Archiving Desire: Materiality, Sexuality and the Secret Police in Romanian State Socialism

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Declaration

I hereby declare that no parts of this dissertation have been submitted towards a degree at any other institution other than CEU, nor, to my knowledge does the dissertation contain any unreferenced material or ideas from other authors.

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Abstract

This dissertation aims to write its history from a bodily and embodied perspective. This salient locus is the ideal venue to discuss issues of sexuality, gender, pleasure, emotions and sensations that are not usually part of histories of state socialism. In fact these topics are quite marginal or rendered insignificant when simply circumscribed to the "resistance" paradigm that necessarily accompanied the well-known "totalitarian" paradigm employed to describe experiences in the former Eastern Block.

Making the body central to my investigation enabled me to offer three theoretical openings. First, it re-grounded the history of state socialism from the (rather abstract) discussions with ideology, politics and economics towards lived and embodied experiences. Secondly, by making the body central it allowed me to bring in a series of connected topics and phenomena, for example the constitution of bodies during socialism, either normal or deviant that would otherwise be simply relegated to the realm of socialist policy when in fact they dovetail more complex relations. Thirdly, by focusing on the body I was able to bring forth experiences and personal histories of people like the nudists, the yoga practitioners and homosexual men. Their particular common situation within socialism, but also their evident differences, would have been lost without the common theme of the body.

The argument that this dissertation makes is that far from being repressive, the functioning of state socialist regimes itself generated and sustained a broad range of desires and libidinal investments, thus enabling the formation of very complex gendered subjectivities and bodies. State surveillance, its gaze upon the people, its disposition of bodies was traversed by erotic desires and based on sexual pleasures. *I argue that what sustained the communist regime was its scopophilia: the voyeuristic pleasure of looking, taking pleasure in looking, in the surveillance itself.* Consequently, while sexuality was officially repressed, in fact I will argue that it was affirmed in the very functioning of the regime. This argument brings into discussion immediately the role of the secret police and of secrecy more generally. Secrecy becomes then a focal point of my investigation as a practice that generates arousal itself. Secrecy also elicits the desire to look, to penetrate with the gaze what is hidden and unknown. Secrecy I argue remains inseparable from penetration: the phallocentric affirmation of the regime. For building up my case I use materials such as oral history interviews, secret police archives and memoirs.

Acknowledgements

The writing of this dissertation took more time then anybody, the author included, ever expected. It is a piece long over-due and reflecting only bits and glimpses of an entire intellectual journey around two fields of research with apparently little in common – the history of state socialist Romania and gender studies. Moreover the dissertation is unfortunately even less of an accurate mirror of the many actual travels (in between Bucharest-Budapest, Constanta, Los Angeles, Vienna, Utrecht) and many wonderful people I had the opportunity to meet along the way.

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Introduction

This dissertation talks about the production of sexuality, gender and bodily dispositions in post-war Romania. In contrast to the predominant works in the field that take their starting point from the “repression” exercised by state socialist regimes in relation to body, desire and sexuality[1], I take a different route and depict the productive mechanisms of power. Rather than simply circumscribe my research along the dichotomy of power and resistance, structure and agency, I explore the social and political ways in which sexualities came into being, were performed, sanctioned, policed, reinterpreted, subverted and re-signified in a variety of social contexts, groups and practices. More specifically, this dissertation scrutinizes the existence of three overlapping alternative spheres during Romanian state socialism: a nudist bohemian colony on the shores of the Black Sea Coast, a yoga group experimenting with sexual philosophy under the guidance of a local self-fashioned yogi and the Bucharest based homosexual subculture fraught with self-hatred, mired in suspicion, vulnerable to blackmail and prison.

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[1] Daphne Berdahl, Matti Bunzl and Martha Lampland, *Altering States: Ethnographies of Transition inEastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union* (University of Michigan Press, 2000). The repressive hypothesis applied to the case of Romanian socialism Vladimir Tismaneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons: A Political History of Romanian Communism* (University of California Press, 2003). Romanian historiography also uses the totalitarian paradigm as mainstream interpretation of state-socialism. Most of the works issued by the collective of “The Institute for the Investigation of Communist Crimes in Romania”, a public institute tasked with producing scholarship on Romanian state socialism is very much invested in the totalitarian paradigm. Among the works published in the recent year the most telling ones are Budeancă, Cosmin and Olteanu, Florentin, *Stat Și Viață Privată În Regimurile Comuniste*, Institutul de Investigare a Crimelor Comunismului în România (Iasi: Polirom, 2009).Cristina Roman and others, *Politica Pronatalista a Regimului Ceausescu: Institutii Si Practici* (Iasi: Polirom, 2011).Budeanca Cosmin (ed.), *Experiențe Carcerale În România Comunistă. Volum I*, Institutul de Investigare a Crimelor Comunismului (Iasi: Polirom, 2007).Ivan, Ruxandra (ed.), *‘Transformarea Socialistă’ Politici ale Regimului Comunist între ideologie și administrație*, Institutul de Investigare a Crimelor Comunismului în România (Iași: Polirom, 2009).Budeancă, Cosmin and Olteanu, Florentin, *Forme de Represiune În Regimurile Comuniste* (Iasi: Polirom, 2008).Cioflâncă, Adrian and Jinga, Luciana, *Represiune Și Control Social În România Comunista. Anuarul Institutului de Investigare a Crimelor Comunismului Și Memoria Exilului Românesc. Volumele V-VI* (Iași: Polirom, 2012).

Subject constitution, I argue was indelibly connected not only with the functioning of the socialist state but most importantly with workings of the "secret" police. Some may argue that indeed the cases studies I chose to dwell upon are test cases hardly common (or commonly accepted) in Western democracies too.

However, in my choice of cases as well as during my expose, I do not mean to deny the specificities of state socialism and its particular politics regarding sexuality and the body. The Romanian example is a case in point for its specific conservatism and rigid framework of sexual politics. But instead of simply assuming an official disposition and then discern some oppositional practices, I seek to understand the mutually constitutive dimension of power and alternative sexual and bodily practices. Instead of binaries, I look at contradictions, paradoxes and at the unconscious of power.

Taking a cue from Michael Foucault's work on the history of ideas connected to human sexuality[2], my main argument is that far from being repressive, state socialist power was itself generating and sustaining a broad range of desires and libidinal investments, thus enabling the formation of a very complex gendered subjectivity. State surveillance, its gaze upon the people, its disposition of bodies was traversed by erotic desires and based on sexual pleasures. *I argue that what sustained the communist regime was its scopophilia: the voyeuristic pleasure of looking, taking pleasure in looking, in the surveillance itself.* Consequently, while sexuality was officially repressed, in fact I will argue that it was affirmed in the very functioning of the regime. Gazing at and being looked at constituted the two interlocked pillars of the fantasy orchestrated by the Party-

[2] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction* (Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 1990).

State. This dialectics is central to my investigations and my analysis throughout this dissertation.

This argument brings into discussion immediately the role of the secret police and of secrecy more generally. I interpret sex as being the dirty secret of the regime, but also link it through my case studies with sex being done in secrecy, like many other things during socialism. Secrecy becomes a focal point, that which generates arousal itself. Secrecy also elicits the desire to look, to penetrate with the gaze what is hidden and unknown. Secrecy becomes then inseparable from penetration: the phallocentric affirmation of the regime.

I place the body in this relationship between the gaze of power and secrecy: not only the object being gazed at, disciplined and created through this very act of gazing at, but also, and more importantly, the interaction between bodies is what constitutes the secrecy. Secrecy in this case does not mean knowledge imparted to a few people being in the know, but action and interaction, the secrecy of bodies in contact and in touch.

State socialism had explicit, official discourses and disciplinary practices through which it aimed to produce the ideal socialist body and an ideal socialist morality: the laboring body, the (re)producing body, the athletic and the muscular body. At the very same tie, through its actions, especially through the actions of the secret police, the socialist regime also produced a range of bodies and bodily practices that were more complex and contradictory and thus deviated from the ideals of the regime itself. The nudist, the homosexual man and the yoga students were the unintended consequences of the mechanisms of power deployed by the state. These are (to various degrees) contested and contesting figures elsewhere too, not just during state socialism –tricksters that can always confuse the meaning of a situation or of a bodily regime. The various local cases I analyze in this dissertation show more specifically how these mechanisms of repressive and productive power had produced "dissident" subjects who constructed other meanings through and on their bodies. The nudists and yoga guru for instance produced other versions of socialist bodies that emphasized sensuality and sexual freedom. Their histories reveal Foucault's suggestion that power creates effects that it does not control and often these effects take the form of resistance to power.[3]

Therefore, on this theoretical background I offer a re-interpretation of Louis Althusser's theory of subject interpellation[4]. In Althusser's analysis, it is the police shouting "hey you" that expresses the act of interpellation. In socialism, this relation takes a more literal meaning since it is the secret police based on which the regime is able to function. Moreover, during socialism, what really represented its forceful imposition was not only the direct affirmation of the police, this direct form of addressing the subject. More insidiously, it was the potentiality of police surveillance, of police gazing, that modeled the subject. The expectation that the regime was ubiquitous and that it was (potentially) always watching as in a panopticon generated a particular form of subjectivation. Operating from the darkness, from secrecy, and clandestinely –rather than directly – the socialist type of power instituted also a different form of governmentality, in which the

[3] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*.p.121-122.
[4] Louis Althusser, On Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses in*Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (Aakar Books, 2006), p.170-173.

management of people was the salient blueprint.[5] Therefore, I look at socialism not only as a form of disciplinary power – the standard view of much of the literature on socialism keen to emphasize repression and totalitarianism – but more importantly as a form of biopower rooted in modernity, having its own individuating salient features.

Such a form of exercising power and creating subjects also raises the question of what are the forms that subversion and alternative practices take? Contrary to the liberal paradigm that interprets resistance as a form of evading power through everyday strategies of making do or of carving individual niches in an otherwise constraining surrounding[6], I argue based on my case studies, that it is in fact the opposite: *subversion during socialism took the form of an attempt to reveal its contradictions, internal inconsistencies and gaps. For that matter, alternative practices had to fully engage power, on its very terrain, not to elude it.*

Judith Butler in *Bodies that Matter* wrote that "*the forming of the subject requires an identification with the normative phantasm of sex, and this identification takes place through a repudiation which produces a domain of abjection, a repudiation without which the subject cannot emerge*."[7] As such, I structure my research on subject and body formations along the dialectics of „normality" and „abnormality". I seek therefore to

[5] This is also Kligman's argument in Gail Kligman, *The Politics of Duplicity: Controlling Reproduction in Ceausescu's Romania* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).
[6] for a theoretical illustration of this paradigm see James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987). The liberal paradigm of evading power through acts of everyday resistance is also well illustrated in the historiography of former state –socialist states with better known examples such Orlando Figes, *The Whisperers: Private Life in Stalin's Russia*, Reprint edition (New York: Picador, 2008).Dennis Deletant, *Ceauşescu and the Securitate: Coercion and Dissent in Romania, 1965-1989* (M.E. Sharpe, 1995).Daphne Berdahl, *On the Social Life of Postsocialism: Memory, Consumption, Germany* (Indiana University Press, 2010).
[7] Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (Routledge, 2011), p.3.

trace the domain of the "abject" subjects and bodies not as a category in itself, but as a relational process emerging from the workings of power and its shifting definitions of normality and acceptability. The abject subjects and bodies also raise the specter of the ungrievable and unlivable bodies, those subjects that are outside the practices of mourning. Mourning then becomes an index of belonging and even humanness[8]; it also draws the boundaries of the "social" and citizenship.

Gaze, secrecy and bodies therefore create a triangle of lust and fear, repression and confession, sex and ascetism. This raises a series of interconnected questions: How does desire emerge in the communist scopophilia? What is pleasure in this case, and how the external gaze of power plays its role in arousing fantasies and fulfilling them? How does fantasies of promiscuity (linked with secrecy) emerge and how they fulfill the role of eroticizing the entire communist space? How are desire, shame and secrecy linked together, especially in the post-peasant context of post-war Romania?

In raising these questions I aim to offer a different take on governmentality and sexuality during socialism. I explore issues of desire, sexual fantasies, love practices and seduction mechanisms in contexts that allowed for more flexibility in the interpretation of hetero and non-hetero sexuality. Such issues have been long neglected by a narrow focus on repression, the normalizing discourse of reproductive sexuality and the banning of abortion. I pursue this discussion in a longer historical and social framework, by taking a different view on socialism itself: I understand socialism as the political form of the

[8] Judith Butler further develops this argument in Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (Verso, 2006).

transition from a peasant based economy to an economy centered on heavy industry and industrial production.[9] This shift, which was marked by a thorough urbanization, entailed its own forms of bodily norms, discipline and politics as well as an underpinning sexuality and eroticism.[10]

Moreover, I insert this story of development in a wider project of post-war modernity, which produced a similar ambivalent discourse on sex – on the one hand it harnessed sex for reproduction while on the other hand it posited sexuality as a sphere of personal fulfillment, exploration and self-improvement. As Dagmar Herzog argues, the 20th century was the century of sexuality. Sex became ever more central to individual identity, expressed in the growing interest in controlling birth, the shifting expectations of sexual acts, the growing professionalization of sex research, the birth of the sex industry and the question of sexual orientation.[11] Moreover it was the period when people perceived themselves to be endowed not only with sexual orientation but also with sexual rights. This transformation or rather constant preoccupation with sexuality also included the need for states to recognize a whole new sphere of individual rights pertaining to one's sex -sexual rights. At the same time, sexuality also acquired a powerful political connotation. Sexuality became a field of struggle and political and cultural conflicts,

[9] Eric J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century, 1914-1991* (Michael Joseph, 1994). For the Romanian case, authors Gail Kligman and Katherine Verdery argue along a similar line in Gail Kligman and Katherine Verdery, *Peasants under Siege: The Collectivization of Romanian Agriculture, 1949-1962* (Princeton University Press, 2011).

[10] Recent works in GDR history or the USSR case dwell on the similar arguments see Evans Jennifer, 'Decriminalization, Seduction, and "Unnatural Desire" in East Germany', *Feminist Studies*, 36 (2010), 553–77.Josie McLellan, *Love in the Time of Communism: Intimacy and Sexuality in the GDR* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).Deborah A. Field, *Private Life and Communist Morality in Khrushchev's Russia* (Peter Lang, 2007).Dan Healey, *Homosexual Desire in Revolutionary Russia: The Regulation of Sexual and Gender Dissent* (University of Chicago Press, 2001).

[11] Dagmar Herzog, *Sexuality in Europe: A Twentieth-Century History* (Cambridge University Press, 2011).

linked with secularization, commercialization and the development of capitalism towards new markets and commodities. This is the context that I will also be emphasizing for the state socialist context which, in spite of the fact that it did not call itself a capitalist economy, did nonetheless undergo similar processes – rapid secularization, an orientation towards consumer goods (however deficient it might have been), egalitarianism and individualization in terms of human relationships.

In this dissertation I explore all these issues by looking at three broad case studies, overlapping but distinct: the community of nudists in 2 Mai (chapter 2), the yoga practices centered around Gregorian Bivolaru (chapter 3) and the turmoil of three homosexual men during communism (chapter 4). Chapter 1 provides a necessary contextualization by succinctly presenting the history of post-war Romanian legislation aimed at dislodging the previous peasant social arrangements in favor of the mononuclear working-class families needed for the new factory life, while at the same trying to enforce a socialist morality in keeping with the state's productive and ideological goals.

In what follows I wish to embed my research in the three broad overlapping fields I engage with in my dissertation - body and subject formation; nudity, sexuality and desire; history and theory of socialism – in order to trace both my intellectual trajectory but also my specific contribution to these debates. After this discussion I will also offer a brief commentary about my methods and my sources (a more detailed discussion of them in chapter 5) used for elaborating this dissertation.

1. Body formations: materiality and interpellation

Marcel Mauss' classic text *Techniques of the Body* is considered to be the starting point of a distinct sociology of the body. [12] In his text, Mauss pointed to the social uses of the body and established important links with programs of training and education, bourgeoning in the interwar period. Mauss believed that the body is at the same time the original tool with which humans shape their world and the original substance out of which the human world is shaped. Consequently, with Mauss, the human body gained a central position after centuries of Western thinking that considered the body a hindrance to soul. However, despite the obvious importance of this text, one of its main shortcomings is that it regards the body as a pre-given In-Itself, thus a thing of nature.

By contrast, Norbert Elias embedded the body in various overlapping social structures and showed how the body was an important locus in the western civilizing process.[13] Elias suggested that different forms of societal control are successful insofar as they manage to exert their power over bodies in order to tame and standardize them. Consequently, the body appears at the core of the societal symbolic function, deeply imbued with meanings, values and ideologies. These aspects have a tantamount importance in the case of state socialism as well, especially in the case of Romania, where the body was the prime locus of exercising state power and was considered the material base of the creation of the New Man, as I explain chapter 1.

[12] Marcel Mauss,'Techniques of the Body∗', *Economy and society*, 2 (1973), 70–88.
[13] Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process: The History of Manners* (Urizen Books, 1978).

Mary Douglas made a similar argument by conceiving the body as a natural symbol reflecting the realities of society. Whenever the boundaries of social collectivity are threatened, these anxieties are mirrored in the degree of care (or of punishment) exercised over the physical body. The powers and dangers accredited to social structures are reproduced on a small scale upon the human body.[14] At the same time, Douglas coined the term "body politic" to refer to the structuring of society on the model of the body. Through the division of labor, certain social strata rank higher than others in accordance to an imaginary scale of purity. Consequently, in Douglas' writing the connection between the body and the society is made even more explicit, while the body appears to be not only a locus for societal restraints but also central in the functioning of society.

The most inspiring theoretical approach for this present study is Foucault's conceptualization of the body. Foucault regarded the body as a discursive product of the power/knowledge nexus.[15] The body is the site where the microphysics of power is operating in order to render a subject productive. The microphysics of power operates in an unapparent network of relations, based on certain tactics, techniques and dispositions. The validity of this microphysics of power is to be found at the intersection between different institutions and the functioning of the body, thus instituting a political technology of power, that is, the knowledge of body which does not rely anymore (or solely) on physical coercion but on gaze, organization, supervision, calculation, examination and documentation.[16] As I mentioned above, in my study I emphasize the

[14] Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (Psychology Press, 2002).
[15] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and punish: the birth of the prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995).
[16] Foucault, *Discipline and punish, p.200*.

productive character of power over bodies, especially its unexpected, unpredicted and unintended outcomes, which open up various spaces and relations in which alternative body regimes and bodily practices can appear and challenge power.

Stallybrass and White inquired into the formation of the bourgeois body by pinpointing to the series of exclusions that shaped this body.[17] First and foremost, the two authors showed that the bourgeois body was formed through a number of disciplining mechanisms that aimed at delineating the emergent bourgeois body from all the traits and features of the body characteristic of the lower classes, seen as grotesque and dangerous. Following Norbert Elias, Stallybrass and White argued that any reform of the body and of the manners concerning the bodies is in fact a political act, aimed at constructing a new individual. The body is the primordial target of any regime, because this is the salient locus of inscribing its new ethos. Moreover, the ideology that is embodied by its subjects becomes more pervasive and thus more difficult to combat and react to.

These observations are salient for my case study because they enable me to compare the formation of the bourgeois body described by Stallybrass and White with the formation of the socialist body envisaged by the socialist state as it appears in its official documents, legislations and programs. As in the bourgeois case, the socialist body emerges following a series of exclusions of bodily articulations that are deemed abnormal, deviant, un-socialist and un-patriotic. It is this dialectics of exclusion as constitutive of the socialist body formation that allows me to grasp the bodily

[17] Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1986).

dispositions and the wider social dynamics in which the bodies of nudists, yoga practitioners and homosexual men were embedded during socialism. While the actual content of the bourgeois and socialist bodily articulations might have been different, what I seek to show is that the process of formation itself (of excluding, of Othering, of surveilling, of gazing and of controlling the bodies deemed abnormal) was similar.

A number of studies scrutinized women's position in Ceausescu's Romania trying to evaluate the actual every day life of women against the ideological commitments of the state in relation to *the women's question* and the promise of equality between women and men[18]. The main concern for much of the "gender" history of socialist Romania has been the 1966 ban on abortion, its toll on women's lives and women's participation in politics[19] and work.[20] Gail Kligman's comprehensive study depicted how state's reproduction policies have turned into everyday techniques of control. The impact of Ceausescu's "political demography" was taken as a starting point for exploring how state power was constituted and exercised through the institutionalization of social practices such as complicity and duplicity.[21] Moreover, Kligman's seminal study showed that

[18] Fisher Mary Ellen, 'Women in Romanian Politics. Elena Ceausescu, Pronatalism and the Promotion of Women, in Sharon L. Wolchik and Alfred G. Meyer', in *Women, State and Party in Eastern Europe*, by Sharon L Wolchik and Alfred G Meyer (Durham: Duke University Press, 1985). Hausleitner Mariana, 'Women in Romania: Before and After the Collapse.', in *Gender Politics and Post-Communism: Reflections from Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union* (New York: Routledge, 1992).Massino, Jill, '"Something Old, Something New: Marital Roles and Relations in State Socialist Romania,"', *Journal of Women's History*, 22 (2010), 34–60. Essays in Shana Penn and Jill Massino, *Gender Politics and Everyday Life in State Socialist Eastern and Central Europe* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), especially Raluca Maria Popa's chapter T*ranslating Equality between Women and Men across Cold War Divides: Women Activists from Hungary and Romania and the Creation of International Women's Year* .

[19] Bucur-Deckard, Maria, 'Gendering Dissent: Of Bodies and Minds, Survival and Opposition under Communism', *OSP*, 7 (2008), 9–26.

[20] For an overview of the role, development and politics of gender as a category of historical research in former Eastern Europe see Bucur-Deckard, Maria, 'An Arhipelago of Stories: Gender History in Eastern Europe', *American Historical Review*, 113 (2008), 1375–89.

[21] Kligman.

issues of embodiment, especially the troubling ones, couldn't be separated from issues of sexuality, gender norms, heteronormativity and control. This point is further developed by Biebuyick's analysis of marriage advice manuals published after 1966 in Romania, where the dominant paradigm of interpreting human sexuality was along the lines of the heterosexual imperative doubled by the imperative of collective duty to society. [22] In my study I pick up on this point and explicitly address the "troubling", "abnormal" body regimes and practices that emerged during socialism not necessarily in spite of its repressive policies described by Kligman and others, but enabled by them and by the police deployed to enforce them.

In order to pursue this analytical path, I need to clarify what body dispositions and embodiment mean. Following Luce Irigaray's critique of Western metaphysics[23], several feminist philosophers have depicted the way in which bodies are construed as imaginary bodies.[24] This current, known as corporeal feminism - a discourse offering a radical anti-Cartesian revaluation of the material conditions that undermine the articulation of the cogito, representation and sexed body - is not only intended to pinpoint to the frailty and inconsistencies of a mind/body dialectics. Rather, the point has been to show that the body is a crucial site of gender constitution.

[22] Erin Biebuyck, 'The Collectivisation of Pleasure: Normative Sexuality in Post 1966 Romania', *ASPASIA*, 4 (2010), 49–70.

[23] Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One* (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 1985).

[24] The most salient supporters of this view have been Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism*, First Edition (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994).and Butler, *Bodies That Matter*.

The rejection of body in the Western logocentrism and somatophobia was not just a simple act of repression and negation, but one of actively constructing the body-subject under various gender representations. Thus, while Irigaray and Braidotti argued for a return to matter, to the materiality of the body, which was systematically denied in the logocentrist logic, Grosz employing a Deleuzian reading of Spinoza, pointed to the constructed nature of the body. For Deleuze, ethics is not the imposition of norms, nor the negation of law but the way in which bodies affirm their existence. But this is a genderless ethics for, as Grosz pointed out, bodies are formulated within a masculine body-image and within a strong set of dominant representations. Consequently, in order to recapture the materiality of the body it is not sufficient to criticize the inherent duality of mind/body, but also to show how this dualism actively constructs the body within certain phallocentric frames.[25]

This discussion further elicited the theoretical and political distinction between gender and sex, also very relevant for the three case studies I discuss in this dissertation. Rosi Braidotti, also a Deleuze inspired feminist philosopher, has argued that sexual difference is ontological and constitutive of the subject and that the body should be thought in its sexual specificity.[26] Thus, this shift would be more open to the discursive constructions of the body, but without losing body's specificity: that is, women and men bodies are discursively constructed in different manners. Sexuality and sexual difference become then fundamental in the production of subjectivity. While such a view focuses again on the specificities of different embodiment patterns and inherent power relations, it

[25] Grosz.p.120
[26] Rosi Braidotti, *Metamorphoses: Towards a Materialist Theory of Becoming*, 1 edition (Cambridge, UK ; Malden, MA: Polity, 2002).

nonetheless runs the risk of undue essentialisms. The sex/gender dualism has been accused of prolonging the mind/body one, while slipping into empiricist and biological notions of sex. On the contrary, the "biological body" is always-already trapped within discursive practices, and thus there is no pre-discursive "sex" or gender as Butler argued [27]. Moreover, Butler showed that the material body is indeed discursively constructed (there is no materiality per se), but these discursive constructions are always contingent and localized, and always shifting. Thus, the author claimed that what is at stake to grasp is the mode of functioning of these discursive constructions and the way they build what is "normal" and what is "outside" (the repressed, the excluded) in terms of embodiment. Thus, Butler noted that is counterproductive to simply inscribe the feminine as "outside" due to the logocentric exclusion of the body (as feminine), but rather to understand how the body is subjected through a series of shifting "image of thought" which inscribe bodies along lines of natural or aberrant.[28]

Furthermore, Butler contrasted Hegel and Foucault in order to show that one of the differences between them is that Hegel did not take the proliferating effect of disciplinary activity into account. In Hegel, power simply operates on the body that is presupposed as given, as part of an inert human nature and gradually mediates its immediacy. By contrast, Foucault emphasized how disciplining mechanisms themselves set in motion the proliferation of what they endeavor to suppress, regulate and discipline. For example, the repression of sexuality gives rise to new forms of sexual pleasure in a circular movement of power. Thus, the Foucauldian argument seems to be that power mechanisms open up

[27] Butler, *Bodies That Matter, p.58*.
[28] Butler, *Bodies That Matter, p.121-143*.

the space for their own inefficacity, in so far as they generate the excess they want to repress, contain, and discipline. Therefore, what effectively eludes the grasp of power is not an illusory, external Hegelian In-Itself, but rather the "obscene", aberrant, disquieting excess that sustains power's operation. Consequently, any power assemblage generates its own resistance, deviance and transgression and opens up the space for contention at its core, not in an imaginary outside.[29]

This is the line of thought I employ in my research: what is excluded, what is left out and imagined as deviant and abnormal is also what elicits desire, attraction and curiosity. Therefore, the act of excluding the abnormal (which is precisely the act through which the abnormal is created) is inseparable from the act of repressing desire. What power represses (usually) is what power secretly desires. This is the theoretical background within which I place my discussion about "abnormal" embodiments and subject formation during socialism.

2. Abnormal bodies and subjects

As already noted, the idea of aberrant embodiments stems from the proliferating effect of power: power not only represses its subject-object but also generates a surplus of the very subject-object it aims to contain. This surplus represents an ontological fissure at the core of the power edifice, which opens the space for resistance and contention. The three instances of aberrant embodiments I scrutinize in this dissertation dovetails, as I argue,

[29] Slavoj Zizek, *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology*, Second Edition edition (London; New York: Verso, 2009), p.247-313.

the surplus at the heart of Ceausescu's governmental regime that also expresses the repressed desire of power itself.

The nude/ist body

The representation of the naked bodies of either women or men (but especially women) is perhaps the most researched aspect of nudity. Art historians, some informed by feminist ideas, have built an extensive scholarship about artistic depictions of nudity.[30] What seems to be at the core of this field of research is the question of what defines the naked body as art. Furthermore, this approach leads to a distinction between artistic representations of naked bodies and "*other*" representations, which are not or cannot be considered as "art".[31] Moreover, the relationship between sexuality, eroticism and the nude, especially the female nude in "canonical" scholarship has been scrutinized from a variety of theoretical frameworks (psychoanalysis, feminism, Marxism).[32] Is the erotic in the image, in the "eye of the beholder" or in the relationship between the historical context of the specific work of art, its consumer and the image itself?

