cultura contemporanea – Con un appendice su yovel ebraico e giubileo cristiano* (Angeli, 2000), 54.

¹⁶ Liviu Rotman, *Școala israelito-română (1851-1914)* (București: Hasefer, 1999), 378.

¹⁷ Fărcășan, 300.

¹⁸ Rotman, *Școala israelito-română*, 378-9.

¹⁹ Fărcășan, 301.

²⁰ Liviu Rotman, “Social and economic structures of the Jewish population of Romania in the last part of the 19th century” in *Romanian Jewish Studies*, Volume I, Spring 1987, number 1, 15.

²¹ Liviu Rotman, “Mental and cultural Structures of Romanian Jews at the turn of the century” in *Shvut*, no 16/1993, Tel Aviv University, 152.

²² *Ibid.*, 155.

²³ *Ibid.*, 156.

²⁴ The traditional school, the *heder*, is the elementary schooling system organized within the Jewish community.

²⁵ Article “Heder” in Gershon David Hundert ed., *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*, vol. I, 710.

²⁶ Rotman, *Școala israelito-română*, 98-99.

²⁷ Hundert ed., *The YIVO Encyclopedia*, vol. I, 710.

²⁸ Rotman, 136.

²⁹ Marius Mircu, *Povestea presei evreiești din România* (Tel Aviv: Glob Bat-Yam, 2003), 14.

³⁰ Kuller, 16.

³¹ Ibid., 69.

³² Ibid., 76.

³³ Ibid., 115.

³⁴ “Însemnări” in *Adam*, an I, no 8-9, 1 October 1929, 31.

³⁵ *Adam*, an I, no 20, 15 April 1930, 15.

³⁶ Mendelsohn, 201.

³⁷ Leon Volovici, “The Response of Jewish Leaders and Intellectuals to Antisemitism” in Liviu Rotman and Raphael Vago eds., *The History of the Jews in Romania Between the Two World Wars* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 2005), 158.

³⁸ Robert Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure* (New York, 1957) quoted in Paul Mendes Flohr, *Divided passions: Jewish intellectuals and the experience of modernity* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1991), 42.

³⁹ Ibid., 162.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 43.

⁴¹ Peter Burger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), 20.

⁴² Poggioli, 30.

⁴³ Ibid., 34.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 117.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 108.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 123.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 121.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 33.

⁴⁹ Irina Livezeanu, *Cultură și naționalism în România Mare. 1918-1930* (București: Humanitas, 1998).

Chapter 2.

A Generational Portrait: Romanian-Language Jewish Intellectuals during the Interwar Period

Witnessing as children the massive Jewish migration towards the West from the beginning of the century and the emergence of a Jewish national movement, the intellectuals experienced later the WWI trauma and faced the anti-Semitic manifestations from early 1920s. They fully confronted the end of the “assimilationist” project of the previous generation of scholars and journalists who were struggling for legal Emancipation. Also, they were the first to experience the effects of Emancipation for the status of Romanian Jews and, thus, for the reshaping of a modern identity, able to preserve the Jewish roots and to integrate them within the larger body nation. The commonality of political, cultural and social experience articulated a common “generational consciousness” which functioned as a cohesive frame of reference for the already analyzed identity patterns, while providing “a sense of rupture with the past (...) that will later distinguish the members of the generation from those who follow them in time”¹.

Undertaking a socio-cultural analysis of the biographical trajectories of the writers, the current chapter maintains a collective generational approach while researching who were the Jewish acculturated intellectuals in individual terms. Thus, the current chapter basically offers a missing link between the previous section, which focused on the

analysis of mechanisms determining the option for certain identity patterns and politics of cultural discourse, and the following three chapters, which are dedicated to methods and strategies of articulating identity in their writings. Focusing on the investigation of private biographical details able to emphasize certain common patterns in terms of origin, formation, education or socialization, this chapter eventually details in each individual case the identity options in order to shed more light on the collective processes within the group.

A. The Origins: Regional and Cultural Identity. The birth place of the intellectuals usually offers important data on the community type to which they belonged, as well as on the general background which influenced them. Also the size and the ethnic structure of the locality might have influenced the evolution of the community and thus the identity of the future intellectual. Thus, generally speaking, all intellectuals analyzed came from former Regat, basically from Moldavia and Wallachia, the main areas where Jewish communities were already acculturated to the Romanian language or had incentives to do it. Thus, a few cases of Yiddish-born Moldavian intellectuals shifting to Romanian and moving to Bucharest should be mentioned.

In Moldavia, the future intellectuals came mainly from its Northern and Eastern part, known basically for its traditional semi-rural Yiddish speaking *shtetl* communities, which were more compact, religious and relatively segregated from the Romanian communities. The Jewish culture was stronger here than in the other urban Regat regions due to the fact that sizable Jewish population was concentrated in compact communities which maintained their traditions and identity; another factor was the important tradition of Yiddish culture here. Ury Benador was in Mihăileni, Botoșani, while Sașa Pană and Ion Călugaru came to Bucharest from Dorohoi, Botoșani County. Although he grew up in

Fundoaia (near Herța, Bukovina) where his grandfather was *arendar*², Beniamin Fundoianu was born and later he returned to study in Iași where his father had his business and which by that time was a city largely consisting of Jewish population. In Wallachia and especially in Bucharest, the greatest Jewish community in this region, the structure of the community was radically different; Bucharest, as a metropolis with a big population out of which 10% were Jews, had a different social structure determined by its modern and highly urban character. Nevertheless, Bucharest had a significant Jewish population living mainly in its famous Jewish quarters (*Calea Văcărești* (Văcărești Avenue) novel described it in opposition to the typical *shtetls* of Ury Benador and Ion Călugaru), although not limited to them. Contrasting with Bucharest, the rest of Wallachia counted a smaller population concentration and percentage than Moldavia. At the same time and probably due also to this factor, the population was more acculturated, with the majority of Romanian native speakers and with a special community of Sephardic origin remarkably integrated to the economic and social life of the Capital. Brăila used to be a very cosmopolitan middle-range city where many ethnic communities competed in different areas as in a multicultural American urban model; due to the size and to the ethnic composition of the place, the social structure and relations also changed. This fact might have generated Mihail Sebastian's detached perspective on ethnic identity, be it Jewish or Romanian, perceived rather as an intellectual problem; in multicultural Brăila, Jewish or Romanian identity represented just another model among other distinct ethnic minority's identities.

Basically, two clusters of young intellectuals emerged, coming from Moldavia and Wallachia and later moving to Bucharest to join the Romanian language intellectual milieu there. Although Iași was also intellectually appealing as the capital of the Moldavian province, at least for Beniamin Fundoianu, F. Brunea-Fox and I. Ludo in the first years

after the WWI, the possibilities offered by the Capital won over the provincial atmosphere of Iași. At the same time, leaving Iași or Brăila, the intellectuals made a clear option for the Romanian language and Romanian cultural milieu as the old traditional centers for the development of Yiddish culture and for Zionism and Hebrew language were left behind; Bucharest was a more acculturated place.

B. Socio-Economical Background. The parents' profession and, subsequently the families' economic level, were essential in determining the financial capacity of the family and the educational opportunities at hand for the young intellectual. The schooling type, access to higher education and professional training, studies abroad, access to cultural resources and the general environment were directly influenced by the financial level and all had a significant impact on the intellectual trajectory of the emerging elite.

First of all, the professionals (medical doctors, lawyers, pharmacists, accountants, businessmen) were able to secure a more stable environment for the family when compared with small manufacturers, artisans, craftsmen and petty traders (tailors, merchants, *arendars*, shoemakers). They were better paid, had more stable jobs, usually with an expanding clientele within both Jewish and Gentile environment, poorer and richer population as well. Therefore, family could offer further education and a future career, including university studies abroad and a series of professional opportunities, while for the more modest families, the children were often determined to interrupt their studies (unless the community offered to support them partially as it was the case, up to a certain point, for Ion Călugaru), become an unskilled worker at an early age and approach life from a different perspective. Camil Baltazar's father, a poor timber-maker who was unable to support his son in school, decided to send him to learn a trade by apprenticing; the future

poet had to work in different trades, describing his misery and unhappiness through his suicidal attempt at the age of 13³. A similar case was represented by I. Peltz who was born in a family of small manufacturers; his father was a tailor and his mother was a lingerie-maker in the Jewish quarter, hardly making a living for the family, a fact which soon caused the young writer to abandon education and start making a living. Starting to work from an early age, they abandoned further education.

The middle-class professional environment offered a different background and imposed higher expectations from their offspring. Even if there might not be a great financial and social difference between a successful tailor and a small businessman or accountant, the expectations, future projects and strivings for the family and children were different as the self-conscience of a social standing and aspirations set different standards. The social connections determined by their profession and status brought together a different perception of Jewish identity for themselves, but also amongst the Gentile population around them if compared with the poorer, less interacting and often segregated-living individuals. In his memoir *Născut în '02*⁴ (Born in '02), Sașa Pană described his happy childhood protected from any restraints as his father was trying to compensate his sad childhood years by assuring a happy life to his children. Also the Jewish – Gentile relations were influenced by the father's social status and young Sașa Pană was spared by traumatic anti-Semitic experiences during his studies. On the contrary, his poorer classmate, Ion Călugaru, seemed to have been affected by the anti-Semitic attitude during school years, accounting it later in his novels. Pană's memoir offered rich material for analyzing the career and financial development of the family through the father's professional trajectory as a successful provincial doctor, expanding his clientele, earning more money for a new bigger house, offering a sound education and university studies for

his son, but also imposing the choice of his future career. Describing this sympathy for and friendship with the peasants during his childhood in his *Amintiri* (Memories)⁵, I. Răcăciuni remembered happily his time spent as a child on the estate administrated by his father, a prosperous *arendar* in Moldavia, just as much as Sașa Pană evoked his happy years in school. The connection of the economic and social status with the degree of acceptance and integration was significant.

Secondly, parents' occupation and economic level determined the future career or profession of their children. Apart from the financial resources securing their future studies, the choice for a profession was connected with the parents' area of expertise in a form of acknowledging, maintaining and continuing the parents' success, as well as social progress and consolidation of status for the middle-class born intellectuals. Even if they never practiced the chosen career, they were determined by their families to pursue university degrees (sometimes never finished) with clearly determined liberal professions ascribing them from the beginning to the intelligentsia/elite group. Usually the children born in poor families had to take up an occupation connected with manual activity, going to work as apprentice for a while in order to gain training and then, after securing for themselves the skills within a trade, they continued to practice it, according to the job market request or they rebelled and looked for more intellectual liberal occupations, but not requiring higher education. Thus many of them ended up working in publishing and press as correctors, printers, and even editors as the publications needed talented individuals and did not request a formal higher degree. Even if the family did not have sufficient resources, as was the case with Emil Dorian, the son of a teacher, all families were determined that their children were to continue their university studies and embrace "respectable" professions even if they would not practice later, supporting them sometimes with great sacrifices. The

preferred professions were coming from the law, financial economic, medical field; without any exceptions, the future intellectuals were supposed to join liberal professions able to secure their earning without being forced to depend on state jobs, usually not accessible to Jewish applicants.

Thirdly, the level of culture acquired from home increased the chances of success of the future intellectuals, as well as their future identity. The fact that middle-class children grew up with home libraries in Romanian and in foreign languages, with training in foreign languages and musical education, when parents were emphasizing the learning of Romanian and speaking it as a mother tongue (even in the cases where parents were speaking also Yiddish as a first language) greatly increased the economic and social integration of children and their professional success. Saşa Pană was an avid literature reader spending all his childhood savings on books and ordering the last novelties from Paris, sharing his last sympathies with his parents who were also passionate readers of Romanian and French literature. As a rule, the young intellectuals were speaking French and traveled to France during their studies, they were familiar with Romanian and with foreign languages from home, had early access to culture and were familiar with intellectual debates. Benjamin Fundoianu's mother came from the famous intellectual Schwarzfeld family who founded and promoted Jewish historiography and culture in Romania and worked also in journalism. Fundoianu's uncle Adolphe (the poet Avram Steuerman–Rodion) was also an important figure of the time while A. L. Zissu was a friend of the family, later facilitating Benjamin's entrance into Bucharest journalism as editor of *Mântuirea*. Coming from such an educated family and background, the expectations of the children to continue at the same level the intellectual occupations of their family were very high. Having such examples in front of them, the intellectual and professional models were

already defined, apart from the family pressure to continue a social and professional path; this was even more significant in the case of those children born in intellectual families practicing teaching, journalism, and literature. In the case of the poorer traditional families, early education was restricted to religious knowledge and Hebrew reading in the *heder* schooling system. The more resources family had to send the child to continue his (or her) education further, especially after the end of the Jewish traditional educational cycle, the greater chances the young man had to better acculturate by acquiring Romanian and knowledge on Romanian society, which would then later favor his adaptation to Romanian professional environment. Otherwise trapped within the Jewish community working market, those unable to read, write and speak Romanian had to find a Jewish milieu to survive professionally.

Finally, the economic level and the social position of the family sometimes caused a decreasing of the chances of the young men to experience the hostile environment and the anti-Jewish prejudice and discrimination due to the inherent network, social connections and professional environment which acted as a safety network (see Saşa Pană's memoirs). Here the social background made a great difference for the Gentile society in favor of the Jewish elite. Even if belonging to the Jewish community, the educated and the professionals, financially stable individuals were less exposed to prejudice and persecution. Thus the socio-professional and economic position of the families determined to a great extent the identity model and discourse of the intellectuals analyzed.

C. Religious, Linguistic and Early Educational Environment. Acquired through education in the Romanian public system or in the Israelite Romanian schools, the Romanian language represented affiliation to a literature, culture and intellectual

environment which became dominant in all regions after WWI. Due to the country's administration, official education, and institutions aiming at nationalizing minorities in regions previously dominated by Hungarian, German, Russian or Yiddish cultures, acculturation to the language of the state also represented enlarging the access to a wider public consisting not only of Gentiles, but also of Romanian acculturated Jews.

In Wallachia there was already a strong majority of Jewish population speaking Romanian and even declaring it as a mother tongue in the 1930 census. In Moldavia, the percentage of Romanian speakers was lower, due to the fact that most of the settlements consisted of compact traditional semi-rural communities (*shtetls*) or urban settlements, where the majority consisted of Yiddish speakers. After the 1918 Unification when Bessarabia and Bucovina joined Romania, the contacts between the Jewish population in the region with the larger Yiddish speaking centers in Galicia, Russia, Poland were severed; although Yiddish continued to generate a rich literature and great poets, the former Yiddish centers decreased, while the young generations also had to learn Romanian in order to pursue higher education for social and economic advancement. Although a rich language generating a great culture and literature, Yiddish was mainly popular among the people within the compact Jewish communities and in the rural areas, but unable to offer in the new post-Unification context the space for a literary career in the tradition of the great Yiddish writers from the end of the 19th century. Chances of further development in a culturally flourishing environment, such as in former Galicia and Russia with which it had contacts before in a constant exchange, disappeared due to the new political changes. More and more individuals had to leave their communities for urban spaces offering new occupations, jobs, education, entertainment and socialization, most of them in Romanian. The same happened with intellectuals and writers; in order to gain a wider audience, in

order to find jobs and participate in a larger dialogue, intellectuals had to choose writing in Romanian. This is the case of several writers who either started writing in Yiddish and Hebrew in the beginning and then changed to Romanian (A. L. Zissu and Ury Benador), or started their careers in Romanian after having studied it in school and being familiar with it as a culture and literature through their education. Therefore, the writers researched in the current study came exclusively from Moldavia and Wallachia as the only areas where the intellectuals were native Romanian speakers or significantly acculturated to Romanian.

In terms of religion, in Moldavia there were many observant traditional Yiddish speaking communities, as well as important Hassidic communities in Northern Moldavia (for example, A. L. Zissu's family). The early mandatory education, focusing on Torah and Hebrew language, was conducted in the *heder*, the community's first educational level before going to the Israelite Romanian school or to the Romanian public system where usually the training in Jewish subjects decreased in order to favor secular topics. If interested in studying further, the student compromised a traditional lifestyle with the habits of the Gentile majority with whom he came in contact while entering a new educational system. Little by little, under the effect of acculturation, religion was reduced to the symbolic value of entertaining connections with family and community as well as participation in religious celebrations (Saşa Pană's memoir described his relation with Judaism in similar terms). Nevertheless, Jewish identity remained strong for the intellectuals despite the recent acculturation and Emancipation; this fact could be explained through the intermittent anti-Semitic atmosphere, as well as through the strong Jewish cultural life developing in new forms after Emancipation.

One of the most interesting cases in terms of identity articulation and language change was writer Ury Benador; son of a Yiddish language writer, Benador had Yiddish as

a mother tongue, later acquiring Romanian which he mastered to the point of writing literature and practicing journalism. His journalistic debut was in Yiddish in 1916 in newspaper *Der Hamer* which he edited with Iacob Botoșansky and continued publishing intermittently till 1940s, in parallel with his activity in Romanian which became his dominant area of work. After moving from his Moldavian *shtetl* to the multiethnic Brăila and later to the Capital and, finally, after building a career in literature and press there, his intellectual trajectory imposed the need of mastering the Romanian language. A. L. Zissu, originally from Northern Moldavia, was the descendent of a famous Hassidic family. Well versed in Judaism, he mastered Hebrew and Yiddish and was able to practice journalism in both languages. By the age of 16, Zissu acquired a sound knowledge in Talmud, Bible exegesis and Jewish thought and by the age of 20 a diploma of rabbi (recognized by the Casa Școalelor) which he never used. Starting his journalistic career first in the Hebrew language, Zissu founded the monthly review *Hamekitz* in Piatra Neamț, and later also directed the *Hatikvah* review in Galați. Writing also in Yiddish, he collaborated with the review *Licht*, before collaborating on Romanian-language Jewish publications like *Adam*, *Puntea de fildeș* (The ivory bridge), *Hasmonaea* or founding the greatest Jewish Romanian publication *Mântuirea*. Despite these strong connections with Jewish culture, Zissu also became a successful journalist in Romanian publications and a Romanian language writer. Thus, apart from his writing in both Hebrew and Yiddish, even a Zionist leader of the prestige of Zissu acculturated and decided to start writing in Romanian for reaching a larger audience for his cultural Zionist doctrine in Bucharest, the mostly acculturated region of the country. On the contrary, for Beniamin Fundoianu, Yiddish was not his mother tongue, although he understood and occasionally used it, mainly for artistic purposes as translations and nostalgic connections with his past and profound identity; in this sense, he was still

able to translate Yiddish poems and publish them in different reviews. Saşa Pană declared himself as coming from a non-religious family which hardly observed any rules due to the integration through profession and socialization of his family. Still, the consciousness of being religiously Jewish was reinforced in the absence of education in *heder* and community schools through participation in religious celebrations and preservation of customs symbolizing his connection with Judaism. Even if suggesting two opposing trends, the writers acculturating to Romanian for practical purposes and the intellectuals preserving and reviving their connection with Jewish culture represent basically the expression of a conflicting milieu which involved the political and cultural nationalization of minorities, but who also granted Emancipation, without abandoning a socio-cultural and political anti-Semitism.

Basically, an important trend of language change from Yiddish to Romanian was visible within the Jewish intellectual groups during the interwar period in a search for professional accomplishment and wider audience. As a result, the language change process taking place now demonstrated the consolidation of Romanian language among former Regat Jewish intellectual groups though a strong process of acculturation followed by its social consequences leading to insertion into the Romanian intellectual environment. The shift from Yiddish to Romanian occurred mainly in the case of the young intellectuals coming from traditional milieus of Yiddish speakers with a strong ambition to succeed in the professional field and who had as a natural choice the language of the local majority. The traditional Jewish education based on Hebrew and religious knowledge had the effect of shaping a strong Jewish identity. The native Romanian-speaking Jewish intellectuals were coming from already acculturated families, usually from middle class, professionally successful environment; thus also the religious attachment decreased while the family

became more secularized, acculturated and planning their integration, declaring their Judaism as being of private concern due to their “non-religious families”⁶.

D. Formative Environment and Intellectual Influences. According to the level of formal education attended, the individuals had a standard training programmed by the schooling system. For example, the Romanian Israelite School as well as the Romanian public education provided basically a sound training in Romanian history, language and literature, French and sometimes German as foreign languages, music and visual arts, as well as “Jewish subjects” classes (in the Israelite Romanian system, in terms of Hebrew, Jewish history and Judaism). These disciplines planned to secure a solid Romanian cultural background which, in the case of ethnic and religious minorities as well as in the case of regional identity groups, functioned also as a nationalizing instrument, sometimes oppressing the actual background of the non-Romanian student with obligatory Christian Orthodox religious education or a nationally-centered approach on Romanian culture and history. Justified by the identity crisis of Greater Romania in the years after the 1918 Unification when a sizable percentage of the population (roughly 28%) consisted of ethnic and religious groups and even the Romanian population maintained a strong regional identity, the educational policies worked against regionalism and affirmation of distinct ethnic identities. Therefore, a Jewish student’s perception of his (or her) identity was differently influenced and shaped according to the type and degree of Jewish cultural and religious education, if he never attended Romanian formal education or if he attended for the entire educational track only non-Jewish schools. The same educational system provided an extensive knowledge on arts and humanities, an opening to the world and to cosmopolitanism through history of music, arts, foreign languages, world literature and

history. Because the cultural training was planned as general and European as possible, the interest in French culture and literature was privileged as this was practically the first foreign language studied in the former Regat areas. Reading French literature and press in the original language was not only advisable, but it was often a must as Romanian translations were not available in many cases. Therefore students had, once studying in the state education, a natural inclination for the French speaking world, apart from the natural interest in it due to its predominant political, cultural and economic position. Pompiliu Eliade showed the importance of the French influence in the Romanian life in the 19th century already. If Germany, Austria and Hungary represented also significant centers for the Transylvanian area and for Central European regions, for the former Regat, France functioned as the main center, while Romania became a “cultural colony” and a periphery of the French empire as Fundoianu characterized Romanian culture in a controversial writing.

Apart from formal education, the background provided by family and friends consolidated and refined tastes and preferences for certain literary types, politicized directions, historical interpretation, and manners of approaching the surrounding world according to the family history, the contacts with society or with the cultural training. Jewish identity was often preserved as a form of counteracting the effects of Romanian education and acculturation through preservation of customs, language usage, traditions, and religious observance. The network of friends and acquaintances enriched, stimulated or contradicted the home and educational environment with new sources of information, interpretation and approach on culture and identity. Thus the home and the familiar environment could support and consolidate through a secularized, culturally Romanian atmosphere and an effacing Jewish background the official education supporting the

shaping of the Romanian cultural identity. In the same way, a student coming from a traditional, religious family, self-conscious of his identity would have been puzzled by the Romanizing atmosphere in school and find his identity repressed; thus the Jewish identity would develop in contradiction with a Romanian education and culture which will be assimilated, but never felt as intimate and personal due to the constant feeling of being rejected and not finding himself/herself represented within it. Ion Călugaru and Ury Benador offered accounts of their experiences in school supporting this interpretation. This permanent tension between formal education and personal environment was of utmost importance for the development of the intellectual identity of the writers and their connection to Romanian culture and society. Contradicting the formal education system promoting mainly French culture and literature, Ury Benador opposed his own background to it. As a Yiddish native speaker, he always perceived the general taste for French as frivolous, preferring the German language and literature; his favorite novelists were Thomas Mann, Franz Werfel, Stefan Zweig, while his obsessive intellectual model was composer Ludwig van Beethoven, the absolute paradigm of creative genius and universalism for whom his entire creation built a personality cult. Also in terms of literary topics, the intellectuals with a strong Jewish educational background and coming from a traditional environment, with little formal education in the official system were naturally more interested in writing on Jewish topics if compared with the more acculturated enrolling in the cosmopolitan modernist direction.

Beniamin Fundoianu's life and work represented a great example of the complex synthesis of Romanian, Jewish and modern European intellectual influences due to the region in which he was born, as well as to the cultural background and intellectual environment of his family. His intellectual identity was the product of the intellectual

Jewish bourgeois milieu of Northern Moldavia, culturally emancipated, following the Haskala principles, connected at the same time to the Jewish cultural tradition (his family had sound knowledge of Yiddish and Hebrew) and familiar with the Romanian literature with which Fundoianu's generation identify to a great extent. At the same time German (influential in Bukovina) and French (influential in former Regat) cultures were present as a proof of the interest in modern European culture. Thus Fundoianu embraced at the same time Romanian culture and his Jewish roots, French and German literatures and languages.

The cultural opening and direction acquired through family and friends' influence, schooling orientation and personal interest and affinities, also the combination of these influences converging or conflicting within one's formative trajectory generated the complex intellectual individualities of the later periods. A Romanian national-oriented education reinforced the strength of Jewish identity and background among some students who, although acculturated, felt excluded from the school and official discourse. On the contrary, the Haskala influence and the secular environment in Fundoianu's case promoted Jewish, Romanian and universal cultural roots, shaping a complex identity at ease in any culture without complexes and dilemmas, aside from the hostile environment perceived in university (where, just as Saşa Pană a few years later, he faced anti-Semitism). Nevertheless, the international opening, be it acquired through education, family or personal efforts, for world literature, current literary trends and movements and especially French literary scene, was a general trend.

E. Intellectual Contacts: Networks, Informal Groups, Intellectual Circles. The effect of intellectual circles and network affiliation for the intellectual evolution was capital; the literary trends that attracted the intellectuals, the publications on which they

collaborated or the cultural movements in which they participated could be to a large extent filtered by the social context. The mediation of the literary affiliation through the social level was significant especially during adolescence as the peak formative moment in one's intellectual biography. By including this social intellectual dimension of the analysis, the current chapter plans to reconstruct the environment of the formative influences and to integrate the individual within Jewish and Romanian cultural backgrounds.

The basic social contact mediating the early cultural influences was represented by individual friendships, personal connections, especially those built during school years or within work environment. The friendship between Beniamin Fundoianu and F. Brunea-Fox started in Iași, where they were studying in the same school. It grew stronger due to their common interests in the avant-garde and was consolidated during their journalistic period spent in the Capital, where Fundoianu determined and supported Brunea-Fox's literary debut in print. When Sașa Pană became the animator of *unu* (one) publication and publishing house, he edited some of Ion Călugaru's writings and promoted him within the avant-garde group as his former colleague in their native Dorohoi and continuing education together in Bucharest. Even after leaving Romania, these connections contributed to maintaining the intellectual's artistic presence within the Romanian literary scene through participation in projects and publications home. Also these connections functioned in the opposite direction, helping in the process of publication, translation and publicization abroad of their friends' work while they were still living in Romania, as well as their contacts with the literary scene in Paris when traveling. Thus in 1934, Sașa Pană published the collection of Tristan Tzara's Romanian pre-Dadaist poetry, *Primele poeme ale lui Tristan Tzara* (First poems of Tristan Tzara), while Tristan Tzara kept in touch with artists as Marcel Iancu and Ion Vinea, whom he had met and worked with in his adolescence in

Romania. While Fundoianu was already in Paris, he managed to publish with the support of his friends in Romania the volume *Priveliști* (Landscapes) (1930), collecting his most representative poems in Romanian. After his departure, Fundoianu maintained his old friendship with A. L. Zissu, trying to promote the latter's work in France; in 1928 Fundoianu translated in French Zissu's *Confesiunea unui candelabru* (The Confession of a Chandelier). Despite the distance, Fundoianu maintained an extensive correspondence and exchange of literary and cultural updates with his friends in Romania and recreated a friendly environment in Paris, being surrounded by friends coming from Romania in order to settle in France such as Ilarie Voronca, actor Luca Gridu, friend since childhood, Claude Sernet, Constantin Brancusi and Victor Brauner. As a proof of their friendship, Fundoianu's first poem in French, "Exercice de français", was dedicated to Ion Vineanu, friend and former collaborator.

Apart from school or family environment, the working place also facilitated personal relationships between individuals. Working for a journal or a publishing house (as most of the future intellectuals found jobs in these fields) facilitated contact between individuals sharing similar artistic and political opinions and thus artistic nuclei of intellectual connections and milieus were created. *Adam*, a well-known Jewish literary publication, supported the collaboration of most of the Romanian-language Jewish intellectuals regardless of their political opinions. Its editors, I. Ludo, Idov Cohn and Miron Grindea, brought together Jewish and Romanian contributors. As a member of the editorial board of *Integral*, Brunea-Fox worked together with Ilarie Voronca, Ion Călugaru and M. H. Maxy. Attending the same *Sburătorul* circle, writers such as Felix Aderca – greatly appreciated by the amphytrion of the circle, Ilarie Voronca, Cezar Baltazar, Ion Călugaru, Benjamin

Fundoianu, I. Peltz or Ury Benador, regular participants in the debates, socialized and had the chance of reading each other's works before being published.

Based on a community of literary and cultural views, intellectual groups and circles were created. For example, the group around the avant-gardist publication and publishing house *unu* maintained a strong community feeling, forging friendships and common projects involving Ilarie Voronca, Saşa Pană, painter Maxy, Geo Bogza, Victor Brauner and Ion Călugaru. Especially Saşa Pană, the center of the group as the editor-in-chief and founder of the review and of the publishing house *unu*, contributed to the preservation of the group through the perseverance of finding funds and readers, publishers and contributors for the publication, keeping the group united around their artistic creed and maintaining the connection with most of them. In time, based on individual connections facilitated by community of interests, networks were created for literary projects, cultural endeavors or artistic activities favoring further professional collaborations. Before his departure for France, Tristan Tzara founded together with colleagues and friends Ion Vinea, Adrian Maniu and Marcel Iancu the review *Simbolul* (The Symbol) (1912).

Thus, apart from the home and educational environment, other influences mediated through the social level were coming through personal connections (friendships, acquaintances) to small social groups (informal groups, circles) extending to networks able to function in wider projects, associations, formal organizations.

F. The Professional Background of the Writers. Although all the intellectuals in the current study essentially defined themselves as writers, for the great majority writing literature remained their *violon d'Ingres* as the socio-economic and cultural context was unable to allow them support themselves while practicing it. Therefore, securing a

profession through formal education represented a priority for their family as well as for themselves, although some of them never practiced. First, there was the category of liberal professions; following the family model and the efforts of the previous generations for social and economic integration and success, people chose law, medicine, economics or sciences in order to secure a specialized and highly qualified job with greater opportunities on the liberal job market. Not much interest was taken into professions placing the individual within the state system such as administration, education, and military ranks because these areas were usually inaccessible to Jewish applicants during the pre-Emancipation period while being restricted to Romanian citizens. Thus there are lawyers: Ilarie Voronca, although he never practiced, was still a member of the Bar Association; Mihail Sebastian practiced only during financial breaks from his journalism or playwriting, working in the office of a reputed attorney and representing different cases in court. The medical profession was a second option: Emil Dorian graduated from Bucharest University and served as military medical staff during WWI; Saşa Pană followed his father's path as a medical doctor, graduating from military school and becoming a military doctor with an officer rank in the Romanian army. Economics was also an option: Isaiia Răcăciuni graduated from the Commercial Academy while Sergiu Dan had some training at the Advanced School of Commerce. A. L. Zissu had a solid religious training, getting his rabbi diploma recognized by Casa Şcoalelor, but which he never used. Exceptionally, a few intellectuals chose initially a career in humanities, but finally changed their course in favor of a liberal profession. For instance, leaving in 1915 for Zurich to study letters and philosophy, Tristan Tzara settled in Paris in 1920 to study chemistry. Many intellectuals never graduated university as they never finished their education; usually lacking financial support (Mihail Sebastian could not finish his doctorate in law in France) and being forced

to work more in order to earn money, many were already involved in their favorite literary or journalistic occupation (Brunea-Fox and Beniamin Fundoianu became more interested in journalism and literature and abandoned university). Almost none of them practiced in the field they were trained for, abandoning their families' or their own old projects in order to look for alternatives in the journalistic field, closer to their literary interests.

Unlike those intellectuals who had a professional alternative, unfinished education was a difficult problem for those who had to interrupt their studies earlier without any qualification and who were practically limited to journalism and writing. Earlier in time if compared with the intellectuals coming from middle class families, the future writers were exposed to social prejudice, economic competition and difficult conditions; these factors depended on the type of education chosen in connection with the financial support received to pursue studies outside community, on their capacity and interest of studying in a national-oriented educational system, as well as to integrate in the state schooling system. Reasons for not finishing education were therefore varied, ranging from economical to social and political. Felix Aderca was unable to finish his studies due to a scandal caused by the anti-Semitic father of one of his competitor colleagues, which caused him to be expelled from school in the 6th grade. Coming from a poor family unable to support his studies after primary school, Ury Benador was self-taught, forced from early adolescence to practice different jobs to support himself. Due to the lack of any formal degree, the editorial jobs in press were the most accessible, even if the lowest paid; thus, I. Peltz became first corrector at *Gazeta ilustrată* (The Illustrated Gazette) (1916), and later became editor for several important publications. After attending the Israelite–Romanian school and gymnasium in Dorohoi, Ion Călugaru moved with financial help offered by the Jewish community to Bucharest for further studies, but he was unable to finish it due to financial difficulties.

Eventually he entered journalism when his Latin professor Eugen Lovinescu offered him a job at his literary publication *Sburătorul* and quitted school.

If high-school education was completed usually in the native or nearby town in the province for the writers originally from Moldavia and Wallachia, for university studies the future students were overwhelmingly choosing Bucharest University. Exceptionally, older Beniamin Fundoianu and his friend Brunea Fox (and Saşa Pană for a while) studied at Iaşi University, which still bore a reputation at the time of the beginning of their studies, but before finishing their academic education they moved to Bucharest. During the 19th and beginning of the 20th century, the reputation of Iaşi as a Moldavian cultural capital and academic center decreased and provincialized, favoring Bucharest which, especially after 1918, was reinforced as the capital of Greater Romania, which concentrated more resources and thus offered more opportunities for professionals, especially in terms of literary and journalistic life. Even more, Iaşi University became the center of anti-Semitic student demonstrations in the early 1920s due to the presence of professor A. C. Cuza, who propagated his ideology and his party membership among students. Planning to become a military doctor, Saşa Pană enrolled in the medico-military institute; after two years at Iaşi University, due to the anti-Semitic environment in the early 1920s described in his memoir, he moved to Bucharest in order to continue his studies. After studying for the whole educational cycle in Iaşi, Fundoianu started the Law School also in the capital of the Moldavian province. Studying political economy with anti-Semitic A. C. Cuza, the feared professor failed Fundoianu, determining the poet to abandon Law school, move to Bucharest and dedicate his activity to his already successful journalistic and literary career.

A second trend in the mobility of university students involved moving abroad, especially France. If as a rule doctoral studies were pursued in France, some of the future writers chose to pursue also their undergraduate degrees abroad. Especially the well-off families who could afford the financial effort sent their children to study abroad immediately after graduating high-school in order to obtain sound education in French language and literature and acquire familiarity with French culture and social environment. A second factor was represented by the fact that, by excluding Iași University which became culturally less competitive and politically problematic, Moldavian students would have had to move to Bucharest, away from their familiar milieu. Thus, due to the inherent necessity to move to a new space and given the fact that later the doctoral studies and the future public acknowledgement of their training would have involved a French studies period anyways, some preferred to choose France from the beginning, avoiding Bucharest. After attending gymnasium in Roman, Max Blecher enrolled in the medical school in Paris. Leaving his native Moinești, in Moldavia, Tristan Tzara attended high school and allegedly a short university period in Bucharest, before leaving in 1915 for Zurich to attend university studies.

If compared with the Gentile intellectuals and writers of the same period, the striking orientation of the Jewish students towards practical studies and liberal professions as opposed to the significant number of humanities graduates among Romanian students testifies the perpetuation of a social and economic measure of security. The humanities graduates were supposed to look for jobs in education and in university as professors, researchers, and public discourse intellectuals able to influence the formation and education of the young generations. Before 1923, these crucial positions in society were legally unavailable to Jewish graduates like most of the jobs in the public sector. Even if there were

cases of Jewish intellectuals succeeding exceptionally in this field, changes in the regulations of the institutions or in the regime of employment of Jewish population could occur any time; the rhythm of legal changes generated a climate of insecurity, which was augmented by the lack of legal status before 1919 / 1923. Even if the analyzed cases of Jewish intellectuals confirmed that all were educated and started to become creative after the Emancipation, certain safety measures to avoid insecurity in terms of employment in the public sector and discrimination in terms of official regulations were visible. Thus most of the intellectuals were advised or deliberately chose practical liberal professions on the free job market and in the private sector on capacity and performance criteria, regardless of ethnicity and religion. This is why there were doctors, lawyers, economists and only few cases of humanists. A second motivation was suggested by the social and economic advancement process in which most of their families were involved for one or even more generations. This success had to be continued and secured through a sound profession, preferably in the same field with the business of the parents or at the same level in order to consolidate a social and economic standing, a second and indirect form of contribution to the safety net and integration against exclusion and discrimination. The clear geographical and economic mobility from villages to towns, from towns to cities, from Moldavia or Wallachia provinces to Bucharest and from Romania to France supported the same desire for better education, professional betterment, and improved level of training to guarantee a successful career and a stable social and economic position. The drive for success, mostly coming from the family background of the better off who were able to fund the studies of their offspring, but also from the Jewish community which decided to support its most intelligent, but poor children, as well as the practical orientation generated the consolidation of a status of middle class, elite position.

For the poor students lacking financial support, but also for the frustrated students unhappy with the practicality of their families' aspirations, or for graduates dissatisfied with their jobs, a return to literature taking most of their time and interests as well as to journalism represented an attractive option. Both areas were able to provide a minimal living without requirements for formal education. Therefore journalism usually absorbed these intellectuals as the closest option to their literary plans, waiting for the proper moment to materialize in published books and successful careers.

G. Occupations and Affiliations. In rare cases, the common sense determined the individual to be dedicated to his profession in order to make a living while trying to find time for writing. Felix Aderca had a twenty-year long career as a clerk in the Ministry of Work; Emil Dorian practiced as a medical doctor in Bucharest till the end of his life, while A. L. Zissu became a successful businessman. But for most of the writers, securing a fixed income while being dedicated to writing were almost incompatible aspirations; in order to find a compromising solution, the individuals had to make efforts to concentrate on both. Saşa Pană was a military doctor, working in a demanding and tiring arrangement; his memoir described his endless missions to the far provincial military units by train, sudden work calls, modest payment and the overwhelming interdiction to publish while being an officer in the Romanian army. Nevertheless, his literary work, the periodical publication of the *unu* magazine, the activity of the publishing house *unu* as well as the almost daily meetings with collaborators and his correspondence with other writers occupied all the time left, his long train hours, his sleep and his financial resources. Mihail Sebastian was a lawyer, apart from being a successful playwright and controversial novelist; still, his work

in the office of a famous lawyer as well as his activity within the Bar Association were described as extremely harmful for his literary activity, boring and the least preferable. He was practicing mainly when his financial resources were diminished and when his journalistic and literary activities were not offering minimal income for his needs.

Dissatisfied with their original professions, mainly decided early by their families, but also dedicated to literature and art, writers found themselves in a difficult situation. At that time in Romania, just as in any other country, a literary person was not usually able to make a living out of practicing writing exclusively; at the same time, the long hours spent on writing, keeping contacts with other literati groups, reading and maintaining up to date with the artistic developments and innovative trends on the Romanian and international scene took a lot of time. Thus, many of the writers preferred to look for jobs in the journalistic field or in the editorial houses, theatre or cultural institutions as closest areas to writing. But as they were more difficult to access and rare to appear on the job market, journalism was the most popular occupation, as a new booming field, in need of intellectual voices and intelligent discourse. As a rising trade developing spectacularly, journalism had the capacity of offering a working place and an income; thus many intellectuals favored literature, culture and public discourse through journalism, even if as a result, their financial situation was usually more than precarious. Apart from being the closest option to the ideal of making a living from writing, journalism had also the advantage of offering an intellectually stimulating milieu. Editorial teams and boards, as well as publishing houses provided a social environment for exchanging, enriching and creating intellectual and literary views, as well as meeting other people in the same field. Thus their personal interest overlapped with the professional tasks; both directions seemed as a natural continuation of each other and the ideal option.

H. Pseudonyms and Identity. An interesting factor for analyzing the problem of identity was provided by a chronological analysis of the change of pseudonyms used by writers. Usually the writers changed their original names with Romanian pseudonyms meant to integrate them better in the cultural environment and to protect them from anti-Semitic attacks. Basically the first recognizable sign of adherence to the Romanian milieu, the pseudonym, was able to provide material for reconstructing the history of the intellectual identity of the writer when the process was fragmented into several stages and name versions. A form of compromise, when still preserving the Jewish name, the pseudonyms adopted at least a Romanian ending or resonances; for example, in the case of Beniamin Fundoianu, choosing Wechslerescu as a pseudonym, he also chose a parody and a mixture between Romanian and Jewish identities. Ștrul Leiba Croitoru or Buim Croitoru was the birth name of I. Călugaru; a strange pseudonym, Călugaru meant in Romanian *monk* (a clear reference to the Christian denomination), surprising for a writer with such a strong Jewish identity as Călugaru. The story behind the surprising situation explained that it was the invention of his boss at the *Sburătorul* review, E. Lovinescu. Born Alexandru Binder, Sașa Pană chose a combination of the Russian diminutive of his original name, Alexandru, and a Romanian word *pană* (feather), a symbol of his favorite occupation, writing.

The most interesting and transparent evolution in terms of identity was Beniamin Fundoianu's. Born Benjamin Wechsler, he published for a while using his original name or pseudonyms of Judaic resonance, such as Ofir (a Biblical town) and Hashir (in Hebrew, song). In the literary publications and different other journals from Iași and Bucharest, he played with variations such as Alex Vilara, Wechslerescu⁷ (his original Jewish name with a

specific Romanian name suffix), Iașanul (a derivative from the Moldavian city of Iași), Const. Meletie, etc. When he reached notoriety in the Romanian intellectual environment, he decided for Benjamin Fundoianu, preserving the name of the maternal grandfather and associating the name of a place in Northern Moldavia, Fundoaia, in Dorohoi County, where the paternal grandfather was *arendar* and where Benjamin spent his childhood. After migrating to France, he adopted the closest possible French version, choosing Benjamin Fondane. Sarcastically, E. Lovinescu had said about Fundoianu's name variations that he was "Wechsler at Hârlau or in the neighborhood (...), B. Fundoianu in Bucharest (...) and Fondane in Paris"⁸, actually synthesizing his whole professional and personal evolution in relation to certain periods of his career. The last stage was represented by the publication in the press of the French Résistance where he signed Isaac Laquedem, the mythical name of the *Juif errant*. All these changes symbolized his cultural affiliations, the change of a Moldavian Jewish environment for a Romanian and then for a French cultural one, culminating in a forced dissimulation during the radicalized years. His trajectory was especially symbolic, as his original name, Wechsler, meant "changer". Samuel Rosenstock, the young avant-gardist and creator of Dadaism, changed his name in Tzara, similar with the Romanian word for "land" or "country", but also with the Hebrew meaning of "worry" or "grief", "pain". In these cases, names became a form of asserting a political and cultural message of preserving Jewish identity and eventually assuming a mission.

Following the model of the Romanian peasants identifying themselves with the region they were originally coming from, Benjamin Wechsler chose to name himself Fundoianu as a proof of his Romanian roots and emotional connection with the land. In the same way, Isaiia Nacht chose the pseudonym of Isaiia Răcăciuni, partly preserving his Jewish name, partly changing it to a toponymical equivalent confirming his origins from

the Moldavian town Răcăciuni. A manner of expressing their personal attachment to the place, region and country through this confirmation of name choice, Răcăciuni and Fundoianu accomplished a metaphorical regional “assimilationist” gesture meant to consolidate their affiliation to Romanian society.

Unlike other intellectuals preoccupied with name acculturation, Simon Moise Grinberg, the future writer Ury Benador, had a complex evolution. In adolescence, he changed his name to Simon Schmidt, then to Ury Ben Hador (the son of his generation, in Hebrew) and, finally, he chose Ury Benador when he started publishing his novels.

I. Main Attraction: Journalism. Journalism was a major option for the career of many intellectuals during the interwar period. First, it was a natural option for young educated people, unable due to economic reasons to finish their studies and to then have access to a profession and a clearly cut career trajectory in one defined field of expertise. It also represented a liberal profession offering chances of affirmation for young and talented individuals and it was open regardless of previous formal education. Therefore many of the future intellectuals, already interested in writing, communication and language, started to earn a modest living as correctors, editors, reporters and soon built strong careers in this new and promising, developing area. The second reason was the cultural and political commitment to a political and literary career which determined the need to publish and be present in journalistic projects; many intellectuals created revolutionary press projects such as avant-garde reviews, literary journals or simply contributed to Zionist or Socialist press as a direct form of expression of their otherwise publicly opaque political options. Regardless of motivation, press represented a central point in the activity of all the analyzed

intellectuals. Practically every individual from the list of intellectuals selected for my research was involved in the editorial board of one publication as an employee, apart from their collaboration to many other publications and from the initiative of issuing ephemeral literary magazines unable to survive on the market.

A source of income or an opportunity for publicizing the discourse of a group for a larger public (especially for the innovative young groups, it was difficult to permeate the rather traditional conservative intellectual life, dominant at the moment), journalism was an interesting temptation for all the intellectuals who were often working for several publications simultaneously during their career. This is how professional journalistic careers were built; starting to work as a corrector, I. Peltz soon became editor for *Scena* (The Scene), *Presa liberă* (1918) (Free press), in 1917 N. D. Cocea hired him as an editor for *Chemarea* (The call) and *Facla* (The torch) (1919), eventually working for the most important publications of the period and even directing reviews *Caiete lunare* (Monthly Notebooks) (1927) and *Zodiac* (Star signs) (1930-1932). Earning a reputation as journalists, many of them developed solid careers in cultural press and were invited to work for reputable journals; Mihail Sebastian worked on the editorial team of *Cuvântul* (1927-1934) and *Revista Fundațiilor Regale* (1936-1940). Initiating new journalistic projects, such as publications or editorial houses, represented a higher degree of professionalization; I. Ludo worked as an editor for several publications in Iași before moving to Bucharest to become the secretary of the editorial board of Zionist publication *Mântuirea* and the founder of remarkable review and publishing house *Adam*. Avant-gardists were extremely industrious in this direction; Sașa Pană, the main animator of the avant-gardist movement in Romania, was the founder and the editor-in-chief of review *unu* (1928-1932), and director of publishing house *unu*.

A promising avant-gardist poet in his youth, Brunea Fox became one of the most famous journalists of the interwar period emblematically nick-named the “Prince of the reporters” for his contribution to the creation of the genre of reportage in Romanian interwar press. Introducing it to the literary scene as well, Brunea Fox practically bridged his artistic inclinations with his current profession into a successful synthesis. Fascinated by modernist writing, Brunea Fox was influenced by surrealism and by the avant-gardist group he was attached to, mainly by Ștefan Roll and B. Fundoianu. Moving to mainstream commercial journalism, he adapted the style of the interviews and reportage to his artistic needs, converting his former poetic creativity into a new style of journalism; thus he created a real school and a style in the field of literary-journalistic reportage and a follower of this model was Geo Bogza. He was also the first reporter of the Iron Guard pogrom of 1941 in Bucharest publishing *Orașul măcelului. Jurnalul rebeliunii și crimelor legionare* (The city of slaughter. The Diary of the Legionary Rebellion and its Crimes) in 1944.

Apart from professional journalism in terms of editorial, typographic or administrative jobs, writing for different publications appeared as a means of supporting the early beginnings, helping and supplementing the efforts of building an intellectual career and finally became also a tribune of delivering artistic and political discourse. In terms of publications, there were several directions among the variety of journals for which intellectuals wrote; first there were the major cultural publications such as *Sburătorul*, *Viața românească*, *Contimporanul*, *România literară* (Literary Romania), etc.; then there were the Jewish publications in Romanian as *Adam*, Zionist newspaper *Mântuirea*, *Lumea evree*. The independent reviews of the modernist and avant-gardist groups channeling and expressing the innovative perspectives *unu*, *75 H. P.*, *Contimporanul*, *Punct* (The Point), etc consisted a third direction; finally, the press of leftist orientation represented the fourth

group. After their debut in print, be it in a traditional reputed or a minor local review, the intellectuals had often a double or triple journalistic activity, writing at the same time for more categories of publications. While defining their artistic views and innovative perspectives on literature in their own founded publications or in mainstream cultural press, they often contributed to the Jewish Romanian press as well. Sometimes even a third direction could be located; expression of the process of synchronization with the intellectual life and debates from abroad, the avant-gardist poets published, from home or after their migration to France, in French literary publications and integrated their discourses to the international scene as a confirmation of their cosmopolitan opening.

Founded by A. L. Zissu, political Zionist newspaper *Mântuirea* brought together in the 1920s a great number of intellectuals among whom Ion Călugaru, Brunea-Fox, Felix Aderca, Beniamin Fundoianu or I. Ludo who worked as contributors. The agenda of cultural review *Adam* focused from the very beginning on bringing together Romanian-language Jewish intellectuals and it became the place where most of the intellectuals of the time published, despite political or cultural orientation, among whom Ion Călugaru, Brunea-Fox, Felix Aderca, Ury Benador, Beniamin Fundoianu, Sașa Pană, Ilarie Voronca, Mihail Sebastian, A. L. Zissu, Emil Dorian or Max Blecher. Zionist press represented by *Lumea evree* and *Știri din lumea evreească* received contributions from Ion Călugaru, Felix Aderca, Ury Benador, Beniamin Fundoianu and A. L. Zissu, respectively Felix Aderca or Mihail Sebastian. For the writers whose native tongue was Yiddish or who were able to use Hebrew, certain number of publications hosted their creations; it is not surprising to discover the signatures of Felix Aderca, Beniamin Fundoianu, A. L. Zissu in Zionist review *Hatikvah* (Galați) or Ury Benador's in *Der Hamer*, A. L. Zissu's in Yiddish publication

Licht (Iași) and also in Hebrew review *Hamekitz*. Abroad, Ilarie Voronca and Beniamin Fundoianu published also in *Cahiers juifs*.

Avant-gardist press gathered also a great part of the intellectuals, who found in these publications a place for expressing and publicizing their artistic creed. *Contimporanul* published works of Ion Călugaru, Beniamin Fundoianu, Mihail Sebastian, Benador, Felix Aderca, Sașa Pană, Ilarie Voronca, Tristan Tzara (with poems in French after his departure) and Brunea-Fox; *unu* collected the most vibrant names in the avant-garde as Brunea-Fox, Ion Călugaru, Ilarie Voronca and Tristan Tzara (French). Initiated by these intellectuals as freelancing projects with few financial resources and often supported through their own salaries, as it was the case of *unu* surviving through the efforts of irrepressible Sașa Pană, the listed publications were the natural expression of their rebellious identity in cultural-artistic, but also existential terms.

Reputed mainstream cultural publications such as *Sburătorul* included often the contributions of young writers, while the literary circle around the publication directed by Eugen Lovinescu counted among its members future well-known intellectuals such as Beniamin Fundoianu, Felix Aderca, Emil Dorian, Ilarie Voronca or Camil Baltazar. *Rampa* was a reputed cultural journal where Beniamin Fundoianu, Ury Benador, Sașa Pană, I. Peltz, Mihail Sebastian, Ilarie Voronca, Camil Baltazar or I. Răcăciuni published. Brunea-Fox, Ury Benador, Ion Călugaru, I. Peltz and Mihail Sebastian worked for *Reporter*. Reputed *Revista Fundațiilor Regale* published Felix Aderca, Ury Benador, Sașa Pană, I. Peltz, Mihail Sebastian and I. Răcăciuni. A remarkable presence in Romanian cultural press during the interwar period, the Jewish Romanian intellectuals and journalists proved through their activity an extraordinary integration into Romanian cultural life; even if due to political and legal limitations and social anti-Semitism, certain positions were still

inaccessible to these young and talented writers, the competitive open market of cultural journalism had to open its gates in front of the new innovative voices.

Publishing in reviews abroad meant, for the intellectuals living in Romania, but also for those who migrated to France, a confirmation of their intellectual integration in the international debate. Beniamin Fundoianu, living in France from 1923 on, was one of the most prolific and renowned names; he published in *Cahiers du Sud*, *Revue Philosophique*, *Les Nouvelles Littéraires* (reviews in Belgium, Argentina, Switzerland), *Le Journal des Poètes* (Belgium), *Bifur*, *Les Volontaires* (France), etc. He also collaborated to a few of the illegal reviews of the French Résistance. In France, Ilarie Voronca collaborated among other publications to *Les Nouvelles Littéraires*, *Cahiers du Sud* (Marseille), *Méridien*, *Europe*, *Commune*, *Le Pont de l'Épée*, *Entretiens*, etc. From Romania, Max Blecher published in *Les Feuilles inutiles* and *Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution*.

The collaboration to leftist press, indicator of the political sympathies of the intellectuals, included many Socialist journals, mostly short-lived. *Clopotul* (The Bell) published articles of Beniamin Fundoianu, Sașa Pană and Ion Călugaru; Ion Călugaru published also in *Era Nouă* (New Era) and to *Șantier* (Construction Site), Emil Dorian and I. Peltz contributed. For *Flacăra* (The Flame) many intellectuals, among whom Felix Aderca, Brunea-Fox, Beniamin Fundoianu, Sașa Pană, Ilarie Voronca, Ion Călugaru contributed, if only to name the most visible. A puzzling situation of open borders and confusing limitations could be noticed in terms of collaboration; the paradox of the activity of these writers consists in the fact that collaborating to Zionist press did not exclude writing for Socialist journals and being at the same time involved in Romanian avant-gardist press and mainstream publications. Avant-gardist press often supported leftist ideology which continued fluidly with the international collaborations of many

intellectuals. This lack of limitations proved the primacy of art and the fluidity of the political options integrated in the intellectual discourse; freedom of ideas was the most important context for their discourse.

The orientations of the publications to which the intellectuals collaborated suggested a large variety of options; the great number of mainstream literary journals, to which practically all the intellectuals collaborated, shows the fact that cultural life was open to include the new intellectual voices. Also the Jewish publications, especially the literary ones, showed the same opening; *Adam* and *Puntea de fildeș* built their agenda on this idea of bridging cultures and thus brought together many Romanian and Jewish writers. The foreign publications to which the intellectuals collaborated when abroad or even from Romania proved the capacity of integrating on the international level the writers into artistic debates. Finally, leftist publications represented a natural orientation among the political alternatives offered by press, as well as a possible political option for acculturated Jewish intellectuals. To conclude, the variety of artistic and political options present in the vast journalistic activity of the intellectuals demonstrated the capacity to adapt and integrate in the intellectual context both within Romanian and international scene, the capacity to assimilate and synchronize with the latest debates and the profound degree of acculturation necessary to integrate within the national literary tradition.

J. Political Orientations. Before 1919, when Emancipation law was issued, one of the very few possibilities of obtaining Romanian citizenship for the Jewish population was the volunteer enrollment into the army and the participation in a conflict. In some cases, people were simply called to the army, despite the fact they did not even have Romanian citizenship to impose their participation. Emil Dorian was mobilized on the front as a

military doctor in Moldavia in 1916 and 1918; the war experience was later described in his volume *De vorbă cu bălanul meu*⁹ (Conversations with my white horse). In some other cases, the war experience had an even greater impact due to personal losses involved which cast the whole citizenship–national attachment issue into a new existential perspective. The suicide of poet Avram Steuerman–Rodion, Benjamin Fundoianu’s uncle and mentor, after returning from the WWI, greatly influenced the young poet. Although experiencing the Great War in person, being called to the army in 1914 and eventually rewarded with distinction *Bărbăție și credință*, Felix Aderca was traumatized while witnessing the death of his cousin, a fact which determined him write novel *1916* which discussed the war problem. Drafted officially and forced to join the combat despite their status of “foreign subjects” without Romanian citizenship or leaving voluntarily especially to solve individually the citizenship issue, the war experience was traumatic and it stressed the will and determination of the individuals to regulate their legal situation in the country, with all the tragic costs involved. After their return, the traumatic experience permeated their work without being compensated by the reward of citizenship, granted a few years later by the Emancipation law. Despite the official granting of Romanian citizenship after the end of the war, the individuals came to realize soon that integration and full acceptance were still unattainable because the social and cultural level could not be reformed together with the legal sector regulated by Emancipation law. Thus Emil Dorian as a former combatant and Benjamin Fundoianu, living the experience through the tragedy of his uncle, reshaped their Jewish identity in their works by enforcing its representation. Instead of supposedly consolidating the national feelings, the war with its political consequences simply generated the context for freer identity self-representation and stressed differences.

In his study on political directions within Jewish life in interwar Romania, Leon Volovici stressed that the main options shaped by the political context and by the persistence of anti-Semitism were represented by the UER's ideology with Wilhelm Filderman's discourse and by the Zionist doctrine represented by the powerful figure of A. L. Zissu. The "Socialist-Marxist" option represented rather an individual intellectual option which was largely "unacceptable for the Jews of Regat" preferring the bourgeois integrationist UER; the leftist intellectuals were rather "those avoiding the Jewish community life and believing that socialism and the victory of the internationalist approach would totally eliminate the relevance of the 'Jewish problem'"¹⁰. Nevertheless, within the Romanian-language Jewish intellectual group active during the interwar years in the Romanian cultural life, Zionism, Socialism-Marxism and the integrationist UER were differently prioritized. The Zionist and leftist directions became more prominent in the intellectual milieu of Romanian language, if analyzing the discourse and journalistic affiliations of the writers, while the integrationist approach, represented to a certain extent by writers such as Felix Aderca, was drastically sanctioned by the rest of the intellectuals (polemics with I. Ludo). The cultural Romanian identity and the patriotic gestures symbolized by Aderca's largely successful novel *1916* were well received only by the Romanian milieu, as coinciding with their assimilationist solution to the "Jewish problem", while the Jewish intellectuals perceived it as an outdated expression of the previous pro-Emancipation cultural paradigm of the Jewish intellectuals striving to obtain civic rights and equality. In the context of persistent social anti-Semitism, recurrently supported by discriminative measures through official politics such as the 1924 Mârzescu Law or by the 1934 Romanization of the Personnel Law, the only option for the cultural integrationist trend was Marxism in political terms, as well as the avant-gardism in cultural terms. Both

directions had the advantage of excluding the specificity of ethnicity and group identity in order to favor internationalism and class struggle against bourgeoisie. In this context, the political orientations within the Romanian-language Jewish intellectual group consisted in a polarization between Zionists on one hand and leftism represented mainly by underground Communism and official democratic Socialist discourse on the other hand.

Another characteristic of the political views shared by the intellectuals was the ambiguity of options caused by the fact that the limits were not clearly set and the conflicts were not radical. Some intellectuals were consequently or even simultaneously involved in both directions. Ury Benador moved from Zionism to the left; member in a Zionist organization in Brăila before WWI as an emerging local leader, he used to organize cultural and social events for the Jewish youth. Still, in 1939 he participated in the Intellectuals' Congress for Peace in Paris as a delegate of the Communist Party, by that time still in illegality. Also, many intellectuals used to publish simultaneously in ideologically opposed publications, basically supporting from different political perspectives the situation of the Jewish community. In this direction, they followed the tradition of the great Jewish gazettes from the turn of the century supporting the community cause by adopting all the ideologies in order to gather around a larger audience and thus to have a stronger impact. This paradoxical situation was not specific only to the intellectual life; such alliances between ideologically opposed groups were sometimes performed for the sake of the political agenda. Thus, Filderman himself, the leader of the UER, supported the Zionist direction due to the common cause of the community's cultural autonomy advocated by both groups.

Zionism, despite its smaller appeal to the former Regat, if compared with its popularity in the new territories of Bessarabia and Transylvania, had a significant effect especially among Romanian-language Jewish intellectuals. This fact was caused by the

strong influence of A. L. Zissu, journalist and writer himself, as well as the most prominent theoretician of his time, gathering around his projects the most talented intellectuals. The most representative intellectual voice of the Jewish nationalism in Romania, founder of the national Jewish daily *Mântuirea*, Zissu was also the leader of the Zionist movement. Indeed,

...several of his contemporaries – in particular, Romanian Jewish writers such as I. Ludo, Felix Aderca, I. Călugaru, B. Fundoianu – admitted that Zissu had played a decisive role in shaping their Jewish identity and their relationship with Judaism, regardless of their eventual direction and the prolonged dispute among them.¹¹

Mântuirea was the place which gathered, unfortunately only for three years, a group of young and talented intellectuals who would become important names for the Romanian cultural life as well as for the Jewish Romanian intellectual milieu, among whom Ion Călugaru, Brunea-Fox, Felix Aderca, Beniamin Fundoianu or I. Ludo. Collaborating later with other pro-Zionist publications, Fundoianu's preoccupation for Jewish history, cause and destiny became a life-long interest, obvious in his articles and interviews in Zionist press. Another collaborator of Zissu at *Mântuirea* and an important Zionist intellectual, I. Ludo was the editor of several Zionist and cultural Jewish publications; he also became a promoter of Romanian-language Jewish literature during 1930s as founder of the review *Adam* with a very long and powerful standing in interwar Romanian press directed against anti-Semitism and assimilationist tendencies. Mihail Sebastian published articles in Zionist press such as *Știri din lumea evreească*.

The leftist sympathizers and members of Socialist and illegal Communist groups were also active in press and their ideological options were rather obvious. From the

age of 18, Ion Călugaru was a sympathizer of the Communist movement and attended the meetings at the Socialist club on Ionică Street. After the polarization and rise of the right during 1930s, he joined the Socialist movement and the Communists in illegality and collaborated to leftist publications *Cuvântul liber* (Free word), *Reporter*, *Era nouă* (New age), *Clopotul* (The bell). During the WWII he also wrote for the illegal press. Because little has been researched on the early period of leftist movements in Romania, little is known about the political involvement of the avant-gardists and other writers promoting a rebellious artistic discourse or claiming publicly apolitical positions. A recent volume, *Avangarda românească în arhivele Siguranței*¹² (Romanian avant-garde in the archives of the Secret Police), collecting a series of documents now declassified of the Siguranța police surveying the young Romanian avant-garde writers suspected of propaganda and contacts with Moscow and Paris Bolshevik movements, suggested a strong leftist attachment of the interwar Jewish intellectuals. Stelian Tănase, the author of the selection of texts and of the introduction, considered that the avant-gardist writers around *unu* and *Alge* (Algae) reviews were under a strong Bolshevik influence. Among the listed names, Sașa Pană, Victor Brauner, Ion Călugaru, M. H. Maxy, Tristan Tzara, Ilarie Voronca or Gherasim Luca were suspected by the secret police and their activity was monitored in connection with Communist international groups. Their manifestations within the country were surveyed as well, a fact testified by the existence of secret files created in the Siguranța archive. Basically,

...the relationship between Romanian surrealists and Communism was sometimes direct, through the membership in the Communist Party of Romania (...), sometimes indirect, through the influence of the Breton-Aragon group and through their position on revolution and its attachment to Bolshevism.¹³

The secret character of their affiliation, or at least the camouflage of their ideological and political orientation under rebellious artistic attitude and anarchist gestures, was justified by the fact that Bolshevism had a very negative reputation due to the possible threats addressed to a conservative society based on private property and a large land-owning system. During WWI, when together with the wave of migration and under the Bessarabian influence anarchist ideas started to be intensely disseminated in Regat, the Romanian state took special economic and social measures to prevent the possible influence of the revolutionary trend. In this tense context, the Communist Party of Romania was banned from 1924 on. Thus, most of the writers limited themselves to artistic manifestations of their political doctrine in poetry and in cultural press, while concealing their political enrollment and sympathy from the public eye, being nevertheless under the surveillance of the state's authority.

K. Intellectual Horizons: France and International Networks. It would be difficult to overstate the influence of the French culture on Romanian literary and intellectual development. This situation was the natural consequence of a long educational tradition following the French model and cultural influence exerted upon the Romanian literature and intellectual life. For more than a century (by the time the interwar intellectuals started to publish) Romanian elite had been going to Paris for higher education, to learn about cultural innovations, to enjoy Western civilization, importing many of the developments and adapting them to the Romanian context, to find refuge from an uncomfortable social, cultural or political context or simply to entertain and socialize. Aside from the complexity of reasons generating this strong impact, the situation was circumscribed regionally (former Regat was more subjected to the French influence rather

than the Transylvanian region gravitating around German, Austrian and Hungarian centers). In Moldavia and Wallachia, French became naturally more than a second language for the elite from the early years of modernization, even reaching the point of preceding and replacing mother tongue and thus increasing the familiarity with the French socio-cultural scene. The geo-cultural complex of “minor cultures” combined with the ethnic tensions and anti-Semitic attitudes within Romanian society led many Jewish intellectuals to the idea of departing for the West, especially France. In this context, Paris was perceived as a space of public acknowledgement and intellectual freedom.

This situation was especially applicable to the group of intellectuals analyzed in my dissertation, already expressing their attachment to French milieu through a series of cultural contacts and collaborations. Some of them went to study abroad, especially France, at least for graduate and postgraduate degree, but some of them went for undergraduate studies too. Even after returning to Romania, they maintained social and professional connections with intellectuals there, kept updated with the latest novelties and changes on the cultural scene, traveled often to visit and maintained a vast correspondence. Therefore, inclusion in cultural projects and movements, participation and contribution to activities, initiation of events and publication of their works abroad came as a natural continuation. Even more, for those deciding to move to France or for those commuting often enough to transform France into a second home, Paris and French cultural scene became a favorable place for cultural expression.

As an example for the international contacts of the Romanian intellectuals, the avant-garde group manifested a remarkable opening and profound integration within the international cultural life described in their correspondence with the most reputed names of the moment. Saşa Pană, the editor of *unu*, traveled to France often and maintained close

contact with his friends Tzara and Fundoianu, having the initiative of publishing a collection of Tzara's early Romanian poems and asking for Fundoianu's frequent collaboration. In turn, Tzara kept Pana updated by sending him in Romania the latest French publications. Through Sașa Pană's efforts, his publication *unu*, as well as the group around it, were in contact with other avant-gardist groups abroad as well as publications; on behalf of his group, he exchanged letters, books (with Breton, Tzara, Eluard) and publications (*Le Journal des Poètes*, *Le Rouge et le Noir* from Belgium), received collaborations from French writers reciprocating with similar contributions from *unu* for similar avant-gardist groups abroad. Internationally integrated from home, Sașa Pană became a renowned historian of Romanian avant-garde and *unu* group, often invited to contribute to literary reviews and projects abroad.

Quite a few intellectuals settled in France to start a career in the literary field and actively participated in the cultural life. Ilarie Voronca settled in France in 1933, after seven years of commuting between Romania and France, without interrupting his collaboration with Romanian literary press. Beniamin Fundoianu left Romania for France after studying and acquiring a sound journalistic and literary reputation in Romania; his last publication in Romania, *Imagini și cărți din Franța* (Images and books from France), published shortly before his departure, generated heated debates within the Romanian establishment as harshly criticizing the national cultural scene and characterizing it as a French colony. At that time, anti-Semitic student manifestations agitated Romanian society and undermined the chances of integration of the young Jewish intellectuals growing up and being educated in the post-Emancipation period. Culturally, the young intellectuals rebelled against the old ossified traditional Romanian society and canon; they criticized harshly the Romanian cultural establishment as a "minor culture" due to the lack of language circulation and

translations, reducing it to the position of a “French colony” lacking originality and innovation. After demolishing the criticized foundations, the young intellectuals chose France as a way of securing for themselves a potential future public acknowledgement, the access to a larger audience and a wider capacity of interaction.

Little by little, the group of Romanian intellectuals settled in Paris between the two world wars increased; a significant number of writers joined temporarily the group as they were commuting or simply traveling to Paris frequently, mostly belonging to the avant-garde movement who seemed to have found a space of intellectual development and an area free of identity dilemmas and political and cultural pressure. The group had close connections with the Romanian intellectual life home, but it was at the same time struggling to integrate into the French scene. Coming from a cultural space where they were more or less familiar with each other, networks were quickly initiated. News and articles about French cultural life were sent back to Romania (Saşa Pană wrote about the intense correspondence and materials exchanged), while attempts to publicize Romanian writers on the French scene occurred (in 1928 Fundoianu translated, prefaced and published A. L. Zissu’s work *Confesiunea unui candelabru*). Personal connections increased the contacts; Claude Sernet was the brother-in-law of Ilarie Voronca, while Saşa Pană was the Romanian editor of *Tzara* and collaborated with Voronca and Sernet. Benjamin Fundoianu’s case is suggestive in terms of integration into the French cultural scene, but also maintaining contacts with the home environment. Moving to Paris in 1923, he got acquainted and became a close friend of Leon Chestov and Jules de Gaultier, both influencing his creation and thought towards philosophy, and worked as secretary and librarian for the successful writer Rémy de Gourmont. Nevertheless, Fundoianu’s closest group of friends consisted of the Romanian intellectuals living in France with whom he had permanent contacts,

recreating a small Romanian intellectual group in Paris; first there was his sister Lina and her husband Armand Pascal with whom he organized theatre company Insula (Island) right before his departure for France, then Ilarie Voronca, Claude Sernet, philosopher Stéphane Lupasco, sculptor Constantin Brâncuși and artist Victor Brauner. Changing the Romanian language for French even before his departure, Fundoianu published many volumes in France, but he also maintained close contacts with his friends from Romania; they helped him publish volume *Privești* (1930) with his most representative poems in Romanian while he was already in France.

The last part of this chapter plans to demonstrate that the modernist and avant-gardist groups and their connection with the French literary scene supported the tendency of breaking with identity debates in Romanian culture. For a while, until politics invaded French intellectual life as well, intellectuals found there a literary and cultural space freed from ethnic debates, the possibility to break free from oppressing traditionalism and the chance of escaping a small peripheral culture for wider acknowledgement in an international milieu. Through contacts, common projects and publications, intellectuals became part of the international life and could escape the identity dilemma, while concentrating on their artistic discourse. Due to their familiarity with the language, culture, and social environment and sometimes with a solid education abroad, thus also having connections to different groups, some intellectuals decided to return to France and start a literary career there or at least to travel frequently and maintain close contacts through correspondence and information exchanges. The motivation for such an option was complex, ranging from the inferiority complex of being born in a “minor culture” to the desire to assert their work widely and to be publicly acknowledged. Apart from these, they were also looking for a space free of identity debates on ethnicity and religion while

avoiding the local modernism vs. traditionalism dilemma. Therefore, they become interested in cosmopolitanism and choose art and culture as identity. Despite their cosmopolitan direction, they also managed to be part of both Romanian and international European debates, to be integrated and to bridge cultures, placing for the first time the Romanian intellectual scene on the European cultural map.

Conclusion. The analysis of the complex profile of the Romanian-language Jewish intellectuals emerging during interwar culture highlighted the specificity of certain social and cultural mechanisms able to explain the identity options analyzed earlier, as well as the cultural discourse developed in their works. The strong Western European, mainly French, influence and education abroad determined by legal restrictions or by family ambitions favored the attraction of the young intellectuals for the avant-garde and for the international debates. The intense process of acculturation and education in the Romanian language and culture supported the strong integrative direction within their later discourse, despite the socio-political context discouraging it. The focus on careers in the liberal professions, with the evident purpose of acquiring a higher social status while continuing a long-term process of turning the Jewish Romanian elite into a bourgeois group, secured the continuity with the social project of the previous generation. Nevertheless, the central position of journalism as a largely practiced occupation offered the perfect professional solution and artistic outlet, securing a working space as well as a communication area. In this context, the image of a dynamic, highly modernized group emerged; preserving Jewish identity to a great extent despite advanced cultural integration, the young intellectuals promoted a clear integrative project within the Romanian as well as international milieu.

Notes:

¹ Robert Wohl, *The Generation of 1914* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1979).

² *Arenda* was a system of lease of land, estates and property, sometimes involving collecting taxes and dues. *Arendaş/arendar* was the person contracting this obligation and administering the land or property.

³ Alexandru Mirodan, *Dicţionarul neconvenţional al scriitorilor evrei de limbă română*, vol. 1 (Tel Aviv: Editura Minim, 1986).

⁴ Saşa Pană, *Născut în '02: memorii, file de jurnal, evocări* (Bucureşti: Minerva, 1973).

⁵ I. Răcăciuni, *Amintiri* (Bucureşti: Editura pentru Literatură, 1967), 81 and 144-145.

⁶ Pană, 29.

⁷ For review *Mojicul*, in 1915 according to Remus Zăstroiu, “Les cahiers d’un “Inactuel”: B. Fundoianu journaliste” in *Cahiers Benjamin Fondane*, No. 6 / 2003, 4.

⁸ Cited in Leon Volovici, “Fundoianu/Fondane - Metamorfozele identităţii” in Geo Şerban ed., *Caietele culturale Realitatea evreiască – B. Fundoianu - Strigăt întru eternitate* (Bucureşti: 1998), 85.

⁹ Emil Dorian, *De vorba cu balanul meu* (Bucureşti: Cultura Naţională, 1925).

¹⁰ Leon Volovici, “The Response of Jewish Leaders and Intellectuals to Anti-Semitism” in Liviu Rotman and Raphael Vago eds., *The History of the Jews in Romania Between the Two World Wars III* (Tel Aviv University: The Goldstein Goren Diaspora Research Center, 2005), 147.

¹¹ Ibid., 156.

¹² Stelian Tănase, *Avangarda românească în arhivele Siguranţei* (Iaşi: Polirom, 2008).

¹³ Ibid., 7-8.

Chapter 3.

From Social Revolt to Modernity as an Option

The early 1930s witnessed literary debates on the lack of Jewish literature and on the inability of Jewish writers to articulate a minority identity among Romanian intellectuals. I. Ludo analyzed the general situation in his article “Scriitori evrei și de origină evreiască” (Jewish writers and of Jewish origin):

...literature is necessary to appear not from posing, but from the internal, almost organic community of the writer with his genuine idea, which moved him – but above everything to place in your literary creation all the artistic conviction that you are able to feel. This is exactly what the writer of Jewish origin refuses (...) And here the tragi-comedy of the Jewish intellectual starts – and this is an explanation for the fact that we rather have journalists than Jewish writers and writers of Jewish origin. The Jewish topic – they refuse (it) out of despise and ignorance; the Romanian topic refuses itself to him, first because as he is born in the city, he is totally foreign to rural life – while urban anti-Semitism systematically excludes him from the Christian society – which does not want to have anything to do with him and thus he can't actually have knowledge about it. And then, what happens? (...) He does not want to be a Jew, he is not allowed to be anything else, so then he finds a refuge in the modernist trend, a neutral sexless literature, where he is absolved of generating any personal idea, tendency, conviction, social preoccupation – and his only obligation is scribbling and chaos. The writer belonging to the young generation – many times possessing a real talent – is not nationalistic, nor internationalist, but a *je m'en fiche*-ist – a prodigy child, self-sufficient, stentorian, lacking enthusiasm, mysticism, and convictions, spirit of self-preservation, and – what is even worse – curiosity. And his literature is thus what it should fatally be: improvised, empty, false, suspended in vacuum, the classical model of art for art's sake.¹

Due to the high quality of modernist and avant-garde literature, literary history invalidated I. Ludo's criticism. His mocking remarks and exaggerated portrayal of the intellectuals in the avant-garde movements provides the current chapter with the most credible definition of the acculturated, secularized intellectuals. They relegated Jewish identity either to the private realm, to a second-rate discourse directed towards a chosen audience or to the periphery of their work in order to enroll into modernist direction and thus to reject a nationalizing traditionalist canon unable to integrate them.