But in Ceausescu's Romania issues of nudity took different meanings. The only officially acknowledged nudist forms were the state produced anatomical representations of the human body, which had as a salient feature their prudishness and censorship. Furthermore, nudism as an activity was relegated to the specially designed curatorial

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[30] Lynda Nead, *The Female Nude: Art, Obscenity and Sexuality* (London ; New York: Routledge, 1992).
[31] For this distinction see the seminal work of Kenneth Clark, *The Nude: A Study in Ideal Form* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1972).
[32] Ruth Barcan, *Nudity: A Cultural Anatomy*, 1St Edition edition (Oxford, UK ; New York: Berg Publishers, 2004).Federico Ferrari, *Being Nude: The Skin of Images* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014).Perniola Mario, 'Between Clothing and Nudity', in *Fragments for a History of the Human Body*, ed. by Michel Feher, Ramona Naddaff, and Nadia Tazi, 3 vols. (New York: Zone Books, 1989), II, 236–66.

resorts aimed to cater for the fun-need of the working class (like Eforie, Techirghiol and Sovata). Outside this framework, nudity was considered a legal and moral offense and was severely punished by the Penal Code. In this context the small nudist community formed in 2 Mai and Vama Veche (see chapter 2) was highly problematic and potentially subversive.

I inquire into the conditions of possibility of such a network of people, their reasons of practicing nudism and the relationship between their naked bodies and the general societal background of the regime. By tracing personal histories of the participants in the nudist scene I show that nudism, as a semi-public activity, appeared as an aberrant form of embodiment under the gaze of the state and its clothed law enforcers. Also, nudism not only went against the grain of the regime's conservative moral politics and highly regulated instances of "normal" nakedness, but also inscribed the body outside the regime's imperatives of productivity, either concerning work or sexual reproduction. In state socialism, nudism, therefore, took aesthetic, erotic and desirable forms that went against the regime's logic but also against the common practices of nudism in other circumstances.

The interplay of nudism and politics is not, however, restricted to the case of state socialism. The history of Christianity is full of examples heretic or dissent movements which employed nudity as a tool for spiritual achievement against the predominant moral law. The Adamite movement is perhaps one of most researched and most early examples of nudity and politics intermingling as early as the 2nd century AD.[33]

One of the well-known cases of socio-political nudism is the case of the German naturist movement. For some analysts, German naturism had been symptomatic of anti-modern philosophy, a short-had for resistance to the alienation brought by rapid industrialization.[34] Other historians argue that German naturism has sprung from the *Lebensreform* movement, which emerged at the turn of the 20th Century, an emancipatory forward-looking mass-movement. During the inter-war period the movement diversified and broke down in different ideological groups and associations ranging from bourgeois naturists, to aesthetes and pleasure-seekers, to supporters of socialism[35]. In interwar Germany, naturism gained popularity precisely because it denounced the conservative prudish mores of the imperial era. The growing popularity of nudism during the interwar period was not a phenomenon restricted to Germany but it spread in many other European countries gaining adepts in the North just as much as in the South.[36] After Hitler's ascendance to power, the different nudist associations were amassed under a Nazi umbrella organization and subdued to the racist ideology of the regime.[37]

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[33] Jim Cunningham, *Nudity & Christianity* (Bloomington, Ind.; Milton Keynes, U. K.: AuthorHouse, 2006).
[34] Karl Toepfer, *Empire of Ecstasy: Nudity and Movement in German Body Culture, 1910-1935* (University of California Press, 1997).
[35] Michael Hau, *The Cult of Health and Beauty in Germany: A Social History, 1890-1930* (University of Chicago Press, 2003).
[36] For a mapping of nudist movements in Europe see Barcan. Small clues of a nudist movement during interwar Romania see Barnoschi, Vasile Dimitrie, *Nudismul: Revolutia Sociala [Nudism: A Social Revolution]* (Bucureşti: Cultura Românească, 1933).
[37] John Williams, *Turning to Nature in Germany: Hiking, Nudism, and Conservation, 1900-1940* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2007).

Social nudism under the state socialist regime of the Democratic Republic of Germany became a site of permanent struggle and negotiation between the socialist state and its citizens. Social nudism was banned in the aftermath of the World War II by the new communist regime because of its Nazi connections. However, this state decree provoked protests in a variety of forms: from letters and official complaints to clashes between the police and the nudists. The overturning of the ban and the popularity boom of nudism in East Germany points to the slowly disintegration of the East German state.[38]

In the Romanian case the situation was markedly different. Still a very peasant and traditional society before WWII, nudism was confined only to therapeutically designated activities or was the favorite past time of a handful of bohemians and artists. The coming to power of the communist regime only continued these trends, by marking nudism as a decadent activity. For these reasons, practicing nudism against state's dispositions and its prevailing morality had the potential of politicizing it and, simultaneously, of transforming the nudist bodies and subjects as "abnormal".

The discussion of nudism necessarily elicits its dialectical opposite term "nakedness" and its (potential) erotic undertones. In Chapter 2 I approach this issue by reframing it in a different light: there I introduce the notion of a scopophilic state deriving (erotic) pleasure from gazing at its nude subjects. In this way nudity and nakedness intertwined and enabled the formation of various forms of desire and libidinal investments that articulated with other practices such as art, sex, and politics.

[38] McLellan Josie, 'State Socialist Bodies: East German Nudism from Ban to Boom', *The Journal of Modern History*, 79 (2007), 48–79.

The yoga body

Even more so than nudism, yoga had even less of a place in state socialism due to its spiritual aims. Yoga philosophy was regarded as a form of idealism unsuitable for a materialist regime and its fixation on the individual was incongruent with the social expectations of the state. But, just like nudism, in the Romanian case, the strand of yoga I am describing here was also highly sexualized precisely because of the state's ambition to regulate sexuality and desire. As I discuss in chapter 3, by analyzing the case of Gregorian Bivolaru, one of the most important yoga practitioners during socialism, yoga practice became an outlet for expressing sexuality which in turn eroticizied the practice and made it synonymous with engaging in forbidden and transgressive sexual acts. State's attempts to curtail this practice only led to it becoming more appealing and widespread, turning Bivolaru from a marginal yoga aficionado into a guru.

But, as I emphasize in my discussion, Bivolaru was able to begin his engagement with yoga and other spiritual quests not in some obscure and underground places but in state institutions. His first classes on spirituality came after his working hours in centers organized by the state for adult education. This aspect raises two inter-related aspects, which I think were rather under-researched in relation to socialism. First, the economic structure of the socialist state created a certain category of undemanding, low-key jobs, which enabled people to engage in various personal pursuits. The very structure of the socialist economy (low-paid but steady jobs, affordable housing and other amenities, etc.) generated enough free time and conditions for people to engage in activities that evaded the control of the state.[39]Bivolaru and his passion for yoga is a case in point for the generation of socialist dropouts.

Second, and more important for my discussion here, is the relationship between spirituality and state socialism. A series of studies have focused on the relationship between organized religion and the socialist state, pointing to the repression of the former, or to various forms of collaboration, negotiation and compromise.[40] But other, less institutionalized and less formalized, forms of spirituality were neglected by the study of socialism or simply incorporated to the discussions about "escapism" from the everyday realities of socialism.[41] My intention is to take seriously this spiritual aspect engendered by the productivist and materialist logic of the regime itself of which yoga practice is just one example. Spiritual quests of various kinds, from mystic to intellectual, were present across the former socialist bloc in different forms and articulations, sometimes tolerated, sometimes openly repressed by the state. My argument, as I try to show in the case of Bivolaru, is that we can discern here a materialist spirituality: that is, a form of spirituality that takes body as its starting point and as its main reference point.

[39] A. Yurchak, 'Suspending the Political: Late Soviet Artistic Experiments on the Margins of the State', *Poetics Today*, 29 (2008), 713–33.Alexei Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation* (Princeton University Press, 2006).

[40] A good overview on the state-church relationship in the USSR see Sabrina Petra Ramet, *Religious Policy in the Soviet Union* (Cambridge University Press, 2005). Romanian historiography produced a series of studies on the relationship between the Orthodox Church and the communist state. Most studies emphasize a shifting state socialist policy in regards to the main church – from repression during the 1950s to accommodation and close collaboration between state and the Orthodox Church authorities. Most relevant studies published are Cristian Vasile, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română În Primul Deceniu Comunist* (Bucureşti: Curtea Veche, 2005).Gillet Olivier, *Religie Și Naționalism. Ideologia Bisericii Ortodoxe Române Sub Regimul Comunist.* (Bucureşti: Editura Compania, 2001).George Enache, *Ortodoxie Și Putere Politică În România Contemporană* (Bucureşti: Nemira, 2005).

[41] Some essays from Cathleen M. Giustino, Catherine J. Plum and Alexander Vari, *Socialist Escapes: Breaking Away from Ideology and Everyday Routine in Eastern Europe, 1945-1989* (Berghahn Books, 2013).

Naturally, this spiritual fixation with the body unleashed a series of desires and energies and it re-transformed the body from a site of state productivity into a site of pleasure, expressed and searched for in a variety of ways. The quest for bodily pleasure, which became indistinguishable from the spiritual search for those following the teaching of Gregorian Bivolaru, marked the body as "abnormal". According to the socialist imagination, pleasure was necessarily external to the body. Pleasure and satisfaction were supposed to be derived from fulfilling one's tasks towards the building of the socialist society rightfully and enthusiastically and, more generally, from fulfilling's one's role in the society (work, making children, serving the country, etc.). Other kinds of pleasure, especially sexual ones, had no place in this constellation.[42]

By linking body and desire again against a duty filled worldview, yoga held a powerful transformative potential, which attracted its severe policing by the socialist regime. Furthermore, by pointing to new meanings and potentials beyond the ones ascribed by the state, yoga played a role in re-enchanting the socialist world, opening it up to other interpretations and expectations. Therefore, my discussion also contributes in an oblique way to the debates regarding socialist modernity and its dis-enchanting effect over the highly religious populations of Eastern Europe. Again, dialectically, while socialism managed to put an end to the previous spiritual horizon of the old society, it brought into being its own negation and a new positive affirmation of spirituality.

[42] Erin Biebuyck.

The homosexual body

Histories of homosexuality behind the Iron Curtain are only now starting to emerge as legitimate and interesting research topics the field of East European historical studies. With the notable exception of Dan Healy's *Homosexual Desire in Revolutionary Russia. The Regulation of Gender and Desire,* and a couple of other published research such as Jennifer Evans'[43] and Josie McLellan's work on GDR[44], histories of same sex lives are awaiting to a much needed inscription into the everyday of eastern block realities.
In Romania very few attempts have been made to recapture the hidden histories of homosexual men or lesbian women. There is genuinely an interest and an audience for such histories, unlike the early 2000, and yet more coherent research comes from the NGO sphere or that of independent theatre.[45]

As of 1936, homosexuality was criminalized and Ceausescu's regime only reinforced this measure in the 1968 Revised Penal Code, when homosexuality and pornography were considered similar penal offenses. In addition, the pro-natalist policies of Ceausescu's regime led to a de-sexualization of sexual encounters, thus relegating sexual encounters, outside this productive stance, to decaying mores. This led the creation to yet another "abnormal" body: that of the homosexual.

Homosexual existence in the Romanian setting was much more restricted then in other Eastern European countries where slowly the criminalization of homosexuality was dis-

[43] Evans Jennifer.
[44] McLellan.
[45] Florin Buhuceanu, *Homoistorii - Ieşirea Din Invizibilitate* (Bucureşti: MAIKO, 2011). See also the play co-authored by Mihaela Mihailcov and Paul Dunca "După Traian și Decebal: file din istoria gay"

banned matching in this way the equalitarian rhetoric of real existing socialism. While in GDR, former Yugoslavia, Hungary, homosexuality went slowly from police persecution to tolerance, in Romania the criminalization of homosexuality took an extra decade of post socialism to be reversed.

The social sphere had to be purified from sex-related issues and the Penal Code was designed precisely to reach this end. In addition, a powerful patriarchal tradition, reinforced by Ceausescu's regime, already excluded as abnormal all kinds of sexual behaviors that did not conform to the social norms. Heterosexuality, underlined by a powerful, state-driven patriarchy, represented the normal state of affairs.

Against this background, the homosexual bodies, subjects and experiences appear as blank spots par excellence, the ultimate silenced Other. To put it in Butlerian terms, acknowledging their existence would amount to an ontological lost, a "gender trouble" of systemic proportions. Consequently, homosexuality and homoeroticism appear to be the hidden fantasmatic nightmare of Ceausescu's regime, and probably not surprising, of post-socialism as well. Hence, an inquiry into the "aberrant" embodiments put forth by the homosexuals would entail an utter disruption of Ceausescu's regime, from inside and from below. Put differently, tracing the personal histories of homosexuals (and lesbians) of Ceausescu's regime and listening to their stories would amount to a confrontation between the proclaimed and powerfully imposed order of the regime with its traumatic, repressed chaos. In short, it would be the equivalent of queering the regime itself.

I work towards this goal in chapter 4 where I examine the experiences of three prominent homosexual men during socialism. I do not claim a representative sample because my interest is in understanding the manner in which homosexuality was created, lived, negotiated and embodied in interaction with the repressive actions of power. Therefore, I am interested in the type of subjectivity such encounter generated and the counter-mechanisms elicited to deal with it. I thus talk about traumatic stories of guilt, shame, burden and suicide generated by the heteronormative gaze of the state, but also about love, desire, pleasure and sexuality these men felt.

My discussion is then a contribution to the growing field of historiography that analyzes various affects during socialism, but it does so from the perspective of the tension not between state and citizens, but from the wider perspective of the tension between normative regimes of sexuality and behavior and their excluded other. Focusing only on the case of the homosexual men is thus only a stepping- stone, since many other cases still await a proper historical and political recognition.

3. Re-thinking socialism: the police-state

There is by now a growing body of literature on communism following the opening of the secret police and communist party archives. However, my impression is that despite its heterogeneity and complexity, this body of work can be divided between oeuvres that consider socialism as a totalitarian, repressive regime and those that are keen to emphasize society, everyday life and the intricacy of interactions between state and its citizens. Both strands have produced valuable works. My approach in this dissertation is slightly different for, while I do indeed look at the socialist regime as a total and totalizing power, I nonetheless trace not only its repressive features but also its productive qualities. To this end, I think that the notion of governmentality[46] developed by Michael Foucault is suited to explain the socialist power beyond the totalitarian paradigm developed by Hannah Arendt[47].

Foucault described governmentality, as a new type of political power that emerged at the beginning of the 18th Century in Western Europe. Succinctly, governmentality represents the right disposition of things (a generic term referring to citizens, territory, goods, life, death, etc.) into a diagrammatic order of visibility. In modernity, according to Foucault, sovereign power has been slowly overridden by a new modality of governance that springs from the necessity to control larger territories and colonies, as well as from the necessity to adapt to new modes of capitalist production. Consequently, what is at stake is no longer the annihilation of unruly subjects but their reformation, which would render them productive, self-governing and obedient. Thus, to govern changes its meaning: it is no longer to "*impose law on men but to arrange laws*", to deploy particular tactics in order to create governable subjects. [48]

Against the repressive force of the sovereign power, governementality's salient feature is its productive goal of transformation. The deviance is not brutally policed away through

[46] Michel Foucault and others, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France 1977--1978* (St Martins Press, 2009).
[47] Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, New edition (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1973).
[48] Michel Foucault, 'Governmentality', in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, ed. by Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller, 1st edition (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1991), p.89.

repression, but organized in specially designed places: the madhouse, the hospital, the jail aimed at reforming the individuals. What is to be retained from Foucault's description of governmentality is a two-fold idea: first, the diagrammatic order exists as such insofar as there are deviance and deviant elements to be reformed. Thus, the order asserts itself against the disorder embodied by the deviant elements (mad people, lazy, poor, sick, convicts). Consequently, reason and unreason, order and disorder, sanity and insanity are different faces of the same coin that Foucault calls governementality. Furthermore, the salient feature of governmentality is its emphasis on self-governance and self-censorship.

I find this framework useful in approaching state socialism. In his lectures at College de France, *Security, Territory, Population* and *The birth of biopolitics*, Foucault developed the concept of governmentality which he divided into two categories: the police-state and liberalism. Moreover, he argued that: "*there is no governmental rationality of socialism*"[49], considering that socialism is still linked to the liberal governmentality. Perhaps this is the reason why many observers were reluctant to apply the concept of governmentality to Eastern European socialism. But here there is an ambiguity, because Foucault was making his case about socialist (and neo-liberal) governmentality in the context of post-war West Germany, not in the context of GDR. The experience of "*actually existing socialism*" is not taken up by Foucault's analysis.

A way out of this conundrum is to look *at "actually existing socialism" as a police-state*. At first glance, this might not even be such a problematic theoretical position, especially in the Romanian context. Given the well-documented level of secret police surveillance

[49] Foucault and others.

the state deployed in order to monitor and keep in check its subjects, the total powers of Ceausescu and the subordination of life to Party's decrees does indeed render the state as a police state, disciplining and punishing all the subjects that did not confirm to the official norms. However such an understanding is not a Foucauldian understanding of the police-state, but one still attached to the totalitarian paradigm of analyzing state socialism developed by Hannah Arendt's *Origins of Totalitarianism*. What I have in mind is not simply the level of Orwell-like police surveillance deployed by the state, but more importantly the fact that power itself functioned in a police-like manner. To put it differently, during socialism there was no distinction between politics and police. Police was the essence of politics and the social space was organized according to this logic. Visibility, legibility and order were its prime characteristics.

This would echo Foucault's own point when he noted that socialism function under governmentalities of the police state: that is, a "*hyper-administrative state in which there is a fusion, a continuity, the constitution of a sort of massive bloc between governmentality and administration. At that point, in the governmentality of a police state, socialism functions as the internal logic of an administrative apparatus*".[50] What Foucault emphasizes is precisely the administrative apparatus of the state to which socialism is secondary, and while Foucault was referring to Western Germany, I think it describes perfectly the situation unfolding on the either side of the Iron Curtain as well. The socialist state was first and foremost a huge bureaucratic and administrative machine aimed at transforming the society top-down in keeping with some bureaucratically developed goals and guidelines. The essence of this type of state was not its ideology (as

[50] Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics, p.132*.

some analyses of state socialism emphasize) but its desire to organize in a certain way the world and the life of its citizens (it is not the *wooden language* but *the plan* that characterized it[51]): that is, to police it according to a pre-given script.

The way I use police here also recalls Foucault's definition. In *Security, Territory, Population*, Foucault noted that the institution of modern police (prefigured by the royal armies) appear at the height of the development of mercantilism and trade. But the development of trade also marked a shift from the preoccupation with *being* towards a preoccupation with *well-being*; from life *per se*, to a good life.[52] The modern police emerged precisely as an enforcing mechanism of the idea of good life, which, of course, in practice, entails policing all those that do not confirm to the order. While state socialism was fundamentally an anti-market state, it nonetheless developed and implemented its own vision of good life, of development and modernity that required a strong police to implement, of catering to the needs of its folks to the point where it was interpreted as a particular type of welfare dictatorship. Whoever was not subscribing to the socialist welfare was considered an enemy and was outcast and punished as an abnormal subject.[53]

However, what I would like to add here is that police logic is not necessarily (only) repressive logic. Police does repress, curtail and punish, but also prevents, orders,

[51] Katherine Verdery, *What Was Socialism, and What Comes Next?* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1996), especially Chapter 1 What was Socialism and Why Did It Fall?.
[52] Michel Foucault and others, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France 1977-1978* (St Martins Press, 2009) p.311-333.
[53] Konrad Jarausch, 'Care and Coercion: The GDR as Welfare Dictatorship', in *Dictatorship as Experience: towards a socio-cultural history of the GDR*, ed. by Konrad Jarausch (New York: Berghahn Books, 1999). For a similar argument also Lynne Haney, *Inventing the Needy: Gender and the Politics of Welfare in Hungary* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

controls and cajoles. Police is not only about incarceration but it is also about developing networks of informers and trustworthy people able to generate information and data. Police is not only about brute force, but it also serves a pedagogical purpose. Police is simultaneously about punishment, but also about reform and education.

This reconceptualization of state socialism as a police state governmentality enables me to go beyond the totalitarian paradigm of Hannah Arendt, without denying however the totalitarian nature (in the sense of aspiring towards totality) of state socialism. Moreover, by thinking socialism along these lines it offers the possibility to think differently of the role of (secret) police that state socialism deployed beyond the anti-communist scholarship. From a mere instrument of government (blamed for the excesses of the regime), police becomes now a fundament of government and management of the population; not an excess of power, but power inner's logic.

Finally, by conceptualizing socialism as a police state the status of my source material changes. I turn to discussing this aspect in the next section.

Methodology and sources

Since a significant part of my data are collected from the files of the secret police, this raises the question not necessarily of their acuity and truth-content but of their historical formation. Instead of just considering these files as sources of data, I regard them as an important avenue of theoretical investigation. They have the potentiality to reveal something about the functioning of the secret police in the socialist past, and also to say something about the politics of their opening after 1989. This enables me to deal in a different way with issues of memory and especially embodied memories. Therefore, in chapter 5 I will analyze the transition from the sexual pleasures of communism to the textual pleasures of the archive in post-communism. There gaze, secrecy and bodies of files meet again in a different form.

The choice of using secret police archives was both contingent and intended. During the time I conducted research in Romania for this dissertation, the secret police files were becoming increasingly accessible to researchers. After years of political struggles to regulate access to its content, the secret police archive became accessible to investigation not only for purposes related to lustration purposes[54] but also for academic research. They became important resources to complement the data I gathered through interviews and secondary sources.

Moreover, I intentionally decided to engage this material for its theoretical richness. As I mentioned above, by considering socialism a police-state with its specific governmentality, the secret police files were no longer just simple archival material, but traces (in the derridean sense) of the functioning of power itself. They were documents produced by the regime, placed at the heart of the regime. They have thus the potential to reveal important aspects of the functioning of the police-state, its logic and modus operandi, as well as the interaction between the state and its citizens. Therefore, instead

[54] Lustration refers to legislation proposed for the purposes of purging former Communist Party members from public administration in the former Eastern Block.

of simply taking for granted these files, they became important avenues for theoretically discussing the nature of power in socialist Romania, an aspect I discuss in Chapter 5.

This aspect is even more salient for my research since I deal with "abnormal" bodies and subject that made the object of constant surveillance by the secret police and, through this very process, inscribed and solidified their "abnormal" status. By examining these files and their performative effect I could trace at once the logic of power and the "dissident" activities they were purportedly registering. Moreover, since the secret police was an integral part of the life of my subjects, as I explain throughout this dissertation, they reveal important aspects of this constant, everyday interaction.

Therefore, these files appear to be very specific windows in the functioning of the police state, but also the very manifestation of the state's activity. This renders their ontological status problematic since by reading them one necessarily assumes state's perspective. However, through this very mechanism one can become aware of the gaze of the state which offered its scophofilic dimension and which interpellated citizens as subjects of minute observation. Thus, these files have the double status of historical material and political artifacts, which, in turn, render them not simple sources for my investigation, but central objects of it.

This is why, from the point of methodology, my research employed a variety of tools. I used unstructured interviews to talk to nudist practitioners, yoga aficionados and homosexual men during socialism. This technique carried me from Bucharest and Cluj -

where I spoke to practitioners from two generations, spending their summers both in 2 Mai and in Vama Veche – to the villages themselves where I spoke to locals who offered accommodation to the nudists but also information to the secret police. From there I went to New York to interview Nina Cassian in her home and to Los Angeles where I met another generation of nudists, who, like her, emigrated from Romanian at the height of Ceausescu's rule. This multi-sited ethnography across space and time, as well as across social classes, enabled me to grasp a more complex view of the nudist community that local histories, stories and archival material would suggest. In addition to these interviews and discussions I used other archival material, mostly from people's own personal archives, such as photos, manuscript novels and a diary.

Since Gregorian Bivolaru's political status is problematic, with an arrest mandate issued on its name by the Romanian state, it was impossible for me to reach him for an interview. Instead, I talked to people who were involved, in one way or another, with MISA, both before and after 1989. Given the topic, and the constant police harassment that continued well after 1989, it was natural that people would be very reluctant to give too much information or to become too personal about their experiences, in the way many of the nudists did. This aspect in itself helped illuminate some important features of the yoga practitioners as well as their relationship to the socialist state itself. However, I was fortunate enough to gain access to MISA material, including sexually explicit films that captured some of their processions on tape from which I could get a rare glimpse into the practice of the group. In addition, I was able to gain access to a secret online group where MISA members kept in touch and planned their activities. This posed some ethical concerns throughout my study and therefore decided that I will respect the privacy and anonymity of these people in my writing, even though I sometimes rely on knowledge gained from them.

The topic of homosexuality in Romania had remained taboo for many decades after the fall of socialism. In fact homosexuality remained a penal offense until 2001. Therefore, especially as a woman, I found it difficult to contact homosexual men active during communism for interviews. In fact, this was a problem for gay researchers as well, since very few people would openly come out and talk about their experiences of the past. As such, I was confined to dealing for this part with material collected from various archival sources and to narratives from third parties. Since the process of stigmatizing gay men in Romania is only slowly receding, a history of homosexuality can rely for the time being only on this type of secondary material. This is why I believe the three personal accounts I analyze in this dissertation are quite exceptional since they represent some of the very few personal accounts of homosexuality under communism in a narrative and confessional mode, from three men who acquired enough public standing and prestige to be able to do engage in such acts. Therefore, their importance is immense.

When I first started my research for this dissertation my intention was to write only about the nudist community. However, the more I delved into their experiences and their position within state socialism, as well as their social interactions I realized that there were overlapping worlds that I simply could not ignore. My interest shifted therefore from the nudist experience as such, to a broader form of interaction between body practices, the state and the rest of society. This broadened my empirical and theoretical compass and prompted me to want to say something not only about these marginal groups but also about state socialism as such. This dissertation, therefore, must be interpreted only as the first attempt to write a sensuous history of state socialism, which, to my mind, is long overdue.

I.Building a socialist morality in Romania: a historical background

The aim of this chapter is to set the stage for the discussion that follows in the next chapters. Therefore, my goal here is to offer an overview of the political, legislative and cultural situation in socialist Romania and thus to highlight the wider social framework in which the case studies I later discuss are embedded. I seek therefore to give a more historical grounding to my investigation but at the same time to offer a particular history of (Romanian) state socialism at the intersection of embodiment, sexualities and the official gender regimes.

This endeavor is even more called for in the case of state socialist Romania since Ceausescu's harsh anti-abortion legislation is an established and well-researched topic in a number of scholarly works.[55] But while this area of research has been extremely important to discern some of the basic tenets of socialist gender, bodily and sexual regimes, it nonetheless tended to reduce the entire gendered experience of socialism to this particular instance. It is more clear now that the ban on abortion was the outcome of a clear economic and bio-political pressure, namely the need of the regime to create more bodies for its vast industrial project. Always short of labor power for the development of heavy industry in keeping with the developmental logic of the regime, the state resorted

[55] Kligman.Doboș Corina, Jinga, Luciana M and Soare, Florin S, *Politica Pronatalistă a Regimului Ceaușsescu*, Institutul de Investigare a Crimelor Comunismului (Iași: Polirom, 2010).Roman and others. Adriana Baban, *Voices of Romanian Women: Perceptions of Sexuality, Reproductive Behavior, and Partner Relations During the Ceausescu Era* (Transnational Family Research Institute, 1994).Florin S Soare, 'Ceaușescu's Pronatalist Policies: A Moral or an Economic Choice between Compulsory or Voluntary Incentives Motherhood', *European Journal of Government and Economics*, 2 (2013).

to this measure of controlling birth once the rural-to-urban migration ceased to provide the necessary numbers of working bodies.[56] The social and physical costs of the ban on abortion have been disastrous for women living under socialism. Up to 10,000 women had died from botched abortions while many others were permanently disabled[57]. Women and men fought with the psychological effects of not being able control their sexuality or not being able to decide over the size of one's family. Intimacy and sex had been the areas most ridden with anxiety and fear during Romanian socialism and still decades after[58]. In order to be able to implement and to legitimize the banning of abortion, a policy with far reaching effects and unexpected outcomes, the regime had to rely on a particular notion of the human body (women's body more specifically), on a particular notion of the social body, and on particular notions of gender, sexuality and family. In short, the socialist state had to rely on a certain ontology and on a certain epistemology that not only guided its particular policies, but also, and more importantly, guided the very formulation and the ideological justification of those policies. Therefore, my attempt here is to offer the contours of this ontology and epistemology of state socialism through the prism of its legislation.