Nevertheless, one of the most important phenomena of interwar Romanian literature, that is, the emergence of modernism and the avant-garde, turned the period into a "golden age" for the national cultural canon and made it well-known abroad through its spectacular evolution. Among the many "-isms" in world literature at the time, quite a few started in Romania and spread abroad, were initiated abroad by Romanian-born writers or simply counted Romanian artists among their most visible representatives. The famous Dadaism, Lettrism, Constructivism, Expressionism, Surrealism, Futurism introduced Romanian writers and artists to the international public and for the first time Romanian literature became synchronic² with international cultural trends, as well as capable to enter a fruitful dialogue and be integrated into the world's cultural life. Thus, for the first time, Romanian writers became important voices internationally and moved the world's literary debates to Bucharest. This practically brought the Romanian cultural scene into the international attention.

The focus of this chapter falls on the group of Jewish Romanian intellectuals opposing the established traditional cultural canon and social structures. For all of them the interest in modernism and avant-garde coexisted. Therefore, the analysis approaches

together modernism and avant-garde as related cultural movements. Apart from the specific case of the Jewish intellectuals, the association between avant-garde and modernism is grounded on theoretical literary arguments as deeply related and actually ideologically subsumed to one another. Apart from Endre Bojtar, who defined avant-garde as part of modernism as a second more radical wave especially in Central and Eastern European literatures³, also Adrian Marino in his monumental dictionary of literary concepts considered avant-garde as the “extremism of modernity.”⁴ As well, Matei Călinescu in *Five Faces of Modernity*⁵ considered that the avant-garde belonged to the larger paradigm of modernity as its radicalized, more utopian version due to its basic opposition to traditionalism⁶.

While casting a glance upon the corpus of texts generated by these modernist and avant-gardist movements starting with 1910s on, but increasingly during the 1920s and 1930s, one can notice that the number of Romanian-language Jewish intellectuals involved was remarkable; names such as Max Blecher, Tristan Tzara, Beniamin Fundoianu, Ilarie Voronca, Saşa Pană, Claude Sernet (Mihail Cosma), F. Brunea-Fox, became synonymous with modernism and avant-garde itself. This fact did not turn modernism and avant-garde into a “Judaized” area of culture⁷, as some anti-Semitic literary critics of the time perceived it, but it definitely represented an area where the Jewish intellectuals formed the majority and the most representative voices. Ideologically speaking, the avant-garde was deliberately ignoring representations of ethnicity and nationality, but placed the intellectual in a generic “minority culture”, which resonated with the socio-political status of the Jewish intellectuals. This chapter analyzes the manner in which Jewish identity is represented in three case studies of modernist and avant-garde poets, namely Beniamin Fundoianu, Ilarie Voronca, and Max Blecher. The

context I take into account is that of avant-garde's ideological rejection of collectivist affiliations such as ethnicity, nationality and religion as well as its reevaluation of certain modernist movements, such as Symbolism.

A. Representations of Jewish Identity in the Work of Beniamin Fundoianu.

Discussing the representation of Jewish identity in Fundoianu's work, a great difference marked his Romanian and French artistic periods, that is, before and after his migration. Definitely, the two periods marked different biological ages and work stages as the poet left Romania at 25, not yet the mature poet he would later become, but testifying through his creations an ambitious search for an original poetic voice which started reaching the public only in 1930 when his volume *Privești* was published. Also, the Romanian milieu in which he grew up and worked was different from the French one: the status of the Jewish community was still not clear, citizenship and legal rights could be obtained only in 1919 / 1923, the year of his migration. Also, anti-Semitic movements tormented Romanian society and the ethnically centered debates on "Romanian specificity" and literary fashions dominated the cultural life. At the same time, his French period coincided with his maturity, artistic crystallization, and linguistic change; a blockage of four years in Fundoianu's activity accounts for the difficulty of operating a drastic language change at the poetic level. Apart from this, although being Jewish in France meant in late 1920s and 1930s a different thing than in Romania, the experience of migration, removal from family, friendships, and social networks as well as from a certain popularity in Romania disturbed his poetic inner world and made it revolve. The evolution in time of his own manner to approach his Jewish identity, as well as his connection with the Jewish world marked a clear mutation. He departed from an

ethnographic, cultural and religious identification with the Jewish community targeting mainly the Jewish public in Romania through Jewish Romanian publications, and veered towards a universal metaphor of Jewishness as embodying the human condition, dominating his poetic and philosophical work in French. In my interpretation, the experience of migration, of deliberate removal from a familiar environment in order to search for a new space generated an essentialisation and redefinition of his creative and metaphysical self around the centrality and universalism of his Jewish identity perceived as a metaphor for the human condition.

The Romanian Period. Fundoianu's family represented a remarkable example of Jewish intellectual elite, different from the usual case of Romanian Jewish intellectuals coming rather from bourgeois professional families or poor workers' background. The fact that Fundoianu wrote often on Judaism, Jewish community or his own Jewish roots during his years spent in Romania does not come as a surprise. In one of his articles published in *Mântuirea* on Luigi Luzzati, former prime-minister of Italy, and promoting the struggle for civic rights for the Romanian Jewry, Fundoianu wrote as a reaction to the politician's declarations: "yes, if you had lived in Romania, it would have been impossible (...) not to become again Jewish and fully Jewish"⁸. In this context of personally motivated discourse, many of Fundoianu's articles on Jewish topics proved to be generated by an unavoidable political involvement; still, due to the conflictual political atmosphere, these articles were selectively published mainly in Jewish press. Eric Freedman⁹ listed that Fundoianu's contributions on Jewish life appeared in publications as *Egalitatea*, *Hatikvah*, *Hasmonea*, *Adam* and *Mântuirea*. Occasionally, he published articles on Jewish topics in mainstream Romanian cultural publications, but mainly for

signaling literary events. Statistically, most of his “Jewish articles” and also the most relevant in terms of political message appeared in *Mântuirea*, the Zionist publication where Fundoianu worked as an editor¹⁰, hired by Schwarzfeld family’s friend, the journalist and politician A. L. Zissu. In the publication *Lumea evree*, Fundoianu had a permanent column, “Idei și oameni” (Ideas and people), title chosen as homage to his first mentor, Steuerman-Rodion.¹¹ In his articles published in Jewish press, he discussed political issues relevant for his period, as well as cultural and social events significant for the Romanian Jewish community. The topics ranged from the creation of a Jewish state, to Zionism and the emancipation of Romanian Jews, as well as interviews and a series of articles on Judaism.

This clear separation of discourses – one dedicated to the general Romanian public and focused on literary, critical and philosophical topics related to Jewish culture, the other for the Jewish audience referring to politics, community life and Jewish culture - was confirmed by his usage of pseudonyms; thus, as Remus Zăstroiu¹² also noticed, the poet used pseudonyms according to the public targeted, as well as to the publication and topic discussed. In Zionist press debating the problem of the Jewish state or translating Yiddish poetry, Fundoianu signed B. Wechsler, F. Benjamin, while in literary journals in Iași and Bucharest, he signed as B. Fundoianu, Wechslerescu and Iașanul, etc. This formal and internal separation was determined by the special situation of the Jewish community in that period, not yet politically emancipated, with a low degree of integration into the Romanian society, thus existing culturally separately, but also by the reactions of the Romanian nationalistic environment. The separation of Jewish culture and topics from the larger Romanian intellectual life determined the author to activate different sides of his intellectual personality according to the audience and their agenda.

Another source of Jewish identity representation in the work of Fundoianu while still in Romania was represented by the poetry inspired by Moldavian Jewish life after his childhood spent there. The only volume of poetry that Fundoianu published in Romanian, *Priveleşti*, appeared in 1930, years after his departure for France. The book profited from a mature selection in which literary attempts and failures were eliminated, while thematically it selected idyllic descriptions of Northern Moldavian rural life with its patriarchal atmosphere, including many poems inspired by Jewish life in the region. His attachment to the place of origin where he spent his childhood was remarkably transgressing the poetic substance in “Herța” cycle.

Geographically, the poetic rural descriptions had clear localization in the Moldavian region. His pseudonym was a tribute to the place of idyllic childhood depiction, while a cycle of poems was dedicated to Herța, the other favorite place, evoking the life and the nature there. The described locality, a *tîrg*, possibly a *shtetl*, echoed opposite reactions when evoked by the poet; a paradise of peace and rustic tranquility (“In *tîrg* it smells like rain, like fall and hay”¹³), the place was also hated for its backwardness, poverty, low-level infrastructure

Wretched *tîrg*, with lanes and streets
 Destroyed by rain, by cattle and by carts –
 Here, in the middle of the field, the sun was raising
 Here oats was growing.¹⁴

The presence of the Jewish community was a natural part of Fundoianu’s poetic description in his *Priveleşti* volume. The Jewish community was demographically large in Northern Moldavia and organized in *shtetls* or small *tîrgs*, basically semi-rural settlements of compact communities preserving traditional cultural, religious and

linguistic characteristic of the Ashkenazi group specific to Eastern European Jewry. Therefore, evoking the area of Herța and Fundoaia, the Jewish presence confounded with the picture captured in his poems. As he was born in the Moldavian Jewish community of Iași and grew up in the observant family of his grandfather, the *arendar* of Fundoaia, the emotional background attached to the evocation of the Jewish life in Moldavia was the result of the inner reconstruction of his own memories and nostalgic projections of his early years. Thus, the portrayal of the Jewish community in his poetry turned to be at the same time ethnographic and naturally integrated into a rural, bucolic, almost pantheistic depiction of space. It was also an emotional description of the atmosphere and Jewish life experienced by the young boy participating into religious festivals and into the performance of traditional customs of the everyday life.

Performing a transition from the still nature of the described area, the poet introduced the presence of the Jewish community through linguistic characteristic: “At home simple people speaking Yiddish.”¹⁵ He perceived language as the first element to individualize the group from the diffuse community of peasants assimilated to the picture. The importance of language was stressed in a different poem, where Fundoianu showed his own attachment to the written Hebrew present on tombstones in the cemetery:

And I would love a tombstone with Hebrew writing.
The autumn, in the urban cemetery from the barriers,
Sets the beehives sadness into the stones.¹⁶

Yiddish and Hebrew as cultural markers highly identified the community and represented an emotional bond for the poet. Although familiar with both, he decided from the very beginning to communicate his poetic message in Romanian. This parallel set of

languages coexisted on the emotional level, one enforced by official education and family, the other present through traditions and religious performance in his childhood. This determined a certain ease in reshaping Fundoianu poetic persona, ability to transfer his message and sensitivity into different idioms, as well as his later adaptation to French.

Everyday life practices represented by commercial activities of Jewish traders selling their merchandise were also described in his poetry through the issue of language and communication. Due to the compact separate communities in the region and lack of acculturation, Fundoianu noticed the absence of linguistic communication:

Jews selling on counters by sign language
Wishes and travel tools¹⁷.

Through linguistic and professional characteristics of the Jewish community, this representation of the village as a “small Jewish *tîrg*” (as in “The small *tîrg* is humid, rainy and Jewish”¹⁸) placed the presence of the community for good in the agricultural, peasant-like landscape series.

Apart from the very precise geographic reconstruction by means of references to Herța and Fundoaia, the poet also dated his poems through certain historical events and processes. In the first two decades of the 20th century, the massive migration to America, usually by ship, in search for a better future, as well as economic and social safety, was a usual practice in Eastern Europe, including Romania; this period coincided in fact with the years when Fundoianu spent his childhood in the village and his time in the community:

You wait every evening the same carriage
 From which the same returning Jews descend.
 In houses, they know ships leaving for New York
 And reefs where the ocean downloaded dead bones.¹⁹

The same migration story to America by ship, often present in his later French works as the saga of the emigrant, appeared in another poem left in manuscript, “Te văd din nou uitată într-un părete-n ramă” (I see you forgotten in a wall frame). The episode of reconstructing the destiny of a loved one leaving family and birthplace for New York and the difficulties of integration followed by her death completed the references from “Herța” poem with an emotional confessional tone.

Essential part of everyday life, religious festivals and practices were present in Fundoianu’s memory and poetic recollections of his childhood. As a young boy in his grandparents’ house, he was highly impressed with his grandfather uttering prayers and performing rituals during Jewish festivals. He consequently captured them in his poetry. In Fundoianu’s emotional representation of a child exposed to religious performance, the event took the appearance of a world catastrophe; at the same time, as he is integrated into the recreation of the episode as a spectator, the poet identifies with the mature audience who is aware of the theatrical side of the ritual. Finally, the blending of the religious event with the natural phenomena exacerbated the impact on participants and the integration of the mystical feeling into the wider universe included the community with its traditions and culture into the local environment in a natural manner:

In the evening, a black murmur emerged from synagogues:
 They were asking of course – otherwise you would have wanted to pray –
 To be protected by God, as it happened with their ancestors,
 From the panic brought from the red fields.
 Suddenly, beacons were lit behind windows;

A quiet shadow entered small shops
 Through the closed doors and sat at the table. (...)

Grandfather was praying between lit candlesticks:
 "May my right hand be forgotten, let my tongue be silent
 If I ever forget you, Jerusalem!"

The ceiling full of gypsum angels rose to the sky;
 What a fire in the candlesticks of the iron shutters!
 A snow blow apparently cleared out, it seems
 And the house, staggering in the night, like a boat,
 Took off from the *tîrg*'s street and started floating. (...)

And grandfather was talking with I-don't-know-whom. No one
 Was listening his cry from the depth,
 Mixing in his grandson's head
 The pray from the low house with the roar from the field.²⁰

The representations of Jewish life in Fundoianu's poetry appeared in a coherent manner in which the individual was connected with the landscape via a mysticism regarding nature inspired by Judaism. Thus it mobilized both previous interpretations that focused either on Romanian rural poetic influence or on the lack of community with nature. In this respect, Marin Bucur wrote that

B. Fundoianu brought in modern Romanian poetry the previously unknown space of Jewish communities, mix of provincial ghetto and peripheral settlements of a humble modest humanity, which attached itself to the pure landscape (...). It was the evocation of a space integrated to the older territories of Hassidic wisdom, where a world chased by the history of its millennial exile ordered its life as a rural society, adopting the customs of the place, having at hand the field for ploughing, the oxen cart and the meadow for the cattle, but whom, in its own soul preserves the nostalgia of its original place. (...) The song of the land blends with the ancient song of the Exodus.²¹

During his Romanian years, Fundoianu also wrote several poems inspired from Judaism and Biblical sources. His Romanian poetry represented the result of his first years of activity as a young poet. By the age of 25, he willingly finished his literary career in Romanian and had already been living and writing in France. His published volume,

the pieces scattered in the publications of the time, as well as his manuscripts clearly documented the beginnings, evolution and artistic crystallization of a young artist's discourse. Many literary forms, influences, models could already be identified here. Different sources of inspiration or language registers functioned as early lyrical exercises. Within this diverse poetic production, a few poems were inspired from Judaic and Biblical sources, visible through the presence of cultural references or motifs and episodes. From an early stage, Fundoianu's creation demonstrated a clear Judaic influence present in the cycle of poetry "Sonete biblice" (Biblical sonnets) (1916) or in his first poem in prose "Plăzmuiri în noapte" (Night Fantasies), published in the Zionist publication *Hatikvah* or in poem "Metempsihoză" (Metempsychosis) centered on the spiritual identification with the history of Jewish people.

As a characteristic of his poetic form and structure, Fundoianu used the term of "psalm" for a whole category of poems inspired from religious events and personalities' profiles; the psalm, a poetic structure and model expressing a natural connection between, on the one hand, the individual voicing, via a prayer or a monologue, his discourse, and the divinity to which it was addressed, on the other, appeared as a form in the Christian and Jewish Bible. Thus, "Psalmul leprosului" (The Psalm of the Leper), "Psalmul lui Adam" (The Psalm of Adam), "Psalmul lui Abel" (The Psalm of Abel), "Psalmul Sulamitei" (The Psalm of Sulamith), "Psalmul inedit al lui David" (The Unknown Psalm of David) were basically monologues in which the characters meditated on their own existence and situation while attempting to communicate with God through a prayer. According to Marin Bucur, the psalms of Fundoianu are the songs of praise of a man who is not a humble subject; Fundoianu's God lives by his side, with the cattle and trees, as a peasant caring for his creatures in a pantheistic harmony.

Fundoianu's Romanian creations represented Jewish life and culture in a rather compartmentalized way. His "Jewish articles" were published mostly in Jewish press; his psalms²² and poems inspired by the Hebrew Bible originally appeared in Jewish publications and were not included in the volume published in 1930, while the messianic lyric influences, the process of de-mystifying nature or the pantheistic tone in *Privești* volume, although testifying for a strong Hassidic tradition, were dissolved into the substance of the poems and associated with expressionism and symbolism. Recollections about Jewish life in Moldavia benefited from the poet's emotional and personal way of rendering them in the larger context of the ethnographically represented rural milieu. This clear separation between his works inspired by Judaism and Jewish life addressed to the Jewish community appearing in Jewish publications and the works on literary criticism and poetry addressed to a wider public of Romanian language demonstrated a low degree of cultural acceptance and integration of the Jewish community into the wider Romanian environment and thus a fragmented identity. This circumstantial situation selectively activated different facets of the poet's intellectual identity in different cultural and political contexts. Fundoianu basically adjusted his discourse according to the public.

Fundoianu's French Years. His departure for France in 1923 and the continuation of his activity in French, although perceived by critics as a fracture in his trajectory, represented rather a continuation of Fundoianu's poetic searches. At the same time, he abandoned a local set of cultural references in a process of essentialization and universalization of his discourse for the wider world. The experience of migration and self-exile had several consequences: the replacement of Romanian with French as artistic language, the dislocation from the network of friends and the annulment of the position

he already had in front of the Romanian public. In exchange, Fundoianu had to deal with his new condition of emigrant, which operated a great change in terms of identity and perception of his own Jewishness. In France, Benjamin Fundoianu changed his literary name into Benjamin Fondane and turned towards Existentialist philosophy under the influence of Leon Chestov. Studies such as *Rimbaud le Voyou* (1933), *La conscience malheureuse* (1936), *Faux traité d'esthétique* (1938) or *Baudelaire et l'expérience du gouffre* (posthumous, 1947) mixed philosophy and esthetics and confirmed him as one of the first European thinkers of Existentialist philosophy. His philosophical thought was illustrated and supported by his poetic activity in a complex ideological continuity between theoretical writing and lyrical production. His major poems *Ulysses* (1933), *Titanic* (1937) and *Exode. Super Flumina Babylonis* (posthumous, 1965) essentialized Fundoianu's poetic discourse which focused on the poetic and existential self and on the search for answers to his philosophical questions.

As Leon Volovici stated, Fundoianu “places himself, therefore, among those existentialist philosophers who, owing to certain particular features, could be classified under the label of “Jewish” existentialism”²³ and “speaks of an existentialist thought directly related to prophetic thought, a philosophy ‘de la liberté; du possible, de l’absurde’”²⁴. In his profound identity search, his Jewish roots became the center and the substance of his creation; they structured his philosophical writings as elements of Kabala were visible in his study on Rimbaud, while his existentialist discourse itself owed a lot to Judaism:

...on reconnaît ici les fondements mêmes de la tradition juive: la croyance en un Dieu qui renouvelle tous les jours l’acte de la Genèse (...), le refus

d'accepter le mal comme nécessité inscrite dans l'existence, le pouvoir de la prière et du cri, l'espérance messianique.²⁵

The condition of being Jewish transgressed in all his three major poems as a symbol of the human and of the artistic existence through its mobile, restless and permanently searching nature. Migrating from his tragic existentialist philosophy to poetry and from poem to poem, the image of the emigrant, of the exiled became a significant motif and obsession ever-present in Fundoianu's French creation. In different forms, these topics and motifs appear in all his French poems such as the traveler, the doomed poet, Ulysses, all connected to each other through the obsession of voyage, rootlessness, conscience and unfortunate human nature. The issue of the "unhappy condition" of the human being haunted also his philosophical writings. A possible explanation of his focalization on the idea of rootlessness and displacement could be the inherent trauma of migration, of removal from the familiar language, country, social networks where Fundoianu already reached literary celebrity in exchange for a new free space of total foreignness, alienation and difficult beginnings. Another factor determining Fundoianu to face his circumstantial position and translate it into metaphysics was represented by the political radicalization of international and also French political life:

...although he integrated very well in France or maybe, to be more precise, from the moment when his integration stopped being a problem for him, Fundoianu leaves the impression that he assumes in a more and more profound way his Jewish condition. Actually, this internalization does not have to do so much with integration, but with the increasing terror, with the circle getting smaller and smaller around Judaism.²⁶

Starting from Fundoianu's declaration on his poem *Ulysse* considering that "il semble qu'il y ait des poèmes qui ne se déprennent pas du poète, le poursuivent, le harcèlent, l'obligent sans cesse à le reconsidérer, et dessinent finalement une sorte de destin"²⁷, critics noticed that the motif of Ulysses persistently appeared in his poetry. Starting with Fundoianu's Romanian beginnings until his last poems, Ulysses became in time a symbol of his poetic self, his double in poetry, but it was also reshaped as *le Juif errant*, as a Jewish version of the mythological character representing the human destiny and the condition of the poet himself. Thus, the tragic existentialism in Fundoianu's work found a metaphorical and literary representation through this complex structure of images.

Dominated by this obsessive image of the rootless person, Fundoianu actually included the well-known "Chanson de l'Emigrant" in one of his poems. Inspired by a song describing the massive migration of Jews from Eastern Europe towards America and popular a couple of decades earlier, the poem resumed here on a folkloric note the main themes of the endless road, of the never-ending travels. The image of travel, migration and exile confounded itself metaphorically with the Biblical Exodus. Thus Fundoianu's consciousness of being in exile started together with the revelation of the sufferings of the Jewish people.

The poet identifies himself as being Jewish in several ways and this identification turned into a metaphor representing the condition of the artist as well as the one of the human being due to some characteristics on which Fundoianu grounded the image of the Jew in his creation. His self-portrait started unmistakably by declaring "Juif naturellement et cependant Ulysse"²⁸; thus his Jewish identity connected both with the Biblical tradition, religion and metaphysical experience, but also with the recent social history of

the pogroms, massive migration and Jewish life described in his poems. His rootless persona still remembers of the village of his childhood in the manner of Chagall's paintings whose works Fundoianu commented while in France: "ville de petits juifs accrochés à l'air"²⁹.

The strong identification with tradition, past, religion and history continues like in the less engaged and passionate poems from his Romanian period when he sometimes used Judaism as another source for his intellectual exercises of recreating atmosphere, just as the Ancient Greece or the Ottoman Empire. Here, on the contrary, the Jewish history was employed to enforce identity and identification with the universal destiny of the rootless:

...j'étais venu de loin, de plus loin que l'Histoire!
 Le Nil me racontait le soir
 ma romance. J'avais
 fait la Mer Rouge à pied. Avais-je cru,
 avais-je vraiment cru qu'on pouvait t'arrêter
 Histoire, avais-je cru
 que le fusil sans Lui
 allait changer le cours des temps?³⁰

In times of crisis, as the center and the salvation of his being, the poet remembered to pray and to reconnect to Judaism and tradition:

Me voici Aaron.
 Je me mets à genoux et je sanglote et crie
 en une langue que j'ai oubliée, mais dont
 je me souviens aux soirs émus de Ta Colère:
 Adonai, Elochenu, Adonai Echod!³¹

The second path of identification followed the existing Jewish communities. Eastern European Jewry, specifically Northern Moldavian, was described as the original point of departure into the wider world to explore:

...je viens d'une petite ville blanche où pissaient les vaches
 les héliotropes débordaient le soutien-gorge des haies (...)
 ville de petits juifs accrochés à l'air
 les trottoirs étaient des rubans sales
 j'étouffais de bonheur de dégoût
 ça sentait le pain frais et le hareng salé
 l'amour sentait la bouse humide
 j'ai chanté tout cela mais j'ai voulu partir
 je voulais l'univers pathétique³²

The Romanian background was reduced to the function of localizing the birthplace of the poet. As already mentioned, the evocation of the Moldavian *shtetl* came together with an idyllic description of the rural surroundings; populated with peasants, animals and plants, the landscape was described on a pantheistic tone under the influence of Hassidism. Serving as a background, the Romanian localization functioned as a direct suggestion to the Eastern European culture, but also to the typical Romanian rural space; involuntary associations with current events sent the poet back in time to his birthplace:

...pourquoi l'océan me fait-il penser à ces plaines de Besserabie
 on y marchait longtemps et c'était long la vie
 steppe!³³

The poet never went that far to name the country, despite naming places and regions belonging to it; as a perpetual migrant, the poet wondered rhetorically and generically about his nameless country of birth: "Qui se souvient encore de son pays natal?"³⁴. The lack of materialization of his country into his French poetry fitted into the

demonstrative separation of Fundoianu from Romania; he never returned to his country of origin, despite the past abandoned there, as his desire to leave it came as a strong rejection of the original space:

Je n'avais pas revu la terre
 - qui me pressait de voyager?
 Les morts m'appelaient, les vivants,
 je ne pouvais les démeler.
 Il y avait tant de visages
 et les pays dormaient debout –
 encore, encore de la terre,
 je n'en avais jamais assez!³⁵

At this point, the poetic and philosophical equation within Fundoianu's work started to reveal. The poet as a lonely traveler, empathically identified with the groups of Jewish migrants, reached the point of fusing his obsessive voyages and his tragic Jewish condition into the image of "le Juif errant" which finally erases the symbolism of Ulysses. With a long career in world literature and culture, the motif of the wandering Jew was once more employed in Fundoianu's work in connection with his own poetic and largely human self:

Ulysse serait-il une nouvelle métamorphose du Juif errant? Chez Fondane, le juif errant se superpose souvent à l'émigrant, à l'homme sans terre ni langue, traqué, persécuté. La condition de l'émigrant incarne la condition terrestre de l'exilé. Mais ce n'est qu'un aspect du voyageur, car celui-ci se révolte contre un destin imposé, il refuse d'en être passivement le jouet, il réclame un sens et un lieu, se situant dans l'Histoire et contre l'Histoire. (..) Cette revendication d'un sens, d'un sens de l'Histoire, est profondément ancrée dans le judaïsme³⁶

The dramatic image of the Jews traveling on a ship was only one among other representations of the fatal voyage:

...vous rêvez des ponts de troisième où des juifs chassieux
 sanglotent en hébreu, assis sur des caisses d'oignons,
 ils pleurent immobiles, perclus d'étoiles froides,
 et personne ne les attend de l'autre côté de la nuit...³⁷

The poet identified himself with the Jewish group through an empathic attitude and evocation of the dramatic story of the Jewish migrants pushed towards other lands by persecutions, pogroms, and poverty:

...où allez-vous mes frères (...)
 votre sang fouette mon sang, votre paupière me soulève
 vous chevauchez la nuit des temps
 vous êtes ma soif permanente
 je vous ai vus quittant les poches des provinces (...)
 les pogroms de Russie vous avaient chassés hors des villes
 vous n'aviez que votre vie dans les valises
 pauvres juifs qui ramiez sur une mer de sang
 quel or vous attirait dans les pays de tete
 quels crépuscules vouliez-vous semer en terre
 émigrants vous n'aviez pas de racines
 ressemeurs de mots, bijoutiers d'accidents
 vous aviez une source terrible d'énergie
 dans vos mains je lisais une ligne de vie.³⁸

This long description of the Jewish destiny practically transferred the mythical attributes of a perpetual wanderer on the presentation of the real group by creating a constructed assumed past and a previous existence. Empathy and identification with the common history and past made the poet transform the otherwise realistically described group on the ship into a symbolical and collective embodiment of the literary figure of the wandering Jew.

Discussing the Jewish presence in Fundoianu's work, Leon Volovici noticed that

Just as the Jewish world from his native Moldavia became in his youth a source of inspiration for his lyrical *Priveleşti*, in the essays published in the 1930s Fundoianu transcended the Judaic roots, still involving them as a passageway for the process of exploration of the meaning of creation and as a possible answer to his philosophically existentialist questions.³⁹

Indeed, although not very visible during his Romanian period, the Judaic influence on Fundoianu's creation was a strong foundation and it heavily employed his origins, childhood, traditions and culture. Placed in a marginalized position (in terms of appearing only in articles published in the Romanian Jewish press and thus with limited circulation), in the situation of a simple literary source of inspiration among others or functioning as an ineffable, but substantial presence in his poetry of *Priveleşti*, the representations of Fundoianu's Jewish identity contained a significant note of discretion. Fundoianu kept his Jewish sources and works "at home" for the community's audience due to socio-political circumstances. This publicly divided identity (although impossible to function on a more profound level, as the metaphysical substance of his poetry, even the pantheism, perceived as "traditional" and of rural inspiration in *Priveleşti*, contained a strong Hassidic and Judaic Weltanschauung) was activated according to the audience and intellectual milieu adjusting the set of cultural references, the topics and the sources of inspiration. This situation was generated by the low level of social and cultural integration of the Jewish community in Romania at that time, associated with a low level of political and civic acceptance, with anti-Semitic manifestations and lack of civil rights.

Following the representations of his Jewish identity after his migration for France, a process of repositioning and reshaping his Jewishness in the center of his identity basically transformed it into a metaphor for his poetic - largely and universally human - identity. His poems testify for a displacement of his Jewish identity from the marginal

strata of his creation towards the center of his work and artistic self. In a large meditation on the destiny of mankind, Fundoianu basically employed the symbol of *le Juif errant* in its modern version of “Jewish Ulysses” as a cultural metaphor for the common dimension of migration, travel, exile through space, time, and human existence. To support the centrality of this poetic equation of traveler- Jew-poet-Man, the solid Judaic foundations of his philosophy determined a certain continuity between his theoretical and poetic work, allowing researchers to treat his French poetry as a long-term process of rewriting one poem with different circumstantial variations: the poem of *Ulysses*, *Exodus* / Exile, travel / migration under different hypostases. His own experience of migration together with his metaphysically assumed condition of being Jewish determined this profound mutation and concentration on Jewish identity as intellectualism, humanism, philosophical approach to a general reality:

...elements from the Bible and Jewish mystics are fused in a modern poetry intended not as a variation on biblical themes, nor as “Jewish” or “religious” lyrics, but as the lyrical proof of the tragic consciousness of a man, who chose the biblical voice because it was his. Hesitating between metaphysical despair and the longing for universal brotherhood, the poet transformed himself into a suffering and pathetic prophet, searching in the Jewish tradition for the meaning of existence and his own destiny.⁴⁰

Summing up, the greater significance of his work was that it used the Jewish experience as a metaphor to express the human existence in its universal and essential substance. At the same time, it is exactly the experience of exile that offered him the chance to openly reconcile with his Jewishness in his own creations. Expressing a rather dual identity activated in appropriate circumstances, his Jewish and non-Jewish (universal, rather than Romanian or French) identity representations were synthetically

reunited only after his departure, while the double identity survived in Romania rather fragmented, separated, unable to synthesize.

B. Ilarie Voronca and the Interplay of Symbolic Registers. Called by literary critics “the billionaire of images”⁴¹ due to the stylistic specificity of his work, Ilarie Voronca authored many volumes of poetry and prose lavishly describing the Romanian landscape, folk customs, culture, language and memory through frequent cultural references. At the same time, cultural or personal references to the Jewish environment or to Judaism were not openly included into the literary text written before his migration to France in the 1930s. This situation obviously suggested a certain public cultural affiliation and a personal strategy of artistic and intellectual inclusion within the existent Romanian cultural canon, at least in terms of poetic discourse.

The limited representation of the Jewish environment and culture in the work of Voronca was paradoxical in the context of an inflation of blatantly conventional references to Romanian life and culture assuming and employing heavily a nationalizing artistic repertoire including rural lifestyle, peasantry, Orthodox Christianity and folk customs, perceived as defining the nation and the national literary discourse. The initial influence of Symbolism and later of Surrealism, both employing a certain artistic register of symbols inspired by peasant life and primitivism as opposed to the modernity and to the city, could explain the massive appearance of such cultural references in his creation. Secondly, the rigidity of the national literary canon and the nationalizing tendency of its repertoire determined the poet to adapt his discourse and to repress other forms of manifestation in order to integrate into the larger intellectual debates. Finally, his

Romanian cultural background, his life and his formative experiences in the country became an inspiration for his poetry and transgressed into his work together with their context. Basically, searching for a form of adaptation to a conservative cultural environment, Voronca designed a creative inclusive literary discourse by assimilating a formal language register and strategy which emphasized the presence of the Romanian context and played down, as the other modernists and avant-gardists did, the representation of the Jewish background in his work.

Together with his artistic maturation and with his migration to France, the detachment from early influences and the individualization of his poetic discourse reshaped his artistic discourse, while the need for employing culturally local references and the representation of the Romanian background in his creation faded. In the new French intellectual context, liberated from the need to comply with specific constrictive literary norms, Voronca reevaluated the poetic representation of his Jewish identity and transformed it into a profound humanistic and creative philosophy. In his entire work, the poet never defined himself in ethnic-religious terms, preferring artistic coordinates of his identity such as the creator, visionary and poet. Towards the last years of his French activity, the poet started reinventing himself as a wanderer, a lonely stranger, affected by alienation and rootlessness, often associated with the image of Ahasverus, the wandering Jew. Basically, the French environment liberated the poet from the conflicting representations of ethnicity and offered him the opportunity to concentrate in his writing on the human condition and on the condition of the poet. The repressed presence of his Jewish background, reduced from the cultural and religious representation to mere symbolism and self-awareness, eventually resurfaced together with the most important part of Voronca's identity, the one of the Poet.

Reconstructing the Romanian Landscape. During its formative beginnings, Ilarie Voronca's poetry assimilated motives, tropes and elements coming from the poetic language of different Romanian literary trends, mostly visible in his first volume. In this respect, literary critic Ion Pop considered that

...volume *Restriști* (Distress) illustrated still the Symbolist formula (...); there were poems greatly indebted to Bacovia's poetic atmosphere (...), but also traces of *Vecerniile* (Evening Prayers) of Camil Baltazar or Demostene Botez, also related to Bacovia's poetic atmosphere.⁴²

Ilarie Voronca himself admitted later the influence of several Romanian poets, while critics identified in his first volume a certain degree of "subordination to the lyric convention of the moment, with its specific topoi"⁴³. After all, the poet developed inside Romanian language and literature and, being educated in the Romanian culture, he internalized a whole cultural code which emerged in his first works.

Even later, when his poetry abandoned the visible influences and started articulating a personal innovative artistic discourse, these changes altered rather the structural level of his poetry, while the poetic vocabulary preserved much of the initial cultural set of references and the language registers. The preservation of the former language registers intended to secure a cultural and social integration within the literary milieu and audience. Supporting this fact, the French translations of many of his volumes preserved the poetic message, but renounced to a great part of the local cultural references as irrelevant for the new audience. In this way the poetic discourse was liberated from the specificity of a certain segment of Romanian poetic language and succeeded in communicating the same message, which became a universal one.

Frequently, the abstract metaphors and the vague images employed in Voronca's poetry acquired clarity and substance via specific references to geography, recreating the Romanian landscape in the text. Most places included into the poetic discourse, such as cities, villages, rivers or mountains, were valued mainly for their emotional potential due to the localization of the poet's living experience during childhood or adolescence. For example, in volume *Amitié des Choses*, Constanța city was actually referred as "ce port de ma jeunesse" and nostalgia followed through the interrogation "pourquoi ai-je donc quitté ce port, cet âge"⁴⁴. The recreated geography gained emotional quality from the recollection of a past event:

..la mère et sa main comme un regard, thé bu sur le peron a Soveja
La forêt bruit le souvenir le dogcart crépité⁴⁵

Apart from the emotional function of the landscape, the spatial references enhanced the expressivity of the poetic discourse by appealing to the general knowledge of the audience; the process of evoking a renowned quality of a certain object, person, or custom from a definite region appealed to the audience familiarized with it, as a form of poetic and geographically-localized jargon. In this way, Voronca introduced a secondary emotional geography of the inanimate universe of the individual through the mediation of objects or qualities originating from a specific region or place. He introduced objects such as carpets ("Tapis d'Olténie lointains"⁴⁶; Oltenian carpets), wine kinds ("the season is served in wine cups / of Cotnar"⁴⁷) or even nature ("when leaves murmur with Moldavian accent"⁴⁸). Geography contributed to an even more abstract level of localization; by attaching a certain event to a certain place or a certain quality of a place to psychological and physiological processes otherwise difficult to describe, the poet actually planned to

enhance their visual and artistic effect or to simply clarify them. Thus, in order to individualize the function of dreams or the process of breathing, Voronca employed metaphors coming from the geographical area; the dream functioned as a certain river's flow and agitated foam ("And the dream which dances on the foreheads / Like Trotuș river in laces over the round stones."⁴⁹) and breath suddenly stopped as a bridge over spectacular mountains ("breath stopped on lips like a bridge over the Carpathian side"⁵⁰).

Voronca employed images, vocabulary and descriptions of specific concepts coming from the local popular culture, customs, habits and lifestyle; musical instruments (for example *bucium*) ("from solemn springs *buciumul* gathers its sound" ⁵¹), folk customs (*hora*, the youth gathering and party dancing), specific working tools (*războiul de țesut* - the mechanical device used for carpet manufacturing) and myths or folk stories (the community's outcasts, *haiduci*; "The rain like a *haiduc* comes forward with the musket of the lightning risen."⁵²). Belonging to the same local cultural area, the religious register was subjected to a similar artistic logic. Mostly present in his first volumes, but also appearing in his mature work, the poetic vocabulary referring to Christian religious life approached a conventional form aiming to localize scenes, gestures, sensations, images or memories. The inclusion of this linguistic and imagistic register in Voronca's poetry openly expressed the will to accept and conform with a certain wider literary discourse used employed during that period by the Romanian cultural life and artistic canon which considered the religious area as belonging to the national expression, together with the rural space and the historical heroic recollection. In this respect, Voronca's poetry was initially influenced by literary models with a strong metaphysical and religious component ranging from Lucian Blaga's expressionism or Arghezi's modernism. In the following volumes, while Voronca's discourse articulated a more

individualized artistic voice and the formative influences diminished, the usage of Christian religious vocabulary transformed its function of material reference in *Restriști*, his early volume, into mere suggestions to spirituality offered to the audience via the mediation of religious vocabulary:

...the sea makes faces at the stars, the wind
like a priest in vestment who performs the sermon among leaves of
silence⁵³

or

...the seas flow over the table cloth like a glass of milk
birches kneel and pray
and lightning crosses
ripping the darkness like an abdomen⁵⁴

in *Ulise*, his volume published five years later. In time, the religious language register “secularized” or toned down its evocative, denominative and referential function into a merely suggestive dimension meant to enhance the value of the artistic event, mainly by manipulating the cultural resonances attached to it. The organic integration of all these specific references demonstrated a profound acculturation to the Romanian society, but also to the Romanian poetic tradition employing these cultural registers.

Voronca found often in his early Romanian biography a rich source of inspiration. Naturally attached to places, customs and society during his formative experiences, the poet inherently evoked them in his self-referential texts, thus using them as a background for his recollections, enhancing their authentic intimate side. Similarly, geography could often become the pretext for autobiographical evocation. For example, when recalling Soveja, the memory of the poet’s past resurfaced and the place able to generate again the lived experience, the *vécu* (the lived) occupied the center of the discourse. This evocative

technique came from his literary past and former influences; on one hand, the place preserved its own material value, but it also functioned as an intermediary zone able to mediate the access to a part of the poet's past. This connection altered in time as the balance of forces changed. If the place used to be the generator of poetry and sometimes repository of memories, in time the memory carried with it its geographical context and subordinated it while recreating the lost images. This aspect explains the great number of Romanian localities, rivers, mountains, and folk customs mentioned into Voronca's poems, as a form of authenticating and coloring his past. Although they created an emotional environment for his poetry, their presence was rather intended for localizing events and it functioned as a necessary background for grounding the poetical act and not a source of poetry in itself.

After Voronca's departure for France, the Romanian background was naturally repositioned within the poetic reconstructions of the past. While evoking the poet's birthplace, family and environment with their local flavor, *Mic manual de fericire perfectă* (Small manual of perfect happiness) employed a significant Proustian approach to recalling childhood, generated by the act of encountering a seemingly similar sound, smell or view. The lost space received a supplementary degree of remoteness as it was recreated starting from a sensation from the present which connected emotionally with a similar one from the past. Like the ground hanging onto the roots of a plant when dislocated, memories automatically brought their context into the picture:

C'est ainsi que ce matin, les yeux encore a moitié fermés, je me laissais bercer par la voix d'un marchand d'habits... "Marchand d'habits, marchand d'habits, mar...chaaand d'habits", annonçait-il et c'était à n'en pas douter la voix d'un marchand d'habits que j'avais entendue une trentaine d'année auparavant dans le port danubien de Brăila, lorsque

j'habitais chez une jeune et adorable tante. Pendant quelques instants, tout le paysage de la lointaine enfance vient de déposer autour de la voix du marchand.⁵⁵

While living abroad, a simple sensation, sound, image, taste or feeling could act as the Proustian activator for a whole process of evoking Voronca's past life. Despite the context, a simple sensation was able to recreate the past and to overlap it with the present to the level of total immersion and confusion. The space was inherently idealized due to its quality of memory repository for the poet's past experiences; when even the current surrounding space received positive and embellishing characteristics due to its remote resemblance to a space where a happy event and memory crystallized, the idealization of the old space obviously increased. The idealization of the past and, subsequently, of its background, contaminated even the current space which by chance resembled the other one. Thus, the evoked happy past contaminated the present and made it undeservedly glorious. Nevertheless, in time the representation and the characteristics of the space diminished gradually. As the process of recreation and evocation focused exclusively on the lived (*vécu*) and living experience, rather than on its current contextualization, the latter became subordinated and secondary.

Witnessing this processes when the past influenced the quality of the present (be it time or space) and the present sensations recreated the past, the poet practically lived in a space and time which were unstable and fluid, where past and present were permanently in the danger of immersing into each other. These processes were obviously the outcome of the overwhelming power of the past, often idealized and in need of nostalgic representation. For the sake of the context, the poet mentioned places, mountains, colors, but the center of "his" space was represented by the "living quality" that these details

recreated in his memory. Therefore the space was not recreated for its own value, but it resurfaced to fulfill the poet's necessity to remember and it functioned as a catalyst for his past. His sensations, the people encountered, his feelings, became the essential motivation for the recreation of nature and background which was afterwards reduced to the function of an idealized and beloved context. Its specificity and characteristics were secondary for the artistic event.

Subverting the Public Discourse: the Remembrance of Violence. In the context of a rich, innovative and lively imagery in volume *Zodiac* (Astrological Signs), Ilarie Voronca dedicated the XVth sequel to his friend, painter Victor Brauner, important figure in the international modernist 20th century scene, also of Romanian Jewish origin. The fragment consisted of a series of violent, deadly and terrifying images introducing a break into the artistic and emotional ambiance of the volume. The episode contrasted with the other sequels and introduced a feeling of anxiety in Voronca's poem:

While in hospitals insomnia passes by with a convoy of bed sheets
And a vision closes a night owl in blood.
But the bell of a bitter tomorrow sounds beneath the temples
And hooligans crosses your paths, with saws of laughter and bats,
At every step another human being strangles you, crushes you
And in any thought there is a rope tying you to the stars,
When rigid palm goes though the body of a flame
When no nail scratches the wall of exaltation
When only a ribbon, a fly remained from the killed bird
And from the destruction of flesh a flute of isolation
When mirrors flooded the rooms and the forehead
And you pass out among vegetation on a chlorophyll stretcher.⁵⁶

Without a direct reference to the anti-Semitic student manifestations from the early 1920s, as well as to the Iron Guard raids of early and mid-1930s, the

experienced violence could have provided the artist with a rich, infamous source of inspiration. The vivid image of daily danger on the streets, caused by “young hooligans” armed with bats and ending with the poetic death of the victim on the emergency push-cart, involved fear, utterly expressed throughout the description, transforming existence into a permanent threat. The vocabulary coming from the specific area of trauma, aggression and physical attack (hospital, night owl, blood, bell, rope, stars, fire, stiff fingers, and nails scratching a wall, killed bird, beaten flesh, sleep, and medical carrier) introduced a whole register of dramatic, alienating, depressing images. The recreation of such a violent episode, physically assumed by the poet biologically identifying with the victim and discretely obscuring the violent background through metaphors, could represent a reenacting of a personal experience of the poet or of his friend’s to whom the poet was actually dedicated in a gesture of solidarity or commonality of experience. Himself a student in the early 1920s and departing for France only after the rise of the Iron Guard within Romanian society, Voronca could not have missed the effects of the anti-Semitic political agitation, vividly described in Saşa Pană’s memoirs as penetrating his dreams and becoming an obsessive presence. The literary profile of Ilarie Voronca, dominated by its solar lively character, was dramatically undermined, initiating the transition towards a larger meditation on existence during his French period.

Poetry as the Identity Core. After Voronca’s migration to France in the 1930s, his poetic discourse abandoned the opulent imagery and turned more and more towards the self-referential, autobiographical meditation. Although his past and his Romanian years represented an important source of inspiration for his French work, the employment of local cultural references, previously abundant, was reduced to a minimum; retaining only

the essence of his individual existential experience, Voronca's discourse sublimated to a transcendent, self-referential and universally symbolic poetry. Moreover, his poetic persona started to be defined almost exclusively in terms of creation and writing, as if his identity was exclusively expressed through art and poetry:

Cela fera quelque trente-neuf ans que tu m'as accueilli, ma vie.
Je ne sais pas d'ou je venais, tu m'as pris par la main (...)
C'est moi que tu as attendu, avec mes remords, mes blessures,
Le diamante du poème pour le verre de l' âme,
Revant, dans la nuit froide au feu d'un regard,
La monnaie des mes peines n'ayant cours pour le bonheur.⁵⁷

Metaphors of rootlessness and rejection started to appear in his poetry significantly often after his departure for France, functioning as an artistic expression of his migrant condition, but also as a consequence of publicly re-assuming his Jewish identity in a new cultural canon such as the French one. In this respect, Voronca's artistic discourse showed a strikingly similar situation with Fundoianu's poetry, obsessed with the myth of the wanderer, symbolized by the same myths of Ulysses or Ahasverus and this fact might be the consequence of their common experience as Eastern European migrants, but also Jews in 1930s Western Europe. In time, this abstract metaphor of estrangement and migration crystallized in his poetry as the myth of Ulysses, the figure of Petre Schlemihl or in the apocalyptic image of island Patmos, all connected through the motive of traveling. Nevertheless, the most significant reference was the one to Ahasverus, the wandering Jew, symbol of the human solitary condition, becoming here a marker of the universal inadaptation of the poet and an obvious form of self-identification:

You are a poet, thus, for ever Ahasverus
 Without a shadow and searching the keys of the spring
 Love sounds in you like an alarm clock
 You sang and the shadow got scared and ran like a bird.⁵⁸

Symbol of the drama of human condition permanently in motion and changing, but also culturally representing the Jewish fate, the myth of Ahasverus was associated in volume *Petre Schlemihl* with the poet's artistic identity. Connecting back to his roots through the most universal side of his personality, the poetic one, Ilarie Voronca finally reintegrated his Jewish identity into the substance of his works freed from contextual cultural determinants and social impositions.

The idea of the impossibility to be accepted by the society, symbolical for France around the WWII as well as for the early 1920s and 1930s in radicalized Romania, appeared in a few poems. In *Interviul*⁵⁹ (The Interview) the poet wrote that “only the dead will sometime accept me in their country without asking for my ID papers, without forcing me to fill in forms and naturalization requests”,⁶⁰ adapting the mythical condition of the wandering stranger to the current politics of migration and legislation involved. As a consequence, the rootless wandering poet could not be attached to a certain space or to people, to a country or nation; his existence in an ideal space of poetry and art severed his ties with the mundane which reciprocally was not represented in his creation anymore. When writing about his past, personality or life, references were necessary, but the poet transferred them to the abstract, universal level, detaching them from a proper localization or context. Thus the poet moved from a specific context, tradition and culture to a territory of imagination, of the abstract and creativity. This dual existence between mind and body, home and abroad, native language and acquired French obsessed the poet repeatedly writing about it:

Et pourtant j'ai été l'homme
 De deux patries, l'une de terre, l'autre de nuages;
 De deux femmes, l'une de neige et de vin, l'autre de brume;
 De deux langues, l'une d'ici, l'autre d'un pays non encore situé.⁶¹

The image of the ideal place was generically described as “une patrie généreuse. Une patrie unanime. Un soleil égal attentif”⁶², but as the reality could not offer such a realization, the search moved to his inner realm when moving to the Land of Poetry, to “Imagi-NATION.” Thus, instead of choosing a nation to belong to, he preferred “imagi-NATION” as the ultimate form of expressing his artistic identity against any ethnic, social defining terms involving often disputes over socio-political inclusion and exclusion.

C. Identity as the Periphery of the Self: Max Blecher. Both novels that M. Blecher published during his short life, *Întîmplări din realitatea imediată* (Events from the closest reality) and *Inimi cicatrizate* (Scarred hearts), focused on the problem of identity and identity crisis, adaptation and contact with the surrounding world, in existentialist terms. Due to his tragic destiny, prisoner of his own body and terminal illness, the writer concentrated on a profound analysis of the self and of his existence in the world mediated and explored only through his writing. The identity analysis explored the existentialist conflict of the human self with the world and its limits in terms of pain, suffering, disease, experimenting, suicidal and madness and ignored the fashionable cultural dimension or ethnic collective identification. Nevertheless, Judaism and Jewish culture appeared as a strong presence in his work, although it was placed in the

background, providing a natural context for his writing. For example, Blecher described life cycle customs such as the process of mourning, the wedding and the burial in his work; obviously, their function was not to certify the attachment and preservation of his Jewish identity, but rather to provide his story with an authentic and functional environment. But even if the Jewish background of his works functioned as an authentic context, in the existential substance of Blecher's tragedy it became a topic of further ego explorations in contact with the world and the essence of the self. Therefore, the descriptions emptied the scenes of any ethnic markers, almost transforming them into essentially generic rituals meant to communicate on the universalism of human experiences and on the commonality of pain and suffering, rather than express a group identity. Practically, through all these descriptions, the author never intended to add a monographic approach to his memories, but to employ them functionally in the context of his emotional experiments. This marginalization, however authentic, of his Jewish background justified through Blecher's tragic condition, determined eventually that the problem of identity became less significant for the writer in social and cultural terms; in exchange, the individual's dramatic existential struggle tended to occupy the center of his work. The limited social experience of the author shaped the essentially individual representation of his writing, ignoring any irrelevant collective affiliations. Finally, the connections with the avant-garde and the writer's interest in a movement ignoring ethnicity pressed for a minor, nevertheless significant, Jewish representation in his work. Summing up, Jewish identity and representation never became an issue in Blecher's work, but it naturally emerged while discussing his existential condition as being an essential part of his origin, culture and formation; without being subjected to a strategy of avoidance or repression, Judaism appeared as a transgressed experience.

Obviously, Max Blecher perceived Jewish tradition as a natural part of his background and traditional elements appeared in his narrative, in the description of his dreams and literary constructs. The representation of his Jewish identity could be found on two levels of his creation. First, the most intimate level of creativity, difficult to be identified as it emerged within the profound literary structures as intimate sources of emotional and stylistic inspiration, was signaled by E. Suhor⁶³ in his article in *Revista Cultului Mozaic* (The Review of the Mosaic Community) while analyzing Blecher's literature. The second level, represented through a few scenes depicting life cycle events and ritual traditions of ethnographic source, offered the cultural environment of the main character and succeeded to relate to the public on the level of universal human experiences rather than on the specificity of Jewish life. Another significant fact is that in the novel *Inimi cicatrizate*, focusing on the life in a sanatorium, on pain and death, any background references and contextual descriptions disappear, while the drama unfolds in universal terms. On the contrary, *Întîmplări din irealitatea imediată* was written as an autobiography, following the life story of the character from his early years; due to this fact, the context and references tended to receive a special position within the narrative,

Representations of Identity in the Work of M. Blecher. In both novels, the author focused on the transformation of the relations with the world and with his own self under the impact of the crippling disease or due to maturation and time passage. In both cases, the situation was generated by a constant process of self-discovery under the effect of time passage or sickness, and thus self-referentiality became essential, as much as his elementary contact with the world. This direct form of experiencing the world assumed representations of physical existence perceived as the central element in the work of M.

Blecher. Corporality, the connection with his own body, intensely perceived during the period of illness, the reaction to pain and suffering, the limitations of the physical self and the experiences employing senses and direct contact gave substance to the profile of the main character in *Inimi cicatrizate*. His physical integrity was placed in a profound crisis due to his newly discovered disease and condition; through this extreme experience, his self-awareness as a human being received a primordial place. The first contact with his disease immediately following the moment when the patient had to face the medical verdict was suggestively described as the final moment of his existence:

Within the previous hour so many horrible things had happened calmly and sententiously, so many crushes took place that Emanuel, exhausted by the sensational character of the day, in one second of amazing unconsciousness felt like laughing. (...) He was actually waiting any moment that the doctor opened a door and invited him to the next room: "Come in, please!... The guillotine is ready..."⁶⁴

The effect of accepting his sickness and thus his handicapping situation determined quickly a deterioration of his own physical self-conscience; a subsequent self-awareness of his fragility developed while the writer started doubting his gestures and basic acts, the former grounds of his being and his identity:

He wanted to ask more questions; if his spine won't break until he would reach the hotel, if he would not collapse in the street, if his head would not fall from his shoulders rolling down on the pavement as a bowling ball. He had started feeling very fragile since a few minutes ago. In the glass factories the workers amused themselves throwing in water pieces of melting composition which hardened and became more resistant than regular glass, so that they could be even hit with a hammer, but if a small fragment broke from it, the whole thing turned to powder. One single broken vertebra was not sufficient to transform into powder his whole body?⁶⁵

His identity and his self-perception were severely altered under the dramatic impact of the changes operated on his physical self. From then on, the character perceived himself as objectified and belonging to a new “category” which made him an accessory to reality instead of its master:

It was one of the strange sensations connected to the illness, when a patient was pushed in a cart followed by healthy persons. Something like the walk of the family following the stretcher of a corpse... or like one traveler in a hurry running after the carriage carrying his luggage.⁶⁶

Under the effect of this fundamental physical alteration, the whole reality and the principles he knew before changed, and thus the whole world modified accordingly:

But everything seemed much sadder and more indifferent... Now an ill Emanuel stepped into this world, having a rotten vertebra, an unfortunate being out of whose way the houses stepped back fearfully. He was walking slowly on the pavement as if he would have floated over the substance of the asphalt. While he was in the doctor’s office, the reality thinned strangely.⁶⁷

Unlike the previously discussed novels approaching the self in connection with the collective and involving reevaluations of identity representation within the social context, Blecher’s novel created a counter-example based on the specificity of existential *expérience-limite* where the individual confronted only his own essence. Identity representation in Blecher’s works rather managed to change the surrounding reality under the impact of the tragic mutation operated on the level of basic physical existence. The individual projected his own incapacitation on the surrounding space, transforming its characteristics and potentialities.

Jewish Life as an Existential Background. Following the biography of the author, the plot of the novels was located in both France and Romania; due to the vagueness of the topics, the background of the novels describes the space of childhood as opposed to the international space of illness and experience. If his native space offered to a certain extent an ethnographical localization, significantly related to his identity while evocating his early years, the life in the sanatorium spent in a francophone milieu and his existential experiences there provided the reader with a counter-example. Thus, in Blecher's work, the universal representativity of the milieu and the centrality of pain seemed to define identity construction. Nevertheless, despite his cosmopolitan, modernist, acculturated spirit, experiencing the limits of existence, the writer's recollections connected with Jewish life and religious observance function as a constant reminder of his roots, even if relegated to a space of memory and marginality.

The precise descriptions of autobiographical details used while presenting everyday life on Saturday afternoons, with family gatherings, with the food prepared and the sweets of the day, did not follow any ethnographical intention as in the case of Ion Călugaru. Instead, the author planned to recreate a background able to generate a specific feeling, memory, reaction as in the novels of Marcel Proust:

Every Saturday afternoon we used to gather in the living room where the gramophone was playing oriental tunes from *Kismet* and Edda offered us sweet-bitter cakes made with honey and almonds.⁶⁸

In the series of life cycle events, the writer evoked frequently the rituals involved by the death of a person; the most impressive was the recollection of his grandfather's death, with a description of the ritual bath before the burial. Without any ethnographic

agenda, Max Blecher's text deeply involved the emotionality of the author due to the fact that the death of a loved one appeared as another experience facilitating the author's contact with the essential reality of the world, in this case death and its materiality. Focusing on the suggestive essential aspects, with only a few details involved, but sufficient to draw a stylized sketch of the scene, the recollection of the moment generated a vivid image which could easily appeal to the reader's own fundamental experiences. The lack of descriptive opulence, specific to the monographic novels, confirmed the intention of simply offering a context for the human generic experience despite specific cultural and religious codes; still, the Jewish burial traditions and customs emerged clearly in the background:

I used to go to see him every day there on the eve of his death and to assist to the prayer of the dying, which he himself pronounced it, with a trembling voice and without emotion, after getting dressed in a new white shirt so that the prayer was more solemn. In that small room I saw him dead after a few days, lying on a tin table. My uncle requested from the family the honor of washing the dead. (...) He was trembling completely while he was bringing the buckets filled with water from the taps from the courtyard in order to heat them in the kitchen. When the water warmed up, he brought it into the room and started washing the corpse with laundry soap and wisps of straws.⁶⁹

A similar picture was described later, while evoking Edda's death; the traditional custom of washing hands anticipated for the readers the announcement of the death of the sick person. The description of the custom functioned as an introductory narrative for the tragic event and as a suggestion of the impact of the person's death. Emptied of any specific cultural symbolism, the actions described received a pure functional role in the economy of the novel:

When I opened my eyes, he stepped into the room, brought me a white basin and a cup of water to wash my hands. With a painful convulsion which hurt my heart, I understood what this meant. – Wash your hands, my father told me. Edda died.⁷⁰

Beyond culture and tradition, the event functioned as a pretext for revealing the character's discoveries in connection with the reality and the world, his experiences and realizations. The same function received the brief description of Edda's wedding, earlier in the text. This time the writer was interested in the mysterious connection between two human beings, man and woman brought together through the sexual connection and love. The ceremony was the starting point for placing the phenomenon in crisis and for giving some material background to highlight the abstract event.

In the back of the dark living room, the bride was waiting in her armchair on the pedestal. Her white veils were lowered over her face and only when she returned from the canopy and pulled them up, I saw Edda for the first time...⁷¹

In the context of relativization of his personal background, M. Blecher included into his early memories also elements connected to non-Jewish environment. The surroundings offering sources of inspiration for his memory and experiences did not connect necessarily to his Jewish origins. There were a few fragments evoking the atmosphere he experienced in Catholic churches, with their specific decorations and involving a certain emotional aesthetic impact:

There are also the natural size paintings of Jesus in catholic churches. The strained glass lights the altars with the last reflexes of a red sunset, while lilies exhale their whole long and lugubrious perfume at this hour of the day at the feet of Christ.⁷²

Cultural Identity at the Periphery of Experience. While connecting with the world through capital situations and experiences, the author placed the cultural environment in the background, on a secondary position; it was important in order to ground the experience or to make the event appear authentic, but the purpose of the literary reconstruction was not the description of the cultural coding, but the essential message contained in the universal experience. Within the literary text, the Jewish origins of the author and his background were present through a layer of details and suggestions belonging to a cultural code, but their position was rather marginal. This treatment of identity was imposed by the fact that the writer favored the fundamental experience attained through these practices in the irrepressible effort of the author to explore the surrounding reality. Details connected with Jewish life, but also with the Romanian environment could be traced and connected with the biographical details. But their place within the text was not a central one; they were not described for their own sake, but to support general universal conclusions which were accomplished and completed through their participation.

The memories of the author's Jewish roots and background emerged in the self-referential literary text when he wrote about childhood and adolescence; when he wrote about maturity and illness coming together with the end of his adolescence, the references diminished, the main character objectified his intimate self into character "Emanuel" and the international, vague references to a universal culture came to match the universal experience of suffering. Therefore, a significant mutation took place within the author's and the character's identity and the possibly cultural context faded in order to be replaced by the existentialism of pain. Jewish culture preserved its position of contextualizing the origin and cultural background of the young writer, but the core of Blecher's narrative

was permanently occupied by a largely human identity, eager to reach universality of experience and the profoundness of human existence despite collective, cultural or religious definitions. The identity debate, although present, referred not to ethnicity and culture, but to existence and humanity at large.

Conclusions. It became common knowledge that, for modernism and avant-garde, ethnicity and religion represented marginal topics. Nevertheless, the generation of Romanian Jewish rebellious intellectuals did not correspond to the Western model of assimilated intellectuals, severing ties with Judaism, emerging in modern societies and constituting the main promoters of modernism. On the contrary, the early 20th century Romanian Jewish intellectuals came from recently acculturated families, sometimes bilingual (Romanian and Yiddish), or already Romanian speaking. Originally coming from compact communities and semi-modernized families with religiously observant grandparents and parents, the young intellectuals preserved a strong relation with the Jewish community and with Judaism. Therefore, instead of assimilating the Romanian national canon with its symbols and producing replicas of assimilated discourse, most of the writers preferred to rebel and reject any assimilationist discourse and a strong private attachment to Judaism.

A direct result of this identity model, the works of these intellectuals still contained a significant representation of Jewish identity despite the modernist doctrine. Usually relegated to the area of private writings (memoirs, correspondence, and diaries, as in Sașa Pană's case), marginalized to the external strata of their works in metaphors, symbols and encrypted parables (M. Blecher), or deposited into a secondary discourse directed towards acculturated Jewish readership promoted in Jewish Romanian

publications (Fundoianu), the Jewish presence occupied a significant space. At the same time, the set of Romanian cultural references, background and experience represented in their works had the same peripheral and contextual function. Due to their profound acculturation and to a certain conformism with the official artistic discourse able to integrate the authors to the cultural canon of the moment (the Symbolist influence, the folkloric and even Christian Orthodox inspiration of some of Voronca's and Fundoianu's poetry), their creations assimilated certain traditional linguistic and artistic registers. This double peripheralization of the ethnic and religious element in the works of the modernists and avant-gardists confirms the adoption of the modernist cultural doctrines which displayed a lack of interest in this area; nevertheless, this fact also demonstrates the conventionality of the Romanian cultural references employed. On the other hand, the Jewish identity strongly present in the profile and trajectory of all these recently acculturated intellectual groups was cautiously and selectively represented in their public work. This specific approach to identity issues emphasizes the profound integrative character of the modernist and avant-gardist works of the Jewish intellectuals; although contesting norms, they preferred to do it from within Romanian language and culture, and, although adopting the cosmopolitan doctrine of modernism, they tended to preserve both Romanian cultural references as a sign of profound acculturation and Jewish identity representation due to the strong community connection.

Some of these intellectuals took their rebellious gesture to the end, rejecting the state of facts and migrated to the West, starting abroad fascinating artistic careers, commuting and maintaining the connections and network back in Romania, as it was the case of Fundoianu, Voronca, Brauner, Tzara and many others. Once abroad, their modernist discourse started to reevaluate their Jewish roots and cultural background as

symbols of the human fate and creation. Voronca and Fundoianu revived their relation with Judaism and Jewish identity. The others developed their discourse further and totally assimilated their intellectual identity to a symbol of human existence; questioned during the politically radicalized period on his Jewish / Romanian identity, one of the writers declared being “neither one, or the other; but a Parnassian.” In his terms, modernist ideology and avant-garde became a way of life, a form of protest and rejection of a certain social organization and cultural normativity to which intellectuals belonged through language and cultural background, but from which they felt deeply excluded.

Notes:

¹ I. Ludo, “Scriitori evrei și de origine evreiască” in *Adam*, an III, no 47, 15 March 1932, 12-13.

² Eugen Lovinescu, major literary critic, elaborated the theory of synchronism in his work *Istoria civilizației române moderne*, favoring Europeanization and modernization of national institutions and values, perceived as integration and adaptation to the local context.

³ Endre Bojtar, “The Avant-Garde in Central and Eastern European Literature” in *Art Journal*, Vol. 49, No. 1, Spring 1990, 56. As this association serves the purpose of my research, I will constantly refer to the avant-gardism as part of modernism.

⁴ Adrian Marino, *Dicționar de idei literare* (București: Eminescu, 1973), vol. 1, A-G, 195.

⁵ Matei Călinescu, *Five faces of modernity: Modernity, Avant-Garde, Decadence, Kitsch, Postmodernism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1987) and Romanian edition, *Cinci fețe ale modernității: modernism, avangardă, decadent, kitsch, postmodernism* (București: Univers, 1995).

⁶ Matei Călinescu, *Cinci fețe ale modernității*, 88-89.

⁷ “Tristan Tzara-Sașa Pană. Investigație în arhivele pariziene”, series of letters in *Manuscriptum*, 4 (49) /1982 (XII), 158, Sașa Pană presented in a letter to Tristan Tzara the extremist cultural atmosphere and the extensive usage of syntagm “judaization of Romanian literature” in connection with “new and pornographic literature” within the nationalist Romanian press in the 1930s.

⁸ Article “Dacă aș trăi în România” in *Mântuirea*, I, 1919, nr. 15, 7 February, 1.

⁹ Eric Freedman, “Bibliographie sélective des écrits de Fondane relatifs au judaïsme (1914-1934)” in *Cahiers Benjamin Fondane. Périple d'un Juif irraisonné*, no.2 / automne 1998, 64-68.

¹⁰ According to Remus Zastroiu, “Les cahiers d'un ‘Inactuel’: B. Fundoianu journaliste” in *Cahiers Benjamin Fondane*, No. 6 / 2003, 5.

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- ¹¹ Ibid., 6.
- ¹² Ibid., 4.
- ¹³ “Herța”, *Poezii*, I, 14.
- ¹⁴ “Provincie”, *Poezii*, I, 30.
- ¹⁵ “Herța”, *Poezii*, I, 14.
- ¹⁶ “Cîntece simple. Mărior”, *Poezii*, I, 40.
- ¹⁷ “Alte priveriști”, *Poezii*, I, 48.
- ¹⁸ “Provincie”, *Poezii*, II, 58.
- ¹⁹ “Herța”, *Poezii*, I, 17.
- ²⁰ Ibid., 18-19.
- ²¹ Marin Bucur, *Priveriștile poeziei* (București: Albatros, 1985), 78.
- ²² “Sonete biblice”, “Moise”, “Scara lui Iacob”, “Ultima verba. Cîntarea lui Samson” were published in Zionist publication *Hatikvah*; “Psalmul leprosului” and “Monologul lui Baltazar” in *Lumea evree*, “Psalmul lui Adam” in review *Adam*.
- ²³ Leon Volovici, “Benjamin Fondane: Judaism as individual experience and existentialist philosophy” in *Tenth World Congress of Jewish Studies*, Volume II (Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 1990), 81.
- ²⁴ Ibid., 82.
- ²⁵ Gilla Eisenberg, “B. Fondane, Juif témoin” in *Cahiers Benjamin Fondane*, 2/1998, 17.
- ²⁶ Mircea Martin, “Există în figura destinului nostru lucruri ce nu pot fi schimbate” in Geo Șerban ed., *B. Fundoianu. Strigăt întru eternitate* (București: Caietele culturale evreiești, 1998), 69.
- ²⁷ Revue *Messages* (Thouars), 1942 quoted in Monique Jutrin, “Ulysse: Poésie et Destin” in review *Europe*, no. 827 / March 1998, 71.
- ²⁸ Fondane, *Ulysse*, 15.
- ²⁹ Ibid., 23.
- ³⁰ Fondane, *L’Exode*, 56.
- ³¹ Ibid., 54.
- ³² Fondane, *Ulysse*, 23.
- ³³ Ibid., 25.
- ³⁴ Fondane, *Titanic*, 81.
- ³⁵ Fondane, *L’Exode*, 23.

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- ³⁶ Monique Jutrin, “Ulysse: poésie et destin“, *Europe review*, no. 827 / March 1998, 75.
- ³⁷ Fondane, *Titanic*, 33.
- ³⁸ Fondane, *Ulysse*, 30.
- ³⁹ Leon Volovici, preface for *Judaism și elenism* (București: Hasefer, 1999), 16.
- ⁴⁰ Leon Volovici, “Benjamin Fondane: Judaism as individual experience”, 83.
- ⁴¹ “Miliardarul de imagini” was a syntagm used to characterize Voronca’s later poetic style by E. Lovinescu.
- ⁴² Ion Pop, preface to volume *Zodiac*, by Ilarie Voronca (București: Minerva, 1992), 7.
- ⁴³ *Ibid.*, 9.
- ⁴⁴ Ilarie Voronca, *Amitié des Choses* (Éditions Sagesse, 1937), 22.
- ⁴⁵ Ilarie Voronca, *Ulysse dans la Cité* (Paris: Éditions du Sagittaire), 21.
- ⁴⁶ Ilarie Voronca, “Dîner chez Jeanne Coppel“ in *Dîner chez Jeanne Coppel* (1952), republished in Ilarie Voronca, *Poeme alese*, vol.2 (București, Minerva, 1972) 3,13.
- ⁴⁷ “Cotnar“ in Voronca, *Zodiac*, 155.
- ⁴⁸ “Hotar” in Voronca, *Zodiac*, 159.
- ⁴⁹ “Zodiac” in Voronca, *Zodiac*, 211.
- ⁵⁰ “Ulise” in Voronca, *Zodiac*, 134.
- ⁵¹ “Șapte seara” in Voronca, *Zodiac*, 144.
- ⁵² “Brățara nopților”, XXIV, in Voronca, *Zodiac*, 195 – 196.
- ⁵³ “Mai târziu” in Voronca, *Zodiac*, 151.
- ⁵⁴ “Ulise” in Voronca, *Zodiac*, 123.
- ⁵⁵ Ilarie Voronca, *Mic manual de fericire perfectă* (București: Cartea românească), 84.
- ⁵⁶ “Zodiac”, XV, in Voronca, *Zodiac*, 229.
- ⁵⁷ “Poeme” in Voronca, *Poeme alese*, vol. 2, 333 – 335.
- ⁵⁸ “Petre Schlemihl”, XIV in Voronca, *Poeme alese*, vol. 1, 165.
- ⁵⁹ In *Interviul. Unsprezece povestiri*, several fragments on naturalization and the experience of being a stranger in a new land, 67 – 70.
- ⁶⁰ Ilarie Voronca, *Interviul. Unsprezece povestiri*, 138.
- ⁶¹ “Autoportret” in Voronca, *Poeme alese*, vol. 2, 304.

⁶² “Étaient-ce des Hommes?” in Ilarie Voronca, *Patmos* (Paris : Éditions des Cahiers Libres, 1934), 63.

⁶³ E. Suhor, “M. Blecher: 50 de ani de la moarte” in *Revista Cultului Mozaic*, An XXXIII, nr. 648 / 15 June 1988, 5.

⁶⁴ M. Blecher, *Inimi cicatrizate. Întâmplări în irealitatea imediată* (București: Gramar, 1995), 14.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 54-55.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 192.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 186.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 221.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 188.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 173.

Chapter 4.

Constructing Jewish Identity in Romanian Culture

While being interviewed by the journal *Adam* in 1931 on the state of Jewish literature, writer, journalist and Zionist politician A. L. Zissu bitterly stressed that in Romania Jewish writers were not using Yiddish and Hebrew as a means of authentic expression of Jewish life and culture. Abandoning language as a criterion for Jewish literature, Zissu identified Ion Călugaru and Isac Ludo as promising writers, apart from whom Jewish literature was “for now non-existent in Romanian”¹. The same criticism was addressed by Ludo in 1932 in more critical terms in the same journal: “do we have a Jewish culture? No! Do we have a Jewish literature? No! Do we have Jewish writers? No!”² Reciprocally, for Ludo, the only exception was Zissu (whose works he was reviewing in the quoted article) as

...the only, but without any reservations, the only writer we have who is a hundred per cent Jewish – asserted through his ideology, through his pure feeling and through the emotionalism of his work (...). Our literary territory is unpopulated.³

Apart from the mutual gratifying inclusion into the group of “Jewish writers”, both intellectuals tended to the Zionist direction, a fact which justified their radical definition of Jewishness in cultural terms. Still, Ludo’s conclusion to his article was a

sign of ideological mutation and reevaluation of Jewish culture as a productive literary source:

...what a superb field of research our social and moral body offers – which outside a unique cultural and spiritual tradition – contains also a contemporary reality, permanently effervescent and generating surprises.⁴

Zissu returned in 1935 to this problem raised in the early 1930s, with a solution and also a program in a polemical letter addressed to one of the greatly criticized “Romanian writers”, Felix Aderca:

...reconnection with Judaism. This is the only sea bottom where your anchor can rest – I say ‘yours’ as through you, this letter addresses to all creators and ideas of Jewish birth of my generation, yours and the ones after us – the only citadel where no one can chase you out under the accusation of usurpation, intrusion, subversion, dissolution; the only receiving you without CONDITIONS.⁵

Despite the skepticism, in terms of literary phenomena the mid-1930s witnessed the emergence of a literature focused on Jewish life and identity in Romania. The major novels and short stories written on this topic were published at this moment: Isac Peltz’s *Calea Văcărești*⁶ and *Foc în Hanul cu Tei*⁷ (Fire in the lime tree inn), Ury Benador’s *Ghetto Veac XX*⁸ and Ion Călugaru’s *Copilăria unui netrebnic*⁹ (Childhood of a wretched one). Moving from Călugaru’s monographic description of the traditional life in a small *shetl* from Northern Moldavia to the challenges of the urban life in the Bucharest Jewish quarter of legendary Văcărești – Dudești of Peltz, the literary variety of description also benefited from the presentation of the Jewish neighborhood in Braila, Eastern Wallachia,

a multiethnic city of medium size, semi-urban in its poor periphery represented in Benador's work.