The moral universe underpinning the law of abortion itself warrants this approach. As Ceausescu himself noted during the meeting with the Central Committee, the legislative forum of the socialist state prior to finalizing the decree: "*in my opinion we have*

[56] See both Florin S Soare.Kligman.
[57] Number put forth in *Comisia Prezidențială Pentru Analiza Dictaturii Comuniste Din România - Raport Final*, ed. by Tismăneanu, Vladimir, Dorin Dobrincu, and Cristian Vasile (București: Humanitas, 2007).
[58] Baban, Adriana, 'Women's Sexuality and Reproductive Behavior in Post-Ceaușescu Romania: A Psychological Approach', in *Reproducing Gender: Politics,Publics, and Everyday Life* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2000).

legalized prostitution through abortions and free divorces [...] how is this possible are we an institution for the encouragement of prostitution or do we have the responsibility to keep the health of the people, the natural growth of the people, to defend the morality of the people?... The problem of natality is not a problem of the desires of one to have or not to have children but a social problem, each man has obligations towards society."[59]

The focus of this chapter is thus on the moral universe of socialism, which engendered its specific gender regimes, bodily practices, and sexual politics. My approach renounces the repressive hypothesis of socialism: namely that, by and large, this was a repressive regime that simply stifled the creative imagination of people with regards to their sexuality and bodily practices in favor of top-down, party-designed strict dispositions. My point is that we should understand that the very actions of the party, in line with its ideology and economic interests, gave rise to a series of practices that were not only subverted and resisted by people, but also embraced, adopted, thwarted and creatively incorporated. This is so, lest we forget, the ascendance to power of the Communist Party after WWII was a modernizing moment from the previous peasant morality, gender norms, bodily practices and sexual regimes still characterizing the 80% rural Romanians.

In fact, this is the intersection where I place my discussion. Instead of looking at the socialist regime sui generis, I seek to embed it into a longer history of Romanian modernity, especially concerning the transition from a largely traditional, peasant and proto-industrial society to an urban and industrialized one in the space of no more than

[59] Nicolae Ceausescu cited in Florin S Soare, p.68. *Author's translation after official documents A.N.I.C., fond CC al PCR – Cancelarie, Case file 102/1966 , p. 17.*

two generations. More than any salient feature one could identify in relation to socialism, for me this very process holds the key to understanding the contradictions, tensions, frictions and struggles involved in the articulation of alternative bodily practices and sexual relations that I discuss in the next chapters. Put differently, I don't think we can deduce the features of state socialism solely from the intellectual histories linking it to the development of the Russian revolution or even to Stalinism[60], but from longer and local histories in which members of the society were embedded and subjectivized as gendered bodies.

My main argument therefore is that the socialist ontology and epistemology evoked above emerged from the transformation of a powerful traditional (peasant) morality under the pressures of the socialist industrial modernity the Communist Party set out to promote, with its cult for work, monogamous industrial families grouped around the factory towns, and undergirded by a general drive towards productivity and the fulfillment of the Plan. Abstracting gender regimes, bodily practices and representations, sexual behaviors and norms from this confluence would entail missing exactly the socio-historical background in which they emerged and which imprinted their content and dynamics.

The literature on gender and state socialism in Romania, already mentioned above, tended to reproduce the state socialist obsessions with production, reproduction, nuclear family and fertility rates. The analysis emphasized women's lived experiences of sexuality and control over their own reproduction within the period of the pro-natalist

[60] Tismaneanu.

decree. These studies focused on the normative side of sexuality within the state socialist period[61]. While the state propaganda, popular materials and official policies and laws focused on the pronatalist imperative, the outcome has often been much more varied, inciting to numerous other forms of sexuality.

Therefore, a discussion of sexuality under socialism must take into account a number of interrelated issues. First, I offer an account of the legislation regulating sexuality beyond reproduction and the criminalization of abortion. I read this legislation together with the legislation concerning family (especially divorce), the criminalization of certain forms of sexuality (such as prostitution and homosexuality), and the production and consumption of *ars erotica*. I place this discussion within the broader framework of the transfers unfolding between the soviet satellites and the USSR inside the soviet bloc, influencing policies and moralities, but also within a longer period dating back to the interwar period. For example, albeit a new socialist Constitution was adopted in 1948, the Penal and Civil code largely remained unchanged. Secondly, I look at the creation of the socialist morality and its main tenets emerging from this historical intersection. Socialist morality was one of the key ideological constructions during late socialism. It replaced the Stahanovite moral code, an ideological construction that had been deployed to generate public affects of unbridled productivity during the Stalin era and in the first decades of state socialist power in the Eastern Block.[62] The revision and fine-tunning of socialist morality in late socialist Romania (shifting from Stahanovite morals to communist code

[61] Kligman.Baban.Doboș Corina, Jinga, Luciana M and Soare, Florin S.Florin S Soare. Mihaela Miroiu and Otilia Dragomir.
[62]Lewis H. Siegelbaum, *Stakhanovism and the Politics of Productivity in the USSR,1935-1941*, Soviet and East European Studies (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

of ethics[63]) connected the expectations of a New Man with a new body regime and gender dispositions. Lastly, I give a brief overview of the role and modus operandi of the Romanian communist secret police. A short description of its organization and its techniques are salient for an informed reading of the paper trail it left behind and for the corpus I analyze throughout the chapters, as well as for its role in enforcing the moral expectations and bodily dispositions of the regime.

1.Socialist legislation in historical perspective

In the popular imagination, exemplified by well-known Romanian New Wave movie "*4 months, 3 weeks, 2 days*", the ban on abortion is inextricably linked with Ceaușescu's rule. However there is a longer history of control over women's sexuality. After the communist takeover in 1947, abortion remained highly restricted and it remained a crime until 1957. The communist regime's amendments to the Penal Code in 1948 penalized both the woman demanding abortion and the person assisting her. The prison sentence ranged from 3 to 6 months for unmarried women and from 6 months to a year for married ones. The person performing the abortion faced 1 to 3 years and if the woman died, 3 to 5 years.[64] These provisions existed already in the 1936 Penal Code, a legal instrument adopted during the royal dictatorship of Carol II.[65] It is true that compared to the period of Ceausescu, the early communist state showed some leniency towards the practice and at times seemed to tolerate it unofficially.

[63] 'Codul Principiilor Și Normelor Muncii Și Vieții Comuniștilor, Al Eticiii Și Echității Socialiste [The Code of Principles and Norms of Work and Life of Communists, of Socialist Ethics and Equity]' (Viata Studenteasca, 1975).
[64] Kligman.
[65] 'Noul Cod Penal Complect "Regele Carol Al II-Lea" Din Martie 1936' (Bucuresti: Ticu I. Esanu, 1937),

In 1957, taking a cue from the Soviet jurisprudence, abortion was decriminalized and made available to women in medical clinics at a very low price. Only abortions done outside the state system were considered criminal offenses since such procedures would endanger women's health. The new regulations also liberalized the divorce law, making it easier for couples to get separated. Kligman interpreted this change as an attack on the traditional family driven by the state's need to uproot people and flexibilize them in order to create a mobile industrial work force[66]. This was for sure one of the goals of introducing more progressive legislation. However, what I want to emphasize here is precisely the modernist character the communist state had in relation to past traditions, linked to the traditional values and to the interwar period legislation. Also, the role of the Soviet Union in this process was decisive, since it offered the blueprint and the impetus of such overarching changes.

Just like Kligman, a series of other authors, including Romanian ones, have questioned the reasons behind these measures taken by the state.[67] Was it because the state needed a different kind of work population? Was it because the state was making a trade-off with women, offering them free abortion instead of actual equality? Was it a more subtle form of pacifying the population in the wake of the 1956 uprising in Hungary? All explanations are plausible and all might be true at the same time. However, irrespective of the motivations behind such decisions, the fact remains that the communist state broke with the previous traditions and institutional settings, and it created the space for new relations and behaviors to emerge.

[66] Kligman .
[67] Most recently Doboș Corina, Jinga, Luciana M and Soare, Florin S.

Following Michael Foucault, I want to draw attention to the fact that what the law does is not simply to "discipline and punish" but to create the subject[68]. What is important to look at when analyzing legal provisions is not (only) the formal level of regulations and dispositions, but their performative effect in creating particular types of subjects. The importance of the 1957 legislation was that for the first time in the history of modern Romania, by decriminalizing abortion and liberalizing divorce, the state –for whatever reasons – was accomplishing two things simultaneously: on one hand it linked social reproduction with individuality and individual choice, on the other hand it delinked social reproduction from national reproduction. In short, the state recognized and created a construction very similar to a liberal subject for whom rational calculation (about one's career, choices, living conditions) was salient. Contrary to the widespread belief in the massification and collectivisation engendered by the policies of the ruling Communist parties in Eastern Europe, the communist regimes generated individuality.[69] The socialist subject was expected to break free from her previous constellation of family and traditional networks in order to design on her own new such constellation, in the social environment of the socialist state. It was simultaneously liberating and uprooting, just like theorists described modernity to be.[70] That this played into the hands of the state for the creation of a different working force, in keeping with its industrial needs, I think there is no doubt. But the unleashing of such energies was not something the state was able to

[68] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*.
[69] For the case of Hunagry see Martha Lampland, *The Object of Labor: Commodification in Socialist Hungary*, 1 edition (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1995). For a similar argument for the Romanian case see the work of anthropologist David A. Kideckel, *The Solitude of Collectivism: Romanian Villagers to the Revolution and Beyond*, 1 edition (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993).
[70] Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (Verso, 1983).

control either. This appears obvious in the other pieces of legislation the state was adopting.

Most importantly, already in 1954, the state adopted a new Family Code. This represented a breakthrough because until then the legislation dealing with the family was subordinated to the Civil Code adopted in 1864 and, with minor modification, still in vigor. In that Civil Code, the woman (and the children) was under the authority of her husband.[71] The Constitution of 1948 already proclaimed the equality of man and women, but the Family Code, at least in theory, was meant to put it into practice. The novelty of the Code, therefore, compared to the previous legislation, was that it rested on three main principles: the free agreement of future spouses regarding their marriage; the principle of free equality of spouses in the rights and obligations in personal and patrimonial relations; the principle of state care and guarantee for family and marriage.[72]

Kligman rightfully noted that what we witness here is the passage from a traditional patriarchy to a state patriarchy that is taking charge of the citizens and of their well-being.[73] I would supplement this point by adding that the state is granting citizenship and rights only to those conforming to its heterosexual norms and its heterosexual, monogamous understanding of the family. For, homosexuality was first criminalized in the Criminal Code of 1936, which described same sex acts as the crime of sexual

[71] Constantin Iordachi, 'The Unyielding Boundaries of Citizenship: The Emancipation of "Non-Citizens" in Romania, 1866–1918', *European Review of History: Revue europeenne d'histoire*, 8 (2001), 157–86.
[72] Consiliul de Stat al României, 'Codul Familiei - Legea nr.4/1953 [Family Code - Law no.4/1953' (București: Consiliul de Stat, 1985).Șerbănescu, Scarlat, *Codul Familiei: Comentat Și Adnotat [The Family Code: Comments and Addontations]* (Bucureşti: Editura Științifică, 1963).
[73] Kligman.Verdery Katherine, 'From Parent-State to Family Patriarchs: Gender and Nation in Contemporary Eastern Europe"', *East European Politics & Societies*, 8 (1994), 225–55.

inversion. Sexual inversion was a crime under the chapter of crimes against the public mores and therefore not necessarily a major crime. It was described as follows: "*acts of sexual inversion between men or between women constitute the crime of sexual inversion if such acts provoke public scandal, crimes punishable with imprisonment from 6 months to 2 years*"[74]. Without exception, in Romania homosexuality will remain a punishable crime until 2001, dovetailing once more the force of legal continuities across political systems and epochs. The communist constitution of 1948 introduced amendments to the Criminal Code in order to punish sexual inversion with prison sentences from 3 to 10 years. In Ceausescu's Penal Code of 1968, the specific crime of sexual inversion consisting of "*acts of sexual inversion between men or between women*" was introduced again under article 200, with smaller jail sentences criminalizing both women and men engaging in same-sex acts.[75]

What the anti-abortion law of 1966 did was to link again reproduction with the nation, while signaling a return to increasingly conservative politics of the regime. Apart from the ban on abortion, additional legislation to promote compulsory and productive heterosexuality was also adopted, such as the Decree 779 that stipulated the exceptional character of divorce.[76] The new law stipulated that marriage could end only with the death of the spouse, and only very limited cases of exceptional circumstances were allowed. This re-focusing on the family and on the nation as family become the

[74] 'Noul Cod Penal Complect "Regele Carol Al II-Lea" Din Martie 1936 [The New Penal Code "King Carol II" from March 1936]'.
[75] 'Codul Penal Al Republicii Socialiste România [The Penal Code of The Socialist Republic of Romania]' (București: Editura Politică, 1968).
[76] Consiliul de Stat al României, 'Decret nr.779 Din 8 Octombrie 1966 Pentru Modificarea Unor Dispoziții Legale Privitoare La Divorț [Decree 779 from 8th of October 1966 Regarding Changes of Legal Provisions on Divorce]' (Buletinul Oficial Nr.64 din 8 octombrie 1966, 1966).

trademarks of Ceausescu's regime and the dominant ideology of late socialism in Romania[77]. One aspect that is important to note is that the Romanian communist regime was not homogenous, but it had its own internal discontinuities and differences. These are important, because they help to situate the actions (and repercussions) of the people I discuss in the next chapters.

The legislation on abortion generated a lot of scholarship. Băban looked at the consequences the abortion ban had on women's experiences of sexuality and matrimony[78]; Kligman examined Ceausescu's dictatorship through the concept of political demography to investigate the mechanisms by which the state controlled individuals[79]; Jinga and Soare took a historical approach and looked at the documents and party meetings prior to the issuing of the decrees to point to the dual causes influencing the abortion decree – the economic rational as well as the nationalist and moral reasons.[80] Adam Burakowski noted that with the anti-abortion decree, Ceausescu's regime began to look worrisome and constraining in the eyes of the Romanians and of foreigners.[81]

The authors of the legislation on abortion argued that the regime's polices of demography were motived by economic reasons. Once the inclusion of women into the labor force in the 1950s exhausted its potential of growth, the regime was constantly in need of more labor power for its plans for industrial expansion. It was the interdependency between

[77] Verdery Katherine.
[78] Baban, Adriana.
[79] Kligman.
[80] Doboș Corina, Jinga, Luciana M and Soare, Florin S.
[81] Adam Burakowski, *Dictatura Lui Nicolae Ceausescu 1965-1989: Geniul Carpatilor* (Iasi: Polirom, 2011).

economic and demographic growth that was referred to constantly by the communist party leadership in numerous documents and speeches.

Therefore, a commission was set up to investigate the causes of this labor shortage and to prepare a report. “The Committee on the Study of Measures Designed to Improve National Birth Rates” presented its conclusions on August 2, 1966 in front of the executive committee of the Central Committee of the RCP.[82] The document argued for positive policy measures in order to ensure higher birth rates. Among the recommendations, party bureaucrats mentioned longer maternity leaves, more child-care facilities, and payments for newly parents. Along these measures, the limitation of access to abortion figured prominently except in exceptional cases such as health and socio-medical conditions. Moreover, the document recommended a shift in education policy of the state that would play-down the contraceptive techniques.

The Central Committee welcomed the recommendations, especially the ban on abortions. In the eyes of the Party, the demographic decline was strictly linked with the free access to abortion. Also, as already mentioned, the liberalization of abortion was considered immoral and a sign of indecency and loose morals. The high rate of divorces was also considered to be a cause of free abortion. In addition, many of the Central Committee members used their personal experiences of growing up in poor peasant families as arguments for discarding any provisions concerning socio-medical exceptions for abortions. The country and the industry demanded more people and therefore personal comfort was nothing but an excuse to avoid fulfilling a national duty. As Ceausescu put

[82] Florin S Soare.

it, the problem of natality was not a personal problem linked with desire, but a social one, linked with obligation.

Moreover, throughout the meeting sanctions for doctors performing abortion were also discussed, as well as a rise in fees for abortions and divorce, the establishment of a tax for childless persons. At the end of the meeting, the committee had voted on banning abortion rather then simply limiting it and also decided to fight abortion on all channels.

However, the outcome of the law was not the one predicted, showing again that there is an uncontrolled level of state regulations: after two years of rapid increase in births, the rate went down to pre-1966 levels.[83]The legislation was working against itself.

Another important domain of harsh state regulation was that of the production and distribution of obscene materials. Article 325 of the 1968 Penal Code punished the manufacture and the possession of “obscene materials” with jail sentences up to two years.[84] Such provisions were already present in the interwar period, only that the punishment was less severe. Moreover, this piece of legislation basically defined the official representation of nudity by outlawing other expressions of sexuality and their producers. But this led to the creation of an alternative market of sexually explicit materials in which people like Bivolaru (see chapter 3) would later prosper.

[83] Kligman.
[84] ‘Codul Penal Al Republicii Socialiste România [The Penal Code of The Socialist Republic of Romania]’, Article 325.

As I already suggested the legal basis that governed the sexual behavior of the population during the first period of Romanian socialism and during Ceausescu's regime was significantly linked with the 1936 Penal Code.[85] Another important legacy of the interwar period for the Romanian communism was the preoccupation with the management of the population. It was during the interwar period that "population" and its bio-political characteristics became an object of scientific study, reform and state intervention.

Strictly connected to that, nationalism emerged as the key political theme and the main mobilizing force behind the attempts to construct the nation. Nationalism was revived as early as 1958 by the communist regime and it blew out of proportions during Ceausescu's rule.[86] The importance of interwar nationalism was that it established a chain of equivalences between the Orthodox Church, the state and the nation, which entailed that the concerns over motherhood, sexual reproduction and ethnic purity were central. In the communist case, the church was absent but it was replaced by the centrality of the Party, which took upon itself the task of developing the state and the nation while guarding the purity of the Romanian nation and of the Romanian people.

Moreover, King's Carol II dictatorship between 1930 and 1940 already prefigured some of the features of political power that will characterize Ceausescu's regime as well: the centralization of power by a single person, politics made by the ruler's family and coterie,

[85] For underlining the legal continuities between the inter-war and post-war regimes in Romania Cercel, Cosmin Sebastian, 'The "Right" Side of the Law. State of Siege and the Rise of Fascism in Interwar Romanian Fascism', *Journal of Comparative Fascist Studies*, 2 (2013), 205–33.Cercel, Cosmin Sebastian, 'Narrating Dystopia: Nicolae Ceaușescu's Legal Career', *Journal of Comparative Law*, 6 (2011), 1–22.
[86] Katherine Verdery, *National Ideology Under Socialism: Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceauşescu's Romania* (University of California Press, 1995).

the subordination of the political and cultural life to the ruler's interests, nationalization of industry and 5-year plans (which of course were features of national communism as well), the cult of the new Man, an overemphasis of Romanian exceptionality as a nation and a penchant for grand public demonstrations.

The interwar period was also the period of the rise of Romanian fascism. The Romanian fascist movement was a complex phenomenon that incorporated many different social groups. It was largely a movement with urban roots among the declassed intellectuals that gained social traction among the rural poor, with a backing from the Orthodox priests.[87] It was a nationalist movement with social under-stones but also with a very important spiritual component. The anti-Semitic orientation of the movement was based on the concepts of ethnic superiority and religious belonging. For the Romanian fascists, the main perils of modernization were those of losing one's faith and one's moral compass derived from the values of homeland and orthodoxy. Moreover, based on these precepts, the fascist movement developed a spiritual program aimed at surpassing the harmful effects of modernity in order to re-discover the authentic features of Christianity.[88]

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[87] For an detailed account of fascism's rise to power during the late interwar period and the role of anti-Semitism in Romanian politics see Dennis Deletant, *Hitler's Forgotten Ally: Ion Antonescu and His Regime, Romania 1940-44* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006). For a more detailed account of the fascist group the Iron Guard see Ioanid Radu, 'The Sacralised Politics of the Romanian Iron Guard', *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, 5 (2004), 419–53.

[88] For an detailed account of fascism's rise to power during the late interwar period and the role of anti-Semitism in Romanian politics see Deletant, *Hitler's Forgotten Ally*. For a more detailed account of the fascist group the Iron Guard see Ioanid Radu, 'The Sacralised Politics of the Romanian Iron Guard', *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, 5 (2004), 419–53 .

Maria Bucur made apparent the distinction between the Romanian interwar fascist movement and the eugenicist ideas very en vogue at the time.[89] While her argument is convincing, I suggest we should not dismiss the obvious connections between the two, especially the component regarding the biopolitics of the body. For eugenicists, the locus of individual significance was the body, which offered its place in the wider community. Moreover, the eugenicists sought to shift the relationship between the citizens and the state giving more power to the government over both healthy and dysgenic populations. While clearly there was a difference from the instrumentalization of eugenics in fascist regimes, especially concerning racial purity, the eugenicists did harbor the same desire to intervene over the human body based on scientific, nationalistic and state-driven principles.

The desire to construct a new Man, the desire of the state to intervene in order to model the human body according to political and ideological needs, and the focus on the body as the focus of the biopolitics were all features of the socialist state itself. But instead of simply tracing their history to a sui generis history of socialism, I wanted to suggest here that there is a longer history emerging in the interwar period as an outcome of and as a response to incipient modern transformation, that the communist modernization only magnified.

[89] Maria Bucur, *Eugenics and Modernization in Interwar Romania*, Pitt Series in Russian and East European Studies (Pittsburgh, Pa: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2002).

2.Building a socialist morality and a proper socialist body

It is well known that state socialism promoted a morality of hard work and sacrifice for the nation in keeping with its logic of modernization and development.[90] Also, the party attempted to realize a unity between the private desires of the people and the public socialist goals exposed in the ideological documents of the party. In short, this was the definition of the New Man: the person not only able to subordinate its goals and ambition to the common good, but to make the two coincide. Therefore, the goal was not necessarily to make the individual obey state goals, but to fully accept state goals as its own. This attempt presupposed the development of an entire psychic life of the individual, as well as a new morality. The communist morality entailed a cheerful self-sacrifice, which resonated with the idea of "*socialist patriotism*" a key element of Ceausescu's ideology. These aspects are important in order to understand the moral universe the regime was trying to create and the way in which alternative practices and moralities, as well as opposing body regimes, which I discuss in the next chapters, emerged.[91]

It is important to note therefore that the Romanian Worker's Party, like any Communist party, functioned as a mass organization with special sections for the youth, women, professional categories, etc. Broad party membership was seen as showing legitimacy for the party, while the different sections would dovetail democracy. By 1948, the party had

[90] Siegelbaum.Field, Chapter 2 and Chapter 3.
[91] I take socialist patriotism to refer to the attempts made by Communist Parties in the Eastern Block to use nationalism in order to sell socialism, an idea originating during the anti-fascist resistance. The linkage between nationalism and real existing socialisms played out differently in different contexts. See for example its demise in the case of Hungary see Martin Mevius, *Agents of Moscow: The Hungarian Communist Party and the Origins of Socialist Patriotism 1941-1953* (Oxford : New York: Oxford University Press, 2005). In the case of Romania, nationalism overtook the communist premises of state socialist regimes leading up to it becoming the hegemonic ideology of state socialism. See Verdery, *National Ideology Under Socialism*.

grown from around 2000 members to 1 million.[92] After the purges of the 1950s, when many members with previous fascist allegiances were excluded, the party lost some 200,000 cadres and became more restrictive in accepting members.[93] However, by 1989, the party was again a truly mass organization, comprising four and a half million people, which meant that approximately 1 in 5 Romanians was a member[94]. Therefore, the communist regime had these two salient features: a fixation on work and the desire to incorporate people into larger organizations. Both features constituted the main pillars of the communist morality. Not working and not belonging to an organization, from the most elementary one –the family – to the largest one –the Party – was a sign of social failure and deviance.

Starting with 1958, the Romanian Communist Party, under the leadership of Gheorghiu Dej embarked on a road of independence from the USSR, a party line further exploited and manipulated by Ceausescu's leadership. The construction of a more independent approach was ideologically routed in nationalism and anti-Soviet feeling, resources that were mobilized in order to elicit legitimacy and support for the regime both at home and in the international arena. The first step in this direction was the expelling of Soviet troops from Romania in 1958, followed by the departure of the Soviet advisors in 1964.[95] Internally, the abandonment of communist internationalism already started in 1952 and continued with the classical method mock trials and exposures of party leaders for their

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[92] The British historian Denis Deletant talks about 2000 party members in 1944 see Dennis Deletant, *Communist Terror in Romania: Gheorghiu-Dej and the Police State, 1948-1965* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), p.11-34.
[93] Burakowski, p.32.
[94] Burakowski, p.271.
[95] Dennis Deletant, *Communist Terror in Romania: Gheorghiu-Dej and the Police State, 1948-1965* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), p.269-289.

close connection or endorsement of soviet policies.[96] Observers noted that the nationalist line under Gheorghiu Dej was economically motivated and it became clearly articulated by the leader's refusal to join the economic model proposed by the Soviet Union to the COMECON member states. Romania's role in the plan was to "become the agricultural hinterland of the Soviet Bloc" while other block countries were tasked with building solid industries. [97] Romania's political leaders showed their commitment to expand the country's economy via industrialization, following the Leninist principle that the independence and economic stability is closely connected with the development of an industrial base. The "declaration of independence" from the USSR became state policy in 1964 when the Romanian Worker's Party affirmed the principle of national sovereignty within the communist block as the main principle of collaboration within communist countries. Abroad, the declaration was read as a Romanian independence manifesto, New York Times noting: "*the pursuit of independence and national renaissance by the communist leadership of Romania appears to be developed with the precision and confidence of a well made symphony. The leitmotif remains the determination of the government of Gheorghiu Dej to expend the countries economy on Romanian terms regardless of the wishes of the Soviet Union or its European Allies*"[98].

But this bold stand would not have been possible without an already established party discipline consolidated through the political purges and control. Moreover the ideological work had also broke away from the Soviet model and began to develop its sui generis

[96] For an insight into the working of party purges from the point of view of their high ranking victims see Robert Levy, *Ana Pauker: The Rise and Fall of a Jewish Communist*, English Language edition (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), p.134-163.
[97] Burakowski, p. 45-47.
[98] Deletant, *Communist Terror in Romania, p.125*.

ideology, centered around the nation and the traditional morality of family, work, and individual sacrifice.

Also, in the April Declaration of 1964 Gheorghiu Dej announced the principles of "national communism": the party would dedicate its work to the construction of socialism in Romania, not necessarily following soviet blueprints but based on local knowledge matching local needs and histories.[99] In a sense, this was the moment when the Romanian Communist Party more or less explicitly aims to re-connect itself with the pattern of development set up during the interwar period, but under the leadership of the Communist Party. It is no accident, therefore, that in the following period, the regime will revert to some of the policies already established in the interwar period, as I mentioned above.

At the death of Gheorghiu Dej in 1965 the main features of socialist nationalism and its underpinning morality were already set out. They will be magnified during Ceausescu's reign, especially after the formal and spectacular fall out with the USSR in 1968, when Ceausescu denounced the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia.

The 1968 events made Ceausescu very popular both at home and abroad. Ceausescu had been a staunch supporter of Dubcek and of a national way of building socialism.[100] Ceausescu's political declarations further promoted him as a liberal socialist leader acceptable even in the eyes of the West, a leader willing to take the risk of being in

[99] Deletant, *Communist Terror in Romania*.
[100] Burakowski.

conflict with Soviet Russia. At home, the end of the 1960s was marked by a rich youth culture, autonomous from the rigid ideological expectations.[101] This was the period of short-lived Romanian liberalism. Already by the end of 1968, the omens of the closure were visible. Following an unexpected and quite popular student rebellion on the streets of Bucharest during the Christmas night of that year, the regime initiated a vigorous program of political education and strengthening of ideological ties with the youth.[102]

Burakowski argued that after having survived the threat of Soviet invasion in the summer, the student demonstration alerted the regime to the need of a firmer control over the minds and bodies of the population, especially of its younger segments. From that moment on, the emphasis on ideological education became a salient feature of the regime and its main guidelines for cultural policies.[103] To this end, political education and the cultivation of socialist patriotism (a sentiment uniting the love for the party with the love the nation), were the two main themes of the 10th Party Congress held in 1969. This was also the Congress in which the Party concluded that Romania already achieved socialism and that now it was entering into a new stage: the stage of the multi-lateral development. This stage was considered to be the last intermediary phase before reaching communism.