In this context, the creation of a "Jewish literature in Romanian", or at least the emergence of a literature in Romanian with Jewish topics, had to address two fields, audiences and cultural codes at the same time. Addressing the Jewish acculturated public, the writers articulated a severe criticism of the Jewish society facing modernization and compromising its identity markers, traditions and religious values, while for the larger Romanian-speaking public, the cultural translation of codes, as well as the employment of certain timely "literary recipes" (the "literature of the periphery", the drama of the intellectual, "childhood recollections" model, etc.) and the adaptation to Romanian literary registers secured the penetration and inclusion into the national cultural canon. This process of "deterritorialization"/"reterritorialization" of an artistic language and culture by a minority group struggling to find its position was very well analyzed in the theoretical demonstration of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari developed in their work *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*. Coining a new concept, namely "deterritorialization"¹⁰, Deleuze and Guattari's theory basically analyzed the process of subverting the dominant culture or literature from within, separating a trend within the majority's discourse and opening a new space for the discourse of the minority. In their reading, the emergence of a minor literature is not the result of a process of absorbing multiculturalism within the cultural canon, but rather the outcome of placing the minority's trademark within the majority's culture and literature in order to appropriate it. For my case study, the literature with Jewish topics in Romanian became part of the cultural canon due to its adaptation, constant negotiation and employment of specific tropes, motifs and genres from the "majority culture" in order to penetrate it; thus, for the

current analysis, a reversed version of the concept proved useful, namely “reterritorialization”, as the Jewish intellectuals had as a larger goal the project of integrating the perspective on the world introduced by Jewish community within Romanian culture.

As a result, the current chapter analyzes how “Jewish literature” in Romanian language was articulated focusing on the literary strategies of inclusion as well as self-representation within Romanian culture on one hand, and on the discourse on Jewish life and identity in Romania on the other, contained in the literary works of three of the most representative writers: Ion Călugaru, Isac Peltz and Ury Benador.

A. I. Călugaru: Jewish Life between Traditionalism and Modernization. Ion Călugaru’s best known novel, *Copilăria unui netrebnic*, made memorable one of his most complex and representative characters, namely Buiumaș a Tiprei; in other short stories and in the sequel *Trustul* (The Corporation), Buiumaș became a recurrent character who developed in time and space as a representative of the main message of the author. In many respects an autobiographical novel (just like Buiumaș, Călugaru came from a Moldavian *shtetl*, worked for various publications in Bucharest, never finished his studies, struggled to survive as a teenager in the capital studying and working in difficult conditions), *Copilăria unui netrebnic* transforms its main character into a symbol meant to demonstrate the author’s perspective on life and his political views in time through the planned three-novel series¹¹. If in the first novel the message is credible and set within accomplished literary construction due to the author’s familiarity with the life in the *shtetl*, the second novel *Trustul* is less convincing. Moving the character in his teenage years to the capital and forcing him face political temptations, financial hardships and

urban challenges, the political message becomes central and, in order to be expressed better, the characters tend to become black-and-white sketches manipulated by the ideas behind them. Still, *Trustul* is an interesting continuation and a necessary completion of Călugaru's ideological universe, despite its lower literary accomplishment. Apart from the first novel presenting the world of the *shtetl* through Buiumaş' childhood lucid recollections, a number of short stories sharing the same space and characters were published, most probably after they were used as sketches for the future novel, but still providing new details and completing the perspective¹². The first book of the series appeared in 1936, but the short stories focusing on the profile of little Buiumaş a Țiprei and his *shtetl* began to be published even earlier.

Two main aspects are to be identified in Călugaru's work (novels, collections of short stories, articles). First, the monographic dimension of his work had the obvious mission of preserving the memory of the Jewish community (but also Romanian, Jewish, Roma or Greek)¹³. Secondly, the writer's interest in the marginal, the poor and the hopeless characters and environments, in the life at the periphery of the society, in poverty, depression and utter cruelty dictated by the needs of survival imposed a naturalistic perspective which undermined the nostalgically-susceptible ethnographic discourse. In political terms, the interest in the disadvantaged and marginal justified the Marxist ideology and leftist socio-political criticism incorporated in his novels and character profiles criticizing both Romanian and Jewish life. These two discourses coexisting in Călugaru's work represented a natural part of the larger cultural directions within Romanian intellectual life. While the life at the periphery and the marginal characters, bound to fail and to be attached to their misery, could be perceived as part of a larger literary trend popular within the Romanian intellectual environment of the

moment¹⁴ (M. Sadoveanu, Zamfirescu, etc.), the monographic dimension is more difficult to frame. The romantic interest in idealizing rural life and considering it the reservoir of national creativity and civilization was already outdated by the time Călugaru published his work. The *Sămănătorul* group and all the other rural national-oriented writers such as poporanists tend to abandon peasantry and primitive life as a source of inspiration, allowing modernism enough space to develop, apart from the still conservative groups stressing much on the ethnic Romanian chord. Writing about Jews, Greeks and Roma¹⁵, Călugaru probably maintained an inner conflict with this type of ideology, but functioned as a form of decentralizing the Romanian literary canon in a new direction coinciding with politics and the new minorities' status.

Against Forgetting: A Monograph of the Moldavian Jewish Life. In one of Călugaru's short stories, the teacher Glantzer referred symbolically to his pupil, Buiumaș, and stated his mission for the future as "A Țiprei Buiumaș is intelligent and he will speak to the world and to God for us when we are gone. He will commemorate us and mourn for us."¹⁶ Truthful to his "commemorative" literary mission, Călugaru described the customs, the folk life and the specificity of the Moldavian Jewish community in a very vivid style in his best-known novel, *Copilăria unui netrebnic*. Some critics¹⁷ perceived the novel as a very accomplished reply to Ion Creangă's iconic *Amintiri din copilărie*¹⁸ (Childhood Recollections), also describing the rural Moldavia and the peasant life; the region described and the common monographic approach encouraged this type of interpretation. Some other critical voices connected his picturesque style of describing Jewish life with the work of the great Yiddish writer Sholem Aleichem¹⁹. Placed in the middle of the two literary directions and influences, Călugaru provided both the

Romanian readership and the Jewish Romanian audience with a fascinating work which was equally culturally accessible through different literary models and personal social experience. If, for the Romanian readers, the similarity with Creangă's book offered a good introduction into the Jewish life by using a familiar regional and socio-economic background, for the Jewish public, the monograph functioned as a reminder and a repository of a world left behind to which the author tried to reconnect.

Moldavian Jewry, part of the larger Eastern European Jewish community and related most closely to the Galician group in particular, was influenced to a certain extent by the local culture in many areas of life. Life in a Romanian neighborhood influenced the lifestyle and the cultural references of the Jewish community due to the necessary and inherent communication process and effected changes within its cultural structures and language. As a consequence, Călugaru's novel and short stories offered a localized monograph of the Moldavian Jewry through its life, customs, human types, relationships, integration and language use, expressing its specificity through names, folklore, cultural references, giving it a certain local flavor, and facilitating the connection with the surrounding community through cultural osmosis. This cultural mix and the local influences become visible when the author presents the verbal specificity of the group reflected in the folk literature: the manner of speaking, the specific expressions, the language and the names of the characters, but also in the material culture represented in specific food, puns or folk costumes.

The language, captured through the written text of the novel trying to recreate the spoken variants with its nuances, shows how Romanian and Yiddish coexist and interfere. A series of Romanian folklore cultural references are employed in the construction of comparisons in order to suggest a certain situation in a more vivid and memorable way;

archaisms and regionalisms are used to show the cultural communication between communities (expressions like *descuț ăa o hadadulcă* / barefooted as a crazy woman, *despletită ca popa la feredeu*²⁰ / with loosened hair as the priest getting out of the bath, coming from folklore and peasant language register). Stanzas of folkloric songs (“Moișă / coișă / pampampușă / joacă plosnița după ușă”²¹ or “Plîngi, mireaso, plîngu-ți ochii...”²²) were ethnographically localized and appealing to the readers reconnecting with their own childhood experience. The appeal to the common cultural background of the readership, be it Romanian or Jewish, is facilitated on this level of cultural communication and employed in order to more easily introduce the Jewish community profile and culture through familiar references to the Romanian audience. At the same time, the specificity of the Jewish Moldavian community is monographically recreated. Unfortunately, the number of studies on Yiddish folklore and lifestyle in the Moldavian *shtetls* at the beginning of the 20th century is extremely small, thus it is rather difficult to assess the authenticity of such language usage or of the folklore elements in Călugaru’s writings. In any case, the Romanian local influences presented in such a picturesque manner in Călugaru’s work are credible; perceived as Yiddish speaking, traditional and religiously observant, the communities in this area were exercising significant cultural exchanges with the Gentile rural population, naturally determined by the economic and social interactions, business and networking.

The names of characters employed in *Copilăria unui netrebnic* suggest the local Moldavian influence on the traditional community culture through the early stages of acculturation. Old traditional Jewish names are transformed due to a trend of Romanization which made them sound more similar to the peasant ones: Saniil Căruceru, Mochi Ciucălău, Buftea, Buiumaș (Buium received the Romanian diminutive *-aș*). The

choice of names in Călugaru's work (including the mocking names and the familiar diminutive versions) suggested the increasing level of communication between communities and a certain trend towards integration. At the same time, the fact that the Romanian language seems to be quite widely spoken in the novel, even as a second language used for communication for business or social purposes, represents another indicator for the level of communication between communities and individuals at the time when the novel was written. The heavy symbolism of the names is tackled also in the novel *Trustul*, where the same Buiumaș, this time a teenager exploring city life, receives the suggestion from his friend, Ira, to adopt a Romanian name for the sake of easier integration²³; this is how the readers witness the metamorphosis of Buium a Țiprei into Tudorică Ziprea, a total Romanization of the Hebrew name of his mother and a replacement of his original ethnic name. These forms of adaptation operating with the perspective of a planned integration involve compromises and abandoning parts of individual and collective identity in exchange for new ones. Imposed by the surrounding society and by the process of modernization, urbanization and secularization, these changes are the beginning of a longer and more profound process placing the Jewish traditional identity in crisis.

Poverty, Sickness, Hunger: A Naturalistic Description of the Shtetl. The naturalist depiction of the *shtetl* dominated Călugaru's prose, contrasting with the nostalgic, idealizing and colorful tone of the Central European writers presenting Jewish life. *Copilăria unui netrebnic* was constructed on a subtle tension between the monographic approach, originally belonging to the model of "childhood recollection" literature accounted through the eyes of the "inner child", and the naturalistic analysis of

the society specific to the mature, present-day criticism of the society projected backwards into the author's past. But if the monograph focuses on the life in a traditional Jewish community from Moldavia, the crude description of society goes beyond the limits of the Jewish community, embracing also the life of the Greeks, Romanians or Roma groups inhabiting the same geographical area, living similar life and sharing similar problems. The social critique presents basically the environment of marginalized wretched people practicing the lowest-paid jobs and fighting the deepest poverty, misery, failure, depression, struggle for survival, marginality and peripheral forms of living all together, be they Gypsy, Jews or Romanians.

Copilăria unui netrebnic starts with the memorable scene of an almost-infant Buiumaş craving some more food of the kind his mother seems to enjoy so much, after feeding him²⁴. Obviously, hunger and food are central themes for the novel as the standard of life is obsessively represented through the variably richer or poorer meals, through the special dishes prepared for holidays and special events, the lack of food, the maddening hunger and substitutes. Using food and its reverse, hunger, as symbols of the society, the author develops two directions; on one hand, he described poverty in material terms, while on the other hand he presented the degradation of human relations. Childhood recollections such as “Tifosul roşu” (Red typhus) present unemotional, almost detached and mind-numbing human relations within the family; in one of the stories, the physical infirmity of two of his brothers is sanctioned through sleeping in cold and uncomfortable conditions²⁵. In this brutal world created by poverty, sickness and death, there is no room for sentimentality and emotionalism and the author describes not only the shocking symptoms, but also the deep causes.

The people described in Călugaru's short stories and novels are usually practicing low-paid jobs, varying creatively from workers and apprentices to tailors, shoemakers, cleaning and washing ladies or inn-keepers, and guided by the sole purpose of survival. Without much education, unable to earn a decent living for their work, individuals are forced to be prisoners of an extremely poor lifestyle and to support extended families. The long hours of work practically deprive the individual of his life; from apprenticing at a very early age, the individual continues working in a shop or being self-employed till the end of his life, without vacation or retirement, as for example in the case of Chirvăsuț în "Stafia"²⁶ (The Ghost), dying while at work cutting wood for a family. Just as dramatic is the end of Varvara's life²⁷: she is found dead at home, but ready with commissioned laundry, suggesting that people have no life left apart from their work as their entire time was dedicated to earn money, never enough to survive. In order to stress the dramatic quality of the situation, the author focuses on two social categories: children and old people. Sent to work in inappropriate conditions, the young children lack food, clothes, sleep and proper housing, as is the case for Ira Căruceru and even for Buiumaș, recently arrived in Bucharest and hardly making a living²⁸. To the other extreme, the old people are still forced to work in order to support themselves while obviously unable to make a living or starving for not finding a job. Călugaru stressed even more strongly the cruelty of society and lifestyle while describing the extreme vulnerability of these most disadvantaged groups.

A natural consequence of this precarious lifestyle, sickness and death are omnipresent. The characters suffer from various diseases, children die naturally at an early age, doctors are rarely present due to the costs involved, but also due to the fact that Romania had a low doctor / patient ratio in the beginning of the century, especially in the

countryside. Typhus, tuberculosis, sexually transmitted diseases, and cancerous tumors were very frequent due to malnutrition, hard work, inappropriate housing, and lack of hygiene and medical assistance. In many cases, only half of the children of a given family survive infancy, while bearing marks of early diseases. In the same line, the mental health of the community was severely affected: depression, suicide, madness and insanity bring an end to trajectories of life exhausted by struggle and fight. Individuals seem to be prisoners of their own lives and destinies, and they are not given the chance of surpassing their conditions.

The Crisis of Traditional Identity: the Modernity and the City. Following the evolution of Buiumaş a Țiprei growing up and becoming mature, the cycle of novels featuring him as the main character placed in contrast the traditional *shtetl* environment and life in the great Capital. After some education in the *heder*, in the Israelite-Romanian school and in the Romanian state educational system, young Buiumaş leaves the *shtetl* to go to Bucharest for further studies and to work in order to support himself. Quite early, he has to face a difficult dilemma: on one hand, he is aware that the social and economical situation in the *shtetl* would prevent him from staying within the community because his family is unable to continue supporting him, while no jobs were available. On the other hand, he needs to leave his community in order to get higher education and discover the world.

Paralleling the process of gradually discovering the world outside the *shtetl*, Buiumaş goes through a process of estrangement and subsequent isolation from the community where he had started to be perceived as an outsider:

When he enters *mahala*²⁹, dressed up in his school uniform, neighbors laugh at him, saying he is taking too much pride in it, but they also envy him. Because between them and Buiumaş there is now an invisible wall...³⁰

The communication difficulties and the mutual feeling of intimidation signal a strong detachment and isolation, while the distance between him and the surrounding traditional community becomes greater with every educational level he goes through. The feeling of estrangement from the community is genuine and increasing, especially after his experiences in the capital; returning home for a short while, his family is unable to understand him, while he cannot communicate with them anymore.

Leaving the *shtetl* and trying to adapt to Bucharest, Buiumaş reflects on the life in the capital in very appreciative tones caused by the inherent comparison with life in the *shtetl*. Conversely, the *shtetl* is implicitly subjected to a realistic analysis of the poverty, drama and cruelty of human relations:

He left without missing his home, without being sorry. During the past two years, the agitation, the small size of the *shtetl*, the endless holy superstitions became unbearable (...) Here there was life, a better life, plenty of it and not envious, sly, enmity looks or quarrels. (...) the tram starts moving. It goes by large streets; on both sides shops, all the time new shops, with windows in which any house from the *shtetl* could fit in....³¹

The message of the novel conveyed through the trajectory of the main character and through the description of the two contrasting environments is rather clear. The traditional Jewish world is perceived as a stagnant, frozen space of the past, where things do not evolve anymore, subjected to the circular time measured by the yearly festivals

and celebrations or by life events and customs. The inertia of community life, so much condemned by Buiumaş while strolling along the broad roads of Bucharest, is described as the main cause of a crisis in which the traditional and the modern, the rural and the urban, the old and the young are bound to conflict. There is little space for change and not many opportunities for the young. Affected by poverty, by a limited number of professions, still based on a traditional pattern of judging modern life challenges, the *shtetl* is bound to be left behind by the young, poor and ambitious ones. The only individuals remaining are the old, the parents, preserving as much as possible their way of life and avoiding any change and identity loss; from this perspective, the generation of Buiumaş' parents was bound to vanish, as it was unable to react to the pressure of poverty, misery and eventually disappearance. Still, the generational break motivating the young to move to urban settlements while searching for a better life and survival possibilities is a dramatic one, suggested through the motif of non-communication and estrangement. The monographic aspect of the novel seems to represent in this context a last picture of a fading world which will be preserved only in the memory of its former inhabitants.

Political Alternatives and Socialism. After identifying the profound crisis of the Jewish community and its motivation, Călugaru suggested an ideological alternative. Quite a few of his characters and some of the most engaging dialogues in the novel *Trustul*, as well as the topic of the story “De la 5 pînă la 5” (From 5 to 5) were inspired by the Socialist movement and ideology to which Buiumaş was attracted through his circle of friends in Bucharest. At the same time, no characters or references to Zionism were to be found in Călugaru's work. To the surprise of the reader, the author tackled only

marginally the Jewish-Romanian relations³². The novel, although presenting Jewish life in Moldavia, does not focus on the specificity of the Jewish culture and society as a regular monograph, but it visibly argues for the similarities between the ethnic-religious groups. Călugaru attempts to “Moldovenize” Jewish life on several levels, from the adaptation of the language registers and the name usage up to customs and ways of living. In stressing the social similarities (poverty, sickness, unemployment) and by avoiding presenting the topic of Jewish-Romanian relations and anti-Semitism, Călugaru obviously had a political agenda behind his writings. Thus, his literature concentrated less on the differences, antagonisms and conflicts between communities, but more on the similar social and economic characteristics and on the general human concerns, able to bring together groups, even if on the surface the narrative evoked the ethnic and the specific. The work of Călugaru, as in general in Romanian-language Jewish literature, deconstructed stereotypes and prejudices regarding the Jewish community by depicting it in a very realistic light, by presenting the similarities with the non-Jewish groups and the grounds on which common life could be built further.

While presenting the Socialist group, Călugaru ideologizes the literary substance in a visible, simplistic, forced and almost propagandistic manner. Socialist characters such as poor workers like Ietien, Mochi Ciucălău or Marici Ceapă, barely surviving their daily occupations, are described with sympathy, in warm tones, deliberately exaggerating the positive traits in contrast with the rich, decadent individuals coming from the financial world such as Dimache or Gumar. The episodes with strong characters determined to resist political persecutions, e.g., Dobrogeanu-Gherea’s burial, the picture of the Socialist illegal club and the people gravitating around it and the strike in Isar’s typography, are balanced by the lavish world of the landowners, businessmen described as superficial,

weak, and interested in indulging themselves and delivering a superiority discourse. The social structures appear as rather schematically designed by the writer as the rich became richer through onerous business; the message is rather transparent, primitively expressed and not convincing due to the schematic character of the plot naively expressing dichotomies and Manichaeism through sympathy versus antipathy and manipulating the focus of the readers.

The novel *Trustul* was published in 1937 just before the right wing rose to power in Romania. In this context, the book ends with a critical and depressing conclusion: Fedia, the Russian refugee marginalized by his fellow workers for his mental limitation, argumentative nature and inability to adapt, commits suicide. All the time on the side of the rejected, Fedia represents the embodiment of the workers' situation at the time: unable to communicate their complaints and to be heard, prevented from occupying better jobs, eager to adapt, but frustrated by the lack of opportunities offered and raging with revolt. Soon, Mochi, the young Socialist activist and Ietien, the leader of the miners, disappear as short-lived characters of the novel; their activism does not bring any changes or results and the movement is repressed by the police. Most of the characters, even the most ideologized ones, are thus forced to adapt to the society and to compromise. Thus the conclusion of the novel turns pragmatic, meditating on the impossibility to oppose a corrupt system which is determined to survive either by destroying the weak opponents or by corrupting and taking in the adaptable ones when their destruction is not possible. Little by little, the young rebellious Ziprea (adapted name of Buiumaş) gets used to his situation which could be hardly altered, and accepts his life within the corrupted system as better and preferable to the one of misery and insecurity. Evolving from the image of a *shtetl* boy amazed of the new city life and determined to survive in Bucharest by all

means, to the profile of the defeated and tired young man struggling for his life in difficult conditions, Ziprea chooses to continue the struggle, abandon his former idealism and adapt to the system and to the reality of life instead of endlessly planning a change which is not in his capacity to accomplish. His new ideology, designed by the conditions that the city life has forced him to accept, has less to do with his Jewish background and identity (which in this novel are less prominent), and allows more space for the Socialist political message.

B. I. Peltz: The Identity Crisis of the Jewish Community. Already a tendency in Romanian literature of the interwar period, “the literature of the milieus” or the “literature of the periphery”, as it was also called, mainly focused on a strong criticism of the Romanian modernizing society, expressing the attitude of the intelligentsia at the turn of the century and its way of relating to the social changes and modernization. The *mahala*, the outskirts, the life in a *han*³³ (inn), the permanently moving tenants, the cheap and disaffected houses for rent, lower classes, low-paid jobs, poverty, lack of hope, drama, and tuberculosis were already part of the Romanian interwar literary scene through the pre-WWI works of Mihail Sadoveanu or Cezar Petrescu, but it gained more popularity after WWI through the work of authors such as G. M. Vlădescu, Gib Mihăescu and Felix Aderca. It is sign of the success of this literary direction that critics such as Ovid S. Crohmălniceanu and George Călinescu dedicated extensive chapters to the phenomenon. During the interwar period, Isac Peltz was one of the most important writers of the so-called “literature of the periphery” due to his interest in the life at the outskirts of the society, at the periphery and of the marginal. This type of social discourse

of the poor and neglected, victims of the fate and social determinism secured Peltz an affiliation to a successful literary recipe for the period. Writing on the Bucharest *mahala* like everybody else, Peltz focused on the Jewish life and specificity of the community. In this context, Peltz adopted the literary genre and its successful social-literary strategy and introduced the ethnic-religious groups for an easier cultural and literary integration of Jewish identity into the Romanian intellectual field. Unfortunately, the readers and the critics appreciated his novels mostly for tackling the marginal, but continued to ignore the deeper ethnic-religious minority problem underlying the whole narrative.

Integrated within this literary trend, Peltz follows a triple political and social discourse. On the one hand he debates the situation of those poor, marginalized, forgotten and subjected to fatal determinism, just as the other writers from the group. On the other hand, Peltz focuses on the ethnic aspect of this periphery in an attempt to deconstruct the anti-Semitic discourse and stereotypes of his time which were targeting the Jewish financiers for the decline of the Romanian economy and life; in this deconstructive direction, Peltz planned to show the stratified structure of the Jewish community, with its own underprivileged groups and poor Jewish neighborhood. If the anti-Semitic discourse was targeting the caricature-like figures of the Jewish *arendar*, financier, banker and industrialist, tradesman and ferocious merchant, Peltz presented the Jewish quarter in Bucharest not with the definite project of putting together a monograph with specific details, but rather to stress the level of prejudice and misconceptions within the Romanian collective political imaginary. In this context, the presence of the rich Jewish characters is accompanied by a severe criticism coming from the part of the community, placing the blame for the loss of identity on the younger generations that are striving for economic success and social recognition while compromising the lifestyle and customs

of traditional observant life. Directed against the rich groups, Peltz's discourse added a third level to his political stance. Thus Peltz's criticism dissected the problems of the Jewish community, but at the same time also the problem of unsuccessful integration within Romanian society.

Literature of the Periphery as a Genre: Integrating Jewish Life. Peltz was not exclusively a writer of Jewish life; just like Călugaru, he was interested in the life at the margins of the society, on the poor and wretched groups, social disadvantaged milieus and periphery, but his major focus was on Jewish life perceived as integral part of the experience of the marginal. In two novels of background fresco-like literature, *Tară bună* (Good country) and *Actele vorbește* (Documents speak), Peltz projected an overview of Romanian society in general, focusing on integrality of human and community connections instead of particular milieus, types and events. A more detailed portrait examining several "milieus" presented only briefly in the previous two novels focuses on Jewish life and community: *Horoscop* (Horoscope), *Nopțile Domnișoarei Mili* (Miss Mili's nights), *De-a bușilea* (Toddling), *De-a viața și de-a moartea* (Playing the game of life and death), *Moartea tinerețelor* (The death of young age). Only in his two major novels, *Foc în Hanul cu Tei* and *Calea Văcărești*, does Peltz address the problems and specificities of Jewish life in Romania as well as carry out an in-depth analysis of the Jewish society in the first decades of the twentieth century. These two novels manage to connect the general social focus of his literature embodied in this "literature of the periphery" genre with his profound identification and preoccupation with Jewish life and identity crisis in Romania in the form of writing a "Romanian-language Jewish literature." Thus, the novels belong equally to both tendencies due to the economic and

social specificity of the Romanian Jewish life, and at the same time this double approach and discourse led to their success in being widely read.

Staging the drama of human destiny, the author focuses on literary devices able to naturally offer a place for gathering individuals; thus Peltz's favorite setting for the plot was the *han*, which functioned as a stage for the general tragedy of mankind by offering a variety of destinies naturally brought together by these housing arrangements. Peltz facile solution for the dilemma of how to bring together the most disparate groups of people with their destinies, situations, trajectories and dramas was to use the *mahala* as a larger community setting. Thus, the author collected greater groups and had more space in the novel to play with characters' lives naturally.

Peltz populated his literature with description of buildings, the presentation of common space and material objects. Human life, individual's destinies, and life stories seem to be determined by these structures, especially as Peltz uses them to present the human substance. Concentrating on individuals, the author presents several forms of inhabiting used as markers of economic and social success or failure. The poorest individuals live in shared accommodation as inns, rented houses, and cheap hotels:

What about the bagel maker? There are ten people in a small room, all of them men and all working hard from morning till after midnight. The wife of the bagel maker died of tuberculosis, her sons would follow her soon.³⁴

The lack of privacy imposed by communal living, the high costs of the rent and the poor conditions (humidity, lack of electricity and heating) generates a permanent search for a better place, thus periodical moving out at St. George and St. Dumitru, but also a series of diseases flourishing in these scarce living conditions. Evictions and sales

of properties are the major events in human destiny marking the end or the beginning of social ascension. Naturally, the most admired cases are represented by professionals and businessmen who could afford to move out of the *mahala* into the city center, a fact which naturally severs ties with the community and lifestyle, but also signifies a high degree of acculturation, integration and social and economic success.

The selection of setting offers also the pretext for enumerating professions and occupations described through their diversity, misery, poverty and through the anecdotic character of the life trajectories, through the illicit ways of gaining fortunes, used as another method of describing society. Diseases, death, depression, tuberculosis, cancer, suicide, madness, insanity and precarious health were other issues greatly exploited by the “literature of the periphery” and which gained an inherent place also in the universe of Peltz’s novels. Programmatically a social literature, Peltz’s narrative also employed places containing social manifestations as spaces for socializing; the teahouse, the Synagogue, the shop, and the ideological gatherings and clubs, the dancing parties and the cultural societies represent alternative forms of connecting socially on different generational levels and bonding within the larger community.

The Economic Factor: Social Consequences and Identity Changes. The main element structuring Peltz’s social criticism and identified as the cause for the community’s dissolution and for the lack of communication between generations is social change analyzed through the financial factor. The topic was also extremely popular in Romanian literature of the time as a manifestation of the socio-economic and cultural changes that society was undergoing and also fearing; it represented a process of modernization and change from a rural and agricultural society to a semi-industrialized

and urban one. The same economic drive and development of the bourgeois group could be identified in the Jewish community as well. Peltz's novel basically grounds the entire generational divide in the effects that the economic issues had on Jewish society. The "financial obsession" and the will of economic progress are perceived as destructive and totally negative forces leading to the ruin of characters' destinies and to dramatic changes in their lives. The structure of the novel undergoes the same pattern: the middle generation is practically demonized by its children and by its parents for attempting to climb the social ladder through economic success (while it is actually the only proven way of wider social acceptance in a rather anti-Semitic and xenophobic society), and the situation was further complicated also by the question of identity preservation. The changes in the economic status are condemned mainly for the fact that this process led to an assimilationist behavior and to a crisis of the Jewish identity while the efforts to integration and inclusion were still doubtful.

The mercantilism of the world of Peltz's novels was crudely defined by one representative of the children's generation criticizing the successful group in the middle: it is

...a world in which money is everything; where honor can be measured in gold; where personal merits disappear in front of a well-fed stomach, jewels and fortunes; where the traditions of the "people of the book" have disappeared completely.³⁵

Obviously, the natural identification of money with human value becomes the cruel rationale of the book, clearly implying that a person without financial means holds no value for society. The stories behind financial gains and fortunes were often sordid. Micu Braun, the main character of *Foc în Hanul cu Tei*, becomes the typical case; coming

from a poor family, he left for America in his early years and returned with a dubious past resurfacing due to his friend's occasional blackmailing and placing him in difficult situation. Thus the critique of a social category and the analysis of the creation of the bourgeois group are performed with irony, stressing the collective hypocrisy involved; the promiscuity, compromises and poverty of previous generations or of the past are forgotten through social acceptance in order to favor the demanding standards, pretensions and snobbism of the present day. Although the social standards and the traditional community hierarchy based on education and morality marginalize the process of inclusion of the nouveau riches in the establishment up to a certain level, the recently emerging financial factor determines changes in terms of internal community organization, forcing the inclusion of rich and doubtful individuals able to finance institutions and philanthropic activities. The case of Micu Braun is telling in this respect, as he was previously socially excluded for his lack of scruples in business, and later courted by the philanthropic organization and by the intellectuals of the community in order to join the association and donate funds³⁶.

Just as Jewish society had to compromise its organization and structures in order to include the newly emerging financial group, the individuals also had to change their lifestyle and principles in order to attain social and financial success. Numerous compromises and changes were integrated in everyday life as the successful businessman had to work and socialize increasingly with the Gentile society, to accept new forms of living and lifestyle and to change his traditional way of living. The old customs and traditions changed within family life. Thus Blum, one of the characters in *Foc în Hanul cu Tei*, was described as

...like all the other merchants in the neighborhood, he kept his shop open on Saturdays, not growing a beard but cutting his hair in a modern style, smoked, no matter if there was a Jewish holiday or not, eating bacon and was not different by any means from the other Christian merchants. Like Micu Braun, like Blumenfeld, like Nordman, he celebrated Christmas, Easter and Baptism of Saint John, when he was partying for days and nights with the rest of the petty traders of the Lipscani commercial area. Only on Rosh-Hashanah and Yom Kippur, the holy fall holidays, Blum felt obliged to close the shop. Not from any religious conviction. He was just fearing of the unknown and wanted to be in peace with the Hebrew God, at least then.³⁷

Clearly, the condemnable compromises and identity changes are basically directed towards economic stability and social acceptance and integration; the inner monologue of a father planning to secure a better life for his children in a different neighborhood, in a more socially secure area and less ethnically marginal eventually hoped for them to be "gay, dignified and masters of their own", not beaten, cursed and under bosses' authority. The security of the children's future was assured through constant efforts of the parents who, by supporting their education and living standards, also passed on a corrupted way of living leading towards assimilation and an identity containing its own crisis to explode later on. In novel *Actele vorbește*, the case of an assimilationist doctor was criticized and his community relations also altered:

Doctor Weintraub, since he became Strugureanu, did also something else: he baptized his child in the Christian faith, Mihai. Since then, he looks down in a protective generous manner of cold indifference to the architect Glasman...³⁸

All these financial developments and social changes affect deeply the cohesion and solidarity within the community. At a certain point in the novel, a man in difficulty asked for help and mercy from one of the rich characters by appealing to the common

Jewish origin and identity as the community and solidarity were always perceived as basic links within the group. The supreme appeal for help and understanding, “we all are Jews,” signaling the identity connection behind any social differences, was ignored; for Peltz, this was the symbol of the dissolution of the community as a symbolical body of connected individuals³⁹.

In this complex context, the relationship between Romanians and Jews receives a special place; the drive for success and financial stability and the compromises meant to secure it were basically the result of a century-long tense and unstable status of the Jewish community in Romania. In Peltz’s novel, the Jewish-Gentile relations are based on constant negotiation and business compromises. The relations are mainly constructed in the working environment and are based on business collaborations, but the appearance of convivial socialization is often destroyed once a major event interferes. For example, when businessman Micu Braun dies, his family dramatically perceives the superficiality and practical functionalism of Micu’s social circles and networks. Unlike Braun’s parties and dinners populated with important Gentile business and political figures, none of the former contacts appears to honor his memory at his funeral. The social connections were mainly articulated through business and profit activities for which socializing and maintaining appearances represented merely a friendly cover, not to be mistaken for relaxed and social friendly relations⁴⁰. According to a sad remark of one character, Braun sought social acceptance within Romanian society throughout his professional life; when it was finally granted, the connection was mainly created on business grounds and dissolved once the interest and profit source disappeared. This hypocritical dichotomy between substance and appearance and the functionality of the double discourse activated and deactivated according to practical interests structured the behavior of most of the

non-Jewish characters present in Peltz's novel. Furthermore, the reduced presence of Romanian characters in the structure of the novel, apart from signaling the low level of communication and interaction between communities, addressed a severe criticism of the quality of relationships as well as the motivations behind them. The portrait of the Romanian group as well as the criticism of the social relationships (attitude towards Jews, double standards, tolerance of the authorities for anti-Semitic attacks, dormant social anti-Semitism) is revealed as a secondary agenda of the novel, following the social criticism of Jewish society. The superficiality and hypocrisy of the Jewish-Christian human relations is frequently emphasized. Eventually, the need for economic advancement which compromised Jewish identity and subsequently the cohesion of the community did not secured a real social integration and acceptance; the criticism of Jewish-Gentile relations highlights compromise, double standards and acceptance, while the results are simply circumstantial.

A Generational Critique of Identity Crisis. The generational approach used by Peltz in his novel objectively identified the distinctions between social groups following the changes in terms of values, customs and identity using a chronological indicator. The internal group oppositions based on different collective outlooks on life are explained through the age distinction and cultural and economic transformations attached to the time factor. The generational concept operates via a clearer, step-by-step evolution of Jewish society under the impact of modernization, secularization and urbanization; following the three generational discourses, the reader is better equipped with knowledge on internal transformations, inner conflicts and a group perspective⁴¹.

The old generation, the one of “grandparents” was usually identified with the first generation of poor immigrants from Poland and Russia, importing here a renowned sense of Jewish lifestyle, tradition, genuine Eastern European culture and identity, Yiddish and Orthodoxy as well as a greater respect for the values of Judaism and community solidarity in a society which in some areas had already started a process of acculturation and modernization. Their portrait is sketchy, based on a primitive deconstruction of their existence oscillating “between synagogue, workshop and teahouse” in a form of detachment from real world:

...the same Jewish grandfathers, exhausted by the long years of work and torments, lost in a perpetual dreaming state, absent from the arguments of those around them, mummified in their defeated attitude – the same world occupies the chairs and drinks out of teapots the boiling drink... This is their only vice, their only escape from the trouble of everyday living, these hours dedicated to the coffee shop.⁴²

Although not prominent in the novel, without a great impact on the structure of the narrative, the first generation was rather isolated within the community, but strongly attached to it, preserving traditions and unable to adjust to the new environment. Their function is rather referential in the novel, causing the profile of the second generation, the one of the parents, to become more salient by stressing the changes it undertook in time. Thus the silent discrete group of the oldest addresses an unspoken criticism of the next generation by articulating a clear and conservative profile.

The middle generation, the one of the “parents”, overly represented in the novel as the only active element, the engine of change and cultural community transformation, driven by economic and social advancement and able to compromise old cultural values, dominates the narrative scene. Its transformations, compromises, identity

shifts and inner conflicts were already analyzed within the previous section concerning the economic factors. Condemned tacitly by their parents for the drastic identity changes and repression, but also by their children for the long-term failure of their integrative efforts and lack of political involvement, the middle generation within Peltz's works adopt a much criticized "assimilationist" discourse, popular within Wallachian Jewry politically supporting the UER and thus Romanian politics instead of articulating a Jewish political identity. In order to stress this shortcoming, the novelist describes the petty local and internal politics within the Jewish community, concerning strictly the relations with local Romanian administration in a strategy of securing their business projects where the rich representatives of the middle generation were mostly involved (higher positions within philanthropic societies, associations, struggles for positions within the community administrative hierarchy, political alliances supporting Romanian local interest groups and parties in power, business associations) in contrast with the more generous, collective and also utopian political efforts of their children. The struggles to obtain citizenship and to repetitively and pathetically demonstrate the patriotic attachment to the "national interests" in exchange for a partial and doubtful integration and acceptance were looked down on by the next generation.