This congress paved the way to what was called in Romanian historiography the "July theses", the first and most significant sign of the political closure that characterized

[101] Madigan Fichter, 'Rock "N" Roll Nation: Counterculture and Dissent in Romania, 1965–1975', *Nationalities Papers*, 39 (2011), 567–85.Caius Dobrescu, 'The Phoenix That Could Not Rise: Politics and Rock Culture in Romania 1960-1989', *East Central Europe*, 38 (2011), 255–90.
[102] Adam Burakowski, 'Un Eveniment Important Aproape Necunoscut: Demonstrația Studenților Din București, 24 Decembrie 1968 [An Almost Forgotten Important Event: The Demonstration of Bucharest Students, 24th of December 1968]', *Arhivele Totalitarismului*, 1-2 (2006), 238–47.
[103] Burakowski, p.129.

Romanian late socialism[104]. On July 6th 1971 Ceausescu gave a speech outlining in 17 points the new principles of the Romanian Communist Party cultural politics. These politics are best encapsulated by the following quote from the speech: "*perhaps women enjoy a love poem every now and then, but love poetry no matter how beautiful, should also be complemented with poems describing the socialist realities, the revolutionary spirit and the elevated consciousness of our socialist and communist society*".[105] The point here is not simply that Ceausescu was suggesting to replace love poetry with a realist and mobilizing description of socialist realities (that is, a return to socialist realism) but that love poems, and the expression of personal love should not be separated from expressing the love for the country and for the party. The two had to be merged together. Moreover, further contributing to the discussions over the gendered dynamics of real existing socialism, even this small declaration echoes the overall paternalist tone under which women's existence were framed by party policies and party leaders.

The new cultural politics condemned the western influences on Romanian culture. Therefore, it demanded that the party takes greater control over the cultural life in order to counter the bourgeois opinions and ideas in culture and replace them with the ones developed by the party, aimed at strengthening the new ideological and moral ethos promoted by the regime. Also, the "July theses" explicitly sought to elevate the communist consciousness of the Romanian population, in preparation to reaching the final stage of development, communism. The assumption was that the party was in advance of people's consciousness and therefore the people had to be helped to be on the

[104] Anneli Ute Gabanyi, *Cultul lui Ceauşescu [Ceauşescu's Cult]* (Ed. Polirom, 2003).
[105] Liviu Malita, *Ceausescu Critic Literar* (Bucureşti: Editura Vremea, 2007), p.89.

same level. This was an expression of the theory of the avant-garde of the communist party in historical change now harvested for nationalist purposes. The main tool to promote the ideas of the party was through political education. Classes of political education were introduced not only in schools and universities but also in different work settings in order to mold socialist citizen's consciousness to the elevated mode the party required of them.

Finally, the speech also marked the beginning of Ceausescu's cult of personality. The most important feature of it was the fact that Ceausescu dropped the identification with a Marxist-Leninist working class hero and refashioned himself instead as a national historical figure, imagining himself as the culmination of a long history of national heroes defending the nation. To this end, Ceausescu enlisted numerous intellectuals from poets to historians and painters to help solidify this personal mythology via monographs and official biographies or via staged celebrations that included massive portrayals, songs and poems all dedicated to the supreme leader.[106]

The 11th Congress of the Romanian Communist Party held in 1974 represents another pivotal moment for the development of socialist morality and cultural politics. During this congress Ceausescu was elected not only as Secretary General of the Communist Party, but also as head of state, thus officially linking together the nation and the party.[107]The leader, in his double function, had to lead society towards the fulfillment of the program for reaching the end point of the multi-lateral society. This development

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[106] Gabanyi.
[107] Deletant, *Ceauşescu and the Securitate p. 100-120*.

entailed the harmonious and unitary development of the productive forces as well as of the social forces and relations. Homogeneity, harmony and unity became the new key words.

Furthermore, the Congress brought into the spotlight the figure of "the New Man" - an ideological trope that would become ever more present in the politico-ideological discussions. As mentioned already, the idea of the "new man" emerged already in the fascist imagination of the interwar period as a symbol of overcoming the materialist legacy of modernity towards a more spiritual future.[108] In the communist context it signaled the fact that the task of the party was not only that of building a new society, but also that of creating a new type of human personality.

The New Man was supposed to be always committed to the advancement of the social good, to be critical of shortcomings and to be an inventor and promoter of new ideas, and most importantly to be a worker and find her/his meaning in the professional life. The New Man is in fact a very porous concept, almost an empty signifier. However, some of the main features of the New Man are clearly discernable from party documents. Thus, the New Man has a very developed social consciousness as a result of its political education. The New Man is a socialist patriot. Work is its primary focus and its primary preoccupation, directed towards the fulfillment of the country. Collectivity and solidarity are its main guiding principles and its personal will is incorporated into the bigger goals of the society.[109]

[108] Radu.
[109] Gabanyi, p.126.

But what was the body of the New Man supposed to be like? What were the main guiding principles envisaged by the party to shape this body according to its aims? It is impossible to get a clear picture of these expectations since they were never detailed as such in any party directives or documents. They can only be intuitively derived from other adjacent documents or decisions as well from the ideological precepts. Clearly, the body of the New Man was supposed to be lean, muscular, and strong enough to embark upon the road of constructing socialism. It was supposed to be free of vices (like alcohol and smoking) and clean. Also, it was supposed to be properly dressed in order to express the socialist morality, a stringency more directed towards women's bodies, as it is always the case. Also, what determined the proper features of the socialist body was not its own features as such, but the type of activities it engaged in. A series of activities were deemed inappropriate by the socialist morality, from the more serious ones (like theft or slacking) to the more innocuous ones, like sunbathing or lazily reading, as some mocking posters designed for pedagogical purposes showed. The official doctrine of the body constructed by the socialist state, remained true to its materialist presuppositions, was not determined only by a priori bodily features (as was the case with the racial corporality developed by fascism) but, more importantly, by the practices the body was engaged in. In keeping with this belief, the state developed a particular institution aimed at keeping in line the bodies and souls of the citizens: this was, of course, the Securitate.

3. Securitate and the Informer as a technology of the body

The Communist takeover meant redesigning the institutional apparatus of the state in order first to ensure control of significant institutions and secondly to model it according to socialist principles. This project of institutional design included the transformation of the interwar secret police, the "*Siguranța*" into a new institution official named "*Directia Generala a Securitatii Poporului*" (The General Directorate of People's Security) in short and in more familiar terms, the Securitate. The Securitate was formally established in August 1948 under the control of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and at the time it employed around 4,600 permanent workers, distributed in a central apparatus formed by 10 specific units. In addition to the central apparatus, operational offices were also deployed regionally and later on one in each county.The institution was tasked with "*protecting the democratic gains of the People's Republic of Romania from its external and internal enemies*", a work undertaken usually by officers that had previously safeguarded the anti-communist political regime.[110] The lack of qualified cadre was a problem that actually haunted the institution throughout the years.

The somber reputation of the Securitate and its apparatus goes back to the first decade of communism when it was the only organization trusted to conduct investigations on crimes "that endanger the state's security". This particular criminal category was often used for rapid arrests and political purges during the first decade of communism. Basically this crime was one of the main accusations against the political prisoners, oppositional movements and party dissenters. The Securitate had been charged with producing evidence and confessions to be used in mock trials and politically motivated court cases against the supporters of the former regime, against any dissenters of

[110] Marius Oprea, *Bastionul cruzimii: o istorie a Securității, 1948-1964* (Polirom, 2008).

communism including peasants refusing to enlist their properties and lands during the collectivization.[111]

From 1952 and all the way to the fall of communism, the control over the Securitate was a matter of concern for the leaders of the communist party who tried to contain the power the institution was amassing independently of the party. The institution was able to spy not only of persons supposedly posing a security risk, but also on party officials, including the party leader Gheorghe Gheorghiu Dej, ministers and even other Securitate officers. Therefore, in the ensuring decades, the control over the Securitate kept shifting from the Ministry of Interior to top echelon of the Communist party and back again in a circular manner, in search for better containment of the Securitate power.[112]

The subsequent reorganizations of the Securitate entailed not only a shift between institutions responsible for its oversight but changes in its organizational structures (segments of it growing increasingly more decentralized and more autonomous), its techniques of operation and its overall mission.[113] Thus, in the first decades of communism, the role of the Securitate was to combat and annihilate "*class enemies*" and its repertoire included the use of force, torture, arrests, and threats. After Ceausescu's ascendance to power, the institution employed more subtle methods such as surveillance, dissuading opponents from certain actions or discrediting potential dissidents. This methodology enabled officers to discover, mold and contain potential protest actions even

[111] Marius Oprea, *Banalitatea Raului. O Istorie a Securitatii in Documente 1949-1989. [The Banality of Evil. A History of the Securitate in Documents 1949-1989]* (Iasi: Polirom, 2002), p. 115-164.
[112] Deletant, *Ceauşescu and the Securitate, p.322-350.*
[113] Marius Oprea, *Bastionul cruzimii: o istorie a Securității, 1948-1964* (Polirom, 2008), p.230.

before such actions would be voiced as such. Basically the role of the Secret police was to deter rather than to punish, and to prevent rather than to prosecute. To this purpose the Securitate developed extended networks of informers in all major institutions and recruited informers and collaborators from all social milieus and walks of life. The size of these networks is estimated to have around 400,000 people out of which 137.000 were active in 1898.[114]

The density and richness of the social network of informers was the main asset of the Securitate. It not only offered access to virtually the entire society, but it also helped to create the illusion of ubiquity the Securitate enjoyed. Basically anyone could be the spy working for the Securitate, which therefore forced people to maximum restraint and secrecy. The real power of the Securitate was constituted by the self-censorship it was able to instill.

The informers were basically the smallest unit of action of the Securitate, usually people recruited by secret police operatives in order to provide information regarding their immediate environment. Missions entrusted to informers ranged from simple recounts of events or of actions of others, to more complicated tasks such as observation and locating compromising materials (such as diaries) within someone's environment, to influencing the behavior or attitudes of those persons they spied upon. The informers were recruited from all environments and it was quite common that case officers would attempt to recruit for the Securitate those persons already under investigation or at least with some compromising element in their biographies. This strategic advantage would ensure the

[114] Marius Oprea, *Bastionul cruzimii: o istorie a Securității, 1948-1964* (Polirom, 2008), p.81.

control of the handler over his informants and would provide a motive for approaching a potential informer.[115]

The Securitate was embedded into the social body of the nation, which it aimed to control and shape according to the official dispositions. But the Securitate was not concerned only with the body of nation as such but with personal bodies as well. Its locus of manifestation was, from the very beginning, directed against the physical body. From incarceration, torture and killing, the body was an essential part of the Securitate's action. Its ultimate power, after all, resided in the capacity of controlling the body, or effecting an action upon it. But there were more subtle ways of doing this, through surveillance and control of the "targets" as the next chapters will demonstrate. Therefore, Securitate was an essential element of construing and enforcing the socialist morality and its associated body features and disciplines.

To conclude this chapter, the Securitate was a particular institution –quite central and quite powerful – in the hands of the state aimed at molding the new citizens. But it was not alone and not exception. The Securitate was part of an arsenal of institutions, legislation, ideology and practices that aimed at creating a new socialist morality in keeping with the regimes ontology. But far from rigidly creating uniform New Men such official dispositions led in fact to a variety of dissident and resistant practices to which I now turn.

[115] Mihai Albu, *Informatorul.Studiu Asupra Colaborării Cu Securitatea [The Informer. A Study on the Collaboration with the Securitate]* (Iasi: Polirom, 2008), p.15-40.

II.Overlapping fantasies: sexuality, subjectivity and the secret police in the "2 Mai" community of nudists

> *But the nostalgia that writes these lines remembers […] the fishing village where summer vacations among friends and the closeness of the sea seemed almost to cancel the sadness of the whole year….*
>
> Norman Manea, *On Clowns: The Dictator and the Artist*[116]

2 Mai is a small fishing village on the Romanian-Bulgarian border well known for its pristine sandy beach and nudism.[117] Far from major cities, off the beaten track and out of the habitual circuit of state socialist tourist resorts, 2 Mai lacked up until 1989 any basic amenities including running water, electricity, restaurants, hotels, or campsites. To get there, one had either to walk or bike for 5 kilometers while carrying drinking water and basic foodstuffs. Moreover, in an aftermath of the Second World War, the state placed there a military compound meant to secure the terrestrial and maritime borders of the People's Republic of Romania.

[116] The fishing village is none other then 2 Mai in the author's words "*a chic but unpretentious resort for the Bucharest intelligentsia*"

[117] As the legend goes, the godfather of the village was the first Romanian monarch, Carol the I st; In the aftermath of the 1878 Russian –Ottoman War, the newly independent Romanian state received a territory south of the Danube- present day Dobruja, which included the Black Sea Coast line. As king Carol was inspecting the new territorial additions and its populations, he came across a small amassment of houses; He asked for the name of the place, but no one in his entourage was able to provide him with one and so he decided to name the village with the date of his visit – the second of May. The accurate story of the toponim is yet to be written, but the documentation available does show that the village bears this name already in 1887. The name of the village, the second of May, evokes the national holiday of the 1st of May (the international workers day) which was institutionalized in Romania during the state socialism regime.

Despite these hurdles, from the mid 1950s until the early 1990s this village was the favorite destination of a community of artists and intellectuals, some of them members of the Communist Party, who escaped the daily routine of socialism summer after summer for hours of socializing in the nude. One can safely argue that this group was far from a typical collection of socialist citizens both in terms of their class background and in terms of cultural capital. The initial group of 2 Mai goers grew out of a strong link with communist party politics in which some of the nudists of 2 Mai participated at different levels of decision. The generational narrative of this group can be retold as a tale of gradual disenchantment and of dramatic confrontation with the paradoxes and internal inconsistencies of "actually existing socialism," specifically in its Stalinist form. Antifascists, some of them true believers in the ideals of communism, the initial group of nudists specifically embraced the ideas of an equalitarian society, of the elimination of social antagonisms based on class, ethnic background, sex as well as the humanist principals of emancipation of the lower classes through education and worthwhile working conditions.[118] Moreover, most of the group members had been the generation who had witnessed the disasters and abuses of the Second World War and had come out at the end of it with a sense of idealism, a generational mission of rebuilding and modernizing a society so that war and genocide would not repeat itself.[119] The emergence

[118] These ideals were echoed in many of my interviews conducted with some of the early 2 Mai goers.

[119] An important part of Romanian historiography works within the totalitarian framework, emphasizing the criminal and illegitimate nature of communist dictatorship in Romania. Indeed labor camps, prisons; massive arrests are a significant part of the memory and history of the communist regime. The abuses were one of the important turning points for some of the 2 Mai nudists who actually knew of such abuses. What I want to emphasize though is the idealism that absolutely characterized this group – a certain temperate interest in material benefits, the belief in a common cause, the search of authenticity (of which 2 Mai was a part).

of the group epitomized both the aspirations of early Romanian state-socialism and its internal contradictions.

In this chapter I analyze the story of this group with an eye to the power structures of the communist state in order to discern how sexuality, desire and phantasy were produced through the mechanism of gazing. Nonetheless it is important to mention that even within this initial group the relationship with the party were different – with some members closer to the circles of decisions than others. In the 2 Mai society participated also persons that identified themselves as anti-communists from the very beginning. They were referred to as "former"[foști], either former supporters of the liberal regimes or former believers in communism. Towards the decades, many people would fit this category after growing disenchanted with actually existing socialism.

Another important caveat is that the dynamics of holidaying in 2 Mai changed over the course of the five decades of communism with increasingly more participants discovering the "*backyard tourism*"[120] of 2 Mai and the charm of living in a peasant household, in tiny and low ceiling rooms made of clay and with no indoor plumbing. From the oral history interviews I have gathered, I identified at least three distinct generations that overlapped on the nudist beaches of 2 Mai and the nearby Vama Veche by the early 1980s.[121] Sometimes this overlap of different generations fostered conflicts over politics,

[120] Mihailescu Vintila, '"Limanu. Spaţii Sociale Şi Dezvoltare Locală" [Limanu. Social Spaces and Local Development]', *Societatea Reala*, 2005.
[121] Irina Costache, 'From the Party to the Beach Party:nudism and Artistic Expression in the People's Republic of Romania', in *Socialist Escapes: Breaking Away from Ideology and Everyday Routine in Eastern Europe, 1945-1989*, ed. by Cathleen M. Giustino, Catherine J. Plum, and Alexander Vari (Berghahn Books, 2013), pp. 126–42.

fun and nudism. Other times it actually fostered a process of collaboration, learning and mentoring between different generations, usually sharing the same preoccupation (writing, intellectual pursuits, academics, arts). This collaboration was usually forged in in Bucharest and continued after the summer. Generation was one of the most important dividing lines in the community of socialist nudists.

As the story of the 1950s group of vacationers and their leading character, poet Nina Cassian[122], will show, it was quite common that those who would colonize the southern strip of the Black Sea Coast in the summers actually were familiar with each other. Nudism was a group affaire – in the sense that most tourists would come in extended groups made up of families and friends and would occupy an entire peasant household. In addition, such groups would know each other prior to arriving in 2 Mai or at least there would always be some overlaps with acquaintances and friends, 2 Mai goers being part of the same social world of Bucharest or other Romanian university centers. In fact the social proximity also created out of the beaches in 2 Mai some sort of a private yet public space making undressing there a bit of a family affaire. One interviewee recalls that by the 1970s the fact that you "*would meet everyone you knew in Bucharest, but didn't visit in a while*"[123] or that "*you would find yourself among your own*"[124] was a motivation to return each summer.

[122] Nina Cassian, pen name of Ştefănescu Renee Annie (b.27th of November 1924, Galați – d. 14th of April 2014 New York), poet, translator and musician.
[123] Marina Spallas, 2 Mai and its artists, 2008, author's interview .
[124] Sofia Oprescu, 2 Mai memories, 2008, author's interview.

Going back to the story of the initial group of nudists who established 2 Mai as an alternative holiday spot, it must be said that their story does not fit the well-known scenario of communist dictatorships in which regular citizens resisted the pressures of coercive party politics in organized or unorganized fashion. On the contrary, it is a tale in which prominent supporters of the communist party and ideology tried to oppose the very system that they had eagerly and earnestly helped to create. Just like for other citizens however, their form of revolt did not take the form of an outspoken social protest; nor did it coagulate in a coherent political movement. They simply used the resources they had at hand to generate their own forms of expressions and life-styles in which nudism articulated with various searches for artistic creativity.

In a sense this project continues the idea of Maria Bucur in relation to the historiography of communism, namely that researchers of contemporary Romanian history need to open up the the concept of dissent and analyze it also from an embodied perspective. For Bucur, "*embodied dissent*" is a strategy to render visible women's experiences under communism, especially as they were the primary targets of a harsh pro-natalist policy during Ceausescu's time.[125] However if Bucur's undertaking is a restorative one in which reading women's unsafe abortions as political dissent is actually validating women living under communism as political subjects through their participation in anti-communist "dissent", this chapter takes the body and embodied dissent as its main locus of research not as a recuperative undertaking but because such a focus offers an analytical perspective more sensitive at the co-articulation of power and subjectivity.

[125] Bucur-Deckard, Maria, 'Gendering Dissent: Of Bodies and Minds, Survival and Opposition under Communism'.

Nudism, and the very activity of summering in the remoteness of 2 Mai, therefore, took the form of dissent in relation to the prevailing ideology, politics and body regimes of Romanian state socialism. Nudism was indeed a form of protest against the prudishness of the regime and against its increasing conservative, nationalist, authoritarian and why not anti-communist features, already palpable by late 1950s and reaching extremist forms by late 1980s. [126] Nudism in 2 Mai was a gesture of dissidence, in the primary sense of the term: organized from *within* the regime and articulated around communist and anti-fascist principles. However, in the prevailing anti-communist and revisionist atmosphere of post-communism such forms of opposition - embodied, artistic, from within and at the level of the everyday – have been obliterated by a focus on the "proper political oppositional acts" of a handful of official dissidents, mostly men.[127] The biographies that I trace in this section belong to people who had a much more nuanced relationship with the communist regime as well as with characters that have been considered so far more on the side of the oppressor or of the privileged rather then of the dissident. This collection of characters also figures more prominently in histories of Romanian literature or of Romania art histories. The 2 Mai aficionados are neither minor actors of history nor truly historical subjects yet their middle ground both in terms of class and access to power is perhaps richer in meanings and strategies of state-subject negotiations.

[126] Anti-communist here is a characterization that some of my informants made in relation to the existing regimes of Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej and Nicolae Ceaușescu whom they definied in opposition to their own ideas of communism. After the 1956 Hungarian uprising and more clearly after Ceaușescu's takeover, those initial supporters of communist ideals found themselves more at odds with the predicaments of real existing socialism.

[127] Bucur-Deckard, Maria, 'Gendering Dissent: Of Bodies and Minds, Survival and Opposition under Communism'.

This chapter therefore tells a different story by narrating the formation, development and sexual and bodily politics of this group of communist romantic dissidents. Ensuing generations imprinted the place with their own visions of nudism, freedom, and bohemian life, sometimes in small conflicts with this first generation that I discuss here. I trace their formation as "naked subjects", in the act of doing nudism on the beach itself and in relationship to the pervasive view of the state and its official disposition of things and bodies. Consequently, I place my discussion at the intersection between panopticism[128] (the total surveillance orchestrated by the state through the eyes of the Secret Police) and heterotopia (the non-hegemonic space, which according to Michael Foucault who coined the term, is neither here nor there, but is a place of complete otherness). [129] Nudism and other associated practices such as parties, different art practices (from painting, to writing and making music), joke telling and charades, drinking were enabled in the village of 2 Mai also due to its actual location. At the same time, the practices unfolding in 2 Mai, inscribed this topos as a significant one in the symbolic and political geography of communism. 2 Mai represented a "discontinuity", a "fold" in the neat structures and strictures of state socialist territory – a "nomadic geography".

The scope of juxtaposing panopticism and heterotopia as the antagonistic poles between which 2 Mai was formed and transformed by the activity of official power is to offer a different framing of the relationship between subjects and power during state socialism. An untold number of studies have maintained the opposition between the totalitarian power of the state and the everyday resistance of the people. While state power was

[128] Michel Foucault, 'Panopticism', in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), pp. 195–228.
[129] Michel Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', *Diacritics*, 16 (1986), 22–27.

constructed as an implacable, bounded and concrete block, resistance to power and its imposed uniformity was imagined emerging in its various fissures and cracks of state power. A cartography of such places consists of private spaces turned semipublic (most notoriously the kitchen), marginal (ized) institutions (such as the church, the shipyard), and other small acts of direct defiance of authority (long hair, hitchhiking, protest letters). These approaches necessarily relied on a dualism that framed the social world in terms of structure against agency and then tried to imagine various forms of their interplay.[130]

By contrast, my take is different: I favor a view that is sensible to the performative and constitutive dimensions of power, to its reiterative and citational character[131], enabling and disabling possibilities, concomitantly creating, repressing and foreclosing actions, subjects, bodies and social worlds and imaginations. Therefore, instead of simply positing a neat opposition between the regime and its naked opponents, I point out their intricate consubstantiality. The main mechanism that interests me here is the process of subject formation, "a naked subject" in this case unfolding under the interpelating gaze of the party.

Therefore, this chapter discusses not only the relationship between power and opposition during state socialism –especially the cultural and artistic forms the opposition might have taken – but also, more importantly, the process of subject formation inseparably

[130] The collection of essays amassed in volumes such as David Crowley and Susan E. Reid, *Socialist Spaces: Sites of Everyday Life in the Eastern Bloc* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2002).David Crowley and Susan E. Reid, *Pleasures in Socialism: Leisure and Luxury in the Eastern Bloc* (Northwestern University Press, 2010); Giustino, Plum and Vari.
[131] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, 1 edition (New York: Routledge, 2006), p.10-34.

interwoven into these interactions. Hence, it rematerializes the oppositional practices by looking at their embodied and gendered aspects. Therefore, the body gains centrality both as the locus on which power effects inscribe themselves and as the social effect of power itself. As both locus and effect, the body ceases to be a pre-discursive site of inscription, an organic and "natural" tabula rasa, but the effect of struggle that functions as the material base of subject formation.

Hence, the role of gazing appears salient, as the mechanism through which bodies become visible or are erased from legibility. The gaze of power enables certain bodies to appear –granting them legitimacy to be disclosed and displayed – while turning other bodies into dark spots and invisible shadows. Bodies are then not conditioned by their organic materiality, but perhaps more importantly, by imagination and projection since what renders bodies as such, what grants bodies their consistency as legitimate objects of being legible is an extremely unequal economy of vision. Bodies gain legibility only in accordance with the laws of power, only if they fit a normative view of what constitutes a body[132], and a body worth noticing.

This relationship appears with clarity in the case of 2 Mai since there the main act of the participants was to get naked in order to practice nudism. But while being nude in a setting in which nudism is considered appropriate should not pose any particular theoretical problems (especially in western contexts), it takes a different meaning in the socialist context of Romania since it directly confronts the normative gaze of the party. Then, the argument that I develop throughout this chapter is the following: the condition

[132] Crossely Nick, 'The Politics of the Gaze: Between Foucault and Merleau-Ponty', *Human Studies*, 16 (1993), 399–419.

of the nudists in 2 Mai, naked in front of power, on a first basic level, dovetail in fact the way in which people generally appear in front of, and are constituted by, power: as naked bodies, stripped of the social clothing. By becoming naked in the process of nudism, the nudists in 2 Mai were not simply engaging in a cultural practice directed against the prudishness of the regime, but more importantly, were making visible, the nature of the relationship between human life and political power.

At a second level, and this is where the category of sex intervenes, following Georges Bataille I argue that because of its transgressive character in relation to the official norms of the state, going to 2 Mai for nudism and intellectual discussions became an erotic activity in itself. Eroticism sprung not from the act of going nude on the beach –which as I will show below was a rather de-sexualized affair and highly guarded against sexual connotations – but from the very act of dissent. Going to 2 Mai became the equivalent of instituting a parallel "realm of senses" and a different social ontology centered on the body and its movements[133], at odds with the official dispositions. The profoundly conservative and prudish character of the Romanian state socialism I discussed in chapter 1 amplified this aspect. This allows me to discern a series of overlapping fantasies playing out on the beach in 2 Mai. First, the fantasy of the state in relation to the nudists – considered deviant and sexually promiscuous –therefore instituting an overall surveillance mechanism through the secret police officers and secret police informers that far from annulling the sexual character of their acts only served to increase it. Second, the fantasy of the nudists themselves enjoying the erotic character of transgression and the internalized gaze of the state in relation to which they appeared naked and deviant. This

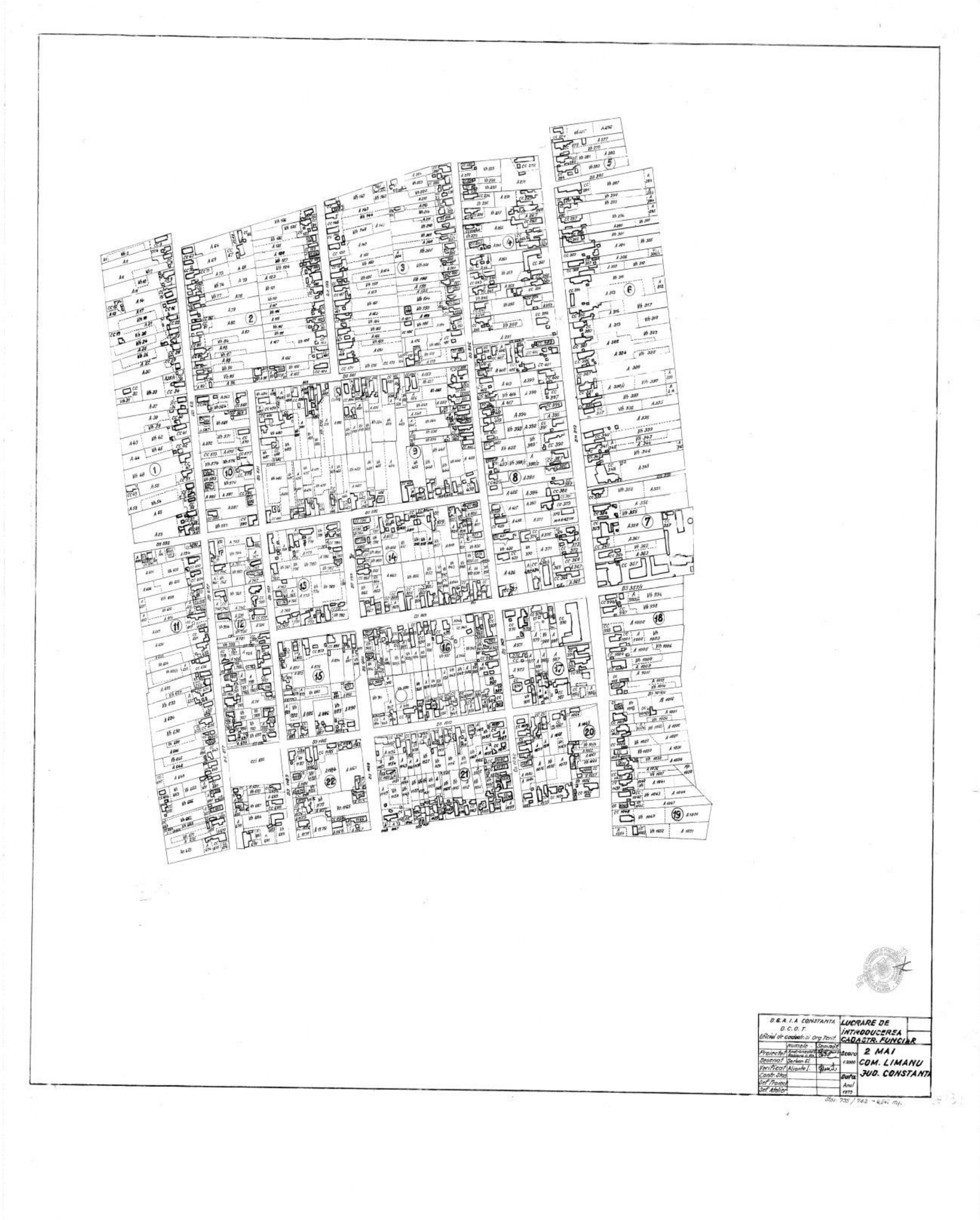
[133] Georges Bataille, *Erotism: Death & Sensuality* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1986).

fantasy engulfed both nudists who were in touch with the Securitate and informing on their fellow nudist travellers as well as those 2 Mai goers who were not informers, those who had refused to collaborate or those nudists whose actions were engaged in more oppositional practices. In short the fantasy of transgression erased categories of good nudists (and supposedly politically opposed to communist regime) and bad nudists (usually a category referring to those members of the community who were Securitate informers).

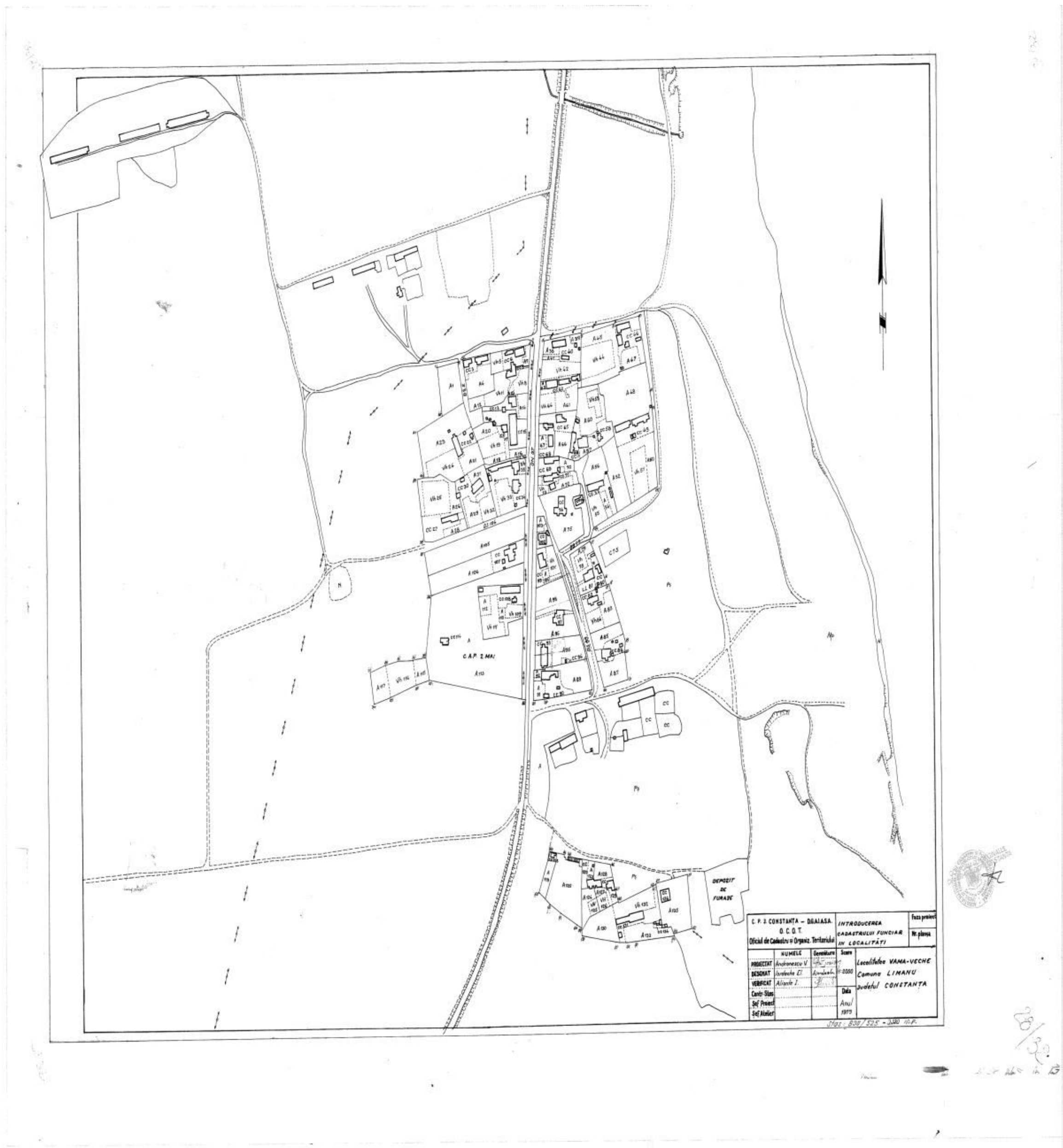
My story is thus placed at the intersection of various gazes and counter-gazes shaping and organizing bodies while modeling fantasies and erotic identifications. The chapter is organized in three parts: first, I introduce the main protagonists their background and the social context of their coming together, while pointing out their nudist routine. In the second section, I analyze the intersection between their practice and the gaze of the state, mediated by secret agents, as the main erotic mechanism for the formation of the "naked subject" of communism and for generating the overlapping fantasies. Finally, the last part deals with the libidinal curiosity that ensued after 1989 in relation to the nudists –which effectively meant the end of the practice itself – while pointing out the protagonists' nostalgia and melancholia in relation to their past practices.

Before introducing the main characters let me first set the stage and present the two villages that have formed the background of my research. Set on the southern tip of the Black sea coast, the two villages were very poor and the locals based their subsistence on agricultural work. In 1965, the census noted that 2 Mai had a stable population of 808 people living in 336 households while in Vama Veche there were only 32 households and under 100 inhabitants.[134] The size, limited access and meager resources led to the villages preserving a kind of an antiquarian and patriarchal features – small houses built of clay and painted in lime with generous back gardens covered in vine-leaves, households with chickens and vegetable gardens and the inevitable outhouse.

[134] A.N.I.C. Constanța, Dosar 495 Fond Primaria Limanu (Ani extremi 1940-1968)



Picture 1. Plan of 2 Mai, 1979



Picture 2. Map of Vama Veche, 1979.

Placed in a border zone and in the close proximity of a military port[135], the villages were not suited for mass tourism.[136] In the official documents of the mayor's office regarding the development and management of the places tourism was not considered as an option of development up until the early 1980s. In 1969, the main source of income for the inhabitants of the villages was agricultural work. To further stress the rather un-characteristic poverty in which the villagers dwelled at the end of the 1960s, the main issues on the local mayor's agenda in regards to the villages was the pressing need to rebuild the road linking Vama Veche and 2 Mai with the port of Mangalia (situated some 3-5 kilometers away) and to better manage school transportation as many of the youngsters in the villages were unschooled.

After 1969, the 2 Mai administration received investments in order to develop its shores for tourism with the view to organize a recreational basis for schoolchildren with the capacity of 105 places. Around the same time, another strategic investment was the opening of the first and only restaurant in the area, for many nudist goers the only alternative for buying alcohol and some food without having to walk three kilometers to the nearest town Mangalia.

[135] Consiliul de Stat, 'Lege nr.678/1969 Privind Regimul de Paza Al Frontierei de Stat Al Republicii Socialiste Romania' (Monitorul Oficial nr.106 din 7 Octombrie 1969) <http://www.lege-online.ro/[accessed 4 October 2014].

[136] In Vama Veche the number of households did not grow up until 1989; one of the specific provisions of Law 678/1969 was that access of foreign citizens into the border zone where the two villages are placed is prohibited. From numerous sources this provision was not fully implemented but nonetheless did provide strong grounds for state surveillance of the beaches.

Picture 3. Postcard from 2 Mai's Dobrogeanu's Restaurant, 1978.

Toward the end of the 1970s, the economic possibilities of the villagers diversified in that the majority of the working age population found work in the tourist industry. By the 1980s, in the stretch of land between Mangalia and 2 Mai, an industrial shipyard was opened, creating better working conditions for the villagers and destroying the serene landscape for the tourists. Despite the fact that tourism was not considered an important resource by state authorities, the villagers did understand its potential and expanded their households with extra-rooms so that they could accommodate more guests.[137] Moreover, some hosts also slowly began to cook and to offer accommodation. The "*backyard tourism*" implied that tourists would self-cater and would bring their own foodstuff. The peasants could provide just basic food such as fresh tomatoes, white cheese, eggs, fruits and every now and then some fish because it was state monopoly. This underdevelopment proved crucial for the development of the nudist community.

1. Becoming a decadent communist

The nudist community of 2 Mai that emerged in late 1950s comprised a number of well-established communist Party members most of whom were writers, artists or belonging to

[137] *Anii 80 Și Bucureștenii [The 1980s and the Bucharestians]*, ed. by Anghelescu, Serban et als. (Bucureşti: Paideia, 2003).

the larger category of cultural producers, chief among them, Nina Cassian, then a young poet, and her husband Alexandru. I. Ştefănescu (nicknamed Ali). They first traveled to 2 Mai with a permit obtained by their mutual friend and companion, Vasile Dumitrescu.[138] All three had been involved with the Romanian Communist Party's networks during the Second World War. They were all intellectuals committed to radical left-wing views who had embraced communism out of sheer conviction. For his beliefs Vasile Dumitrescu served three years in jail during the period of Romanian fascism. When the Communist Party fully took power in 1948, Dumitrescu was appointed head of the Romanian Press Agency (Ager Press), the regime's main propaganda institution. For his work and active involvement in the underground Communist Party during WWII, Ali Stefanescu was appointed to the post-Armistice commission in charge of purging Romanian publishing houses and libraries of fascist reminiscences.[139] By mid-1950s Ştefănescu was a novelist and publisher and an active party cadre working for the General Direction for Press and Printing, the institution in charge of cultural censorship until 1965[140].

Vasile Dumitrescu maintained close ties with the Party leadership throughout the internal party purges of the 1950s and early 1960s only to be placed in an honorary but politically irrelevant position as ambassador to Chile and Switzerland when Ceauşescu took power in 1965.

Nina Cassian, an emblematic figure of the informal nudist community, enjoyed a less powerful position in the Party, though she was no less of a true and dedicated communist.

[138] Author's interview with Nina Cassian (23 April 2009).

[139] The activity of the Censorship commission ended in 1948, for references to the biography of Ali Ştefănescu see Tismăneanu, Vladimir, Dorin Dobrincu and Cristian Vasile. pp. 309-311.

[140] Tismăneanu, Vladimir, Dorin Dobrincu and Cristian Vasile.

She became a member of the illegal Romanian Communist Party in 1941, at the age of sixteen, while still in high school. A student in a Jewish segregated school, she went through the public humiliations of anti-Semitic legislation adopted by the interwar fascist regime.[141] These experiences later fueled her quests for social justice, equality, and human dignity. She explains in a post communist interview: "*It was youthful idealism. Be careful, it was not the ideas that were terrible but the political regimes. That belief in communist ideals was beautiful and noble and to be honest I have never given up on it. Of course these principles have later turned into a shield for the lies of the most gruesome political regime. But to give up… to give up on what? To give up on the most beautiful thoughts, at the beautiful golden sphere of abolishing all hideous contradictions that we encounter on Earth, of hatred between races, classes, sexes and peoples, what for?*[142]

Together with her first husband, the Communist writer Vladimir Colin, Nina Cassian subscribed to the Antifascist resistance movement and joined the circles of the leftist intelligentsia of Bucharest getting politically from the age of sixteen. Her literary debut coincided with the Communist Party's takeover of Romania and managed to keep outside the cannons of Soviet style poetry[143] unlike her further works of the 1940s and 1950s[144].

[141]Nina Cassian, *Memoria ca Zestre [Memory as Dowery]*, III vols. (Bucureşti: Editura Institutului Cultural Român, 2004), p.40, Vol.I.
[142]Cassian, Nina, The utopia of communism, 2009.
[143] Cassian, Nina, *La Scara 1/1: Poeme* (Bucureşti: Forum, 1948).
[144] Cassian, Nina, *Sufletul Nostru [Our Soul]* (Bucureşti: Editura pentru Ştiinţă şi Artă a Uniunii Scriitorilor din Republica Populară Română, 1949).Cassian, Nina, *An Viu O Mie Nouă Sute Şaptesprezece [Enlivened Year Nineteenseventeen]* (Bucureşti: Editura pentru Ştiinţă şi Artă a Uniunii Scriitorilor din Republica Populară Română, 1949).

Nina Cassian was an outspoken person, determined in her comments and political views, talented and recognized as such in the Bucharest literary world, charming, smart and chic yet with an awkward looking heart-shaped face– in a literary critic words " *the most appealing ugly woman of Romanian literature*".[145] Her artistic views, coupled with her own ideas about communist political activism, often conflicted with the official party politics. The dullness and narrow doctrinary Thus, she failed to occupy a more prominent position in both the hierarchy of the Communist Party and the Romanian Writer's Union. "*The lack of confidence of Party activists, of those who do not know me and who do not wish to know me and for whom the reputation of my intelligence was rather a symptom of rebellion rather then a trait useful for the cause, has always dominated my life and career and continues to do so"*, she noted in 1965.[146] Her lesser status in the Party bureaucracy, however, enabled her to adopt a particularly critical position from which she could denounce various contradictions and inconsistencies in the official ideology. Her romance with socialism in Romania came to a definitive end in 1986 when she immigrated to the United States and settled in New York, where over the course of a decade she switched to English-writing and continued to publish poetry.[147] The poet died aged 89, in New York, in April 2014, just as I was preparing to submit this dissertation[148].

[145] Stefanescu, Alex., *Istoria Literaturii Române Contemporane 1941-2000 [The History of Romanina Contemporary Literature 1941-2000]* (Bucureşti: Masina de Scris, 2005).
[146] Cassian, Nina, *Memoria ca Zestre [Memory as Dowery]*.
[147] Cassian, Nina, *Memoria ca Zestre [Memory as Dowery]*. p 225-286.
[148] 'Nina Cassian, Romanian Poet Exiled for Skewering Regime, Dies at 89 - NYTimes.com' <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/18/arts/nina-cassian-exiled-romanian-poet-dies-at-89.html?_r=0> [accessed 5 August 2014].

Beginning in 1955, many of Nina Cassian's fellow comrades, also from Bucharest and making a living in the writing profession and party politics, took the bumpy road to the May 2 nudist beach. For some, the charm and spirit of Cassian were sufficient for setting up summer residence in this remote village. Yet, for the majority of the early campers the main attraction of the village laid in its secluded beaches, which offered the prospect of enjoying a quiet and tranquil getaway from the party routine. For example, in 1958, poet Eugen Jebeleanu and painter Florica Cordescu, also joined the nudist group. Jebeleanu was one of the well-known figures of the post-war left generation of writers whose creative investments were equally distributed between politics and art. He was known as a declared pacifist and anti-fascist author, and his poetry described the horrors of the war.[149]

Ştefan Augustin Doinaş also a highly praised writer and important figure of the establishment, often spent time there with his wife, Irinel Liciu, a well known first ballerina at the Bucharest Opera. Liciu quickly became popular in the community due to her naked moonlight performances, inspired by Mary Wigman's work, while the poet Gheorghe Tomozei expressed his love for her and her beauty in his epigrams.[150] Pavel Câmpeanu, who had served a prison sentence for his communist affiliations during the Second World War and who was recognized as a prominent Marxist sociologist, followed suit, also spending his summers at 2 Mai.[151] After Ceauşescu took power in Romania in 1965 he became one of his outspoken critics on Marxist-Leninist grounds. Later he

[149] Jebeleanu, Eugen, *Ceea Ce Nu Uita [What Cannot Be Forgotten]* (Bucureşti: Fundația Regele Mihai I, 1945).
[150] Cassian, Nina, 'The Utopia of Communism'.
[151] Vera Cîmpeanu daughter of Pavel Cîmpeanu), 2 Mai in my 20s, 2008, author's interview.

became famous both in the West and at home for his socio-phenomenological analysis of life under late-socialism.[152]

Belonging to a younger generation, Ana- Maria Smighelschi[153] and the Șetran couple, all three of them painters and in laws, were very much part of the community. For them, practicing nudism on the beaches of 2 Mai was only the continuation of their life in Bucharest as well as part of their pedagogy for a life without inhibitions and bodily self-consciousness.

Another character of the 2 Mai art scene was for a short while Andrei Cădere. Born in 1934, Cădere was the renegade son of a high-ranking Romanian Army general and a self-taught artist. He lacked the artistic success and the strong ties with the Party the other nudists had. He never exhibited in a proper Romanian art institution, even though his work was well known in the underground artistic circles of the 1950s and 1960s. Instead, his official debut took place with a mock exhibition put up in the nudist village in protest to the rules of the official system. While walking around nude on the sandy beach, he noticed the marks trailing behind him: footsteps, discontinuous lines, and sharp points. This discovery prompted the artist to engage in a series of pen and ink drawings aiming to capture the pathways of his fellow nudists strolling in the village. At the end of that busy summer, the community members were invited to attend Cadere's exhibition, which was designed to mock the artistic establishment. The small room of a peasant house, with low ceilings and small windows, was chosen as the temporary art gallery, with the

[152] See two of his books Cîmpeanu, Pavel, *The Origins Of Stalinism: From Leninist Revolution To Stalinist Society* (London: E M Sharpe, 1989).Câmpeanu.
[153] Anamaria Smighelschi, *Gustul, Mirosul Si Amintirea [The Taste, the Smell, the Memory]* (Bucureşti: Humanitas, 2013).Ana-Maria Smighelschi, 2008, author's interview.

drawings pinned to old woven clothes. The guests had to put on their best outfits and give up nudism for a few hours. These art critics gave their positive verdicts even before the show had started, while deep-fried fish and vodka were served at its conclusion.[154]

The 2 Mai vacationers were in the position to engage in such playful acts since, to various degrees, they were internal to the power structure of Romanian communism. This was then a group that emerged from the Romanian communist nomenklatura at odds with the overall direction of the party after the 1952 purge of Ana Pauker and, especially after the 1956 Soviet invasion of Hungary, which the Romanian communist party actively supported.[155] This was then a movement against the nationalism, anti-Semitism, and conservatism of the Party, abandoning its initial ideals and goals. The opposition sprung from disenchantment and disillusionment with the course the Party took and at the same time carried the melancholy of a better world premised upon the ideology of communism. From this perspective, 2 Mai became a heterotopic space, the Black Sea retreat where these goals could at least still be kept alive, entertained as a possibility, where "the desire for desire" of a better world, for revolution, was still present.

Michael Foucault described heterotopia as a non-hegemonic space. Also, for Foucault, a heterotopic space is a space populated by undesirable bodies, bodies that are excluded from the "normal" spaces in order to construct the utopia. The classic example here is the prison, which is a heterotopic space in so far as it contains the societal unwanted

[154] Pamfil, Francois, 'Despre Andrei Cădere', *Revista Arta* (București, 1993).*Andre Cadere/Andrei Cadere*, ed. by Radu, Magda (Bucureşti: MNAC si Editura UNARTE, 2011).
[155]Deletant, *Communist Terror in Romania, p.84-90*.

others.[156] This ambiguity is also present in the case of 2 Mai: on the one hand the nudists through their activity were trying to enact their own communist utopia, the one the party was unable to create and, even more, abandoned it. On the other hand, from the perspective of the state, the nudists were deviant bodies, or at least bodies engaged in deviant, un-socialist activity. They had to be kept at a distance, even purged, in order for the society to realize the utopia of the New Man.

Therefore, the practice of nudism this group engaged in also added to its liminality within state socialism.[157] Nudism was at odds with the official morals the regime was trying to implement, which depicted nudism and non-therapeutical sunbathing as bourgeois fiddling activities, generated by laziness. The fixation with work and building socialism – visible in the widespread state-sanctioned representations of (usually) male workers' bodies but also in the everyday newspapers and calls for mobilization – that the regime was promoting in all spheres of life, from labor to leisure– stood in deep contrast with the activities of the nudists. [158] In this context, the nudists of 2 Mai appeared as decadents, as transgressors of the Party-imposed order of things. Nudism was thus in contradiction with the productive logic of the regime but also with its bodily expectations: nudism was not simply an (deviant) activity, but also a way of relating to one's body, or, to use Foucault's terminology, nudism was indicative of a particular "care of the self".

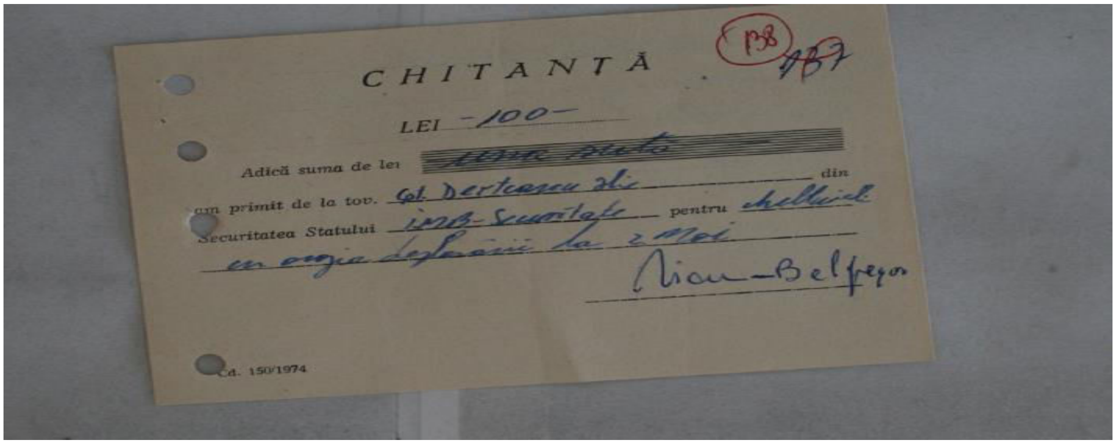
[156] Foucault.
[157] Turner, Victor, 'Liminality and Communitas', in *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (New Brunswick, N. J: Aldine Transaction Press, 2008).
[158] For a description of the work obsessed socialist petit bourgeoisie ideology Tamas, Gaspar Micklos, *Postfascism Și Anticomunism* (Cluj: Tact, 2014).

In her diary, Nina Cassian described her daily routines in the village, including how she swam and sun-bathed naked along with her lifelong lovers Ali and Vasile. Portraying themselves as the "high class" [*lumea bună*] of intellectuals, artists and writers, the campers in 2 Mai structured their holiday time there according to a clear program.[159] Daytime was reserved for nude sunbathing while painting, writing or reading, according to one's interests. Early risers or late comers would either spend time in solitude or join groups of nudists for small talk and jokes, games of cards or reading sessions. Some would perform their usual gymnastics, swim in the nude as the best part of the experience. Morning and afternoons seemed to flow from one into the other and sometimes people would retire to spend the heat hours in their vine-covered gardens. Nighttime was devoted to group activities such as parties, card games, word games, mime and intellectual debates.[160] The secret police archive accurately recorded (through microphones placed in the rooms) the activities of the nudists, such as rewriting the national anthem in a humorous and critical way or doing free associations on socialist commercials[161].

[159] Another source for gathering info about the daily routines of 2 Mai holiday goers are the records of the former Secret Police. For example, the Securitate file of Nina Cassian's offers the following information " *"[...]the source informs that the writer Nina Cassian comes to 2 Mai every summer for a month and a half and resides in a rented room at Grigorie Agafia. Nina Cassian comes together with her husband Mr. Stefanescu. The husband spends 2-3 days with her and then leaves back for Bucharest because the marine climate is not good for his health. During her stay, Nina Cassian receives many visits from young people, older people and foreign citizens oftentimes throwing long parties in the courtyard. Usually her daily schedule is the following: she sleeps up until 11-12, then she goes to the beach, she returns home in the afternoon and after that she is busy with visits and then Nina Cassian parties up until dawn*." CNSAS Archive, File 'I 256690', Vol.I. , p. 198.

[160] Less detailed information but still a good evocation of night parties can be also found in one of Nina Cassian's close friend, Gheorghe Ursu see CNSAS Archive, Penal Stacks [Fond Penal], 'FP 66142 Ursu Gheorghe Emil', Vol I, p. 20-21. The late night garden parties are also mentioned in a number of autobiographical writings by local intellectuals. 2 Mai and its nightlife is often compared to oasis of fresh air and sanity. Luca Pitu, *Insemnarile Magistrului Din Cajvana* (Nemira, 2005), p.80-94.

[161] CNSAS Archive, 'I 256690 Nina Cassian', Volume II, p.22.



CHITANȚĂ

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LEI -100-

Adică suma de lei [redacted]

am primit de la tov. Col. [illegible] din Securitatea Statului IMB-Securitate pentru cheltuieli cu ocazia deplasării la 2 Mai

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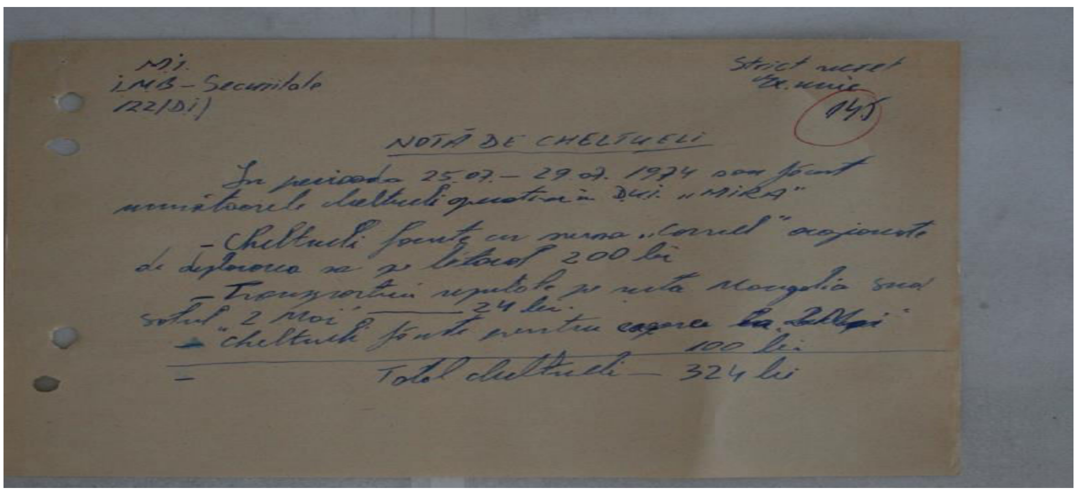

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NOTĂ DE CHELTUIELI

În perioada 25.07.–29.07.1974 am făcut următoarele cheltuieli operative în D.U.I. „MIRA"

– Cheltuieli făcute cu sursa „Cornel" [illegible] 200 lei

– Transportul [illegible] 2 Mai" 24 lei

– "cheltuieli făcute pentru [illegible]" 100 lei

– Total cheltuieli – 324 lei

Picture 4-5. Copies Nina Cassian's Securitate File. Invoices for expenses of Securitate agents in 2 Mai.