The young generation, or the so-called "children's generation", criticize and dramatically oppose the established generation of the parents and connect symbolically with the generation of the grandparents as a form of partial return to Jewish identity during their search for a group identity. Confused and unable to find their own direction, the young characters develop a border identity as they feel on the one hand the consequences of progressively severing ties with Judaism due to education and under their parents' influence, but also on the other hand the failure of the integrative efforts⁴³

of their parents and the futility of their compromises in a society which could not offer full acceptance. The young become lucid, realistic and practical, articulating a severe criticism of their parents' generation, or are simply distracted by the alternatives offered by art, literature, and politics. Women graduate from the Conservatory, Letters and Beaux Arts, while men turn more and more towards medicine, business or law school or are fascinated by political debates, spending a lot of time in the socialist club. The generational break is enforced educationally and culturally and prompted economically by the previous generations. Caught mid-way, the young generation discovers itself in the middle of a crisis which is temporarily resolved through political options and activism. Still, although the "children" are better represented than their "grand-parents" in terms of political activism and group discourse, they are out shadowed by their "parents" in terms of economic and social relative success. Nevertheless, the stamina of their parents and the drive to succeed are missing and the portraits of the young characters are practically a collection of exhausted individuals⁴⁴, confused and insecure about their direction and identity options, thus unable to channel their energy in a clear direction and easily worn out by life's difficulties. Intensively flirting with and seduced by leftist politics (much more than the Zionist ideology which in Wallachia, where Peltz set his novels, was less popular), they were prevented from continuing their projects due to the special situation of the Socialist movement in Romania at that time. Partly banned from Romanian politics (communist movement), partly surveyed by police and Siguranță, subjected to possible arrest and imprisonment, condemnation and exclusion, the young individuals attracted to politics had not much space in order to develop their projects, a fact which gives their action in the novel a heroically, utopian, but also useless aura, and even introduces the anarchist type of character. Thus, most of the political interest is confined to the level of

intellectual and ideological debates, extensive reading⁴⁵ and heated meetings in Socialist clubs. Their intellectualized profile opposes and openly criticizes the material, practical ambitions and greed of their parents; they could definitely not accept the compromises and assimilationist attitude of their parents, so they return to more authentic directions connected to their regained identity⁴⁶ (Judaism, Hassidism and rarely Zionism) or simply decide to reject the last reminders of Jewish identity and dedicate themselves to Socialism.

C. Ury Benador: Politics and the Crisis of the Jewish Intellectual. Ury

Benador confessed in one of his works that

I acknowledge having no other mission except for leaving after me the fresco of the ghetto, which has to be - if not more than literature - at least something else, but literature.⁴⁷

Although this can be perceived as his professed mission as a writer, only *Ghetto Veac XX* and “Appassionata” deal specifically with Jewish life, while not focusing on the community life as such. Unlike Peltz and Călugaru, who approached Jewish life in Romania in the beginning of the 20th century in social collective terms heavily employing the monographic genre, Benador focused on identity issue through a personal perspective and perceived Judaism as an individual way of experiencing the world. As the main characters in his “Jewish works” are intellectuals or members of the elite, the individual perspective on life, shaped by a strong Judaic background to be found in the usage of specific metaphors, symbols, references, became natural. Judaism was integrated in a genuine way into the personal outlook on reality and became a looking glass for his

surroundings. Thus Benador's strategy of representing "the ghetto" is not to recreate the community and its life on paper in order to describe and raise its problems publicly, but to present it through a personalized perspective while focusing on the intellectual's profile and on his (or her) inner conflict. In this way, the background emerged clearly and was able to highlight the personal perspective of the main character as reconstructed by his (or her) mental eyes. By accomplishing this task, the writer abandoned any claims to objectivity and social representativity in order to honor the individual and the subjective reasoning.

Aside from the numerous cultural references involving Jewish history and the Torah, the narrative is ineffably impregnated with elements representing Jewish identity and Judaism. Hassidic stories, parables or mere broken symbolical images fill in the space between the abrupt reality offered by family situations or political discussions and the turmoil agitating the main character's inner life with utopias and analysis. In this respect, Benador is not openly concerned with Jewishness, Jewish identity preservation, the dangers that the assimilationist movement pose against the coherence of the Jewish community; for him, due to his education, cultural and religious background, Judaism and mysticism were from the beginning inborn ways of relating to the world, community or self, which provides his discourse with a deeper symbolism.

The specific element which marked Benador's work, namely intellectual individualism defined by a strong Jewish identity, led to a complex strategy of integration within Romanian interwar literary discourses. In order to better express the internal intellectual tension, the author lets characters tell their own stories first-hand; this literary device close to the "stream of consciousness" technique densely combines feelings, reverie, imagination, dreams, reality and cultural references mainly from the Judaic

background and manages to introduce the reader directly into their troubled inner universe. The intellectual type developed by Benador's writings resembles greatly the authenticist-experimentalist direction in Romanian interwar literature and its pre-existentialist traits through the idea of "experimenting" with a life situation by placing himself and people around him in crisis. Thus Benador connected through his characters' literary intellectualism and problematic inner life with a whole trend of artistic discourses of the interwar period in Romanian literature: A. Holban, Mircea Eliade, Gib Mihăescu and Camil Petrescu's intellectual types, but also the "literature of authenticity" which generated a productive literary model embodied through the *trăirist*⁴⁸ doctrine and placed directly under the Gidian influence. Nevertheless, even if Benador's most accomplished works were well received by the critics of his time, he remained largely ignored due to the dense mystical substance in his texts. Although by far the most accomplished work in the series of novels on "Jewish literature in Romanian", *Ghetto Veac XX* was never republished, unlike the novels of Peltz and Călugaru, which were much easier assimilated through their social critique.

The Profile of the Jewish Intellectual. A businessman in *Final grotesc* (Grotesque ending), a renowned musician in *Subiect banal* (Common topic) or *Hilda*, an aspiring journalist in *Ghetto Veac XX* or a gifted rabbi in "Appassionata", not to mention the permanent background evocation of Beethoven's profile, the main characters in Benador's works are all exceptional individuals and represent intellectual types. All have a tense, febrile, agitated conflicting inner life; the whole substance of the stories consist in fact of their internal monologues and obsessive fixations on love, death, identity, religion, culture or creativity becoming more intense and reaching a climax when the characters

become prisoners of their inner world, losing contact with reality and the ability to function socially. Although not exactly intellectuals through the nature of their profession, their way of living and perceiving the reality, their excess of reasoning, febrile inner searches and problematization transforms them into intellectuals; also the cultural references and models employed, a certain manner of presenting reality mediated by Judaism, their readings, music and essential experiences transcribed in journals, diaries, letters, musical and literary creations shapes their profiles into thinkers of the most authentic vocation.

As some of the main male characters are also artists or thinkers (a musician, a writer, a learned rabbi), they are building as well their own legend and image as geniuses. Self-idealizing his function and his role in the society, the writer described himself as

...in a state of somnambulism and lucidity, detachment from the earthy matters, having when he wakes up the amazed looks of a child in front of the barely created world, as a new toy, only for him, and paralyzed under an immense crystal bell.⁴⁹

The mere act of creation enables his characters to approach surrounding society with greater dignity, self-confidence and self-consciousness, pride in their own mission, but also arrogance, superiority, and frustration against the mediocre mass surrounding them. Due to this complex of mission and superiority which strikingly contrasted with his precarious social and economic position, Baruch rejects help from the community. In this context, the recurrent image of the German composer, L. von Beethoven receives a special attention as the embodiment of genius, intellectualism and creativity. Any study dedicated to the work of Benador should mention his obsession for Beethoven, which functioned as a leitmotif for practically all his writings as a favorite composer, an

intellectual model and the topic of a fictionalized monograph, in *Beethoven, omul* (Beethoven, the Man), from which parts were already published earlier as *Preludiu la Beethoven* (Prelude to Beethoven). The ultimate significance of Beethoven's obsessive presence in Benador's work could be revealed through the text of "Appassionata", one of the most symbolically charged texts of Benador; the religious mystical value that Benador invested in Beethoven's music determined a supernatural connection between the religious figure and the musical genius, while the literary text introduced a rich Hassidic influence and symbolism.

The attitude of rejecting the external tangible world in order to escape and find refuge in a self able to fabricate alternative realities is common for Benador's characters. For example, in *Ghetto Veac XX*, Baruch Landau appears as a "melodramatic rag, still teenager at 30, bovarizing and Peer-Gyntizing his life", lost in his inner projects and meditation, rejecting challenges posed by real life, thus complicating his supposedly responsible position as a married man through an escapist solution. The inner world of the characters is naturally dominated by intense mental processes, forms of analyzing the essence of events and individuals, and reasoning about them. Thus the lack of direct contact with reality and real beings determines a mentally mediated relationship with the world, which develops an intense susceptibility, jealousy, paralysis when it comes to acting and making decisions, doubts, anger, constructing scenarios, possible solutions and inventing forms of mental torture which determine an extremely intense inner life at the expense of the chance to live normally among other people. Baruch, Ludwig, the businessman and the rabbi live in a kind of trance generated by their obsessive thinking; all share the same addiction to reverie, melancholy, an exacerbated sense of pride which is easily offended, susceptibility, dignity, depression, active memory and a great deal of

passivity. A victim of his obsessive thinking, Baruch feels mentally paralyzed and incapable of taking action and changing his situation, applying the projects he designed for his family and future. Thus, his inability to act determines an exasperating situation; Baruch endures a complex of feelings of fury against his stagnation, of a need for a change, of vitalism, but also passivism and daydreaming, all reciprocally blocking one another and confusing the character. His neurasthenic behavior and his search for drama, his confusion and his lack of decision are integrated into a general feeling of anger which is socially projected. Baruch's lack of self-confidence, vulnerability, hesitations, suspicions against people and situations transform him into a fragile and highly unstable character. This over-intellectualization of existence reflects tragically and masochistically also on emotional life. Love stories receive a complex, tragic and profound dimension, as is the case for couples such as Ludwig – Hilda, Baruch – Mira, and even for Reb Burich'l and his wife Mira. Love becomes an extremely dense, heavy and complicated feeling, reaching obsession, transcendental levels and surpassing the individual, but also able to transform itself into a powerful self-destructive tool. Fatedness, magic, fascination, and spiritual attraction are explained through obscure, metaphysical connections.

The same conflictual situation reigns over the issue of intellectual identity. In a moment of self-reflection on his destiny as a writer, Baruch questions himself: "what does he want to be? The short story writer Barbu Țălnă, or the Jewish writer Menachem Landovsky?"⁵⁰ Even if for an intellectual, the most intimate creative act should be connected with language as a major factor determining also the fundamentals of intellectual identity, Baruch oscillates, detached, between becoming a Romanian writer expressing his creations in Romanian or a Jewish writer as he was already by then the author of a play inspired by Jewish life⁵¹. On the other hand, in a different moment of his

existence, surprised by his sudden outburst of poetic creativity in Yiddish, Baruch questions as well the origin of the process and believes that it is the direct influence of Litvak's Yiddishist personality:

...this is it: mimicry, chameleonism. He has no personality. How come he writes in Yiddish? He speaks Yiddish from his childhood, reads Yiddish for a long time, and still he has never written anything in Yiddish till today”⁵²

at the same time acknowledging that he was constantly writing poetry in Romanian Representing the typical case of an acculturated intellectual, born in a Yiddish-speaking family, but deliberately accepting the Romanian language and culture through school and reaching a cultural identification with its values (which were not always coinciding politically and socially with the Jewish community's), Baruch discovers his political confusion between two possible paths: becoming an assimilated Romanian writer of Jewish origin or returning to his mother tongue and writing in it. For both, the lack of interest and enthusiasm, the detachment from political passions explained clearly his in-between position; not feeling a strong connection with his Jewish background anymore, connected only culturally, deliberately and superficially with Romanian society, Baruch could not develop a strong identity and a political discourse and became once more the prisoner of his contradicting and paralyzing drives.

Identity and Politics: the Crisis of the Jewish Intellectuals. The novel *Ghetto Veac XX* intended to present a fresco of the Jewish life in the first decades of the 20th century in Romania by following the critical perspective of the main character, Baruch, a young Jewish intellectual. While including elements of ethnography, history and

anthropology when describing the community as such, political options occupy a central place; Baruch's withdrawn intellectual attitude to political activism and social involvement contrasts strongly with the political conflicts and compromises described in the social background. Eventually, the novel focuses on the problem of the young Jewish intellectual confronted with a profound political and identity crisis connected with modernization, with the traditional Jewish world on one hand and the intolerant non-Jewish society to which he felt attached and acculturated on the other. The exceptional profile of Baruch and his internal monologues become a pretext for a larger analysis of the young Jewish intellectual generation in the Romanian interwar period, as from the beginning of his novel, Benador declares that the story is "the fictionalized life story of Baruch Landau, which is, apparently less his life, but the life of his times and of the Jews."⁵³

The past and previous generations are described as major factors in determining the profile of the present generation; thus Baruch is placed genealogically and intellectually in a profound connection with his exceptional father and grandfather by stressing the coincidences and similarities between generations and thus emphasizing the continuity. Thus the generations in the family (grandfather reb Burich'l, father Mendl and son Baruch) demonstrate a certain continuity of identity; the constant move of the grandfather was repeated by father's departure from Northern Moldavia to Braila to be finally confirmed by Baruch's relocation from Braila to professionally more-rewarding Bucharest. Open-mindedness and extensive reading, troubled roots, and the wandering of each generation are several recurrent topics meant to enlighten the social and cultural interplays within Jewish society; thus the past tends to be reconstructed through any present generation through education, culture and religious identity. The whole lineage

stresses the symbolical continuity that Baruch maintained with his past and intellectual inheritance able to support his Jewish identity strongly present in his discourse.

Educated in a Romanian environment, but still part of a religiously observant traditional Jewish community, the individual had several paths of social advancement and integration available. Starting with language usage (Romanian, Yiddish or both), with the dress code and religious requirements, the two cultural models coming from two different options of identity represented yet another factor able to confuse the young intellectual. The greatest disappointment of idealist Baruch traveling through Northern Moldavia is the dissolution of the image he created about the existence of a collectivity and of an intellectual Jewish atmosphere in the most traditional areas of the Romanian Jewry. Baruch's first personal intercultural experiences are not more fortunate either. Moments from Baruch's childhood when his identification with Romanian culture and history due to his education in Romanian conflict with the hostile atmosphere in school when he was reminded of his non-Romanian roots; the profound conflict and feeling of rejection generated a crisis of identity. In this direction, Benador wrote his programmatic article "De două ori eu -1" (Two times me - 1) where he developed his double identity model, later illustrated by Baruch in the novel. The scene of his high-school entrance exam recalls the strong psychological pressure against Jewish pupils coming from the authorities and surrounding environment. Feeling himself a stranger and placed in an inferior position due to the fact that the ones dictating the hierarchy and educational evaluation are in a position of power and represent authority, Baruch develops a conflicted identity. Despite his solid education, his social acceptance is permanently determined by the political quota which puts Jewish individuals at a disadvantage in comparison with Romanians, thus preventing them from social advancement.

Challenged permanently in his cultural Romanian identification and living in constant fear of anti-Jewish demonstrations, Baruch turns towards possible options within Jewish politics. In terms of political options, the principled debate described above between the older generation adopting the idea of integration within the Romanian society through the UEP, and the younger individuals active in the Socialist and Zionist movement, becomes relevant. First, the criticism against Romanian Jewish politics in general is extremely strong due to the comparative approach; through the discourse of Litvak, a Russian Jewish anarchist, Romanian Jewry appeared to him in “a deep profound boring sleep” if compared with Russian Jewish activism. The UER is struggling for citizenship rights in a hesitant manner, the Jews fighting in the war with Bulgaria have enrolled because of their insecurity about the future granting of citizenship, while the Zionist group consisted of a few late Romantic members focused on raising funds, religious celebration and commemoration without real involvement. The second critical approach is represented by the different generational views; Socialism is perceived as specific to the politics of the young generation, while UER represents the compromising manner of the old generation. The lack of communication between age groups is suggestively represented in the fragment where Zalman’s father, the old, sick and half-paralyzed *hakham* (wise man, Torah scholar) from Brăila listens from home, after a day of fasting and praying for Yom Kippur, to his son’s Socialist speech on the radio from Tiraspol where he was politically active and teaching Romanian. From the young generation’s perspective, the father appears to be

...living apart from everything that surrounds him. (...) discussing seriously and mysteriously Talmud problems in the current year 1913 and I said to myself: this is a ghetto trace from the Middle Ages.⁵⁴

The Socialist direction, to which Benador dedicates most of the political discussions in the novel, focuses on a Jewish ideological version employing Yiddish and thus rejecting the eventual ideological assimilationism on social grounds. In considering the importance of Yiddish in Jewish politics, a constant double standard discourse is applied to Yiddish, which was perceived as not modern, preventing the community from modernizing, or unable to reach to the core of such an acculturated group. The embarrassment of using a familiar idiom for official manifestations, but at the same time the genuine attraction and attachment to the mother tongue, added one more dilemma to an indecisive and confused individual. On this issue, Baruch expresses once more a great dilemma caused by his acculturated condition; lecturing at a literary festival dedicated to I. L. Peretz, Baruch speaks Yiddish, although

...it seemed weird to him that the language he used to speak to his family and neighbors sounds so difficult when presenting publicly. Only when guests started speaking, reading from Peretz or from their own works, he realized how simple everyday words combined properly get festive looks and become emotional and communicative as filled with a dear sadness, of *Harzigkeit*.⁵⁵

The “assimilationist” option represented by UEP is also analyzed in the novel as the debates generated by its doctrine and concerning Jewish identity in political terms within the Romanian modern society influenced young Baruch who assisted in several meetings together with his father. Challenging the UEP ideas according to which the Romanian Jews are basically “Romanians of Mosaic persuasion”, Mendl Landau declares that Jews are “Jews and Romanian citizens”, stressing the fact that being Jewish is not only a matter of religion. Moreover, in Mendl’s view, patriotism should not prevent

Jewish identity and name preservation, but should encourage equality in civil rights. The “superficial and crawling”⁵⁶ image of UER was constantly criticized for its compromising manner of doing politics; adaptability, compromise, lack of political consistency and clear-cut doctrine determined a flexible and tolerant tone accepting injustice against collectivity in exchange for personal advantages:

...he was himself member of the Liberal Party, the most powerful and the most often in power. It was in the Blum's family tradition to be close to a party in power. (...) When asked how his belonging to UER compromises the Liberal Party, the author of the peasant revolts seven years ago with all the anti-Semitic atmosphere and the author of all the expulsion acts against the Jews, and of all the laws against them, so that the struggle of the UER is actually a struggle against the Liberal Party, replied gloomily: “we don't do politics here. This is this and that is that. Each with his business.”⁵⁷

Rejecting the UER way of doing politics, Baruch further criticizes, considering that the community needs

...to be tough! To be tough in order to force the crazy and the murderers to understand what we are. How? First by ceasing to be humble and flattering them. In case of the need to lock ourselves up, in our millennial noble nature, in our spirituality.⁵⁸

In Benador's work, Zionism is barely illustrated through the appearance of several characters due to the fact that it was not a strong movement within the older Regat, if compared with Bukovina or Transylvania. Anarchism, represented by Litvak, was perceived as a Russian influence and actually rarely described in Romanian literature. Definitely neither of the two directions was appealing to Baruch, who in the end joins in the creation of the Yiddishist Socialist group. Nevertheless, an explanation for the lack of

political engagement is offered by Meer Sulitzer, who considered that politics are artificially separating people who were otherwise connected through more profound ties:

...ehe-hei, children, you know only one thing, Jews with borders among themselves, UER, Zionists, Socialists. Bullshit. One soul, one being. "Am Echod". One people. Only illusions separate us. Imagination.⁵⁹

Through the description of several political projects and Baruch's oscillating critical political discourse, Ury Benador recreates the crisis of the young generation of intellectuals of the moment, caught between different conflicting political trends within and also outside Jewish community. Due to their acculturation on the one hand and insecure status within Romanian society on the other, individuals discovered themselves in a political crisis and unable to make a proper choice. A return to Jewish identity and a search for its public and political representation in Romania was what Baruch planned, after joining the Socialist movement, while not being attracted by Zionism. The intense search for a political option and representation of the young Jewish generation of intellectuals is dramatic due to their specific traits and profile as well as due to the specific conditions offered by the Romanian state and society; thus a political ideology to suit the Jewish situation in Romania at the beginning of the century was difficult to find. In his search, Baruch mainly analyzes and criticizes the options available, but the construct he briefly conceives is not a viable alternative to represent their ideals politically either. Thus, Baruch's political crisis is a consequence of his own identity crisis shaped by his own past and experiences to which he was subjected ethnically, socially, politically and culturally. The need to maintain a strong Jewish identity in a dignified manner in the middle of the Romanian society is placed in the center of his

discourse, planning a project of integration on basis of equality and public assertion without compromising Jewish identity and values. Based on Baruch's idealism and lacking proper dynamism of a realistically articulated movement, the project dissolves, as it was mainly supported culturally through the *Oifgong* publication, lectures and cultural meetings, lacking a real political platform and real basis. His discourse is basically not a constructive, activist and movement-creating one; he only manages to articulate a strong identity-oriented criticism against the two generations' political views which lost sight of Jewish identity preservation while pressing more for social rights as equal citizens or as members of a class.

Conclusions. Functioning as a bridge of rapprochement between the Jewish and Romanian societies, the literature inspired by Jewish life was articulated on common grounds, able to facilitate access for the Romanian readership, as well as contact with the Jewish acculturated masses. In this context, this corpus of texts mixed description of Jewish traditions and life with Romanian literary motifs, topics and cultural models able to include these literary works in the larger cultural debates and literary canon. Perceived by Zionist voices and by Jewish intellectuals active in the Jewish Romanian press as a compromise with Romanian culture, and thus sometimes excluded from a potential project of "Romanian-language Jewish literature", this literature evolved in a successful and productive direction in the mid-1930s when the best works of Isac Peltz, Ury Benador and Ion Călugaru were published and received national literary awards. Having in mind a double readership and a double message, the novels of Peltz severely criticized the capitalist society and the domination of financial interests, topics shared by Romanian literature of the time, but also criticized the dissolution of the Jewish community and

presented a monograph of Jewish life in Bucharest *mahalas* in the genre of the literature of the periphery en vogue for G. M. Zamfirescu and others. Călugaru's description of *shtetl* life approached also the topic of deep poverty and a criticism of the economic and social backwardness of the rural communities and traditional lifestyle from an urban modernizing perspective, in the style of childhood recollections made famous by Ion Creangă. Finally, Benador included the profile of the intellectual with his dilemmas in political and private life largely debated in interwar period through the works of Camil Petrescu, but focused also on Jewish spirituality and political movements from a profound mystical perspective.

The central problem approached by the literature with Jewish topics was the general crisis of Jewish identity in modern Romania manifested in political, socio-economic and cultural terms, searching for its place in the new state structures after Emancipation. From the corpus of texts discussed, a literature facing economic advancement and compromises for social inclusion, political temptations and backwardness, secularization and urbanization on different levels varying from the individual intellectualist dilemma to the community perceived in collective, ethnographic terms emerged. Jewish community, life and the characters were approached critically, unlike the profound idyllic image of the *shtetl* and the utterly idealized portrait of the Eastern European Jew presented in the work of Weimar writers, who deplore their assimilated state and the loss of Jewish identity while looking for models in more authentic Eastern areas, or the Polish Jewish literature which perceived *shtetl* life as a space of purity and tranquility against modern urban space. This Romanian Jewish world was destined to fade away, as it appeared in the criticism and distance visible in Călugaru's works discussing the crisis of modernization of traditional communities,

attacking backwardness, poverty and inability to adapt and change in order to survive. In contrast with the position of the “rebellious outsider” that they had to accept before Emancipation, the new approach of the authors of literature with Jewish topics was that of a “critical insider”, part of the nation as well as of the community; writing in Romanian about their own roots, these writers took the liberty to address not only the Romanian readership, but also the Jewish acculturated readers addressing specific issues for each group.

For the Romanian audience to which these works were equally addressed, they had a social mission and functioned as a weapon fighting misconceptions, biases, anti-Semitism, anti-Jewish prejudices and stereotypes. They accomplished these by presenting the Jewish life and culture from the inside, in an authentic and also accessible manner, deconstructing the collective mental structures inherited from a long, exclusionist tradition and making room for acceptance, understanding and integration in a long process of cultural and social rapprochement. By presenting the truth, the ideals and values of Jewish life to the Romanian public, the literature on Jewish topics initiated a form of communication with the Romanian audience, a mediation process entertaining a dynamic dialogue with the previously constructed negative image of the Jewish community. This prejudice had been defined by negative stereotypes and hostile prejudice constructed by the Romanian cultural discourse which lacked social contact with the Jewish community and was often supported by anti-Semitic discourse. Fundamentally, as it managed to function between two cultures and to provide for both, this type of literature became a form of cultural translation operating mental transition and symbolical inclusions. In a synthetic manner, Eugenia Prokop-Janiec⁶⁰ defined this function of

literature with Jewish subjects as “cognitive” for the Gentile public and as “unique socio-literary documents” in a largely self-representational attempt.

For the Jewish public, these works communicated different messages on different levels. Thus, firstly, their work functioned often as a repository of Jewish culture, a form of recollecting and reminding their contemporaries of the authenticity of Jewish life in a period when the community was subjected to the challenges of modernization and altered its values. Ethnographical and social representations fulfilled this function of literature as historical document. Secondly, it deeply criticized from different perspectives the status of the community and the compromises made for integration and acculturation, trading and negotiating the Jewish identity in its most profound aspects. A renunciation of the observant Judaism of the economically dynamic middle generation, the socio-economic backwardness and conservatism of the *shtetl* life, or simply the confusion of the young intellectual confronting politics and modern society were a few aspects highlighting important questions for the community during the interwar period. The general device of childhood memories (Benador, Călugaru and Peltz all used it) linked the individual with tradition, especially when recollecting holidays through the eyes of children; it provided a contrast and a comparison with mature age which generated an implicit criticism of modern decadent life of crisis, opposing authenticity and idealized past. Another form of criticism comes from the employment of the maternal figure, highly symbolic for Judaism in connection with preservation of tradition and continuity, which appears in the progressive and pro-urbanizing discourse of Călugaru as a tough person, acting as a step-mother and forcing the child to find his own way in life and depart from the *shtetl*. Family and its generational chain symbolized continuity and communal structure; Peltz approached them from the perspective of non-cohesive and disintegrating families.

Thirdly, the manner of writing, promoting biographical elements, family histories, and community portraits continued to express, despite structural criticism, a profound symbolism of collective identity consolidated through memory, heritage, continuity in change, generational chain, history, blood links, ancestry, spiritual and cultural values and common experience. These community and family writings were records testifying to the historical destiny of the Jews, as well as chronicles of their experience in Diaspora, located here on Romanian lands. By employing such subjects in this manner of writing Diaspora sagas, the authors partially attempted to consolidate a communal feeling among the readership by coagulating a model of Jewish collective identity inside the Romanian nation and culture. Despite its alterations within the authenticity of Jewish life, the family history expressed a triumph of continuity due to the generational chain defeating even the conflict between them.

Unlike other cases where this reinvention of Jewish culture in local languages was performed under the effect of Zionism and national Jewish revival (for example in Poland), in Romania it could hardly be so perceived. Indeed, the main promoters, I. Ludo and A. L. Zissu, journalists as well as writers, were very active in articulating these ideals in their works, but their most important realization was the shaping of these ideas in the press. The mediocre quality of their prose due to a determinist orientation following a moral thesis, as well as the reduced accessibility, high specificity and low interest for the large Romanian readership, combined with the small social following of Zionism among Romanian acculturated Jews in Regat, determined a low popularity of their works. In exchange, the well-received works of Peltz and Călugaru introduced a leftist critique justified by the strong Socialist sympathies of their writers. In their case, the approach proved to be more successful due to the fact that the integrative project was visibly

supported while promoting an egalitarian society based on economic factors, eradication of poverty and class struggle; in fact, Călugaru wrote extensively about Roma, Greek and Armenian characters, from the same perspective of social inequality. Peltz envisioned his ideal Romanian society as a “good country” (the actual title of one of his novels) in which all ethnic groups should live peacefully. Eventually, this literary direction proved to be successful in its integrative project rather than the independent, national Zionist one. Leftist movements such as Socialism and Communism, although kept under control and surveillance of the state and persecuted and banned for most of the interwar period, managed to attract at least on the ideological level and under the form of sympathizers, a significant number of intellectuals, Jews and non-Jews alike. This explains how, despite a weak social and public representation, leftist movements still had a strong intellectual representation in intellectual life; comparatively, the participation in leftist movements was much more visible in Eastern and Central Europe where a large proletariat existed and capitalism was more developed, playing on the more obvious condition of “Jews as pariah”⁶¹. Sharing a more popular situation, these writers attracted a wider sympathy and their concerns about the situation of the multinational state were largely recognized. Eventually, the literature with Jewish topics supported the integrative project of recreating a Jewish culture in Romanian lands and an integrated culture of the Diaspora.

According to Ludo and Zissu’s definition of Jewish literature, probably nothing else apart from their works (and probably Benador’s) would have fit into their strictly authentic representation of Jewish life and culture. In this context we must speak cautiously about the existence a Romanian-language Jewish literature in the sense of a whole corpus of texts having a common message and coherence of representing exclusively and authentically the Jewish culture and spirituality; nevertheless, the

common thread of social and cultural inclusion and integration animated their message, negotiated their discourse favoring a largely universal value, and secured their intellectual continuity with the avant-gardist and modernist moment. Dominated to a large extent by this integrative project which aimed to address a larger readership and penetrate the Romanian cultural canon on one hand, while also to reinvent Jewish tradition in Romanian culture on the other, the work of Peltz and Călugaru fails short on Ludo and Zissu's, as well as on Blonski's scales. Nevertheless, they succeeded in penetrating the Romanian literary canon as a testimony of the Jewish social presence and experience on the Romanian lands. Renouncing the most specific aspects of cultural authenticity, this form of literature merged into the mainstream of Romanian literature during the interwar period and enjoyed popularity decades after WWII, even republished in massive print runs (also due to the post-war careers of Călugaru, Benador and Peltz).

Finally, the significance of this literary process of the emergence of a literature with Jewish topics must be perceived as a specific response to the challenge of articulating Jewish distinctiveness in the framework of participation in a modernizing and relatively liberal society. In this new context, Jewish community had to reinterpret its tradition in order to face modern challenges, to translate its culture to make it accessible and less "threatening" for the still-ignorant Gentile society, and finally create a "minority culture" within the local milieu in the sense of Deleuze and Guattari's theory developed on Kafka's work⁶². Preserving significant parts of traditional Jewish cultural, social and religious heritage, interwar intellectuals enabled the new identity construct to be integrated into the framework of a modernizing Gentile culture and also promoted its new image as a unifying factor for a future social identity.

Notes:

¹ A. L. Zissu, "Literatura evreiască din România" in *Adam*, an III, no. 38, 1 June 1931, 12.

² I. Ludo, "Scriitori evrei și de origine evreiască" in *Adam*, an III, no 47, 15 March 1932, 11.

³ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁵ A. L. Zissu, "Scrisoare deschisă domnului F. Aderca" in *Adam*, VII, no 81, 15 June 1935, 6.

⁶ I. Peltz, *Calea Văcărești* (București: Cultura Națională, 1933).

⁷ I. Peltz, *Foc în Hanul cu Tei* (București: Adeverul, 1934).

⁸ Ury Benador, *Ghetto Veac XX* (București: Universala Alcalay, 1934).

⁹ Ion Călugaru, *Copilăria unui netrebnic* (București: Naționala Ciornei, 1936).

¹⁰ The concept is introduced in Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, Theory and History of Literature, Volume 30, (University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 18-21.

¹¹ I. Călugaru planned a three-novel series; the third appeared during the Communist regime. *Copilăria unui netrebnic* was published in 1936, *Trustul* in 1937 and *Lumina primăverii* in 1948.

¹² "Din copilăria unui netrebnic"; "Mahmud"; "Visele din vis ale lui Ilya Davidovici"; "Luceafărul morții"; "O icoana de odinioară"; "Stafia lui Chirvăsuț" "Lăutarul și șerpele"; "Odată..."; "Firi neînțelese"; "Casa șoarecilor"; "Ucigașul care nu ucide"; "Între copii".

¹³ I. Călugaru sets his stories in several ethnic environments, mainly the Jewish semi-rural *shtetl*, but he is also interested in the Greek milieu ("Diogen Miracol și shunk", "Toamna Palilulei", "L-am împuscat?", "Bună din lene"), in the Roma community ("Președinte de onoare", "Răpirea lui Oivide") or simply in the Romanian life ("Năpasta Varvarei", "Nasturele", "Ghetele").

¹⁴ Literary critics defined this type of literature as "literature of periphery" or "literature of the milieus" (Ov. S. Crohmălniceanu, "Caleidoscopul mediilor" in *Literatura între cele două războaie mondiale, vol.1*, 316-356, referring to Călugaru, Peltz and Benador, together with Cezar Petrescu, Ionel Teodoreanu, G. M. Vlădescu).

¹⁵ See footnote 13, above.

¹⁶ "Ispite" in Ion Călugaru, *Paradisul statistic* (București: Minerva), 234.

¹⁷ Ov. S. Crohmălniceanu, *Literatura între cele două războaie mondiale* (București: Minerva, 1972), Vol. 1, 346.

¹⁸ Ion Creangă (1837-1889) was the most famous Romanian storyteller and the first writer to largely employ folklore into his works. Inspired by the rural Northern Moldavian milieu, his collection of childhood memories, *Amintiri din copilărie*, became a canonical work for Romanian literature.

¹⁹ Sholem Aleichem (1859-1916) was a classic author of Yiddish literature. His main work *Tevye the Milkman* rendered Eastern European Jewish culture world-famous in a picturesque manner.

²⁰ Ion Călugaru, *Copilăria unui netrebnic* (București: Hasefer, 1996), 10.

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- ²¹ Ibid., 12.
- ²² Ibid., 45.
- ²³ *Copilăria unui netrebnic*, 91; *Trustul*, București: Naționala Ciornei, 1937, 63.
- ²⁴ Ibid., 5 – 8.
- ²⁵ “Din copilăria unui netrebnic” in Călugaru, *Casa șoarecilor*, 45-46.
- ²⁶ “Stafia” in Călugaru, *Paradisul statistic*, 299-309.
- ²⁷ “Năpasta Varvarei” in Călugaru, *Paradisul statistic*, 118 - 123.
- ²⁸ See first chapters in *Trustul*.
- ²⁹ The term of *mahala* is originally Turkish and it used to define a quarter, no matter its central or marginal position. The complex of periphery was attached to it after 1830 when Bucharest assimilated traits of Western urban life and structure, surrounded by semi-rural marginal quarters defined as *mahalas*, according to Adrian Majuru, *Bucureștii mahalalelor sau periferia ca mod de existență* (București: Compania, 2003), 8.
- ³⁰ Călugaru, *Copilăria*, 156.
- ³¹ Ion Călugaru, *Trustul* (Naționala – Ciornei, 1937), 15 – 17.
- ³² Novel *Copilăria unui netrebnic* presents only one scene suggesting the fear of ethnic conflict, 15.
- ³³ *Han*, translated as *inn*, represents mainly a building of small insalubrious low-cost apartments to be rented by the poorest individuals and families.
- ³⁴ Peltz, *Calea Văcărești*, 52.
- ³⁵ Peltz, *Foc în Hanul cu tei*, 167.
- ³⁶ Ibid., 73-75, 109.
- ³⁷ Ibid., 146.
- ³⁸ Isac Peltz, “Actele vorbește” (București: Minerva, 1971), 217.
- ³⁹ Peltz, *Foc în Hanul cu tei*, 203-205.
- ⁴⁰ Ibid., 307.
- ⁴¹ Ibid., 152-155.
- ⁴² Peltz, *Calea Văcărești*, 206.
- ⁴³ Peltz, *Foc în Hanul cu tei*, 306.
- ⁴⁴ Ibid., 272.
- ⁴⁵ Ibid., 57.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 266.

⁴⁷ Ury Benador, *Hilda* (București: Hasefer, 2005), 28.

⁴⁸ *Trăirism* was the Romanian version of *Erlebnis* developed by Nae Ionescu among the Generation 1927 and promoted “authenticity” and “experience” as intellectual and existential values.

⁴⁹ Ury Benador, *Subiect banal (Final grotesc, Appassionata)*, (București: Hasefer, 1998), 49.

⁵⁰ Ury Benador, *Ghetto Veac XX* (Universala Alcalay, București, 1934), 87.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid., 145.

⁵³ Ibid., 27.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 104-105.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 213.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 171.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 175.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 179.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 187.

⁶⁰ Eugenia Prokop Janiec, *Polish-Jewish Literature in the Interwar Years* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2002).

⁶¹ Categories defined in Hannah Arendt, *The Jew as Pariah: Jewish Identity and Politics in the Modern Age* (New York: Grove Press, 1978).

⁶² Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Kafka: toward a minor literature* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1986).

Chapter 5.

The “Double Identity” Model and the Integrative Project

During the interwar period, a model of “double identity”¹ started to be discussed, theorized and debated as an alternative to the assimilationist *versus* nationalist directions of identity construction within the group of Jewish acculturated intellectuals. The project fundamentally assumed a successful acculturation which would involve a simultaneous intellectual, social and cultural inclusion, without abandoning Jewish identity, an ideal state of things possible in a modern, democratic and civic type of society. As integration was still lagging behind due to recurrent anti-Semitic social manifestations, and assimilation was not an option from the perspective of Jewish identity preservation, the concept appeared in the context of the 1930s as an intellectual construct and a socio-political utopia, based only on a strong cultural foundation and was not reflecting the real situation among intellectuals. This new debate, based on theory rather than reality, was symptomatic for the state of mind of the recent emancipated intellectuals coming to the Romanian culture and environment in significant numbers and willing to integrate. It was a product of a certain political trend based on a civic integration of the individual within the national body, which would allow the expression of a complex identity in which he/she was not forced to repress or enforce any of multiple possible belongings.

Moreover, in the field of Jewish politics, the former Regat was absolutely supporting the Union of Romanian Jews, which articulated the same ideological line, opposing any other stronger, identity-driven organizations in the newly-acquired territories (such as the initiatives of the Hungarian Jews in Transylvania or the Zionist organizations) to the point of being called “assimilationists”; nevertheless, the UER and its leader, W. Filderman, rejected strongly this option and pleaded for a strong Jewish identity. This identity model was clearly presented in the speech of Horia Carp, a UER’s delegate in the Romanian Senate who assessed that “we have no other political aspiration than those of the Romanian people”², claiming not a cultural assimilation, but a political one; indeed, being “of Jewish ethnic origin, of Romanian nationality, and of Mosaic religion”, the model defined an obvious Western model of integration.