From its inception, nudism practiced in 2 Mai articulated with an ethos of an alternative socialist cultural elite, willing to stand by its own values in order to ascertain its autonomy from state organized politics. Consequently, the nudist location and the nudist practice itself were designed as sites where a host of poets, actors, musicians, writers, and intellectuals enacted their distance from state politics and difference from the working masses. This difference was expressed through their self-perception of cultural creators trying to establish an autonomy from the uniformity of party directives while on the other hand also differencing them from the domain of common labor where the self-identification with a job was less dominant. This is why the body, and the activities in which the body was central, became the main forms of expression of this group and not the typical forms of dissidence, such as writing pamphlets or engaging in direct political work. The focus on the body dovetailed a different way of being in the world, a radical alterity in which life and artistic creation were intertwined and embodied.

In short, they proposed a vision of being different while being indifferent to the official ebb and flows of politics. These activities reflected in unambiguous terms the social position of the community of nudists within the post-war Romanian society. It is important to clarify these aspects because they explain both the emergence of this group and the form its criticism of the regime took. It also illuminates the general course of the Romanian Communist Party and its solidification into a power bloc in the process of assuming and exercising state power after 1947.

2. From Nudism to Eroticism

The formation of the naked subjects

Nina Cassian's account of her experiences in the 2 Mai community raises the important issue of eroticism and sexuality undergirding the nudist practice. Clark's seminal work "*The Nude: A Study of Ideal Art*" set the canonical opposition between the female nude, as an ideal Aristotelian form and the naked – a depiction of the body not entirely or properly contained by culture and by artistic techniques.[162] In short, nakedness is just simple, brutal "matter" as opposed to the ideal, artistic "form" of the nude. Put differently, the nude is art in as much as it manages to contain, to tame and translate the erotic content of bare feminine nakedness for an implied masculine viewer.[163] While no representation of nakedness can be conceived without its erotic double, this eroticism however should appeal to the intellect, to the higher senses. The naked body is the starting point of the nude, but art and artistic vision transposes the rawness of flesh into an ideal form. To put it in a different manner, in this view the nude is "culture", while nakedness is pure "nature". Furthermore, this polarity seems to reproduce the wider mind/body split of the Western philosophy that relegated the body (because imbued with feminine characteristics) to a lower status.[164]

In this view, nudism is a case in point of non-sexual nakedness, or abstract eroticism deprived of its sexual bases. It is perhaps easy to dismiss Clark's view[165] as a clear-cut sign of European prudishness and hegemonic repression of nature and bodies. But while Clark pinpointed to art as a form of desexualizing the naked body in order to render it bearable[166], what is really at stake to grasp are the other, more subtle and pervasive social mechanisms through which the social nude is created.

[162] Clark.
[163] Nead, p.40-64.
[164] Susan Bordo, *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body,* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2004), Introduction: Feminism, Western Culture and the Body, p.1-45.
[165] Clark.
[166] Clark.

Elisabeth Grosz elaborated a more intricate taxonomy of delineating the ways in which nakedness is rendered legitimate, while taking into account the gaze of others, an aspect missing from Clark's model.[167] She suggested three frames or contexts in which a naked body is legitimately gazed at by others: 1) within the context of power relations such as parent/child; doctor/patient etc.; 2) within the boundaries of lovers' intimate actions and contexts; 3) when nakedness is turned into nudity through representation (Clarks' point) and 4) the (physical) spaces in which nakedness is shared for practical or pleasurable purposes in ways which are ostensibly meant to be non-sexual, such as the locker-room showers, performance street art, nudist beaches, protests etc. What seems salient for the social construction of nudity (the forth category above) is that the social spaces in which it occurs are heavily policed by written and unwritten codes of behavior aimed to ensure that nakedness and the gaze of others upon it remain strictly separated from sexuality[168]. This task becomes even more problematic in the case of the nudist community of 2 Mai since it lacked any of the formal rules characteristics of nudist communities with an explicit reformist agenda[169], but was premised upon casual leisure time and sophisticated intellectual debates.

Being an artist and a poet, and being surrounded by people with similar interests, the entire nudist interaction was imbued with creative and expressive impulses. Thus, the joy of gazing at the other and being gazed at back entailed a concomitant discovery of one's body and one's self. Nina Cassian remembers that before attending the nudist community

[167] Grosz, Elizabeth, 'Naked', in *Impossible Presence: Surface and Screen in the Photogenic Era*, ed. by Smith, Terry (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 2001), pp. 209–23.
[168] Grosz, Elizabeth.Cover Rob, 'The Naked Subject: Nudity, Context and Sexualization in Contemporary Culture', *Body and Society*, 9 (2003), 53 –72.
[169] Like in the case of the German naturist/nudist movement see Hau.Williams.McLellan Josie.

her poetry was dry, politically committed yet not poetical. Her experiences there, and the gradual, playful and mutual discovery of her body and her lovers' bodies under a perpetual exchange of erotic glances, radically transformed her poetry and revived her inner voice. In her first year in 2 Mai in 1957, she wrote a new volume of poetry, marking her break from socialist realism and returned to a modernist abstract poetical language. For the following 30 summers she continued to be most productive in this nudist village. Without a doubt, she insists, the intellectual and bodily catharsis lived in the nudist community entailed a profound and long-lasting transformation in her writing.[170]

Therefore, the nudist, erotic and pleasurable experiences of the body were indistinguishable from poetic creation and from the political engagement conducted through this medium. There is something even more challenging in Cassian's account of mixing bodily pleasures with aesthetic discoveries and purposes. The aesthetic discourse of the nudist community was employed as a criticism of the state and of the Communist Party. Thus, nudism was constructed as an aesthetic activity, unfolding at the margins of the state within and against its authoritative, de-sexualized and repressive discourse. In other words the overlapping of aesthetic creation with bodily eroticization and pleasure can be regarded as an instance in which nudism operated a sexualization of the aesthetic discourse itself. To put it differently, the very iteration of the aesthetic discourse as a ground for de-politicisizing and de-sexualizing the nudist practice ("*we weren't doing anything special in 2 Mai*") led to the politization and sexualization of the aesthetic discourse.

[170] Cassian, Nina, 'The Utopia of Communism'.

Moreover, the aesthetic discourse against party politics and its overall direction became imbued with erotic sub-tones. In *Erotism: death and sensuality*, Bataille wrote that interdiction reveals itself fully in transgression: we become aware of the interdiction only by transgressing it. This is how for Bataille eroticism (in opposition to pure mechanical reproduction) appears: through the transgression of an interdiction[171]. To follow Bataille, desire is constituted by the very existence of the limitation: the desire appears as the desire for transgression.

Therefore, in the case of 2 Mai community of nudists, eroticism did not necessarily appear from the nudist everyday interaction on the beach. Eroticism was not a function of seeing someone's naked body or of being seen naked by another nudists. As many of my interviewees recalled "*naked people on the beach acted as if they were clothed.*"[172] For example they followed the polite etiquette of introductions and even if naked a "true gentlemen" [un domn adevarat] would bend and kiss a woman's hand when introduced even though the lady herself would be naked[173]. This is does not mean however that the interactions between the nudists lacked a sexual content, with flirts, gossips, hetero and homosexual affairs being present, as Nina Cassian noted in her diary[174] and the secret police officers recorded in their files.

[171] Bataille.
[172] Marina Spallas.
[173] Marina Spallas.
[174] Cassian, Nina, *Memoria ca Zestre [Memory as Dowery]*.

Rather, the overt sexualization and transgressive character of nudism was manifested in relation to official state politics and accepted norms of bodily dispositions and artistic practices. Therefore, the very act of going to 2 Mai, of being part of this community –of which nudism was only one component – was in itself an erotic activity. It meant indulging in the pleasures of transgression, of being different and of being at odds with the prevailing norms of behavior, morality and body politics. Instead of taking the recognizable form of organized oppositional politics, the political expression of this group took an embodied and emotional form, offering sensuous and titillating interactions in a regime of sexual repression and prudishness. 2 Mai became them a heterotopic place of overall eroticism: an eroticism not strictly confined to the sphere of direct sexuality, but more subversively, one that functioned as an implicit matrix imbuing all activities and interactions of the participants.

I believe that this implicit erotic matrix undergirding the experience of the decadent communists in 2 Mai accounts for the sexual fantasy developed in relation to nudism as well as to its connected leisure time activities. 2 Mai was imagined by non-participants (including village hosts) and by Securitate officers as part of decadent sexual activities, rituals and excesses. To invoke Bataille again, because of the mechanism of transgressing an interdiction, pleasure becomes inseparable from mystery, from the unknown and the hidden. [175] The entire activity of the nudist in 2 Mai became then imbued by an aura of secrecy and mystery, a veil behind which presumably all sorts of sexual activities unfolded. But in fact, this veil of mystery was in fact a screen: the screen on which

[175] Bataille.

fantasies were projected. One such fantasy constructed the 2 Mai nudists as sinful, as violating and transgressing the accepted, "normal" morality of bodily practices.

Nakedness and Sin: the meeting point between state socialism and Christianity

Since nakedness is always nakedness in relation to a gaze, to another one looking, what are the ways in which nakedness and subjectivity intersect? The analysis of the particular cultural contexts in which the performative (naked) body unfolds cannot be separated from a theory of subject interpellation. In other words, the norms and contexts that rendered nudism in 2 Mai legitimate functioned at the very same time as forms of subject interpellation; nudism was not only a form of leisure time, but also one of subject constitution. How does then nakedness and nudity appear and are constituted in relation to the gaze? Whose gaze is gazing at the nudists sunbathing in 2 Mai? And, finally, what were the salient features of the nudist embodiment in relation to one's sex, one's desires one's sexual imaginary?

Historically, the naked body appeared not only as a radical form of impossibility, of inconceivability, but also as a distortion, an aberation compared to the "normal" state of clothing.[176] Nudity and clothing are thus in a dialectical opposition. This distinction has a very long tradition in the Judeo-Christian Western context. Most accounts that deal with the relationship between body and nakedness take as an inevitable starting point the biblical story of Adam and Eve.[177] It is perhaps worth remembering that the kernel of the story lies in the fact that the nakedness of the two was regarded as "natural", as legitimate before the Fall, before committing the sin, and as shameful, as a stain that needs to be

[176]Barcan.Perniola Mario, II.
[177]Giorgio Agamben, *Nudities* (Stanford University Press, 2011). p.55-91.

covered and erased, after the Fall. In other words, nakedness, in this tradition, is the indelible sign of the major sin while the symbolic order is premised upon its constant successful obliteration. Furthermore, what is to be retained from this mythical story is that in the Christian tradition nakedness refers to the full visibility of the feminine markers of a sexed body, also imbued with dialectical meanings ranging from fertile reproduction, to full decadence, decay and lust.[178]

Erik Peterson, quoted by Agamben, wrote that nudity, as a human experience imbued with meaning appears only after sin. In the state of grace, before Adam and Eve have sinned, the primordial couple wore no clothes. Nudity is then not a state but a relationship with God: nudity becomes visible, recognizable only when the couple is deemed sinful. Basically, Peterson argues that nudity, naked corporeality and sexuality become noticeable only after the Fall because before that, Adam and Eve, while not clothed, were in fact veiled: they were covered by the divine grace. As it were, they were not naked but clad in divine grace. The fall into sin appears then as a denudation: the stripping of this divine grace that simply renders the body naked. This is how sin and shame become associated: shame is the acknowledgment of this nakedness, the absence of divine grace. Drawing from the writings of political theology, Agamben argues that, the problem of nudity is therefore the problem of human nature in relationship to grace, which, transposed in the a non-theological context, entails in fact the relationship between the body and the gaze of power[179]: "*nudity can never satiate the gaze to which it is offered. The gaze avidly continues to search for nudity, even when the smallest piece of clothing*

[178] Cunningham.
[179] Agamben.p.60.

has been removed, even when all parts that were hidden have been exhibited in barefaced manner".[180]

In the case of nudism practiced during state socialist there is a direct link between transgression and sin: the communist set of interdictions mirrored the religious structure of sin. State socialist sexuality was in fact the state articulation of a peasant and Christian morality, elevated to the official doctrine of the Party.[181] It had little to do with the initial set of permissive sexual doctrines elaborated by revolutionary socialists and was in fact premised upon local histories and sensibilities.[182] In this context, it is of little surprise that nudity and nakedness were associated with shame: a central category in the peasant moral universe undergirded by religious beliefs. As Agamben noted, what is proper to Christian theology is the nostalgia for the nudity without shame: for the state of grace before the Fall.[183] The impossibility of being nude without blushing appears in the Gospel and in other religious texts. Shame is then the earthly reflection of the original sin, and the constant reminder of the original act of transgressing God's will. Therefore, nudists in 2 Mai were simply engaging in a sinful act: transgressing both old religious interdictions and the officially sanctioned state socialist disposition of bodies. They were shameful. And in so being, their acts were strictly connected to sexuality.

[180] Agamben.p. 66.
[181] On this point Kligman.p. 136.
[182] For an illustration of how progressive social theories underwent a transformation towards more conservative readings of human sexuality in Soviet Russia during the 1920-1930s see Frances Lee Bernstein, *The Dictatorship of Sex: Lifestyle Advice for the Soviet Masses* (Northern Illinois University Press, 2007).
[183] Agamben.

Thus, the question that arises here concerns the infra-level mechanisms of power that regulate and police the separation of nakedness from sexuality within the nudist community. But, since the micro-powers cultivate not only the bodies on display, their attributes and abilities of movement, but also the legitimate array of gazes upon that bodies, the paradox is that being a site which heavily polices against sexuality and the erotic gaze, it inevitably becomes a highly sexual site, requiring further and harsher policing. Put differently, the policing against the sexuality inherent to nakedness is never complete, never fully accomplished. Thus, the relationship between nakedness and its societal "mediations" requires in effect a theory of the proliferating effects of power.

The voyeuristic gaze of the Party

Foucault emphasized how disciplining power mechanisms themselves set in motion a wild proliferation of what they endeavor to suppress, regulate and discipline. For example, the very repression of sexuality gives rise to new forms of sexual pleasures and so on, in a circular movement of power.[184] Thus, the Foucauldian argument seems to be that power mechanisms open up the space for their own inefficacity, in so far as they generate a surplus in their object. Thus, what effectively eludes the grasp of power is not an illusory, external outside, but rather the "obscene", aberrant, disquieting supplement, excess, that sustains power's operation. Consequently, what is at stake to see, is that the very action of power that tries to separate nakedness from sexuality by translating it into legitimate nudity (a form of leisure time, an intellectual, bohemian caprice, etc.) generates, at the very same time, the impossibility of this separation: nakedness will

[184] Zizek, p.120.

always remain sexualized, which in turn will require further forms of power interventions and subsequent mediations.

The very interdictions posed by the regime, as well as the act of allowing 2 Mai to exist in the first place, dovetail that the regime created the very conditions of possibility for the group of naked dissidents to emerge. This was amplified by the constant surveillance the state deployed in relation to the nudists, especially through the eyes of the secret police officers and the numerous secret police informers tasked to monitor the members of 2 Mai and later Vama Veche communities. Therefore, while officially the regime adopted a prudish and conservative stance, it in fact behaved like a "peeping Tom": constantly monitoring the naked bodies of the nudists. This rendered the regime scopophilic and voyeuristic, taking pleasure in looking at naked bodies.

As such, the nudists in 2 Mai rendered visible the pervert gaze of the Party. By going nude, the group of nudists offered the basic principle of transgression: it rendered visible the pervert gaze of the party, its erotic and phallocentric character. In this sense, the practice of nudism in 2 Mai was truly subversive: instead of actively counterpoising an alternative to the party system, by the very act of going nude in a nudist camp, therefore in a completely de-eroticized way, the nudists rendered visible the lusting gaze of the party, its deeply pervert core. While officially acting prudish, conservative and moralizing, this attitude could only be sustained by a deeply obscene level at the heart of the official power.

But what role does this gaze of the party play for the nudists? I mentioned at the beginning that this group of nudists comprised people disenchanted with the subsequent trajectory of communism, clinging back in different forms and to various degrees, to an original relationship with the ideals of communism. Their transgression was premised upon this disenchantment. But at the root of this disenchantment, as well as the starting point of their nudism and alternative cultural activities, was a form of narcissism. Narcissism is the fantasy of initial unity, the dyadic relationship between the mother and the child. What breaks this relationship is, the authority figure of the father, symbolizing the law and the consistency of the symbolic order.[185] In fact, most of the nudists in 2 Mai had a similar complaint: the Party –this authoritative figure- was the one that brought to an end their initial relationship with communism. The Party acted as an intrusive figure, breaking the unity between self and communism (standing in for the maternal figure). As such, they had to enter the symbolic order of institutionalized communism, of the state building process. Under fear of castration (the equivalent of purges in communism) they had to give up the maternal body and accept the symbolic laws of the father. As Elisabeth Bronfen wrote:

> *Accepting the paternal gaze, the paternal metaphor, as a prohibition of the mother and as a substitute for her gaze (which had transmitted an ambivalent form of plenitude) allows the subject to attain a new, different kind of stability. The authority coterminous with the forbidding gaze of the father renders an inconsistent universe consistent. The imaginary image of the body of plenitude is replaced by an acceptance of the split within the*

[185] Dany Nobus, *Key Concepts of Lacanian Theory* (New York: Other Press, 1998), p.89.

> *subject, fantasies of complete satisfaction are deferred, boundaries are drawn between body and image, thoughts and their realization. Culture thus comes to mean displacing fantasies of destruction, plenitude and completion into the realm of signs.*[186]

This is the interpellating gaze of the Party. Nudism appears then as a rebellion against the Father/Party carrying the nostalgia of the initial unity and the desire for plenitude. This is why the contestation against the party took "naturistic" forms: not only nudism, but also yoga and other forms of going back to "nature" that I discuss throughout this dissertation. They all carried the melancholy of the maternal embrace.

But the authoritative gaze of the Father is not only sexual in nature, but also violent, since it is the Father who can instill punishment when the law is not followed. This tension (between the erotic dimension of the gaze and its police undertone) also structures the way in which the Party gazes at the nudists. On the one hand, the gaze of the party, peeping at the nudists, eroticizes the entire interaction. Most of the nudists I interviewed remembered that they always felt observed by some secret, hidden "eyes" of the state. They knew that they were under constant surveillance even though they could not point to any empirical evidence, or to the person(s) doing the gazing. Just like in the panopticon, the efficacy of the gazing resided in the very possibility for it to occur, not in its actual, or constant, manifestation. The gaze becomes in this way internalized, constitutive of the subject's sense of self.

[186] Elizabeth Bronfen, 'Killing Gazes, Killing in the Gaze: On Michael Powell's Peeping Tom', in *Gaze and Voice as Love Objects*, ed. by Renata Salecl and Slavoj Zizek (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), pp. 59–90, quote from p.75 .

From this perspective, the nudists in 2 Mai were psychotics, indeed "not normal": "*usually, psychosis is conceived as a form of lack with reference to the "normal" state of things. In psychosis, something is missing, the key signifier (the "paternal metaphor") is rejected, foreclosed, excluded from the symbolic universe and thence returns in the real in the guise of psychotic apparitions*".[187] This is what makes the nudists dangerous to the power edifice, but also makes them hard to be recuperated by the liberal anti-communist establishment after 1989. By openly confronting the gaze of the Father/Party, by exposing its pervert core and contradictory nature, the nudists rendered visible what Lacan calls "the Other of the Other": the fiction that offers the illusion of power's consistency, the metanarrative level that guarantees the symbolic order. Nudists basically showed that there is no power behind power, no secret agency, no real watchman in the panopticon, but what lies there is power's own fetishistic desires and pervert obsessions.

This is why the nudists do not fit neatly into the liberal paradigm that opposes power and resistance in totalitarian states. The nudists do not simply account for the overall surveillance engineered by the state in relation to its citizens, the classical (and misplaced) Orwellian analysis. Simply put, the nudists did not interrogate the Big Brother (the agency of surveillance, the embodiment of the totalitarian state) but the big Other (the structure of power as such, its constitutive functioning). Therefore, they revealed not the secret powers operating behind the official level of power (best encapsulated by the myth of the secret police considered to be really in charge of everything), but the secrets of power itself, its disavowed scopophilic and pervert dimensions.

[187] Zizek, Slavoj, '"I Hear You with My Eyes"; Or, The Invisible Master', in *Gaze and Voice as Love Objects*, ed. by Renata Salecl and Slavoj Zizek (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), pp. 90–129.

Nakedness

While nudism entails the display of genitalia on the beach (and other body parts), it is the gaze of the party that acts as a phallus in the scene, eroticizing the interactions and acting as the Law. It is this very assertion of the phallus –of the masculine power and desire for power – is what genders the entire setting of nudism, separating between genders and calling for the need to keep at bay the sexuality that could potentially emerge from gazing at the opposite sex. As it were, the very display of sex seems to instantly elicit the heterosexual matrix of the gender regime that associates display and gazing of the opposite sex with arousal and sexual fantasy.

As Butler noted, the compulsory order of sex-gender defines sexuality as natural only when desire and attraction are directed towards the opposite other (the "gender-which-one-is-not").[188] In this heteronormative matrix, the nudist community becomes eroticized in a normative way since it necessarily implies that it is a place where male gazes look upon women bodies while, at the very same time, eroticism is fully denied and obliterated by references to banal, neutral activities (playing cards, talking intellectual stuff etc.). While the nudist camp is policed (by implicit rules of behavior, mediations through apparent banal activities etc.) in order to construe the naked body and the gazes in relation to it as strictly non-sexual and thus to render nakedness a legitimate nudist activity, a second, more subtle and pervasive level of power relations is also discernable: the full-blown hetero-sexualization of bodies and gazes that inscribe the participants in a

[188] Butler, *Gender Trouble, Chapter 2, p 47-89*.

pervasive heterosexual matrix with its subsequent, entrenched power relations, discriminations and dominations. This occurs, of course, simultaneously with the exclusion of other bodies and other forms of sexuality.

The relationship between sex, gender and subject formation is then crucial here. Judith Butler argued that "sex" itself should not be simply regarded as the pre-discursive, material level on which gender is inscribed, but rather "sex" emerges as a process of *materialization*, as sedimentation. "Sex" itself is formed by the citationality of power, being an effect of its reiterative dimension. The formation of "sex" through this process of citation is precisely the process of forming the gendered subject, and more specifically, the sense of the "I" as speaking and acting subject. The materialization of the body itself is inseparable from the formation of the speaking subject. This is so because,

> *…as a projected phenomenon, the body is not merely the source from which projections issues, but is also always a phenomenon in the world, an estragement from the I who claims it. Indeed the assumption of „sex", the assumption of a certain contoured materiality, is itselsf a giving form to that body, a morphogenesis that takes place through a set of identificatory projections. That the body which one „is" is to some degree a body which gains its sexed contours in part under specular and externalizing conditions suggests that identificatory processes are crucial to the forming of sexed materiality.*[189]

[189] Butler, *Bodies That Matter, p.17*.

Since the subject is produced by a reiterative and re-articulatory practice, as Butler notes, this is also the level at which "agency" must be placed: not in some illusionary external point in relation to power, but in the very reiterative practices of power[190]. The constitution of the subject, its process of materialization in which it acquires a "sexed contour", it is at the very same time the arena in which this process can be contested, interfered with or at least distorted. What many of my nudist interviewees remembered and were eager to point out was how the practice of nudism in the company of friends and people they were attached to and in relation to whom they felt comfortable, enabled them to play and experiment with this identificatory process of the body, to interfere even for a short while with the assumption of a given sex and a given gender.

The body enabled a different form of sensorial experience than the regular, everyday one. Many of my informants dot their recollections with memories of being under the sun, naked, and simply experiencing a different form of connection with and being in the world. This particular aspect, these brief, fleeting moments of bodily evanescence was one of the reasons constantly invoked for the uniqueness of the summery nudist practices. But it was not only that the nudists imagined a different relationship to nature and the environment through their practice but more importantly, along the lines opened by Butler[191], this process enabled a different projection and imagination of the sexed body itself, of its contours, possibilities, and actual practices of formation. Therefore, unsurprisingly, the practice of nudism was accompanied by other practices as well, such as yoga or artistic enactments that prolonged this quest of reimagining the body itself.

[190] Butler, *Bodies That Matter, p. 198.*
[191] Butler, *Bodies That Matter*.

By abiding to the performative level of power, by basking in the pervert gaze of the Party the nudists did not simply generate an alternative social space far removed from the everyday state socialist realities, but it, in fact led to the creation of a different phenomenology, of a new way of being in the world and, as I mentioned already, developed a form of care of the self. This was not restricted only to the summery interactions in 2 Mai but in fact they traveled back to the everyday reality of state socialism. This alternative phenomenology infused pedagogical practices back in Bucharest (as I mentioned above), it informed the literary and artistic creation of the protagonists and sustained the further quest for other forms of spiritual discoveries that were simply proliferating in the shadows and interstices of the official realism and materialism.

The (clothed) secret agent

Cover noted that in the various contexts in which nakedness is performed legitimately, there is always a highly empowered (usually clothed) subject that performs a non-sexual gazing at an objectified naked body, thus ensuring that the non-sexuality of the naked practice is preserved[192].

This was also the case in 2 Mai. But the clothed authority came in various guises. For example, under the pretext of doing their job of inspecting the border with Bulgaria, border patrols frequently interacted with the nudists, asking for their IDs and inquiring into their motives for being there. The officers would watch out for any floating devises that might be employed in order to sail away to Bulgaria or Turkey. Of course, this might

[192] Cover Rob.

sound as a ridiculous concern of the state authorities since none (or very few) people in this community harbored any desire to leave the country in the initial stages of state socialism, especially in such a daunting way. However, in itself this was a performative activity: it was meant to reinforce the idea of border while also displaying the authority of power in a place that was supposed to be strictly about leisure and at a distance from state power. This interaction between the nudists and the border officers was symptomatic for the relationship with power more generally: while 2 Mai was geographically remote and at a distance from the locus of centralized power, in practice, due to its marginality in the concrete sense of being at the margins, it was imbued by police presence. The further one runs from power, the closer it gets to it in fact.

Another aspect that is worth noting is the symbolic hierarchy between the clothed border officer and the naked nudists asked to identify themselves. This ritual of constant identification, of displaying IDs represented the attempt of power to enforce its own sense of self, its own performative creation of the subject and of the bodies. Identifying meant constant interpellation through a repressive state apparatus. Its role was to prevent or annul the alternative forms of subjectivation and materialization of the body performed by the nudists themselves. In this seemingly banal act of asking one to identify herself, the state simply reiterated its power of naming and of giving identity and substance. From this perspective, the border patrollers were not only guarding the physical geographical border of the state, but more importantly they were policing the borders of one's self and identity, ensuring that the practice of nudism will not violate the accepted borders set by the power regime. The contours of the sexed body had to remain intact and for this matter police had to be constantly deployed.

Moreover, as Foucault noted, identity cards are a product of industrial modernity designed to keep track of people and in an increasingly complex urban environment. IDs played the dual role of creating and enforcing order but also visibility. Citizens thus become legibile in the eyes of the state. The ID, just like the map, the census and other technologies of governance, are tools of state's legibility. By asking for the IDs of the nudists, the police officers were reinforcing this modern logic of keeping track of citizens and of making them visible in the eyes of the state. The paradox here is that the nudists, by going naked, already make themselves highly visible to the state: they already have nothing to hide. Yet this hyper-visibility of the nudists is ironic and parodic: as I mentioned it has the role of rendering visible the very gaze of the state. So by asking for their IDs, the policemen are also trying to interrupt this parodic element, to bring people back on the state's familiar territory.[193]

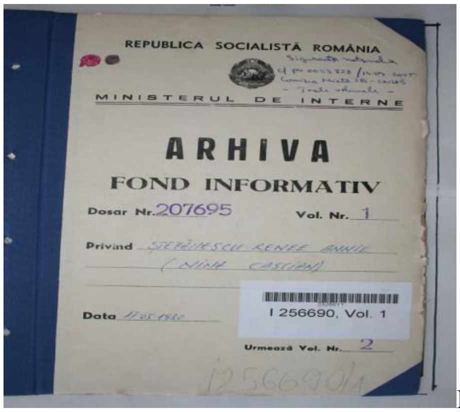
Elisabeth Bronfen argued that the policemen are the representatives of the agency meant to ensure the consistency of the symbolic order. Police functions then not only as a repressive agency, hindering the formation of alternatives and the trespassing of official borders (actual or symbolic), but also, and perhaps more importantly, as a productive force staging the consistency of power, erasing the inconsistencies and contradictions of power. To go back to the discussion started above, the police ensures that power itself will not indulge in its own fantasmatic and perverted desires, in its scopophilic pleasures

[193] I owe this point to my supervisor Allaine Cerwonka.

and erotic gaze. Police is there to enact the other fantasy of power: the fantasy of order, rationality, asexuality and de-eroticization. The police and the control over it appears then as the true fantasy of power, its innermost secret passionate attachment. This was highly evident in the case of state socialism where the importance of the police (in various incarnations) was paramount. State leaders usually assumed direct control of the police (and the armed forces) and usually relied more on police rather than party members to rule. In this constellation, the secret police and the secret agent occupied a central position.

As I mentioned above, secret police officers and secret police informers were at times present in 2 Mai. One of the most interesting piece of archival memory I read in my research was the description of the process in which the secret police introduced microphones in Nina Cassian's lodging at 2 Mai. The operation was carefully recorded by a secret police officer and then added to Nina Cassian's surveillance file that the secret police opened on her name in 1973.[194]

[194] The Securitate opened an information file [*dosar de urmărire informativă*] on Nina Cassian in 1973. She was under surveillance up until 1985, when she emigrated to the US. The official reason for opening a secret police file on her was "*contacts with foreign citizens*". Nina Cassian's file is comprised of 11 volumes with over 2600 pages containing a wide array of materials. In the volume there are transcripts of tapped phone calls, transcripts of conversations recorded with Securitate surveillance equipment in 2 Mai and in her Bucharest home, informant notes from a wide variety of sources – including from her former husband; photocopies of an unpublished manuscript, in fact the poet's journal,photocopies of personal letters and post-cards, photos, reports and reviews of the case compiled by different Securitate officers. 'Statutul Partidului Comunist Roman [The Romanian Communist Party Statute]' (Bucuresti Editura Politica, 1965).



Picture 6. Front page of Nina Cassian's Securitate File.

The surveillance devices were meant to offer access to Nina Cassian's most intimate details, especially to her intimate writings – a journal she had kept most of her life and that she wanted to rework for possible publishing, her intimate conversations with friends at parties and her love life. This was the true object of desire, the ultimate sexual fantasy of the perverted power: power's jouissance came from seeing (and hearing) the sexual intercourse.

While in the liberal anti-totalitarian paradigm this intrusion of power into the most intimate details of one's life was interpreted as a sign of the overwhelming power of power, it in fact dovetails its profound impotence, its castration. Power developed an overarching system of surveillance not because it was too powerful but because it was fearful: what power was fearing was the enjoyment others had, their orgasmic surplus that it could not really contain and control. "The sexual life of others" was inscribed as the surrogate sexual activity of an impotent power; its voyeurism –the sexualization of the gaze and of the act of looking – determined by the lack of enjoyment. One genuine contribution of Vladimir Tismaneanu's writings on communism –that remained largely unacknowledged so far – is the description the author provides involuntarily over the sexual repression dominating the higher echelons of the Romanian communist nomenklatura for almost the entirety of the state socialist regimes.[195] Enjoyment, meaningful relationships with spouses or lovers seemed to be missing from the lives of Party men running the country whose personal lives followed the dictates of work and discipline perhaps ever more than ordinary citizens. It seems highly likely that they derived pleasure solely from regulating, controlling and scrutinizing other people's lives and sexual practices.

Picture 7 Elena and Nicolae Ceaușescu on holiday 1973. Source: Fototeca online a comunismului românesc (ANIC, fond ISIP, Nicolae Ceaușescu).

It was not uncommon that the Romanian Communist Party took an interest in party members' sexual lives throughout the entire communist period. One of the main duties of communist party members (laid out in the Status of the Party) was to "*be an example of*

[195] Tismăneanu, Vladimir, *Lumea Secretă a Nomenclaturii. Amintiri, Dezvaluiri, Portrete [The Secret World of Nomenklatura. Memories, Confessions,* (Bucureşti: Humanitas, 2012).

fairness and moral rectitude in family life and in society".[196] This provision was very significant throughout the entire communist regime as it strategically emphasized morality as a crucial element of a party member but the focus on family life and morality became especially important after the adoption of the demographic policy. As better demographics become a responsibility of the "whole society", communist party members were encouraged to set examples in supporting not only the pronatalist ideals of the party state but also to reinforce the heterosexual and monogamous nature of state policies. It is also worth noting that in the Status of the Party one of the main reasons for party exclusions were "cases whose behavior shows moral decomposition".[197] The organic metaphor belongs to the language of the party while the distancing mechanism of the communist party from members whose mores were not in line with the party demands is shown by de-subjectivizing the person and interpellenting her/him as a mere case.

Party leaders at various levels of power were routinely faced with problems arising from their subordinates' sexual lives. Extramarital affairs, homosexual acts, sexual abuses and sexual harassments at work were brought to the attention of higher officials and then discussed in party and institutional meetings. People were publicly reprimanded, inscribed as negative examples and even excluded for their acts. Moreover, members of different social strata had to routinely account for their sex lives in order to prove their allegiance to the party and to the cause of socialism. Higher-ranking party bureaucrats at the Cadre section had the task of investigating the intimate life of party members through testimonies, witnesses, and police records in order to check weather the morality of the

[196] Cover Rob.
[197] 'Statutul Partidului Comunist Român [The Romanian Communist Party Statute]'. p.25.

party members in question was breached. Furthermore, the results of the investigation and the final verdict regarding some philandering or a more serious divorce case were to be exposed to the party organization to which the person in question belonged. Surely, as I mentioned in Chapter 1, this policy was connected to the demographic policy of the party, aiming to reduce the labor deficits of a fast industrializing country. However, this historical aspect should not obscure the fact that the desire of power to know and to look at other's sexual interactions imbued everyday interactions and went beyond the summer gazing at the naked bodies of the nudists.

This obsession with looking and with the sexual lives of others was literally inscribed in the immense archives left behind both by the secret police as well as by the those belonging to the former Communist Party.[198] They were the place where the sexual fantasies of power took shape, were projected and recorded. Reading Nina Cassian's Securitate file one can discern this aspect by noticing the sexual fantasies projected by the secret informers in relation to her sexual life. Theoretically, the police officers were in the best position to know the empirical truth about her life and record it accordingly. However, the file is filled with what at a first glance seem to be errors or misinterpretations: allegations about sexual affairs, exacerbating the existing ones, placing her in the center of a spy network and so on. In fact, they are sexual fantasies of the secret police and of power more generally. Nina Cassian was suspected of lesbian relations, all presented in a bureaucratized language that only enhanced the erotic

[198] The most relevant source of information is to be found at Romanian National Archives, in the documentary fund "Archives of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party, the Cadres Section."

dimension[199]. Of course, the point is not to establish whether Cassian engaged or not in these relationships –this desire to know the "real truth" would only be a reflection of power's gaze and willingness to know – but to notice the overlapping and mutually constitutive sexual fantasies emerging from the very functioning of a seemingly repressive (and repressed) power. We gather today a rich knowledge about the life and practices of people like Nina Cassian and others from the very documentation produced, archived and preserved by the secret police. To put it differently, our knowledge today is premised upon the voyeuristic gaze and sexual fantasies of the socialist power. By reading these files, to a large extent, we get embroiled into their own fantasies, overlapping with ours.

Escaping Socialism

By the late 1960s, a new generation was escaping to 2 Mai. The youth cohort born during the dawn of the new socialist order brought with them an artistic ethos signaling a new type of sensibility. Similar to their counterparts in the West, Romanian socialist youth frequently felt alienated from the world in which they lived and identified with an international hippie attitude mostly recognizable in musical tastes, clothing, a high value attributed to freedom, and a continuous search for out-of-the-ordinary experiences.

Some of the youthful Romanian bohemians sought a physical escape from socialism by establishing their summer residence at 2 Mai among the older generation of nudists. Family or older friends had introduced some of them to these places. The main attraction of the village was usually the relaxed atmosphere seemingly without any rules or any

[199] CNSAS Archive.

authorities. There was also the question of affordability, as this group was mostly formed of high-school and university students. Last but not least the village offered the possibility to share a room with whomever one chose, in a context in which relationship outside marriage were policed.[200]

The hippie bohemians of the 1960s and 1970s formed a more coherent subculture with its own geography of consumption places, its own politics and its own forms of expression. This new generation of bohemians felt they had nothing to hide or lose as they attended rock concerts, met in pubs and student clubs, played bridge at the Bucharest bridge club and ignored politics and especially communist party politics whenever possible[201]. Nudism and summering in 2 Mai and by now Vama Veche were part of a larger lifestyle project premised upon a series of spaces marginal or unacknowledged or at odds with the official party interests. This generation could discern very little honesty and no trace of idealism in the *langue du bois* of party politics.[202] This generation had little connection with party politics except the restrictions it imposed on their lives. Party activity became little more than following one's opportunistic career. The distrust of politics was doubled by low career ambitions and expectations.[203] This generation grew up under the auspices of a full employment policy endorsed by the Romanian state, in which paid work was both a constitutional right and a duty.

[200] Mary M, Former 2 Mai nudists in California, 2011, author's interview.
[201] Steve Barnoschi, 2 Mai and Bucharest bohemians (1970s), 2010, author's interview.
[202] Mircea Florian, Ceata Melopoica la 2 Mai, 2008, author's interview.
[203] Mircea Florian.

Picture 8: 2 Mai-goers

In this context, the students and young intellectuals could invest most of their time and energy pursuing avenues for self-expression, which were in the end gratifying outlets allowing for personal development. For many, the possibilities of escaping the constraints of a dull and flavorless life rested in music, movies, friends and most importantly in finding a way to escape across the border into the world of Western democracies and capitalism and starting a new life there.[204] What was the role of 2 Mai and Vama Veche in this trajectory? Did the lure of villages and of nudism have anything to do with their proximity to the border zone, the border barriers and their checkpoint, the no man's land that one could see from the road in Vama Veche?

[204] Tania N and Dani N, Former 2 Mai Nudists in California, 2011, author's interview.


Picture 9. A socialist hippie

The coexistence in 2 Mai and Vama Veche of these two generations was not as smooth as it might appear at first. The new generations presence in the village was regarded with concern and sometimes frowned upon. The likes of Nina Cassian considered the intriguing hippies as ignorant and unambitious when it came to politics, while their new esthetic was regarded with indulgence and sympathy as more of a western fad rather then a proper cultural movement. There were sympathies, of course, but overall many of the younger group tended to regard the previous generation as very much part of the problem they were faced with. They had been part of a cultural and political elite that had supported and developed a variety of communist rule in Romania that turned out to be an isolating police state with little tolerance for any signs of difference.[205] What distinguished the younger generation was their rejection of the communist values the previous one was still harboring as well as the desire to leave Ceausescu's Romania as

[205] Mircea Florian.

soon as possible.[206] Almost of all of them were determined to make something of themselves somewhere in the new world.

When I mentioned nudism to my Romanian interviewees over dinners in Santa Monica or Bel Air, where they were living after they emigrated from Romania, I realized that I had struck a chord that was more then a simple nostalgia for a country where they had grown up. The summers in 2 Mai was fundamental in their lives and in the group's life. This was one of the few places where as young undergrads they could experience life on their own as a group of friends, where they had fallen in love and felt free. This was also the place where strategies of emigration were first imagined, discussed and considered. After the regime fell, 2 Mai was the first place to visit, but this time only to note the total loss or decay of the place.[207]

During the 1980s, at the height of emigration, 2 Mai and Vama Veche become strange places of secret fair-wells. Nina Cassian, left for the US with the support of the Rockefeller foundation for a teaching position on creative writing at NYU. The fellowship was supposed to last for only six month but aged 61 decided she to stay behind. The main reasons had to do with one the last political scandals of the Ceausescu era, the death of Gheroghe Ursu while in the custody of the police. A year after Nina Cassian, Norman Manea, the author of the motto of this chapter, also fled the country.

[206] Dragos S, Escaping from Vama Veche into Austria, 2007, author's interview.
[207] Tania N and Dani N.Mary M, author's interviews.

In the summer of 1989, aged 7, my cousins and I would wake up in the early hours of the day to accompany a family friend to the beach in Vama Veche. Since we were the youngest of the group and were not allowed to swim at midnight with the rest of the extended company we had devised a way to make up for that and to join this guy for a swim at dusk. We would go to the beach swim a little and watch our older friend swim for hours on end. Every once in a while our uncle would sit next to us with a timer. The swimmer did his laps with determination sometimes in rapid fast-pasted strokes with powerful and exhausting moves. Other times the swimmer swiftly lost himself in blue horizon only to return what seemed to us hours later. We watched him do his rounds in the quietness of the early day as if this was the most beautiful spectacle on display- movements of grace and force in the blue waters and we were perhaps so mesmerized by this show that we would forget to retell it to anyone else. It could have easily been that we had been told that this was a secret but memory is an unreliable tool. Our swimmer finally fled across the Danube River in the autumn of 1989, months before Ceausescu was toppled.

3. Nostalgia for the Real: fantasmatic desires and melancholic attachments

During the course of researching the nudist community of 2 Mai I kept wondering what was the mechanism that made this topic impress on me as worth studying? Why did I pursue this research option? The immediate, obvious, reason has an autobiographical component: since the age of four I was part of the nudist community in Vama Veche, taken there first by my parents. Therefore, my interest in this topic was an auto-poetic one, a form of exploration at the intersection of history, social transformations and the self.

But there is more to it than this simple narcissistic fixation with my own biography and my own naked body. After 1989, the nudist community of 2 Mai acquired a certain social mystique; it elicited fascination and generated, again, a series of fantasies, many exposed in the summer issues of Dilema Veche, a Bucharest based cultural magazine[208]. After all, 2 Mai and the practice of nudism were at odds with the general atmosphere of state socialism. In the atmosphere of post-communism, the story of the nudist community became one of those points of fixation from the past that could now be re-appropriated and re-signified in the new context.[209]

The most common line of re-interpreting the nudist community was in the already mentioned liberal anti-totalitarian paradigm of power and resistance. Nudism was simply reduced to dissidence and was therefore appropriated for the purposes of the transition of coming to terms with the past and offering a ready-made explanation of communism.[210] This seemed urgent for me to contest and retrace the radical nature of the nudist experience during socialism. Nudism was slowly transformed into a form of life-style, an

[208] Goanță, Dan, 'Despre Mișcări [On Movements]', *Dilema Veche*, 9 April 2004.
[209] Starting with 2003, a group of 2 Mai and Vama Veche beach goers and high profile civil society activists stared a civil movement under the slogan "*Save Vama Veche*". The aims of the movement were preservationist fighting to limit the random developments on the coastline. Along with ecological arguments, the movement also used arguments referring to the cultural heritage of the two villages – as places of nonconformity and anti-communist civil disobedience. In the end, the movement did succeed in branding Vama Veche as a place of nonconformist holidaying yet it did little to limit constructions on the coast-line.
[210] One of the key players producing such a reading of nudism after 1989 was Toma, Mircea, 'Sexul La Români [Sex among the Romanians]', *Almanahul Catavencu* (București, 2003).

alternative “civilized” activity, European and western, in contradiction to the “barbarism” of socialism.

One further puzzling aspect of the liberal re-appropriation of nudism was that socialist nudism was cherished while the actual practice in post-communism was either disappearing or confined to strictly bounded and policed spaces. The mystique of nudism and the fame of 2 Mai entailed in fact not only a fetishization and depolitization of the practice itself, but also a brutal gentrification of the previously remote and simple scenery of 2 Mai (and Vama Veche). Mass tourism, once kept at bay in these areas by the logic of the socialist modernization and by the political implications of nudism, was now thoroughly reorganizing the seaside and the practice of summery vacations. The transformation was so profound and deeply social in nature that in fact led to a genuine cultural war unfolding in the sand: between the nudists who wished to preserve their practice and the mass of tourists who simply wanted to consume the history and fame of this place. Nudism was soon replaced with regularly clothed bodies in swimsuits, allowing only –at a maximum – for the display of women breasts.

But precisely the display of women naked breasts on the beaches that once belonged to the nudists pointed to the more pervasive change. The mystique of 2 Mai, as it attracted scores of new people, resided in fact in the fantasmatic imagination that equated nudism with sexual permissiveness, laxity and casualness. In short, after 1989 2 Mai became popular because the mass of tourists simply internalized the pervert gaze of the defunct party in relation to the nudists and now they were willing to exercise it from close range for themselves. The nudists simply became objects of pervert and pornographic attention and gazing. The practice became highly imbued with heteronormative sexual undertones in which the bodies of women became objects to be consumed by the lusting gazes of usually clothed men. Concomitantly, the beach, more generally, became a highly sexualized place, where the naked breasts of women became the sign of this transformation.

This was one of the main reasons some of the nudist informers invoked in order to explain their decision to renounce the practice, or to give up the location.[211] Yet because they were forced to give up their place and practice, it became a lost object of desire. Nudism and the interactions of 2 Mai were now remembered fondly with nostalgia and melancholy, as it is usually the case with lost worlds.

When it comes to explaining this nostalgia one should avoid here the usual trap that links nostalgia with one's longing for one's youth. Most of the nudists I interviewed –just like Nina Cassian - were in their 40s-50s when they practiced nudism before the fall of communism. What they longed for in post-communism was not necessary their younger bodies, in better shape and condition but that moment of evanescence when one could re-imagine one's body differently and seek an alternative phenomenology, a different way of being in the world. The end of the communist party and its economy of gaze and order of things and bodies simply annulled this possibility. In the new neoliberal context, the imperative to reinvent oneself, to constantly create oneself anew and to mix one's shifting

[211] Ana-Maria Smighelschi.

identities was part of the official ideology itself and had nothing subversive to it. Rather, those unable to do so are excluded from the definition of citizenship and belonging.

Therefore, this nostalgia is nostalgia for what Lacan calls “the Real”: the traumatic encounter with the power itself, that which withstands symbolization.[212] Through its very nature, the communist power inscribed nudism both acceptable and subversive, endowed this practice with the capacity to act as counterhegemonic force and with disrupting effects since it could, ultimately, posit a different social ontology and a different body regime. By contrast, the neoliberal power simply commodified nudism and, like all the rest of bodies, turned the naked bodies of nudists into objects of sexual fascination and consumption. The practice lost its subversive character and its potential for generating meaningful alternative social worlds.

In this transformation the practice of nudism became on one hand a piece of antiquarian interest, the remain of days passed, while on the other hand, for the former nudists themselves, it became an object of melancholic fixation, sometimes serving personal and political purposes of imagining dissident genealogies in the post-communist context. In this sense, the practice of nudism was doubly normalized: both an aesthetic and a dissident practice neatly fitting post-socialist expectations but voided of its radical potentials it held during socialism. In this sense, the socialist past and the political conundrum it posed was also obliterated, preserving in post-communism just its pervert gaze and sexualized interest in the sexual and naked bodies of others.

[212] Nobus.

III. A Socialist Sade: sexuality, yoga and the body of nation

In the previous chapter I analyzed the materialization of the body of nudists at 2 Mai as a symptom of subject formation under the penetrating pervert gaze of the party. In this chapter I change tack and explore the spiritualization of the body. More specifically, this chapter seeks to engage an instance of the plethora of spiritual practices that sprung unofficially and underground during socialism.

The role of this chapter is to open up this debate through a particular case study of spiritual practice that places the body –both as a support and as an end in itself of the spiritual practice – at the center. Therefore, my analysis is not strictly about spiritual practices but, more importantly, about the embodiment and body effects these practices engender and produce. Hence, I continue the discussion from the previous chapter about the material constitution of the body and subject formation through an account of spirituality that is grounded and material.

The practice that is most concerned and centered upon mediating between the body and spiritual fulfillment is, of course, yoga. My case, therefore, traces the formation and transformations of a yoga movement established by Gregorian Bivolaru and known today as *Mișcarea pentru Integrare în Absolut* (The Movement for the Integration into the Absolute, hereafter MISA). The bases of what was to become MISA started as a small underground yoga inspired- group spurred by the spiritual quests of Bivolaru and the group gained notoriety largely through public scandals unraveling after 1989 and especially through the numerous police raids clamping down on the movement in 2003 and 2004[213]. The activities of the movement gained a lot of adepts after the fall of communism and usually consisted of various forms of yoga exercises, meditation, ayurvedic medicine, sexual advice modeled after tantric yoga, nudism in a remote stretch in the Black Sea resort of Costinești, group meditations and processions and devotions that included sex acts. The movement opened branches all over the country and at its peak in the 2000s gathered up to 10,000 participants.[214] The rather unorthodox practices of MISA attracted the wrath of the state, which constantly monitored it through secret agents. Gregorian Bivolaru was at the epicenter of all these events and a prime target of police surveillance. This chapter focuses on guru's biography, in which spiritual discovery and police surveillance are indistinguishable.

Ever since its more popular beginnings during the 1970s decade of state socialism, yoga was at odds with the official realist, materialist and anti-spiritualist doctrine and ideology. It was part of a series of practices and world-views that the regime deemed obscurantist and enchanting and for this matter dangerous. Wrapped in secrecy and organized around rites of initiations, such practices were deemed dangerous for the monopoly of power of the regime. But, just as it was the case with the nudists, precisely because of their secrecy and remoteness from the publicly accepted norms of behavior, they also elicited the

[213] Gabriel Andreescu, *Misa: Radiografia Unei Represiuni [Misa: The X-Ray of a Repression Case]* (Iasi: Polirom, 2013).
[214] 'Cazul MISA-Gregorian Bivolaru Nu Intereseaza Doar Presa de Scandal - Numarul 215-216 - Aprilie - 2004 - Arhiva - Observatorcultural.ro' <http://www.observatorcultural.ro/Cazul-MISA-Gregorian-Bivolaru-nu-intereseaza-doar-presa-de-scandal [accessed 6 May 2014].

curiosity and attracted the gaze of the inquiring party and of its branch, the Securitate. This was so since the yoga philosophy of Bivolaru's group relied heavily on the tantric strand of yoga, which among other things proposed alternative forms of sexuality. [215] Bivolaru's explorations of human sexuality took many other forms too, apart from yoga: from reading, translating and synthetizing tantric yoga materials, to collecting philosophical treatises connected with human sexuality, to procuring and manufacturing pornographic materials and last but not least to collecting information on regular people's sexual practices through questionnaires and open-ended discussions, much like a free-lance or amateur sexologist.

The three fundamental features of Bivolaru's biography as it noted in his secret police file have been yoga, sex and secret police surveillance. The first two dimensions were perceived as posing a direct challenge to the official politics of the regime, to communist morality as well as to the demographic policies imposed by the party-state. If the nudists could be contained and normalized by the gaze of the Party through de-sexualizing techniques enforced by the clothed officers and ultimately subsumed to a therapeutic and leisurely activity, the sexual and bodily practices of Bivolaru's group –which represented the core of its spiritual quest – had to be cranked down directly. The paradox is that this attitude continued even more forcefully after 1989, the new regime continuing the repressive mechanisms of the former socialist one, leading to outward police persecutions of MISA members, framed accusations and public media lynching. The years of 2003 and 2004 had been detrimental for Misa as the credibility of the movement was

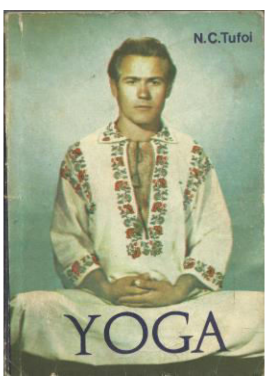
[215] When I speak about Bivolaru group I refer to the losly articulated network of people around bivolaru but also the group that gained consistency in the 1980s – in the Securitate file they are 4-6.

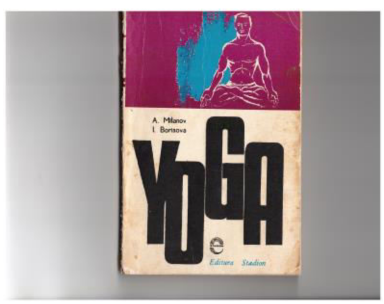
undermined following sensationalist media reports of sexual orgies, pornography and presumed prostitution. The movement had to close down many of its yoga schools throughout the country; its adepts had been stigmatized and persecuted at work and within their families. The final blow came in 2006, when guru Bivolaru under investigation for statutory rape fled the country and received political asylum in Sweden.[216]Following in his footsteps a number of MISA members had to flee Romania, mostly in Denmark and Sweden for fear of political persecution.

With the media frenzy and scandal that have surrounded Bivolaru and MISA in the past four decades, it is important to contextualize Bivolaru's biography and the popularity of his writings, classes, materials and instruction within a larger social phenomena already taking place from the mid 1960s onwards, namely a proliferation of spiritual practices in the shadow of official atheism. An untold numbers of such practices and groups popped up everywhere and included a wide variety of interests: from yoga practices to pre-Christian paganism, from New Age quests to Christian Orthodoxism, from Oriental practices to neo-Protestant rites, from Indian mythology to Buddhist traditions all and more were integrated into a playful mix of traditions, practices, spiritual quests and groups.[217] Some of these practices were tolerated by the state and even endorsed by its institutions; others were harshly repressed (such as the activities of the neo-protestant groups).

[216] Andreescu, *Misa: Radiografia Unei Represiuni [Misa: The X-Ray of a Repression Case]*.

The social routes through which these practices were revived or emerged in the socialist setting of post-war Romania were equally diverse, sometimes overlapping, sometimes being completely unexpected, marking in specific ways both the nature of the practices and their further development. I will explore some of these pathways and influences in the first part of this chapter, where I paint in broad strokes this spiritual setting. I suggest that all these groups, placed at different lengths from state acceptability and official notions of normality, represented in fact a collective attempt at re-enchanting the socialist world, effectively raising up against socialist realism but also, against the realism and pragmatism of socialist industrialization. This return to spiritual quests represented largely a revival of old anti-modern tropes and sentiments. They were rearticulated in the setting of socialist industrialism considered a radical version of modernity itself, and were encouraged by the regime itself and its political and ideological shifts.





Picture 10. *Yoga* published by Romanian author N.C. Tufoi, Iași: Junimea publishing house, 1979.

Picture 11. *Yoga* by A.Milanov and I Borisova, Bucharest: Editura Stadion, 1977, the first book of yoga published in Romanian, translated from Bulgarian.

This is the background in which I explore the trajectory of Bivolaru and of his group. In the second part of this chapter I look at Bivolaru's biographical development, shaped by his spiritual practices and by constant police surveillance. This double history, this entanglement between attempts to escape the everyday of socialism and the constant surveillance distill almost in a poetic fashion the entire history of the spiritual movements during socialism. In my story I will point out the paradoxes and contradictions surrounding the figure of Bivolaru and I will point to the problematic gender regime his practices engendered. I draw parallels between Bivolaru and the Marquis de Sade by pointing out the centrality of the women's bodies –and their exploitation – for gaining a surplus of pleasure. This will enable me to point out to another paradox: while the sexual practices of MISA as a group were indeed transgressive and threatening the regime of order and the body of the nation, at a micro level, they were in fact replicating and enforcing the subordination of women to men.

In the last part of this chapter I explore this public trail of what will after 1989 become the MISA community and its role in revealing the taboos of the post-socialist public sphere, as well as the prevailing regime of sexuality, bodily practices and "normality".

1. Re-enchanting the socialist world: Anti-modernism, Fascism and New Wage

Max Weber wrote that capitalist modernity operated a dis-enchantment of the old traditional world. Similarly, Marx wrote that capitalism represents in fact a welcome alienation from the world of peasantry, dominated by superstition and ritual. Indeed, modernity is that moment in history operating as a break, "when everything that is solid, melts into the air".[218]

[218] Berman, p. 15-37.