In this sense, Ury Benador’s position represented in an inquiry conducted by the journal *Facla* in 1935 could outline the ideological component and identity mechanism of this model; in his opinion, even a totally integrated Jew could not be considered a good and trustworthy Romanian if he concealed his Jewish identity. He believed that this kind of behaviour would create a lot of suspicion within Romanian society. In another article published later in the journal *Adam*, in 1938, when the general political atmosphere had radicalized, Benador pleaded for the same idea. Under the suggestive title of “De două ori eu = 1”, his thesis was “We want to prove that a Jew can be a good Romanian only if he is a good Jew”³. In his perspective, cultural identity could not be acquired only by birth or by voluntary-based adhesion. Ethnic cultural identity was always acquired through an active process of becoming, by reception and assimilation of new spiritual elements. The writer built a theory of spiritual identity in philosophical terms able to compete with other

approaches, demonstrating the possibility of “Romanianism” as well as integrated “Jewishness” merging in the same complex cultural identity.

The current chapter analyzes the impact of such an intellectual project theorized by Benador’s articles on both the Romanian and Jewish milieus by focusing on two significant episodes. First, a survey carried out by the *Facla* journal⁴ prompted intellectuals of Jewish origin and Romanian language to define their identity in 1935 and their answers led to a remarkable debate, offering great source for research. Secondly, the novel *De două mii de ani...* (1934) (For two thousand years...) by Mihail Sebastian presented in narrative fictional form an illustration of the “double rooting” project, by presenting the drama of the Jewish acculturated intellectual during interwar period; followed by a long and aggressive debate, the novel succeeded in revealing, just as the *Facla* survey did, certain patterns of thinking and identity models perceived as acceptable or contestable. Eventually, despite the differences between the two case-studies, the *Facla* inquiry and debate as well as the polemic around *De două mii de ani...* had in common similar socio-cultural and intellectual mechanisms of articulating individual as well as collective identity models which obviously conflicted on opposing political grounds.

A. “Romanian writer” OR “Jewish writer”: the Survey of *Facla* Journal. A

significant episode for the public articulation, social impact and reception of Jewish and Romanian intellectual identity occurred in mid-1930s. In the beginning of 1935, the cultural and political journal *Facla* addressed a question to all the writers of Jewish origin, asking them to define their cultural identity. Published periodically under the title “Scriitor român – Scriitor evreu” (Romanian writer – Jewish writer⁵), the answers led to a

heated debate among the respondents. *Facla's* survey and the strong reactions following it were the result of a misunderstanding. The editorial board found out about the creation of an association of Romanian-language Jewish writers and the event was presented to the public as a bizarre separatist attempt and, in conclusion, as a possible future justification for the reactions of the extreme right in the Romanian society. In other words, the fact was considered a new form of “modern self-ghettoization” not only in cultural terms, but also interpreting it politically as a “chauvinistic exaggeration”⁶ on the part of Jewish intellectuals. The reason for this misunderstanding was a literary event – a lecture evening organized by the Yiddish newspaper *Die Woch* - where some Romanian-language Jewish writers were invited to read their own works together with their Yiddish-writing colleagues. The purpose of the event was to raise funds for the publication of an anthology of literature written by Romanian-language Jewish writers.

To this identity-related question, the best-known Romanian-Jewish writers answered, presenting a wide range of identity positions and even polemical replies. The starting point for the debate was the common Romanian language used in their works and the Jewish origin of all the interviewees. Three major opinion clusters emerged as the debate unfolded, presented not only within the published answers, but also in the polemic which followed.

First, many respondents felt the need to clarify concepts such as “Jewish writer” and “Romanian writer” in the context of the above mentioned group of writers of Jewish origin and using the Romanian language. For most of the respondents, a Romanian writer would be someone who authored works in the Romanian language, being at the same time attached to the Romanian culture, sensibility, and intellectual milieu. A Jewish writer would be someone who used one of the Jewish languages, who was influenced by

Jewish culture and milieu and who represented this heritage from within, not being interested in the surrounding environment. Despite this distinction, there were also self-declared “Jewish writers” using Romanian as a working language, while there were also “Romanian writers” dealing with specific Jewish topics.

The second issue was determined by the efforts of the respondents to define further and separate different groups within the greater category suggested by the question of the journal. Thus two labels were coined, making a clear difference between “Romanian-language Jewish writers” and “Romanian writers of Jewish origin” mainly suggesting that the group distinction would reside in their cultural affiliation, as the language or the “Jewish topics” were not always reliable markers. At this point, the whole discussion reveals a certain attempt to put a fragmented identity in order. The “power struggle” between cultural affiliations highlights the importance granted to one or to the other according to the individual’s biography. A sort of hierarchy of the intellectual components leads us to the conclusion that these differences map different stages in the process of acculturation, inclusion and then integration. For example, being “Romanian-language Jewish writer” means practically acculturation, while being “Romanian writer of Jewish origin” reveals the self-consciousness of a considerable level of integration.

Thus, following the resulted categorization, there are first the “Jewish writers” like A. L. Zissu, Ury Benador or I. Ludo who wrote “from within” Jewish spirituality and spoke the Jewish language as their mother tongue, although writing in Romanian as well. The primacy of the Jewish cultural rooting can not be challenged by a late acquisition of Romanian culture, even mastering the Romanian language to the point of writing valuable works in it. The term “bilingualism” would be a more accurate description of this initial stage, usually the writers rejecting the idea of assimilation and the whole trend

generated by it. The alternative was represented by “Romanian writers of Jewish origin.” Here, the switch within the cultural identity hierarchy was already a fact. Most of the writers of this group declared Romanian as their mother tongue and stressed their affiliation to the dominant culture, “spirituality,” or perception from within. A strong connection with non-Jewish intellectuals and cultural life, and a profound involvement in the intellectual debates of the time offered obvious signs of inclusion of these writers. Acculturation had already taken place and the process of integration was on the way. Assimilation was never an issue, since Jewish origin was socially and culturally defining the individuals, even if not present in their writings.

The violent replies that writers representing the two described extremes addressed to each other were evidence of a lack of agreement in connection with a possible common identity of the writers of Jewish origin and Romanian language or, even better, the non-existence of this type of writer. The conclusion of the polemic was that the “Jewish writers of Romanian origin” was the only real category, while the “Romanian writer of Jewish origin” was more a future possibility offered after generations of successful emancipation and not yet a reality. Since the debate lasted several months, these general contradictory statements did not reflect a sociologically wider reality, but individual positions related to their personal degree of acculturation.

Finally, the third and last issue identified within the *Facla* debate was represented by the category of independent intellectuals striving for a non-political affiliation of their work and for the creation of a utopian, ethnic-free universal space of culture. Internationalism and universalism were indeed the options presented by these writers hoping to transcend identity issues and to extract their work and existence from a social and political context which basically generated the entire debate. A common trait

of these intellectuals was their rapid integration into European culture and their supra-ethnic intellectual identity reflected in their work. Writers such as Tristan Tzara, Ilarie Voronca, Beniamin Fundoianu and the rest of avant-gardists, but also including M. Blecher and Mihail Sebastian, built their cultural attachments disregarding their Jewish or Romanian cultural identity. Although never denying their Jewish origin, these writers perceived Judaism and their complex identity more as an intellectual experience worthy of analysis in their works. In an apparently naive response, a minor poet like Al. Robot suggested that being Jewish was a part of a personal destiny, while the artist, the creator, was a universal citizen, legitimated by the language used and by cultural forerunners.⁷ The language and the culture legitimated him as a writer, but since the artist's main concern was his art, his most important identity was the artistic affiliation of his work. Thus he concluded by proclaiming himself a Parnassian. Going further with the debate, even when writers were interested in discussing their Jewishness, the perspective on the problem was artistically objectified up to the point of perceiving it as an intellectual experience of "double rooting" or tragic conflict.

To summarize and contextualize the whole debate, the way in which *Facla* formulated the question for the literary survey gives a clear view of the possibilities for identity offered to the interviewed writers, which was from the beginning mutually exclusive ("Romanian writer OR Jewish writer?"). On the other hand, from the point of view of the respondents there is a series of nuanced definitions, elaborated and presenting a counter-offer within an ongoing wider social and cultural identity negotiation process. The radical and exclusive offer coming from the part of the journal (thus representing a larger intellectual and social position) was tacitly rejected and replaced with a suggested compromise which is detailed within the answers adding explanations and clarifications.

The hierarchization of a complex multi-faceted identity fundamentally expressed the general level of acculturation in Romania and to a certain extent the integration of the intellectuals surveyed. These facts were ignored by the Romanian press which assumed a separation and incompatibility of identity models according to the vision of the majority about identity construction. The contrast was clear between the unique, primitive theoretical identity model from which the surveyors started, based on arguments belonging to ethnicity and exclusivity, and the complex, civic, multicultural model from which the Jewish intellectuals responded, thus initiating the debate which led to negotiation of the discourse; it also showed on an extremely subtle level the diametrically opposing models which could be perceived in their deeper structure.

Eventually, the responses given by the Jewish intellectuals made a compromise on the level of identity discourse in order to express as accurately as possible the reality they perceived individually. The answers given did not force excessively the conservative identity paradigm put forward by the Romanian public and press, thus staying close to the radical identity offered as a model. At the same time, the respondents also maintained in their definition of identity elements which confirmed acculturation and the tendency towards integration, in order to present the social cultural reality of the intellectual Jewish community.

Analyzing the social cultural context, the category of “Romanian writers of Jewish origin”, theoretically supposed to define a group of assimilated intellectuals, did not reflect the reality of the Romanian interwar period, but rather moderated the identity offer coming from the majority’s part in connection with the social cultural reality, repressing to a great extent the Jewish identity representation. The data offered by the census of 1930 (analyzed in Ezra Mendelsohn’s and Carol Iancu’s volumes⁸)

approximately a decade after Emancipation shows a low degree of assimilation and integration measured only few years before the survey, despite the large acculturation in the former Regat area (especially in Wallachia). As it would appear from the *Facla* survey, the group of Jewish intellectuals presented under the label of “Romanian writers of Jewish origin” maintained frequent contacts with Romanian culture and language, led a social life in the midst of the majority due to their profession and education, and reached a higher degree of integration in connection with the social average described by Ezra Mendelsohn, but never felt or perceived themselves as assimilated. The conclusion of the analysis of the materials offered by the survey shows that Jewish intellectuals were reluctant to accept exclusively either Romanian or Jewish identity, on one hand due to advanced acculturation, but also due to the impossibility of assimilating in the given context.

From this perspective, the group of “Romanian intellectuals” were basically consciously repressing their Jewish identity in favor of harmonizing and socially integrating in an increasingly radicalized social and political context which also expected radical answers from their part. The counter-offer, trying to harmonize the social and political pressures of the traditional-conservative and mutually exclusive model imposed by the society, was represented by a modern identity: multicultural, although based on a hierarchy and constructed on a compromise based on the degree of assimilation and integration and which could be represented by the OR / OR identity type.

B. Mihail Sebastian or the Dilemma of Double Identity. One of the most integrated intellectuals of his generation, Mihail Sebastian was a successful playwright,

literary critic and journalist, novelist and member of 1927 Generation group together with Mircea Eliade, Emil Cioran, Eugen Ionescu and Petru Comarnescu. Sebastian's only "Jewish book", *De două mii de ani...* was the novel where he decided "to tell everything"⁹ that he censored in his theoretical and literary articles as well as in his modernist novels. Before leaving for France where he studied for two years for his PhD, he planned to write a book about all humiliations which suffocated him, starting with childhood and adolescence memories, in an attempt to free himself from their burden through a public exorcism. He was influenced during his years in France by politics and the debate over the role of the intellectual, as well as by the literary influence of André Gide, which was enforced through the common ideology of the Generation 1927. Sebastian published the book in 1934 and it generated a lasting, violent polemic involving Romanian and Jewish intellectuals, the left- and right-wing press, writers and a large readership alike. Promoting openly the idea of "double identity", the book caused a great scandal not only because of its perplexing anti-Semitic preface written by Nae Ionescu, the 1927 Generation's mentor, but also because of its innovative political and cultural message. This was further explained in a volume of essays *Cum am devenit huligan* (1935) (How I Became a Hooligan), a response to the polemic initiated by the publication of the novel. My analysis focuses on the disharmony between Mihail Sebastian's Jewish Romanian identity model and the political perspective presented in the book, and the expectations as well as the political background of the larger audience contesting it; by interpreting the significant polemic around the novel *De două mii de ani...*, the current chapter aims to identify the sources of conflict between the literary discourse of "double identity" and the socio-cultural approach to nation and belonging.

Sebastian's "Jewish book," *De două mii de ani...* presents the complex situation of a Jewish intellectual in a non-Jewish society through the traumatizing experience of the anti-Semitism of the early 1920s, and also through the intellectual incapacity of choosing any of the possible political options at hand such as Zionism, Marxism or isolation. Torn between the paralyzing feeling of being a pariah and the intellectual search for an alternative, hopefully anti-collectivist and individualistic, the main hero of the novel faced a real drama. Relegated to the private realm and stressing the profile of the young intellectual unable to abandon his individualist perspective to join the collective, the Jewish identity as debated in the book can be interpreted as an intellectual "existentialist" experience first, mainly by stressing the detached and abstract way of analyzing its effects and not so much the localized Jewish context.

The story behind the novel is intriguing. In 1929, on Nae Ionescu's advice, Sebastian went to Paris for his doctorate in law. When he returned in 1931, he told his mentor that he was writing a "Jewish book" and asked him to write a preface due to their close relationship and to Ionescu's knowledge of religion, especially Judaism. The Professor accepted, but in 1934 when Sebastian finished the novel, the political situation had already changed and these changes also affected Nae Ionescu's political affiliation together with the orientation of *Cuvântul*. The turn came in November 1933, but Sebastian refused to acknowledge the change and to react to it because of his close relationship with the Professor. Although Ionescu's position was already visibly turning even more traditional, anti-modernistic and antidemocratic towards a conversion to the Iron Guard, Sebastian still asked for the promised preface. It was written only after Nae Ionescu was freed from 45 days in prison, accused of instigating the assassination of I. G. Duca, through the articles written in *Cuvântul*¹⁰. Apparently Sebastian did not want to

reject the preface since such legitimate gesture would have represented an act of censorship against his mentor. As it basically supported and justified theological and messianic anti-Semitism, the preface and especially its tacit acceptance by Sebastian, who published it in his novel about Jewish intellectual identity in Romania, stirred a debate among both Jewish and Romanian groups, all accusing Sebastian of betrayal.

Sebastian's gesture is still puzzling for the reader; the only explanation his friends provided in their personal accounts on the subject is that he reacted in this way out of respect for the professor and also probably hoped that his literary discourse could respond and deconstruct the preface. My interpretation considers that in addition to Sebastian's lack of political and social sense, he approached the situation as an intellectual experience in the line of the *trăirist* doctrine practiced of his 1927 Generation group, which stimulated him to accept the preface as a possible intellectual challenge. As the polemic took over any chances of approaching the novel according to the original intentions of the author, Sebastian wrote the essay-book *Cum am devenit huligan* to explain the message of his novel, to defend himself against anti-Semitic accusations, analyzing the effects produced by the book, but also to define his position on Judaism and his double identity. In a conference held on March 21, 1935, at the French Institute in Bucharest, he summarized for the last time his position within the literary construct, but also in socio-cultural environment:

This was a novel. The novel of a young Jew of Romania who, somehow suddenly, even brutally, is forced to ask himself about the issue of his social and spiritual origin. Who is this man? Is he a Jew? Is he Romanian? Can he be both at the same time? He feels Romanian in many respects: the language he speaks, the native landscape, the Danube of his childhood, the books he loves, the friendships he has. But he admits at the same time he is also a Jew in certain traits of sensibility and intelligence, in a sort of intellectual feverishness, in a certain sense of the tragic. Between these

two forces, - his Judaism and his Romanianism (let me invent a word that does not exist in French, but which certainly can translate the Romanian term), I resume between his Judaism and his Romanianism, he is forced to choose. He thinks he can reunite both in his life, that he can reach an inner agreement of the Romanian and Jewish values which create his self and his spirit.¹¹

After the literary scandal, Sebastian separated himself from the 1927 Generation group, disappointed by the lack of reactions from his friends, among whom Eliade was the most striking. Also, the radicalization of the Romanian society, followed by a rapid enrollment of most of Sebastian's friends from the 1927 Generation and Criterion group into the Iron Guard movement under the influence of Nae Ionescu, led Sebastian to isolate himself and abandon former friendships and intellectual affiliations. 1934 was a catastrophic year for Sebastian: apart from the scandal related to his book, *Cuvântul* was suspended, the Criterion group to which he belonged was legally banned after an embarrassing trial (when the journal appeared again in October 1934, he was not among the collaborators), he lost several friends, and also his mentor. This moment marks the disillusionment of the writer who had hoped that the double identity he projected might actually be a possible option in real life; nevertheless, the controversy generated by his book proved that the political changes had cancelled any chances for social and intellectual integration. Two years later, in a personal letter addressed to one of his friends, another member of the 1927 Generation group, Sebastian expressed once more his frustration in more direct and personal terms than in his novel. For Sebastian, the most troubling element for his private identity crisis was the double standard that Romanian society applied to its Jewish members. Officially citizens, Jews were intermittently attacked by anti-Semitic social outbursts; included in Romanian cultural life, the intellectuals had to both share common ideas and intellectual beliefs, but also

witness the general “Guardist conversion” separating them for good from the rest of the establishment. Probably Mihail Sebastian was one of those most affected by this complex attitude, as visible in his *Jurnal* (Diary) and correspondence, due to the intensity of his integration. His marginalization as the result of the anti-Semitic attacks in the Romanian press of rightist orientation affected him terribly, as seen in a letter addressed to Petru Comarnescu in 1936, revealing his drama of living in the middle of Romanian society while being permanently rejected by it, despite his adherence to national culture and values:

My childhood – as for the rest of the people of my generation – passed under the spirit of the love for the country. I was 11 when at the end of Lucaci street the first Ukrainian mounted soldiers appeared and I cried when I saw them... I lived that exciting atmosphere when every piece of news about one of our successes, a Romanian one, was a celebration and every defeat a humiliation and a moment of despair. When the news about the Germans leaving the country came up, we the high-school boys went out in the street with the courage of our adolescence and conquered the last guns left by the runaway. And then, for months in a row, we participated to the exaltation of victory – which was mine too because it was ours – and we danced *Hora Unirii* around Mihai Viteazu’s statue, with Vaida Voevod and with the one who was later to become the Patriarch Miron Cristea. (...) Why should I be considered less of a Romanian than Mișu Polihroniade for example, and what is even more humiliating is the refusal for permission to have patriotic feelings? Who can contest my right of considering myself Romanian? (...) I cannot start feeling desperation for this country, which my whole life is related to, nor for the people, because I still believe in the dignity of the concept of Man.¹²

The Position of the Intellectual. In the novel, Mihail Sebastian describes the Jewish intellectual as “doubly excluded from the active game of existence, once as an intellectual and second time as a Jew”¹³. As an intellectual, the main character of the novel defines himself in relation with society and reality through an attitude of isolation,

lacking involvement in social and political life, centered on the problem of the self, on the individual crisis, on the analysis of the context and on critical observation. Through this position, he defines the situation of the non-engaged intellectual, but with a critical, objective approach on the contemporary period. As if following Julien Benda's conclusions in his book *Trahison de clercs* (published in 1927 and having a great impact on its readers right in the period of Sebastian's studies in Paris), the intellectual in the novel detaches himself from involvement in the political life (and there was a great variety of possibilities described in the novel, from Marxism and Zionism to Yiddishism, even just in reference to the Jewish community) and refuses the passion of activism in order to maintain his impartial position as an observer and critic, an uninvolved analyst, in order to become credible. The difference between the end of the 1920s in France and the mid-1930s in Romania was represented by the general social and political context; if France still had a liberalist pluralist regime, where freedom of expression was guaranteed to all its citizens despite ethnicity and religion, Romania was darkly approaching a period of change from a conservative frame, leaning more and more towards the right side of the political specter and towards a lack of tolerance for the individual, for freedom of opinion, and public representations of identity. Obviously, both the lack of involvement and the illusion of the intellectual being able to potentially exist outside of socio-political space were unacceptable in such a tormented and agitated period. In the context of the interwar period, especially in mid-1930s, such a way of defining the intellectual fell in contradiction with and antagonized the social, political and even cultural reality. The profound politicization of social life, perceived even more acutely in the cultural space, did not justify or supported such an intellectualized approach, especially in a novel reflecting accurately on the acute social-political conflicts.

a) Detachment. The novel starts by describing the efforts of the young character to detach himself from the social context which attempted to confiscate, absorb and involve him. The conflict of forces is analyzed by the writer with objectivity, presenting on one side the anti-Semitic movements in universities, the beatings of the Jewish students attending classes and on the street, and on the other side the attempts to organize a movement of resistance and defense among the Jewish colleagues. Beyond the naturalistic descriptions, lacking any emotions or empathy, the main hero of the volume tries constantly to avoid any implication in the social crisis around him. He avoids the open conflict with anti-Semitic students targeting him as well, by not expressing any reaction, not answering back to their provocations, and avoiding the risky areas; at the same time, he blocks totally his own emotional and physical reactions against the aggressive gestures and self-censors any manifestation of weakness or depression in the given context. To complete the image of the totally isolated individual, he refuses any engagement in the defense movements initiated by a group of Jewish colleagues. Basically, through all his actions, he refuses to be confiscated by the current social crisis and to accept any of the roles that society might offer him, victim or activist; he ignores the context and its implications, preferring to deal with the situation in immediate, practical defensive terms, placing politics and social life between the brackets, trying to escape from collective and thus avoiding any association with it.

In order to better resist this situation and to succeed in applying his survival philosophy, the character feels the need to isolate himself, to physically delimit himself from any manifestation. This project generates the need for social and even physical separation, ranging from being closed within himself, withdrawn in his own solitude as a

salvation and not interested in the events, people or collective life, to the level of marking his status also in the physical, material space, by moving from the poor, agglomerated student hostel into an attic room. His gesture, defined as a “vacation from life”, a period of recovering, regeneration and making peace with himself reveals the character’s need for calm and peace by reconnecting with simple things, with essences. The motivation behind his entire isolation process of ignoring the street and the anti-Semitic movements, despite the fact that this did not save him from social aggressive attitude, is presented by the main character himself declaring that in the whole crisis “anti-Semitism is not the issue”, but rather the individual crisis, summarized in the question “but when do we make peace with ourselves?”

b) Observer and critic. Later, meditating on his general attitude at the social level, the character notices his own lack of involvement, this incapacity which invariably transforms him into a spectator, an observer, offering him a place for observation, but also the necessary detachment for an objective perspective. By detaching himself, the character assigns himself a privileged position of critic and analyst, the distance and objectivity necessary to put things in order and to subject the Jewish culture and community to a detached analysis, as well as the political radicalized Romanian society.

This detached, critical analysis of the social and cultural phenomena of the time becomes central in the volume, concentrating on a highly sensitive topic for both the Romanian and the Jewish community, especially in a period of the renaissance of anti-Semitic movements and of social crisis (mid-1930s) following a period of calmness and apparent balance (end of 1920s). The choice of isolation, of non-involvement and analysis, together with the detached criticism, with an intellectualizing perspective on

acute social problems, brought new elements into the area of literature with Jewish topics, usually interested in describing the community itself or in presenting socially representative destinies (as it was the case with Călugaru's and Peltz' works). At the same time, presenting the problem of anti-Semitism became a new subject for the literature of Jewish topics which avoided until then a direct approach of the discrimination and persecution of the Jews in Romania. The polemics and attacks coming from the Jewish community's side in the wake of Sebastian's book were motivated by the perception of a certain lack of solidarity of the intellectual with his own community of origin, and as a consequence, of abandoning its social and political problems to a secondary place in the debate proposed by the novel. The critical position of the character daring to define himself in neutral terms between the social anti-Semitic context attacking the individual, and the Jewish cultural life and heritage which "weakens" the social and individual vitality of the character, disturbs both directions and groups. Planning to maintain his middle position and hoping to eventually realize a mediation, the author did not pacify or better analyze through his literature the pre-existing conflict which was more profound and wider than he assumed, but rather antagonized the two groups through his intellectualization and abstraction of the social and political problem.

c) Concentrating on the individual. In fact, apart from the task of observing and objectively analyzing the content, the character of the book wants to isolate it, to place the social reality between the brackets in order to concentrate better on his own inner conflicts and problems, in lieu of being consumed by a crisis which he feels does not concern him exclusively. The whole literary demonstration of being anti-social and refusing popular actions is actually a justification for the defense of his own privacy and

intimacy, which the main character feels is under attack, and towards which he hoped to withdraw peacefully.

The position of isolation and reduction to detached observation is implicitly an assertion of a personal hierarchy in which, for Mihail Sebastian's hero, the crisis of the individual and, thus, of his own individuality, are more important than the situation of the whole community affected by the anti-Semitic movements. Placing the community in a secondary position within the larger social space in order to favor an individual problem, probably irrelevant for the community, possibly came as a shock and intriguing gesture for the readers and generated the conflicting polemical reception from the outraged public. In a period of social reaction, of solidarization, adhesion, ideology, the Jewish intellectual of Mihail Sebastian's novel takes the liberty of ignoring the surrounding reality which conditioned inevitably his identity, of isolating himself in order to solve personal, metaphysical problem of individual relevance and thus is perceived as insignificant for the community.

The Problem of Double Identity. In 1923, in the Deputies' Chamber in Paris, a Jewish French integrated intellectual, successful writer and journalist, the future leftist prime-minister of France Léon Blum, answered an anti-Semitic attack with the following:

I am Jewish. This is a fact. You don't insult me if you remind me that I belong to the Jewish race, belonging which I have never denied, I have only feelings of gratitude and pride towards it.¹⁴

while in another context he declared that

I was born in France. I was raised as Frenchman in French schools. My friends are French. I have a perfect command of French without the slightest trace of foreign accents. I have the right to perceive myself as perfectly assimilated and, still, despite this I feel I am Jewish. And I have never felt the slightest contradiction, the tiniest conflict between these two areas of my consciousness.¹⁵

Apart from the similar rhetoric in demonstrating his Jewish, but also French, and respectively Romanian identity, Mihail Sebastian apparently came ideologically, with his double identity model, from the same space of Jewish integration, specific to Central and Western Europe of the second half of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th. The “Franco-Jewish”¹⁶ model (thus called in the scholarly literature on the history of the Jewish communities in French and English) refers exactly to this mode of existing in society which dominated the French Jewry until the end of the 1920s, when the social crisis affected the socio-political balance, through migration, economic crisis, raise of extremism, etc.

One of the premises from which the novel starts is the double identity of the character. From the very beginning, the family roots and Judaism on one hand, but also the Romanian space, culture and life on the other, are involved in the creation of a conflicting personality in permanent crisis, analyzing and detesting parts of the Jewish heritage, striving for compensation through Romanian culture, noticing also the lack of Romanian social acceptance and the structural importance of his own roots in the construction of his personality. More than a personal crisis, the inner conflict is induced from the outside due to the social tensions to which the individual opting for a double belonging is subjected. Taking a break from the social reality is necessary in order to concentrate on his own personality, troubled by the need to harmonize the two sets of values within the existence of the same individual. The double identity is not constructed,

but assumed from the very beginning, although the social and political context negated the chances and the organicity of this identity. In the context of fluctuating xenophobia, anti-Semitism and extremist trends during the period analyzed by the writer, the natural creation of such an identity, specifically for areas where a long coexistence took place in multicultural spaces, is obviously forced and the result of an individual socio-metaphysical utopia. Although aware of the strong anti-Semitism and of the consequences of marginalization and exclusion from the social life on ethnic-religious criteria, the main character concludes through a personal declaration of adhesion to the Romanian culture and society. Any inclination towards one or the other side would be treating unfairly the other one: "I am Jewish, but also a man of the Danube." At the same time with this voluntary and personal cultural adhesion, the hero enters into a direct conflict with both directions of ideas supported by the Jewish intellectual space, but also by the Romanian one.

Sebastian's novel introduced a new identity model, totally different from the conservative model proposed by the Romanian society and negotiated by the Jewish intellectuals in the very period of the publication of the volume *De două mii de ani...*. From the beginning, the novel was based on the act of assuming a double identity, and the discourse constructed around it referred effectively to the possibilities of harmonizing this complex identity, of combining the two sets of values often incompatible, considering the existence of this identity model as evident. Bringing the two identity spheres on the same level, ignoring the hierarchy imposed by the subtle negotiation between the group of Jewish intellectuals and the social and cultural Romanian space reflected in press which took into account the sensitivity and nationalist hostility of the

moment, Mihail Sebastian proposed for the first time as an alternative to the identity paradigm of OR / OR, the identity of AND / AND type.

As a reaction to the novel, Mihail Sebastian was attacked in press as being “assimilationist” by the Jewish publications on the grounds that he considered himself unjustifiably integrated into a conservative society; the writer rejected these accusations by explaining his own experience in an affective and formative dimension. Indeed, through the history of his family, though culture, education, social and professional environment, he belonged practically to the category of intellectuals who defined themselves in the survey as “Romanian writers of Jewish origin”, meaning integrated, acculturated, being part of the Romanian society. The difference between the identity model produced by this category of intellectuals on one side and by Mihail Sebastian on the other side consisted in his refusal of repressing his Jewish identity in order to favor the Romanian domineering one, even at the formal level, even assuming the risk of presenting a theoretical identity model which could not be recognized in the present social environment. Thus Mihail Sebastian chose not to accept the compromise of repressing his Jewish identity and relegating it to the background of his private life in order to satisfy a public opinion willing to nationalize, nor to grant it a second place within a model which hierarchized loyalties. On the other side, he did not intend to exalt Romanian identity and to make it absolute either, stressing its importance on the level of acculturation and deliberate adherence to Romanian culture and language.

Proposing such an identity model in his novel, Mihail Sebastian entered into an implicit ideological conflict on at least two levels. First, his discourse articulated a general criticism addressed to the larger debate on identity models and process of negotiation in progress, already presented at the beginning of this chapter and centered

on the concept of Romanian vs. Jewish identity; his literary message thus entered into an open polemic with the larger intellectual debate of the time recasting the problem from a new perspective and cultural paradigm of double identity. The second conflict which was initiated by his novel referred to a more specific critique addressed to the cultural and social reality, not only addressing the Jewish world perceived as stagnating in its own identity and tradition and unable to adapt to modernity, but also against the anti-Semitic and xenophobic manifestations agitating the social and political life of the Romanian society.

Placing the identity model proposed by the writer in a wider social and cultural context, it becomes clear that the reasons for the aggressive polemic initiated by the press and public highlight the major incompatibility between the general conservative environment and the modern identity paradigm proposed by the writer. Sebastian actually addressed a severe rationalizing critique of the identity model proposed by the “Romanian intellectuals of Jewish origin” by simply repositioning the debate in a space freed from the political pressures of the conservative society and from the implicit (self)repression of the Jewish identity. At the same time, Sebastian also eliminated the nostalgia of a Jewish traditional conservative identity in a period of intense urbanization and modernization, sometimes encountered in the literature of Eastern European writers fearing the loss of identity in front of the modern inroads of Western civilization. Proposing the creation of a balance, the writer disturbed on one hand the subtle socio-cultural and identity negotiation in progress; on the other hand, he did not represent an actual possibility or reality, but an ideal model. Sebastian in fact disclosed and contradicted the identity politics which compromised social-cultural harmonization; he also placed a mirror in front of the identity discourses of the Jewish and Romanian

intellectuals in order to underline the conflicting and disharmonious points. Practically, the author of *De două mii de ani...* constructed the necessary environment for an ideal identity created for the larger category of intellectuals of Jewish origin and Romanian language. In other words, in his novel, Sebastian articulated an obvious criticism of the variants of compromise and pressure while defining identity for the group of “Romanian writers of Jewish origin” and a form of reaction for preserving identity through negotiation and counter-pressure for the “Romanian-language Jewish writers.” Sebastian deliberately ignored the subtle negotiation in progress and the existing pressures by trying to impose a less popular model, intellectual, individual and innovative, but which in his perspective would restore the dignity of a resulting cultural identity and thus the normality of the social relations. As already presented in the introduction of this chapter, Mihail Sebastian was not the only intellectual who proposed this identity model (Ury Benador also theorized this model¹⁷), but he was the only intellectual who placed it in the center of a literary work, providing it with a wider public audience and thus placing it in the center of the debates of ideas of the moment.

The second level of the implicit criticism in the novel refers to the social and political context in which Sebastian places his literary topic. On one hand, Jewish identity is portrayed from a metaphysical perspective, charged with culturally assimilated (self)stereotypes analyzed from an assumed negative direction coming from the fashionable debates of the moment on the “national specificity.” This complex position leads towards an ambivalent conflicting relation that Sebastian established with his own Jewish identity of which he was proud, but which he also sometimes detested, perceiving it critically and striving in a Bovarist manner towards compensation from the Romanian cultural and ontological space. At the same time, his novel naturalistically presents the

anti-Semitic manifestations in the Romanian social life of the 1920s and he was probably the first writer to speak freely about it, using the first person and reflecting on the issue from the inside (Peltz approaches the life of the community from a collective perspective, mainly concentrating on socio-economic aspects; the episodes describing anti-Semitic conflicts were integrated into the larger picture of the novel in order to complete the image of the Jewish life, but never became the center of a debate within his work¹⁸).

To conclude, the identity model proposed by Mihail Sebastian could have been a natural alternative in a modern society based on liberal principles in which being Romanian and Jewish at the same time was possible due to the fact that the two identities were not mutually exclusive. This was in fact the case in the Austro-Hungarian Empire or in Western Europe, where national identity referred initially to the civic dimension, while the ethnic one could be subsumed or become a problem of free individual option. In the conditions in which the debates on national identity focused obsessively on the “essence of the Romanian spirit”¹⁹ defined in terms connected to the rural space, and Christian orthodoxy, the concept of nation was based on ethnicity. In this context, the already existent model constructed on the social level was an ethnic one, which implicitly declared as incompatible the “double rooting” and determined either an exclusion (by a separation between “nation” and “foreigners”) or a total assimilation (unacceptable for the group’s identity loss and also impossible to be accomplished in the given radicalized conditions). Although in the 1930 census, almost 28% of the Romanian population consisted of ethnic-religious minorities, all the non-Romanian groups, except for the Jewish community, were easily classified as “the other” and excluded by definition from the body of the nation – mainly Hungarians and Germans – due to their clear mapping within a post-WWI cultural Diaspora of previous Austro-Hungarian and Tsarist Empires.

In the case of the Jewish community, its complex identity generated a “double rooting” connecting with a transnational group, but also with the local Romanian culture and society due to profound acculturation and socialization; this fact raised great problems of analysis and reaction of the Romanian socio-political life due to this unique case of voluntary adherence to the Romanian society and culture. In these conditions, the civic identity model of Western modern type proposed by Sebastian started an open conflict with the conservative identity model based on ethnic and autochthonous elements which became implicit in defining the Romanian nation and the intellectual debates of the interwar period.

The Novel of Authenticity and Experience. Included by Ov. S. Crohmălniceanu in the category of “literature of authenticity and experience”²⁰, the work of Mihail Sebastian received an implicit association with writers such as Mircea Eliade, H. Bonciu, Anton Holban, Camil Petrescu or M. Blecher. A member of the Forum group and later the Criterion association, Sebastian delivered lectures together with Eliade, Petru Comarnescu, Paul Sterian, Mircea Vulcănescu and Ionel Jianu and with the collected money he published his first volume, *Fragmente dintr-un carnet găsit* (Fragments from a found notebook), in the same series as Eliade’s *Solilocvii* (Soliloquies), and Sterian’s *Pregătire pentru călătoria din urmă* (Preparations for the final trip). With the same funds, he joined the project of the journal *Azi* (Today) together with Eliade, Paul Comarnescu, Ion Călugaru, Emil Cioran and Eugen Ionescu, and was a member of the Generation 1927, from which he later separated due to political and ideological factors. In this context and intellectual environment, Sebastian embraced with reservations the *trăirist* literary tendency, mostly favored by his attraction for French literature. The fact that he

practiced “the formula of the novel-diary of Gidian type”, transforming “into the confession of an existentialist experiment”, transformed his novel *De două mii de ani...* into “a living book, where the author is searching for himself with a touching sincerity, through the torments of the times and the mutilating effects of racial discrimination on the Jewish conscience”²¹. Indeed, just as many other intellectuals of his generation influenced by French literature, especially by Proust and Gide, Sebastian adopted the principles of the literature of authenticity and experience, often perceived as a Romanian existentialism *avant-la-lettre*. Also, due to the centrality of Jewish life and problems for the novel, *De două mii de ani...* naturally related to the Jewish literature in Romanian language; the combination of modernity and tradition introduced by the novel in this area were remarkable and bear further discussion.

Coming from his cultural background, from education and familiarization with the French space, and the group’s ideology and influence (which he shared with reservations), the French literary influence as well as the philosophy of S. Kierkegaard had a strong impact on Sebastian’s work; the literary discourse of Sebastian belonged indeed to the prose of pure analysis, of experience and inner drama, describing the inner torments of the individual, as well as the identity search for a connection with the surrounding reality. In fact, this is also the pretext of the novel; Sebastian describes the evolution of an identity crisis, he analyzes and dissects it, searches for solutions in order to find an inner balance and is not afraid to experiment in diverse ideological directions in order to test his options and the clarity of his position. A novel of inner crisis described and analyzed in the spirit of the French tradition, *De două mii de ani...* concentrates on its inner space and accepts mental experiment, inner discipline and a dialogue with the

self in exchange for the sexually intellectualized affairs, drugs, and experiments involving the social exterior employed by his fellow writers within their *trăirist* writings.

If the topics populating this type of young rebellious literature in general were basically sexual crisis, vitalism, and intellectual and metaphysical crisis, Sebastian introduced a new topic through the problem of “Jewish experience” in a double sense. Thus, Jewish identity was presented from a collective perspective, as a social background underlined by the anti-Semitic students’ movements from the beginning of the 1920s, but also individually, through the position of the intellectual who attempts to clarify for himself the problem of the conflicting double identity at the philosophical and cultural level.

Thus, due to the problems he approached, Sebastian was an innovator in the space of authenticist and “experimentalist” literature, moving the debate from physiological and rebellious vitalism towards an essentialization of the intellectual and moral existence. Sebastian brought into the debate, in the strictest sense of the “literature of authenticity”, his own central experience in order to be analyzed in his book. Until the publication of his novel, the literature of this type preferred to discuss the problems of the individual, lacking the connection with the social life of the moment and avoided especially a definite political agenda. Although it discussed the problem of the Jewish intellectual in interwar Romania on the metaphysical, individual and abstract level, the novel offered a realist and critical context for the presentation of the topic and raised some extremely uncomfortable questions connected to the social-political situation of the time. Due to the literary “authenticist” manner of transposing the topic, the question raised became more dramatic and literary personalized. The modernity of the formula of the novel, “authenticist and experimentalist” – as it was described by the literary historians,

rendered the social-political agenda in even more dramatic contemporary terms, although the final definite scope of the book was to recreate a veritable and intensely personal experience of the author, by chance being the same as his experience of identity.

The novel also introduced a new tone into the context of literature with Jewish topics. Until then, the appreciated and renowned literature of Peltz, Călugaru and Benador was based on the representation of social aspects and on the idea of community (especially if we talk about Benador who maintained a substantial degree of social representativity even while writing on the drama of the Jewish intellectual) and avoided approaching directly sensitive topics such as anti-Semitism prone to generate a conflict or a polemic. As a consequence, before the publication of the novel-debate of Mihail Sebastian, the problem of anti-Semitism was marginally treated in the context of the Jewish literature.

Under the influence of authenticist literature, Mihail Sebastian's novel was constructed using the first-person narrative, a formula enhancing the impression of credibility, tension, authenticity and participation in the literary event, as well as the dramatism of the shared experience. This approach to the literary theme was new for literature with Jewish topics, where the novel was rather coming from a critical realist perspective. Due to this tension between the stylistic level and the topic approached, the reception was a complex, varied and polemical one and, most of the time, it failed to grasp the message around which the book was actually constructed. The reader was confused, finding a modern novel on Jewish identity in Romania approached not in the classical sense of Călugaru, Dorian or Peltz, but in a modern way suggesting a sublimation of social representation in literary space by introducing the individual as an intellectual functioning as a topic in the literature inspired from Jewish life. *De două mii*

de ani... was the first novel on Jewish life in Romania written from the perspective of modern literature debating intellectual and philosophical problems under the influence of the social and political context and conflict.

Keeping in mind this double connection with two areas of Romanian culture from the interwar period – the authenticist and experimentalist literature on one hand, the literature with Jewish topics on the other hand – it is easy to notice that Sebastian's novel generated a double confusion on the level of expectation from the public. Sebastian was an innovator within the authenticist literature on the level of literary subject within the already consecrated form, thus introducing the problem of the Jewish intellectual perceived through the perspective of the intense social conflict which became even more revealing through the modern literary devices used by this literary direction. In this way, his novel placed under accusation the social milieu and transmitted a deeper emotion and a more intense participation in the drama of the characters for the reader – who otherwise used to be little involved in the problem of a social and ethnic marginalized group. At the same time, the novel represented a novelty within the literature with Jewish topics through its form and literary technique, through the concentration on the problem of the individual, on the crisis of the intellectual, on isolation, all belonging to a discourse of modernization of the literature which until then preferred to present the collectivity and the identity preservation. With this single novel, Sebastian managed to vex both the wider public of Romanian language readers, and also the audience familiar with Jewish topics. This subtle interplay of the double subject / literary-within-the-literary formula succeeded therefore in frustrating and refuting the expectations of the readers of authenticist literature, posing problems of social and ethnic origin of great relevance for the period in discussion and extracting them out of the sexual, metaphysical and

intellectualizing spleen of the literary formula. Also, these problems affected the public interested in literature with Jewish topics, used to picturesque naturalistic evocations of the *shtetl* or Jewish street and with their social crisis in conflict with modernity and their traditions. Eventually, Sebastian's novel generated a violent polemic due to the fact that, innovating in both directions, the highly complex political, social and cultural agenda of the moment found itself represented without any safety measures within the literary space and for the larger audience of the Romanian-language public.

Projected in a period of intellectual experiments, but published in a moment of international political radicalization, the book had the misfortune of being interpreted within the political and social framework of its time, while its cultural meaning and context were ignored. An idealist without a strong sense of politics and their consequences, caught between two worlds or responsible for a kind of "double rooting"²², Sebastian was a special case, if not representative of the wider group of Romanian Jewish intellectuals, obviously significant for the intellectual life of the 1930s. In my perspective, this conflict was visible on three levels of analysis, namely for the problem of the position of the intellectual in connection with society and politics, at the level of the double identity of the Romanian and Jewish intellectual in the 1920s, and finally, to move away from the substance of the novel, on the level of analyzing the construction of the book and the way in which its form was adapted to its content. The main idea behind my analysis was that Sebastian rethought these issues from a modern perspective, in an open space, and placed the political context and social pressures in Romania between brackets in order to reach to a theoretical confirmation which he accomplished in the literary field, but without support or justification in his contemporary society. Thinking these three issues in a modern paradigm, under the Western and

especially French influence, Sebastian generated intense conflicts when the book was published, in a society where all the problems approached were rooted in a traditional perspective which contradicted them. There is a permanent interplay between the space of modernity, of the challenge which Sebastian brings in his book, and the more and more radical and rigid context out of which it was supposed to have emerged and which was expected to be confirmed and validated by the book, but which could not be found in it when it was published. The direct interpretation of the novel at the time of its publication connected everything to the political reality of the moment through the accusations of “assimilationism”, “betrayal”, etc. without taking into account that the whole project actually escaped that system of thinking and analysis and had clear affiliations with the multicultural and liberal modernism of Western Europe, of the France of Julien Benda, Léon Blum and André Gide. The contrast, far from despising critically or in a conformist manner, was an artificial transplantation of a new spiritual climate in an area of conservatism. Thus the events which followed projected an interpretation of the polemic around the novel through the conflict between the cultural modernism in which Sebastian cast the problem of the Jewish intellectual in interwar Romania, and the social and political conservatism in the midst of which the novel fell and through which it was erroneously interpreted.

Conclusion. If the *Facla* survey served to identify mechanisms and negotiation processes between two radically opposing definitions of identity, Sebastian’s book, based on an explicit process of assuming the theoretical model discussed, functioned as an open intellectual and socio-political test of the surrounding society, whether or not it was responsive to such an ideological proposal, collecting direct reactions and open

confrontations. Deliberately ignoring the impact of his discourse in the context of these subtle games and negotiations between social and political tensions already visible in the *Facla* survey, Sebastian's intellectual game placed the whole system into a crisis, antagonizing a conservative environment allotting clear unequivocal functions and positions to groups and individuals. Although during the *Facla* survey, the identity negotiation process was in progress, in the case of Sebastian's novel the "double identity" test failed. Ignoring the possible consequences of not approaching such a sensitive topic with caution, Sebastian had to face an extensive rejection of camps which usually had radically divergent positions, but which aligned in the case of his discourse in their disagreement and non-acceptance. The violence of the polemics generated by the novel was only later matched, when his published *Jurnal* had the strength to challenge again a mental paradigm and approach of the cultural past structuring the historical and literary canon.

The heated debates generated by Sebastian's book, as well as the public responses which followed it, represented basically a test case for the chances of such an identity project and integrative approach within both societies, as he was attacked by both, Zionists and right-wingers, too. This debate also brought face-to-face two political and cultural paradigms for approaching the community, the individual and the ethnic element; basically, the model promoted by the Jewish acculturated intellectuals was based on a liberal, egalitarian, civic adhesion to the national body and to society articulated briefly by the AND/AND model, equally able to integrate both identities. If, according to Franz Rosenzweig, the AND model functioned as a bridge providing easy access to both parts and cultures, "learning to be a German AND a Jew was the challenge inherently posed by the Enlightenment and Emancipation"²³; nevertheless, the Gentile

society usually offered an OR option. Best expressed in the article of one of the writers inspired by Jewish life, a Yiddish-speaker Romanian-writer Ury Benador, the double identity model had thus also a theoretical articulation supporting a hybrid cultural model even in the context of a profoundly Jewish identity. On the other side of the debate, the general radicalized context expressed through the aggressive manner of articulating the survey in *Facla* and of individually pursuing the writers in order to force a response, as well as the anti-Semitic preface and reactions to Sebastian's novel, confirmed the persistence during the interwar period of a pre-WWI social-cultural model of OR/OR identity articulated on ethnic definition and organic bonds to a commonality of history, culture and religion. The literary survey signaled the fundamental opposition between two paradigms of perceiving identity, society and finally political options which referred only partially to the concept of "double rooting", but it provided significant information for the larger context in which this theoretical model and socio-political project was supposed to evolve. Faced with similar definition of a Volkish organic German nation, Rosenzweig approached this as an impossible situation as

...since Moses Mendelssohn most Jews have not, in fact, faced an 'and' but an insidious 'or' (...). This insidious 'or' must be replaced by an 'and'. The relation (...) must cease to be that of a choice – an 'or'. It must be a relation founded in an authentically compelling 'and'. But in the absence of a genuine 'and', the choice – the 'or' – presented to the modern Jew is, of course, no real choice at all.²⁴

Both case studies analyzed for the current chapter stressed the conflict generated while defining the concept of Jewish Romanian intellectual; in both cases heated polemics followed and targeted the "hyphenation" process or the "double rooting," or simply the hierarchization involving the inclusion of both cultural and social affiliations.

The radical contestation came from nationalist directions, be they Romanian or Jewish, arguing against trespassing any collective identity borders. Eventually, the two analyzed episodes were not significant as testimonies about the writers themselves; rather they constructed a coherent model of thinking on identity, collective, acculturation during the interwar Romania. The confrontation between two political paradigms became prominent and created a context where the ideal model of “double identity” and the variation models based on integration and inclusion were tested and confronted the real options censored by a radicalizing society.

Constructing their identity in radically different manners, Jewish acculturated intellectuals and Romanian intellectuals created also different “horizons of expectation.” Most of the Jewish intellectuals adopted a rational theory of double identity as a political model for modernity based on civic values and liberalism following the French pattern of association of individuals freely adhering to the body of the nation on democratic principles (even in Zionist cultural discourse, the language and culture of the land were included as in the case of Benador and Zissu); the importance of Haskala and rationalism of Enlightenment were obvious sources as well. On the other hand, Romanian intellectuals to a large extent favored an ethnicist identity of German Volksnation model which promoted “less (...) an original accord than (...) a common relation of its members to some combination of historical memory, geography, kinship, tradition, mores, religion and language”²⁵ while involved a furious search for the “ethnic specificity” of the Romanian nation. Despite the intense process of negotiating identity through acculturation and integrative cultural efforts, the confrontation between opposing social and political views took place most visibly on cultural grounds, through the debates around Sebastian’s book and the *Facla* survey.

Notes:

¹ The concept of *double-rooting* was analyzed by Leon Volovici in interview “Dubla rădăcina culturală” published in Roxana Sorescu, *Reinventînd Europa* (Bucureşti: Du Style, 1998).

² Ezra Mendelsohn, “Romania” in *The Jews of Eastern Central Europe between the World Wars* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), 190.

³ Ury Benador, “De două ori eu =1” in *Adam*, an X, nr. 117-118, 1-15 March 1938, 14.

⁴ See the analysis of this valuable source in Leon Volovici, “Scriitor român – Scriitor evreu” and “Utopie, ideologie şi literatura: Intelectuali şi scriitori evrei în România în secolul XX” in *Vatra*, no. 10/11, 2000.

⁵ The answers were published in January and February 1935 in *Facla* review.

⁶ Terms used by the editorial board of *Facla*, 12 January 1935, in order to present the incident.

⁷ Al. Robot, “Scrisoare către editor” in *Facla*, 20 January 1935.

⁸ Mendelsohn, “Romania” in *The Jews of Eastern Central Europe* and Carol Iancu, *Evreii din România. De la Emancipare la Marginalizare (1919-1938)*, (Bucureşti: Hasefer, 2000).

⁹ “Not a novel, but a diary, a book about personal discharge, of revising and setting some ideas and problems straight” in Mihail Sebastian, “Jurnal de roman”, *Azi*, I, nr. 5, November 1932, 433.

¹⁰ Zigu Ornea considers that Nae Ionescu wanted to prove his political position after the conflict between the Iron Guard and the government and used Sebastian’s book as an opportunity in Zigu Ornea, *Anii treizeci. Extrema dreaptă românească* (Bucureşti: Editura Fundaţiei Culturale Române, 1996), 399-407.

¹¹ Mihail Sebastian, “Specificul naţional” in Leon Volovici, “Dosar Mihail Sebastian” (“Specificul naţional”, “O seară la Institutul Francez”, “Despre o anumită mentalitate huliganică”) in *Apostrof*, year XII, no. 5 (2001), 132.

¹² “Lumea prin care am trecut. Mircea Eliade şi Mihail Sebastian în corespondenţă cu Petru Comarnescu”, *Manuscriptum*, nr. 4 (33)/1978 (year IX), 167-169.

¹³ Mihail Sebastian, *Cum am devenit huligan* (Bucureşti: Humanitas, 1990), 84-85.

¹⁴ *Debats parlementaires*, 11 January 1923, quoted in Paula Hyman, *The Jews of Modern France*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998.

¹⁵ Marc Vichniac, *Léon Blum* (Paris: Flammarion, 1937) quoted in Hyman, *The Jews of Modern France*.

¹⁶ After Emancipation, which immediately followed the French Revolution, the Jewish community in France went through a rapid process of integration during the 19th century, reaching a strong civic identity in which Judaism became only a religious identity, belonging to the private sphere. In the first decades of the 20th century, after Dreyfuss affair, a trend of rediscovering the Jewish roots and identity emerged in the context of the rise of anti-republican nationalism and social crisis. The 1920s led to a social and cultural flourishing and affirmation of the Jewish French intellectuals within French culture. In 1927, the French state naturalized the Jewish immigrants, while the French Church condemned Action française and the anti-Semitism, while a new integration took place.

¹⁷ Benador, “De două ori eu=1”.

¹⁸ See I. Peltz, *Foc în Hanul cu Tei* and other fragments in Chapter 4 of the current dissertation.

¹⁹ Sebastian tackled this topic in a public lecture on “Specificul național” delivered in 21 of March 1935 at the French Institute, published in *Apostrof*, year XII, no. 5 (132), 2001, 11.

²⁰ Ov. S. Crohmălniceanu, “Literatura “autenticității” și “experienței”” in *Literatura română între cele două războaie mondiale* (București: Minerva, 1972; 1974; 1975), Vol. I, 437-510.

²¹ Crohmălniceanu, *Literatura română între cele două războaie mondiale*, vol. I, 495- 496.

²² These are the terms used by Leon Volovici in order to define the double cultural relation of the Jewish intellectuals in Romania in the interview “Dubla rădăcină culturală” in Sorescu, *Reinventând Europa*.

²³ Paul Mendes Flohr, *German Jews. A Dual Identity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 90.

²⁴ Franz Rosenzweig quoted in Mendes Flohr, *German Jews*, 86.

²⁵ Brian C. J. Singer, “Cultural Versus Contractual Nations: Rethinking their Oppositions” in *History and Theory* 35.3 (1996), 311 quoted in Mendes Flohr, *German Jews*, 16.

Conclusion

My research aimed at answering a few questions related to the first group of Jewish intellectuals born and growing up within Romanian culture and thus deeply acculturated. Chronologically, I followed their activity from slightly before WWI, during the interwar period, before and after the long-belated Emancipation, until anti-Jewish legislation in late 1930s marginalized and then excluded them from Romanian society and cultural life. The main problems which the current study tried to answer were why this group of intellectuals chose these specific identity models, who they were and how they articulated their public discourse in connection with their Jewish identity and Romanian cultural canon. Thus my research focused first on the socio-cultural and political context determining their options and shaping their later discourse, then it moved to a socio-cultural analysis of their intellectual and private individual paths and finally it analyzed their works in terms of identity discourse and integrative approach.

Following the theoretical level of research organized by concepts such as “conflict” and “inclusion”, defined in turn by “identity construction” and by “strategies of integration”, my research identified a series of conclusions for the study of acculturated Jewish intellectuals in the process of redefining their position in order to penetrate a conservative cultural milieu. Thus, among the factors influencing the profile of the intellectuals and their identity, the tension between advanced acculturation and persistent marginalization and exclusion set the background for a strong conflict explainable

through Robert Merton's theory. Acquiring solid Romanian education, the young intellectuals were justifiably acting as insiders of the local culture, but due to the legal and social context they remained social outsiders, generating a high amount of individual frustration. This frustration materialized in the emergence of a rebellious group, which found in the marginal non-canonic modernist and avant-gardist trends the most suitable option reflecting their outsider position and saving them from a national cultural repertoire incompatible and unable to accommodate to their values. In this context, the long belated Emancipation finally legally secured a space for the assertion of Jewish identity within the Romanian space, manifested through the emergence of a "Jewish literature" in the Romanian language. The construction of the "Jewish literature" represented the belated cultural reflection of a social reality neglected for a long time by a conservative culture and consisted in a spin-off replica of a nation-wide intellectual debate searching for the essence of "Romanian identity" while constructing a "minority's culture" within the Romanian language. While analyzing the identity representation within their works, a series of strategies of cultural inclusion was employed. This fact signaled a constant integrative position adopted by all, despite their affiliation to rebellious avant-garde or to "Jewish literature," aiming at a transformation of the cultural canon in order to include the new reality of multi-cultural Romanian society within its borders. While Fundoianu adopted a different identity discourse in connection with his readership, be it Jewish or Romanian, Voronca adopted conservative artistic and linguistic categories able to integrate him into the traditionalist dominant trend. Both strategies were abandoned after their migration to France where self-representational identity discourse and a reevaluation of their Judaism occurred. Perceived as the temporary solution of escaping the ethnic constraints of a traditional milieu, modernism

and avant-garde were exchanged in France for personal cultural discourses when the intellectuals started to reject group ideologies and initiated a large discussion around Jewish identity as an existentialist symbol of human condition. The construction of “Jewish literature” followed the same integrative direction, functioning as a bridge between cultures and societies combining social critique with Jewish identity representation. Deleuze and Guattari’s theoretical demonstration supported my analysis, but a reverse of this theory had to be employed in the sense of “reterritorialization.” Unlike their Kafkian example, the Jewish Romanian intellectuals had as a larger goal the project of integrating socially and culturally the world perspective introduced by Jewish culture within the Romanian canon. Rejected often by Zionist intellectuals as corrupted products, the resulting works were successfully integrated into the larger Romanian cultural canon which failed to assimilate the ethnic element, approaching the text through their leftist largely representative social aspect.

Eventually, the case of the first acculturated generation included in Romanian culture represents a success story, which accomplished the integration of individual works and intellectual profiles, but largely failed in imposing Jewish Romanian identity within Romanian culture. Evolving from “marginal rebels” to “mainstream critics,” the intellectuals proposed a “double identity” model as an ideal solution for the fundamental tension between acculturation to Romanian milieu and marginalization of Jewish identity. The essential incompatibility between civic-liberal and ethnic-organic identity models revealed the major conflict between two paradigms of thinking the individual in connection with the collectivity and eventually determined the failure of this project.

A. The Comparative Context. Placed in a space of cultural interferences coming not only from the North-Eastern Russian model (strong Russian and Galician migration) and from the Western Austro-Hungarian area (Transylvanian, Bukovinian and Banat Jewries) consolidated in the Ashkenazi world, but also from the Balkan South through the Sephardic Wallachian space, Romanian Jewry represents a complex case confronting directly the model proposed in Michael Löwy's book. Although the Romanian Jewry shared with the Eastern European model the general conditions of poverty, high level of anti-Semitism and marginalization on grounds of legal exclusion, the dominance of the Yiddish language and *shtetl* culture perceived as defining the Oriental Jewry had only a regional application due to the variety of identities within the Jewish community. Also, the low presence of Jewish intellectuals in revolutionary movements was justified by the specific structure of the Romanian Jewry with a reduced industrial Jewish proletariat, usually responsible for providing the milieu specific to the successful revolutionary movements. In the same line, Romanian Jewish intellectuals shared some characteristics with the Western model; Romanian Jews displayed a lower interest in the Zionist movement or in the religious renewal, but a higher cultural adherence especially during the interwar period (although not followed by a religious or national one) to the dominant Romanian culture. This fact happened despite the absence of a more integrative, assimilationist context promoting the inclusion of Jews in social, economic and political life especially due to the specificity of Romanian non-proselytizing Orthodox Christian archaic society, but after a long period of assimilation following the early Emancipation. Thus, between the "pariah position" of the Eastern European communities and the integrated existence of the Western Jews, Romanian

acculturated Jewry could provide a second alternative to the intermediary Central European model described by Michael Löwy.

Part of a general cultural trend, the emergence of “Jewish literature” in local languages represented the response to the challenge of expressing Jewish distinctiveness through acculturation and socio-cultural integration or as a direct consequence of Zionist influences and national Jewish revival within the framework of a modernizing and relatively liberal society. If the first explanation was specific to Jewries of Central and Western Europe due to the integrative policies adopted in that region, the second one represented the outcome of the identity movements within Polish Jewry. Placed once more between Central and Eastern European models, the emergence of “Jewish literature in Romanian language” was the direct reaction to Emancipation by asserting a “minority culture” within Romanian culture favored by the newly emerged political context. Thus, the Romanian case contrasted with the Austro-Hungarian situation where the Emancipation generated an influx of assimilationist ideologies. In interwar Romania, the legal inclusion rather performed the function of securing a civic space for the socio-cultural manifestation of “minority discourses” paralleling and replicating the mainstream Romanian national one, nevertheless from the perspective of integration and rapprochement. Eventually, the most distinct characteristic of this phenomenon resides exactly within this balance between public assertion of Jewish identity connecting the process with the Polish case and a profound acculturation similar with the Central and Western European cases. Functioning as a bridge of rapprochement between the Jewish and Gentile societies, the literary phenomenon had a strong integrative component severely criticized by Zionists, connecting it again with the Western model.

Similarly, the avant-garde and modernism in Romania belonged to a larger artistic and cultural framework of manifestation, internationally overlapping with the leftist socio-political revolutionary movements crossing Europe from Russia to Germany, passing through Hungary and Romania too. The strong Jewish presence within revolutionary movements and modernist trends was not specific to the Romanian space, but rather an effect of the modernization of the European society as well as the secularization and acculturation of the Jewish community in general. A large literature on this topic exists, one of the most inspiring books being once more Michael Löwy's study focusing on the Central European case. What was specific to the Romanian case was the fact that the early modernist and avant-gardist movements were dominated by Jewish intellectuals and some even initiated by them (for example, Tristan Tzara's Dadaism and the Lettrism of Isidore Isou) in a society largely dominated by a traditionalist culture. Subjected to a long-delayed process of Emancipation and exclusion, transforming the acculturated individuals into marginalized people without a definite status within their own country, the Romanian Jewish intellectuals represented a frustrated group exposed to revolt against cultural models and social structures. But if avant-garde and modernism emerged in Western and especially Central Europe on the grounds of des-assimilation and disenchantment of a Jewry which lost its identity and connection to its past while discovering the limits of integration and inclusion, but benefiting from basic rights such as citizenship, in Romania it emerged exactly due to the refusal of integration and legal emancipation.

The theory of "double identity", emerging under the liberal influence of civic definitions of nation in Central and Western Europe, represented a failed test for the Romanian society. Nevertheless, this fact opened up for contemporary debate ideas of

authentic pluralism and cultural complexity, assuming the preservation of both Jewish identity and the attachment to the Gentile world. This identity model promoted the concept of an open culture developing on a background of liberalism and civic communal attachment, often incompatible with identity definitions within societies from Eastern and Central Europe, starting with the German Volkist concept of nationhood. An archaic traditional conservative society articulated on ethnic bases, the Romanian nation promoted a similar exclusive identity concept.

B. The Troubled Posterity of the Jewish Intellectuals. The Romanian-language Jewish intellectuals fully participated into the Romanian cultural life of the interwar period and their contribution was largely recognized by the reputed literary critics of the time. Both E. Lovinescu and George Călinescu, the most important critical voices of the interwar period, included them in their literary histories and recognized their talent within the Romanian cultural establishment. It appears that the rejection of their complex cultural position comes mostly from the extremes, as both Zionists and right-wing intellectuals challenged this identity model and their cultural discourse. Nevertheless, this integration had its limitations, as their work did not permeate school curricula and textbooks, this educational area being rigidly regulated by a rather nationalist approach.

The cultural canon of the communist regime avoided certain problematic works and writers due to their reconstructive potential pointing towards uncomfortable political events from the interwar period. Thus, by blocking the republication of certain books or through the interdiction of the profile of certain writers, the regime practically prevented opening a Pandora's Box related to the interwar period history and starting the intellectual, social and political debates around topics such as anti-Semitism, fascism and

minority's history. In this context, the posterity of the Jewish acculturated intellectuals was complex, placing the Romanian communist canon in a difficult position when trying to preserve the glory and success of some writers while preserving the culturally nationalizing direction.

Witnesses to an uncomfortable period of Romanian history and culture, Jewish intellectuals were the receptacles of a double discourse. Most of the bibliography on the presence of Jewish intellectuals in Romanian culture treats the topic in a discriminatory manner ignoring their origin, while employing a strictly stylistic literary-centrist approach as in the case of studies on the avant-garde and avoiding any socio-historical contextualization. In case any background is provided, their Jewish origin is omitted and due to the Romanian resonance of their names, they were ironically assimilated post-mortem as Romanian writers and their writings on Jewish identity erased from bibliographies as in Mihail Sebastian's case. Representing a glorious moment in Romanian literature, the avant-garde could not avoid receiving a lot of attention from literary histories, never discussing the socio-political context responsible for the emergence of the movement in Romania or the socio-political motivation for the ideological enrollment of the writers. On the contrary, the literary profile of Mihail Sebastian was mainly ignored by the Romanian public until the early 1990s due to the mutilation of his literary profile through the extirpation of the core of his oeuvre, his most fascinating novel, *De două mii de ani...* with its essayistic following *Cum am devenit huligan*. All this time, the literary reputation of Mihail Sebastian survived modestly, on superficial coordinates, only through republications of his minor novels appearing in marginal romance collections and experimental literature series or through frequent productions of his plays. The monographs and the remarkable articles of

Cornelia Ștefănescu¹, Dorina Grăsoiu², Leon Volovici³ or Matei Călinescu⁴ were the only ones approaching topics such as Jewish identity (actually, apart from Leon Volovici, the other critics semi-marginally approached it), but part of them were published only after 1989. Due to their leftist approach, Ion Călugaru's and Isac Peltz's works were recuperated by the communist regime and often republished, while the writers themselves found a place in the newly redesigned socio-political context, being promoted and publishing further with the support of the regime. Ury Benador was mostly forgotten after a relatively short communist productive period, while his most accomplished work, *Ghetto Veac XX*, was never republished.

The period after the fall of the communist regime reopened the whole ignored issue and started a large discussion, often degenerating in personal polemics without much scholarly gain due to the highly emotional involvement of the respondents. Subjects like the Iron Guard movement, the fascist regime at the end of the interwar period and the Holocaust were in the center of the discussion, exposing a complex form of intellectual resistance to a process of traumatic forced reconstruction of the past. After decades of idealizing the interwar period perceived by “underground” popular accounts during the communist regime as a “Golden Age,” the post-1989 society had to abandon an idealized cultural and political past, forged as a form of resistance against the communist regime. Therefore, post-1989 intellectuals had to restructure the current national self-perception through a lengthy and morally traumatic process. On the cultural level, the debate around the 1927 Generation and its political involvement with the Iron Guard was the most dynamic and complex. Transformed into mythical figures due to the international fame of some of the 1927 Generation members, this group seemed to embody the best of Romanian culture. The promiscuous political ties of some of its members were first

denied and then reluctantly discussed in a sectarian, emotional way as the interest and national pride in their symbolical value was dramatically threatened. The discussion around the Holocaust and the situation of Romanian Jewry, directly connected with the rise of radicalism in late 1930s Romania, made the “patriotic” task of saving their prestige even more difficult.

In this context, Sebastian’s eventually republished *De două mii de ani...*, as well as his late published *Jurnal* opened the discussion on Jewish identity and other historical and social “taboos.” Indirectly, Sebastian’s books became capital for initiating the debate over the involvement of the iconic 1927 Generation in the extremist Iron Guard movement. Immediately reduced to its function of mirroring Eliade’s, Cioran’s or Nae Ionescu’s political evolution, rather than being perceived as an account of a Jewish writer witnessing a political extremist crisis, Sebastian’s *Jurnal* was misinterpreted and hysterically perceived as a conspiracy aiming at destroying the international reputation of the 1927 Generation and thus a completely unpatriotic gesture at undermining the best of Romanian culture. This Romanian (non-Jewish!) intellectual self-centered approach perceived the diary as an embarrassing testimony against the “turning green”⁵ period while being ignored as a rich source documenting the position of the Jewish intellectuals, thus transforming Sebastian from the main character of his *Jurnal* into a secondary character of his own destiny. Unfortunately, the whole debate did not add much to the previously mutilated image of the writer by providing it with a long-awaited reevaluation. Instead, the polemics revealed a process of cultural and political reconstruction of the past, with attempts by the Romanian post-1989 elite to find a suitable political and cultural position, significant for an analysis of the post-communist Romanian elite on their way to find a new place in a liberal post-communist society. The

interwar Romanian literary history, reconfigured after 1989 after recuperating the purged works and adjusting theoretical paradigms in the area of intellectual history, failed to recuperate the story of the Jewish culture and intellectuals in interwar Romania.

Notes:

¹ Cornelia Ștefănescu, *Mihail Sebastian* (București: Editura Tineretului, 1968).

² Dorina Grăsoiu, *Mihail Sebastian sau ironia unui destin*, (București: Minerva, 1986).

³ Leon Volovici, “Dosar Mihail Sebastian” in *Apostrof*, an XII, no. 5 (132), 2001 and “The Jewish Intellectuals from Romania after the First World War: a Response to anti-Semitism” in Ladislau Gyemant ed., *Studia Judaica IV* (Cluj – Napoca: Babeș-Bolyai University, 1995).

⁴ Matei Călinescu, *Despre Ioan P. Culianu și Mircea Eliade. Amintiri, lecturi, reflecții*, (Iași: Polirom, 2002) with an article on Mihail Sebastian and “The 1927 Generation in Romania: Friendships and Ideological Choices (Mihail Sebastian, Mircea Eliade, Nae Ionescu, Eugen Ionescu, E. M. Cioran)” in *East European Politics and Societies*, vol. 15, nr. 3, Fall 2001, 649-677.

⁵ As the Iron Guard movement color was green, the political attachment was symbolically expressed in “to turn green” as for “to become a Guardist.”

APPENDIX. Bio-bibliographical Data.

Felix ADERCA (1891-1962), prose writer, journalist and literary critic. One of the most integrated intellectuals during the interwar period, Aderca was a member of famous *Sburătorul* circle and collaborated with many cultural publications. Novel *1916* was dedicated to the trauma of WW1 and to the consequences of nationalism. Author of *Mărturia unei generații*, a collection of interviews of his fellow writers.

Camil BALTAZAR (1902-1977), poet and journalist. Member of *Sburătorul* circle, Baltazar was an important professional journalist of the interwar period, working as an editor, member of the editorial team, director and collaborator for many cultural publications. Author of well-received volumes of poetry.

Ury BENADOR (1895-1971), prose writer and playwright. After a period at *Sburătorul* circle, Benador started a career in journalism collaborating with reputed Romanian cultural publications, aside from Yiddish and Hebrew press. Author of works inspired by Jewish life (novel *Ghetto Veac XX*, short story “Appassionata”). Director of the National Jewish Theatre (1947-1954).

M. BLECHER (1909-1938), prose writer and poet. Victim of bone tuberculosis, young Blecher analyzed his tragic experience, becoming a central modernist writer of his time (novels *Întîmplări din realitatea imediată* and *Inimi cicatrizate*, poetry volume *Corp transparent*). Collaboration with many cultural reviews in Romania and France and extensive correspondence with many intellectuals of the time

F. BRUNEA-FOX (1898-1977), journalist and poet. After literary debut with the avant-garde movements within which he continued to be active, Brunea-Fox started a solid career in journalism as a reporter, editor and director of various mainstream dailies, earning a reputation as the “Prince of the Reporters”. Author of volume *Orașul măcelului* (1944), testimony on the Iași pogrom (1941).

Ion CĂLUGARU (1902-1956), prose writer and journalist. Author of novels and collections of short stories inspired by Jewish life in Romania (*Caii lui Cibicioc*, *Copilăria unui netrebnic*, *Trustul*, *Paradisul statistic*), he was also attracted to the avant-garde movement. Editor and journalist for several Romanian publications, he also collaborated with Jewish cultural press.

Emil DORIAN (1893-1956), poet and prose writer. Author of poetry volumes (*Cîntece pentru Lelioara*, *De vorbă cu bălanul meu*) and novels (*Vagabonzii*, *Profeți și paiațe*), mostly inspired by his experience as a WW1 military doctor. In 1982 his

diary was published in English translation (*The Quality of Witness (December 1937 – September 1944)*) describing the politically extremist years and the Holocaust period.

Beniamin FUNDOIANU (1898-1944), philosopher, poet and filmmaker. Published poetry and translations in Jewish press, but also built a reputation of literary critic with volume *Imagini și cărți din Franța*. After leaving for France in 1923, he became a central European existentialist philosopher and poet (*Baudelaire et l'expérience du gouffre*, *La Conscience malheureuse*, *Titanic*, *Faux Traité d'esthétique*, *Rimbaud*, *le voyou* and *Ulysse*) as Benjamin Fondane. Victim of the Holocaust, he died in Auschwitz.

I. LUDO (1894-1980), journalist, editor, writer. A great polemist and pamphleteer, active in challenging the anti-Semitic publications and promoting Jewish identity. Member of the editorial board for Zionist *Mântuirea*, founder of review and publishing house *Adam*. Brilliant translator of Shalom Alechem's work into Romanian whose influence appears in Ludo's best-known volume *Hodje-podje*.

Sașa PANĂ (1902-1981), poet, literary critic, editor. Extremely active avant-garde intellectual, founder of the review and publishing house *unu* and historian of the movement around it. Wrote an exceptional volume of memoirs, *Născut în '02*.

Isac PELTZ (1899-1980), writer and journalist. Described Jewish life in Bucharest in popular novels (*Foc în Hanul cu Tei*, *Calea Văcărești*), largely interested in the life of the poor and the marginal. Distinguished with Romanian Writers' Society Prize. Attracted by the avant-garde, Peltz was also a professional journalist, editor for important interwar dailies. Novel *Israel însîngerat* presents the persecution of the Jewish population during the Holocaust.

Isaia RĂ CĂCIUNI (1900-1976), writer, journalist and playwright. Worked for several publishing houses such as Gutenberg, Cultura națională and Fundațiile Regale pentru Literatură și Artă. Editor and journalist of well-known mainstream publications. Author of a novel inspired by Jewish life in rural Moldavia (*Paradis uitat*) and of a volume of *Amintiri*.

Mihail SEBASTIAN (1907-1945), writer, journalist and playwright. Working in cultural press, he edited or collaborated with the most important publications of the period. Author of a largely debated novel inspired by the experience of being a Jewish intellectual in interwar Romania, *De două mii de ani...* followed by a response book, *Cum am devenit huligan*. His *Jurnal (1935-1944)*, published in 1996, described his life in the radicalized years, was widely translated and had a great impact.

Tristan TZARA (1896-1963), poet. After a short Romanian period with poems published in *Simbolul* (review founded with two other colleagues), he left for studies to Switzerland and France. International reputation as a theoretician and founder of Dada movement together with Hugo Ball, Hans Arp and M. Iancu in Zurich. Continued to collaborate from abroad with Romanian avant-garde publications.

Ilarie VORONCA (1903-1946), poet. Member of *Sburătorul* circle where he started to publish poetry, highly appreciated by E. Lovinescu. Earned his reputation as an important surrealist poet, active in the Romanian avant-garde movement until his departure for France in 1933. Editor and collaborator for avant-garde publications. Winner of the reputed prize of Romanian Writers' Society in 1931.

A. L. ZISSU (1888-1956), writer, journalist, businessman, politician. Founder and editor of several publications in Romanian and Hebrew. Well-known as the director of Zionist daily *Mântuirea*. His novels and short stories inspired by Jewish life (*Spovedania unui candelabru*, *Ereticul de la Mănăstirea Neamțu*), as well as his theoretical works on Jewish identity (*Nu există cult mosaic*; *Logos, Israel, Biserica*) reflected his rediscovery of Judaism and interest in Hassidism. Leader of the Zionist movement in Romania, he was imprisoned by the Communist regime.

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