But because of its highly uprooting characteristics, for its capacity to torn asunder previously existing relations and to refashion everything in its wake, modernity did not only mean progress, constant transformation and endless accumulation, but it also triggered a series of counter-movements, seeking to annul, or at least to stave off, its relentless unfolding. As Svetlana Boym noted, nostalgia, the longing for the past, for the lost home and the painful awareness of an irreplaceable loss, emerged concomitantly with modernity.[219]

Consequently, one should supplement Weber and Marx assertions invoked above, by pointing out the fact that modernity –in its dialectical becoming – did not entail only the dis-enchantment of the world through technique and rational calculus, but also, the proliferation of the desire for a re-enchantment of the world. This desire, this need for mystery and spirituality took, of course, different forms in different periods over the last three hundred years. It entailed the resurrection of local tradition or the discovery of exotic ones, placed at a distance from the core of the western modernity and therefore considered to be more authentic and less tinged by its destructive influences A centerpiece of these anti-modernist resources came from the Far East, from India and China, through the channels provided by the outreach of the British Empire. One of these practices, yoga, ever since the second half of the 19th Century became one of the most

[219] Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (Basic Books, 2001), Chapter 1 p 19-31.

cherished spiritual and bodily practices for westerners keen to enhance their spirituality and find a way out of modernity's alienating effects.[220]

As I mentioned earlier, my assessment is that state socialism was a radical form of Western modernity. The radical transformation of the society, the desire to fully break with the backward past was encoded in the political program of the new socialist regime and was a goal pursed in a very centralized and rapid manner. It entailed breaking with the habits, ideas and mental schemas of the old in order to replace them with a completely new set of ideas and beliefs.

This sweeping rearrangement of values, ideas and worldviews that followed the establishment of the communist regime at the end of the Second World War was coupled with a materialist and realist ontology on which socialism was premised. Therefore, practicing religion along with popular spiritual practices was placed at the margins of the public sphere. The atheist ethos of communism rendered religious worshiping along with other spiritual rituals reactionary, obscurantist, retrograde and inimical to the scientific and rational spirit of the Marxist Leninist principles.

Since the Communist Party claimed a scientific knowledge of the workings of history, claims to different kinds of knowledge, especially spiritual were considered obscurantist, superstitious and a sign of false consciousness. Therefore, they had to be eliminated and the people freed from their spell in order to benefit from the illuminating knowledge

[220] Elizabeth De Michelis, *A History of Modern Yoga: Patanjali and Western Esotericism* (A&C Black, 2005), Chapter 1 p. 19-51.

radiating from the Party. It is also worth noting that in late 1980s, the political regime re-launched atheism as one its main pillars of political education.[221] This atheistic offensive was perhaps a reaction to the religious revivalism of the 1980s decade, when a host of priests spoke against the leadership of the country, most notably the protestant pastor Laszlo Tokes, whose forced transfer from his parish in Timișoara sparked the toppling of the communist regime in December 1989.

While in the first decade of Romanian communism, the public display of spiritual manifestations was severely censored and therefore they were few and far between, beginning with the 1960s, along with a general liberalization of the regime itself and the distant impact of the global 1968, these practices burst into the open. Nudism, orthodox religious rituals, naturism, rock-and-roll[222] and its associated life-style, pre-Christian and pagan traditions, yoga and many other practices appeared as tolerated. Even though they occupied still a marginal position, they ceased to be underground or even outlawed. What is more, some of these practices were in fact actively encouraged, or at least enabled, by the regime, through the publication of books, the creation of specialized circles or the integration of these spiritual practices in the general therapeutic remedies promoted by the regime.[223] This resurgence created the premises for Gregorian Bivolaru to become interested in yoga and develop into an active practitioner.

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[221] Burakowski, p.286-300.

[222] Dobrescu. One of the most well documented sources describing the music scene during the 1970s and 1980s is the book of TV producer Doru Ionescu Ionescu, Doru, *Timpul Chitarelor Electrice [Time of the Electric Guitars]* (Bucureşti: Humanitas, 2006).

[223] Doina Jela, Catalin Strat and Mihai Albu, *Afacerea Meditatia Transcendentala [The Transcendental Meditation Affaire]* (Bucureşti: Humanitas, 2004).


Picture 12 Gregorian Bivolaru in lotus pose.

This aspect is complicated by the fact that this was not an isolated Romanian phenomenon. Barbara Potrata traced the post-socialist roots of the Slovenian New Age movement in the socialist past as well as in the transition to the neoliberal present.[224] Potrata argued that both the New Age and the socialist projects shared a milleranist ideology, which made them close kin. She traced the roots of the New Age in Slovenia in the 1960s counter-culture when young Yugoslavs read books about socialist and other political alternatives and some engaged in a hedonistic life more concerned with music. They also developed an interest in Eastern philosophy and many traveled to the Far East in search of inspiration and original roots. In fact, more recent scholarship on youth culture or everyday life under socialism is increasingly pointing to similar phenomenon all across the former Eastern Block.[225] In the Romanian case, as well as in other

[224] Portrata, Barbara, 'New Age, Socialism and Other Millennarism: Affirming and Struggling with Post/Socialism', *Religion, State and Society*, 32 (2004).
[225] Amanda Swain, '"Freedom for Lithuania" or "Freedom for Hippies"? Nationalism, Youth Counterculture and De-Stalinization in Soviet Lithuania' [accessed 3 August 2014]. William Jay Risch, 'Soviet "Flower Children". Hippies and the Youth Counter-Culture in 1970s L'viv', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 40 (2005), 565–84.Mark Fenemore, *Sex, Thugs and Rock 'N' Roll: Teenage Rebels in Cold-War East Germany* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2009).Horvath Sandor, 'Myths of the Great Tree

alternative cultural phenomenon of the Eastern Block, most of the New Age revivalism had a strong foothold in the interwar period. What is more, some of the proponents of the new age inspired philosophy were closely connected to party cadres or themselves occupying high ranking position within the State or the Party administration, therefore being able to travel abroad and bring back informational material. [226]

Following a performative interpretation of the nature of power, even though the regime revived spiritual practices, these practices quickly acquired a directionality of their own and produced a surplus that the power could no longer contain. In short, they became autonomous and in many instances quite subversive, determining power to intervene in order to limit their effects.

Yoga: From Western Imperialism to Socialist repression

Modern transnational yoga consists of a vast range of embodied practices and a diversity of ideas about the meaning of these practices. Recently, scholars have begun to unravel the vast historical and contextual web of yoga in the modern world. Although usually thought of as Hindu, historically the techniques of yoga have also been used by Buddhists, Jains, Sikhs while maintaining their own metaphysical beliefs. [227] The philosophical tradition of yoga is understood as being codified in Patanjali's yoga Sutras, a body of works written sometimes between 300 and 500 CE. The Yoga Sutra is a collection of aphorisms, often described as Astanga yoga. The objective of the practice

Gang: Constructing Urban Spaces and Youth Culture in Socialist Budapest', in *Testimonies of the City: Identity, Community and Change in a Contemporary Urban World*, ed. by Richard Rodger and Johanna Herbert (London ; New York: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2007), pp. 73–93.
[226] Jela, Strat and Albu.
[227] Michelis.

outlined in Yoga Sutras is an experience of complete cessation of the fluctuations of the mind. Modern yoga groups frequently cite the Yoga Sutras as the foundation of their practice. However, as Mark Singleton argued, the notion of Patanjali's Yoga Sutras as the foundation of yoga can be better understood as the creation of the 19th Century Orientalist and Indian nationalist discourses.[228] What we call yoga today is a product of a deeply collaborative and mutually transformative interaction between Indians and Europeans in the 19th Century. Many scholars' emphasize how yoga was reconfigured and conceptualized in order to become fit for spiritual "export".[229]

Although the western interest in classical yoga took shape already in the 17th and 18th Centuries, it was only in the nineteenth century that wider audiences in the United States and Western Europe began to learn about yoga. Swami Vivekananda is largely credited for this upsurge in interest following his series of lectures. The child of a judge and trained in laic European philosophy and law, Vivekananda embraced religiosity through interaction with Sri Ramakrishna, one of the most famous figures of the nineteenth century Hindu world and still one of the most revered spiritual mystics of India. The practice of yoga described in Vivekanada's lectures as well as in the printed pamphlets he produced had the form of a commodity with an explicit exchange value. His belief was that India had an abundance of spiritual wealth and that yoga was a method that could

[228] Mark Singleton, *Yoga Body: The Origins of Modern Posture Practice* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).
[229] Suzanne Newcombe, 'The Development of Modern Yoga: A Survey of the Field', *Religion Compass*, 3 (2009), 986–1002.

help people to achieve spiritual well being. In return, the West, which was richer in material terms, would simply pay cash for learning yoga.[230]

Vivekananda synthetized the plurality of Vedic yoga tradition in four paths in his book, Raja yoga.[231] His tract, Rajah yoga, published in 1896, circulated widely and is still reprinted worldwide and much acclaimed. Vivekanada's teachings of yoga were the first Indian texts to circulate among a western, English speaking audience. In these presentations we find inscribed not only the fundamental basis of yoga as a western middle class activity in need to atone its spirit under the burden of material plenty, but also the uncanny overlap between the logic of capital accumulation and of spiritual exchange. While the two seem thoroughly opposed, the very revival of ancient tradition that was supposed to counter the effects of capitalism can only take place through its mediation.[232]

The particular combination of ideas used initially by Vivekananda in his presentation of yoga reflected an eclectic mix of various traditional Hindu texts ranging from the Bhagavad Gita to Tantrism and Buddhism, from Advaita Vedanta to the more dualistic classical yoga of Patanjali as well as European ideas about rationality, charity, equality and individualism. Vivekanada used Advaita, or non-dualist understandings of the nature of divinity to ground his version of yoga. The Advaita tradition was more easily aligned

[230] Michelis, *Chapter III Vivekananda and The Emergence of the NeoVedantic Occultism*, p.91-123.
[231] Swami Sivananda and Sivananda (Swami.), *Raja Yoga* (Divine Life Society, 1986).
[232] Sarah Strauss, *Positioning Yoga : Balancing Acts across Cultures* (Oxford /New York: Berg, 2005), p. 23-53.

with Christianity and other monotheistic traditions familiar to his non-Indian audiences.[233]

The yoga doctrine initiated by Vivekanada for the practice of modern western audiences was further magnified globally by Mircea Eliade, a Romanian scholar that got interested in these practices through the mediating figure of his master, Sivananda. Eliade's "Yoga: Immortality and Freedom" is still considered *the* classic analysis of yoga in the history of academic religious studies.[234] Mircea Eliade's work had an important impact during the interwar period both in at home, in the Romanian intellectual elite and abroad among scholars and historians of religion. Eliade was a widely read author (indeed mostly because of his fictional works) and a much appreciated intellectual in spite of his right-wing sympathies.[235] Eliade was one of the pioneers of studying oriental religions, a comparativist of religions who spent his last part of his academic career at University of Chicago establishing a department on history of religion. Due to his adherence to the fascist movement, he was forced into exile after the war while most of his books had been purged from public libraries. Nonetheless Mircea Eliade's books re-emerged in Romanian libraries, at first circulating among petty book traders and samizdat, and then after 1968 reprinted by official printing houses as a grand sign of liberalization and national recuperation. These books informed a large proportion of a new generation of young Romanians seeking alternatives to the mainstream culture during the global 1968.

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233 Michelis, p.40-60.
234 Mircea Eliade, *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom* (Princeton University Press, 2009).
235 Ţurcan, Florin, *Mircea Eliade, Prizonierul Istoriei [Mircea Eliade, the Prisoner of History]* (Bucureşti: Humanitas, 2008).

Among them, Gregorian Bivolaru would later acknowledge the definitive formative influence of Eliade over his development.[236]

Silvia Ceccomori showed in her study of yoga in France that Indian philosophy traveled to Europe on four paths: the intellectual path (with the aid of philosophy and literature), the occult (theosophy), the religious dialogue (Vivekandada and Indian missionaries in Europe) and the embodied (alternative medicine).[237] This categorization is useful but not precise enough to capture a significant shift in the modern reception of yoga in the West, that was more and more flirting with fascism. For the first part of the 20th Century, modern yoga was widely read by a western readership interested in esoteric phenomena. The secret science of harmony, energy and happiness was one strand in the reception of yoga. The second avenue was yoga's practical benefits in terms of health and wellbeing. These two features were rendered ever more appealing and credible by yoga's association with an ancient spiritual tradition which allowed for a peaceful cohabitation and compatibility between yoga and Christianity.[238] During the interwar Europe, the development of the history of religions, and especially Indology, as established academic fields, significantly magnified the popularity and appeal of eastern spiritualties and yoga.

In Romania, yoga re-emerged as a legitimate form of bodily training and an established form of intellectual pursuit when Ceaușescu took power, around the end of the 1960s. Yoga clubs where postures and meditation were taught to students or the working masses

[236] Gregorian Bivolaru claims to have corresponded with Mircea Eliade but so far it remains only an unconfirmed assumption, part of the myth Bivolaru developed around his persona.
[237] Silvia Ceccomori and Michel Hulin, *Cent ans de yoga en France* (Paris: Edidit, 2001), p.23-30.
[238] Strauss, p.45.

sprung up in Houses of Culture and other state-funded institutions as legitimate past-times and even recommended by the medical profession. Classes were taught by self-trained instructors and by enthusiasts of oriental spiritualties and alternative medicine people much like our character, Gregorian Bivolaru who identified with a yoga lifestyle (as much as it was possible in a scarcity society) and who got hooked on the practice. However, yoga enabled forms of bodily practice, spirituality and everyday routine that run counter to everything the regime stood for. Given the outcomes produced by these activities, by this spiritual revivalism, the regime had to backtrack on its initial liberalism and severely clamp down on such practices. The most notorious case of the time was the so-called "Afacerea Meditatia Transcendentala" (hereafter, Transcendental Meditation).

In February 1982, an article in the official magazine of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, *Pentru Patrie* decried a new conspiracy affecting the body and minds of the most educated men. In inflammatory language, the article described the Transcendental Meditation as a dangerous sect, fooling and distracting people from their duties through obscure mysticism. The Transcendental Meditation was depicted as a Western imperialist disease, brought into Romania by "spies" and people meant to harm the country. "*Foreign spies, imperialist interests*"?[239] This language had not been heard since the 1950s. What had happened?

In 1979, one of the economic attaches at the Romanian embassy in Paris and his wife, a met with a Romanian-French citizen, and an instructor in transcendental meditation, Nicolae Stoian in Paris. The couple began to practice MT and, allegedly came to

[239] Monica Lovinescu, *Posteritatea Contemporană - Unde Scurte III* (Bucureşti: Humanitas, 1994).

appreciate its benefits. The couple together with Nicolae Stoian made plans to introduce transcendental meditation back in Romania convinced of its role to improve work capacity and concentration.[240] This was nothing exotic. The official study of psychology throughout the 1970s veered towards meditation, deep breathing, hypnosis and other forms of relaxation as methods of improving brain capacity and healing. The research into these areas was conducted at the Romanian's Academy Institute for Psychological Research.[241]

Following several visits in Romania in 1979 and 1980, Nicolae Stoian together with his wife, Murielle also an MT teacher, initiated several other people back in Bucharest into TM, some of whom where members of party members, others were working in the military or the police. These friends were part of the technical and humanist intelligentsia, some comfortably linked with the Romanian Communist Party, others just respected artists or intellectuals interested in experimenting. The informal groups were usually held in private homes and did not gather more than 15 people at a time. The Stoian's also managed to elicit support for introducing their technique formally, either as part of popular school (as a recreational activity) curricula or as medical palliative therapy to be used in state owned houses of culture for students and medical personnel.[242]But even though the Stoian's and their circles were connected to higher echelons of the party, in order to formally accredit Transcendental Meditation as an

[240] A different version of the story emphasizes that Transcendental meditation affair was a set-up to destroy the independence and credibility of potential rivals of the Ceausescu's.
[241] Jela, Strat and Albu.
[242] Jela, Strat and Albu, p.50. Another hypothesis around the sudden appearance of the Stoian spouse onto the Bucharest scene and their wide access to otherwise quite closely monitored spaces claims that the Nicolae Stoian was actually a good bait for attracting the influential white collar intelligentsia into one of Nicolae Ceaușescu's set ups. The aim of the plot was to compromise any potential opposition from within such millieus.

officially recognized practice, they nonetheless had to submit an official request. They therefore wrote a letter about the benefits of Transcendental Meditation to the head of the National Research Council of the Romanian Socialist Republic, asking for the official accreditation of the technique. After a series of consultations among state officials, the accreditation was denied. Transcendental Meditation was considered neither unique, nor new compared to the research already being done. It was deemed inappropriate because it was lagging behind the developments of the regime, not because it was violating any of its rules.

Despite this report, months later there was another attempt to obtain the official seal of approval. Consequently, the Institute organized two evenings of experiments where the Stoians could introduce their technique to an audience of 371 people, as recorded by the scripts of the Securitate. [243] At these experiments most of the participants were intellectuals, artists, writers, but also regular people interested in oriental studies and yoga practices.[244] The experiments consisted of sessions of initiation of those present. In a ritualized manner, each participant was given a mantra to help him/her meditate. As part of the ritual, the participants were supposed to bring two apples to the masters and to fully vow to keep their personal mantra secret. Each participant took the two apples behind a drape where s/he would be told the mantra and instructed how to mediate in exchange of a signed agreement that s/he would not divulge the technique to others. The two experiments were concluded in the spring of 1981, no one thought about it for much longer especially that yet again the report of the committee organized at the Institute of

[243] CNSAS Archive, Documentary Fund [Fond Documentar], ‘D 3’, Vol. 2, p.48.
[244] Some of the most well known names on the lists of participants were art historian Andrei Pleșu, sculptor Ovidiu Maitec, poet Marin Sorescu.

Psychology research found the technique quite similar to the less mystical autogenic training, a field where in Romania there were already a number of specialists.

After the rather unsuccessful experiments, the TM frenzy quieted down, with some participants completely unconvinced while other perhaps using their mantra's to meditate in private. For many it seemed like an affair long gone, inconsequential and simply expressing the fads and fashions of the well-off at the time. But the calm athmosphere lasted only up until the articles with inflammatory language quoted above stirred things once more a year later. Following these articles and the denunciations they consisted of, the regime organized a series of purges, not unlike the mock trials of the 1950s, albeit less bloody. A series of intellectuals, top echelon Party members up to the mister of Education and Research, managers of enterprises, army personnel, secret police officers and many other people were demoted, reprimanded, put under investigation and even under trail for alleged conspiracy and treason. Because all of the participants in the aforementioned experiments had to sign a document pledging to keep their mantra secret, the officials of the regime interpreted this as a clear sign of an organized conspiracy against the regime. The entire National Academy Institute for Psychological Research was disbanded; its members were laid off and severely sanctioned by the Party with work in production.[245]

[245] Jela, Strat and Albu, p.120-150. In simple terms, the sanctions sent all of the researchers working with the Institute of Psychological Research into unskilled jobs, at best in Bucharest and at worse outside of the city. Among the new jobs proposed by the party to the former researchers at the Academy were some such as unskilled textile worker, cleaning personnel, and factory worker. Most of the researchers were forced into the jobs for some three years the events.

One of the outcomes of these purges was the subsequent marginalization of all the practices connected to yoga, meditation, oriental mystical exercises, martial arts, the study of Far Eastern languages and civilizations, and the disappearance of psychology as the official discipline in which these preoccupations had a legitimate place endorsed by the regime.[246] In their stead, more nationalistic arguments and practices took center stage, such as the pseudo-historical arguments of the millennial origins of the Romanian population. In short, by mid 1980s the Oriental practices started to lose out to the nationalist frenzy. They appeared foreign, non- or even anti-Romanian, a threat to the body of the nation, to its ancestral traditions and its Christian legacy. From useful therapeutic and healthy activities in the 1960s and 1970s, the oriental spiritual practices became a threat. As such, they had to be erased and prosecuted, and the Transcendental Meditation offered precisely the perfect pretext for that.

This shift in the status of the oriental practices vis-à-vis the official politics of the socialist regime is best encapsulated in the biography of Gregorian Bivolaru, the local yoga and spiritual guru. In fact, his entire biography perfectly expresses the ambiguities, paradoxes, fascination and ultimate rejection of these practices in the socialist and post-socialist contexts.

2. A Socialist Sade

The Making of Guru Bivolaru

Gregorian Bivolaru was born on the outskirts of Bucharest and raised by a single mother in an atmosphere ripe with conflicts. Constantly abused by his drunkard step - father, he

[246] Jela, Strat and Albu, p.211.

took refuge in yoga, para-psychology, telepathy and ancient therapeutic practices, quite uncommon and rather unsuitable for a young communist man[247]. Starting in 1971, Bivolaru pursued these interests by carefully studying in the Municipal Library of Bucharest the books of Mircea Eliade who soon became his idol. In addition, Bivolaru was also interested in folkloric traditions and folk therapies of healing. Meanwhile, he attended postural yoga classes at *Casa Sindicatelor Medicale*, mixing together theoretical knowledge and practice. After graduation, Bivolaru took a different route compared to his generational peers. Instead of going to the university, he chose a low paid job as post-master. This step offered him a decent source of income that allowed him to pursue his passions.

This strategy of getting menial jobs for members of the socialist underground scene was widespread around the former eastern bloc and was inseparable from the welfare nature of state socialism. In The Last Soviet Generation, Yurchak describes how this kind of jobs allowed the creative underground time and resources to pursue their subversive activities. Removed from the concerns of productivity and profit, the intellectuals and artists were able to focus on their works of contestation. The figure of the marginal and the bohemian was thus inseparable from that of a state catering for all of its citizens, even at the price of their de-politicization.[248]

In addition, for Bivolaru this job offered the possibility to familiarize himself with the functioning of the mail system, that is one of the few means of communication with the

[247]CNSAS Archive, Informative Stacks [Fond Informativ], ‘I 1687 Bivolaru Gregorian’.
[248] Alexei Yurchak, p.80.

"outside" world during Ceausescu's Romania. In the following years, Bivolaru learnt to effectively use the postal service of the state, under tight scrutiny and censorship, in order to develop a vast correspondence with foreign disciples, friends, yoga organizations and press. Furthermore, he used the post-office as a means to smuggle into the country yoga materials and erotic literature and photos –illegal stuff at the time. Strauss, who studied the dissemination of yoga in modern India, similarly showed how the mail played a significant role in the transmission and creation of a like-minded community of believers around the world.[249]

In light of this atypical trajectory and unorthodox preoccupations, the opening of a Securitate file on Bivolaru's name was inevitable. Bivolaru become a target of Securitate surveillance in 1971, at nineteen, when a police investigation into a murder case connected to a group of mystics, lead up to young Grig as the murder had taken place in his neighborhood and because his interests in the occult were already quite widely known.[250] While the original suspicion was dropped, the investigators found out that the young man, versed in oriental philosophy and yoga, had access to numerous sensitive social strata such as young artists, illegal book traders, scholars and intellectuals with an appetite for Indian philosophy. At the time, even though yoga was a legal pursuit, what worried the investigators were the mystical interpretations Bivolaru was professing. His view of the world was perceived to be counter to the scientific atheism of the socialist state as well as going beyond the tolerated religious prozeltism of the majority of the orthodox population. However, what seemed even stranger for the investigators was the

[249] Strauss, p.40.
[250] CNSAS Archive, Informative Stacks [Fond Informativ], I 1687 Bivolaru Gregorian .

already extensive correspondence that the young man established both domestically and internationally. At nineteen, Bivolaru was writing to magazines, sex education societies, libraries and individuals in DDR and West Germany, Sweden, Finland and the UK.[251] In his letters, he demanded either erotic materials or yoga brochures or at least the publication of short notes announcing his address and his interests with the hope that interested parties would contact him. In most of his outgoing mail, now preserved in his Securitate File, he decried the prudishness of the Romanian regime and the lack of understanding for the needs of the youth. Below, I reproduce in full one such letter sent by Bivolaru and retrieved from his file in the secret police archive. I believe it best encapsulates Bivolaru's efforts as well as the driving force behind his initial quests:

> *Dear Friends*,
>
> *I am a young man from Romania, I am 19 years old. I have a great sympathy for the German people and I like the German erotic articles. From unhappiness, Rumanien there are not sexy articles. From your sexy photos I can to see the emancipated comprehension of the sexuality in Germany. It is really extraordinary the uninhibited acceptance and giving of the joyeaus joke of the sexuality in your country. I admire very much your frankness towards the sex. I like very much the sexy photos, the sexy slides, the sexy films and the sexy magazines. I am very interested to buy sexy articles from SPEZIAL YEARS.*
> *I can to pay the sexy articles in DM or USD. Please to write to me what do you prefer DM or USD. I can to send you the payment by registered letter (Do you accept?). Eventually please to send me the catalogue of SPEZIAL VERSAND regarding the sexy photos, sexy films, sexy magazines and the cost price of this articles in DM or USD.*
> *Please very much to answer me! I like very much the sexy articles and it is my intention to get in touch with you. Please to send me your catalogue in a closed envelope with discretion. I finish my letter washing you and your people good health and happiness.*
> *Sincerely yours,*
> *Gregorian*
> *My address Bivolaru Gregorian, Casuta Postala 309, Oficiul Postal Bucuresti 1 Rumaniein*[252]

[251] Numerous letters have been intercepted and preserved by the Securitate. CNSAS Archive, Informative Stacks [Fond Informativ], I 1687 Bivolaru Gregorian.
[252]CNSAS Archive, Informative Stacks [Fond Informativ], I 1687 Bivolaru Gregorian, p.223.

This letter immediately raises a series of questions. What is that irrepressible drive to write such a letter in approximate English to some faceless recipients asking for what basically amounts to pornographic images? Who is this person making such demands, denoting at the very same time a post-adolescent exasperated sexual desire, but at the same time a smartly encapsulating political awareness of the sexual politics of the DDR and of Romania? Why is he taking the risk of criticizing the sexual politics of state socialism, knowing full well that his letter will most likely be intercepted by the secret police and land him in trouble?

Bivolaru in writing this letter was in fact writing to the regime itself demanding a freer sexuality. It is easy to dismiss his request as demand for pornography –something that the secret police was keen to do. Indeed, his demand is for sexually explicit and arousing images of naked women. But instead of uncritically subscribing to a moralizing stance, it is perhaps useful to ask what was the motivation behind writing such a letter? Instead of focusing on the repressive dimension of the state (which was forbidding the youth to access pornography and sexually explicit materials), I suggest we should look at this letter as a celebration of sexual freedom and, even more to the point, of the aesthetic, non-utilitairan, non-reproductive dimension of sex. In writing this letter, far from expressing the dimension of the "pervert adult" Foucault wrote about, Bivolaru was in glorying sex as such, for its inner beauty.

Bivolaru and Sade

One way to understand Bivolaru's acts is to draw a comparison with the Marquis de Sade and his sadistic practices. While of course Sade was a much more sophisticated character, Bivolaru shared with the Marquis de Sade the belief in freedom as an inter-subjective erotic event. For Sade, sexuality was an ethic principle, elevated to the driving principle of life and death. While Simone de Beauvoir argued for a thorough historicization of the emergence of Sade's practices as the ultimate sign of the declining aristocracy trying to cling to its former status in the bedchamber, this historical awareness does not fully explain the mysterious character of Sade's philosophy, his principle of inflicting enjoyment and, more to the point, the principle of jouissance.[253] Lacan defined jouissance as taking pleasure from a consuming activity that runs counter to the pleasure principle. Pleasure emerges then from the death drive, from the desire to encounter the Real. In "Kant avec Sade", Lacan showed how pleasure is derived from abiding to the law itself. Enjoyment comes as a total subordination to law and power.[254]

Bivolaru did not engage in such Sadistic acts though nonetheless he was routinely accused by the secret police of engaging in immoral/unethical and unlawful sexual practices. The key issue often highlighted as a basis for a criminal case with Bivolaru as defendant had been the seduction of underage women using as a lure the promise of spiritual enlightenment[255]. It is difficult to assess the truthfulness of these reports since most of the accounts come from the secret police willing to indict him. However, the different reports available do indeed describe him as a dominating figure deriving pleasure from inflicting enjoyment through the act of initiation on its followers, usually

[253] Simone De Beauvoir, *Must We Burn De Sade?* 1St Edition edition (Peter Nevill).
[254] Nestor Braunstein, 'Lacan and Philosophy', in *The Cambridge Companion to Lacan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 102 –116.
[255] Accusations foretelling of what was to come two decades later, when indeed Gregorian Bivolaru was charged with statutory rape.

young women. Just like in Sade, the body of young women represented for Bivolaru the site of inscription of his desires and of *scientia sexualis*.

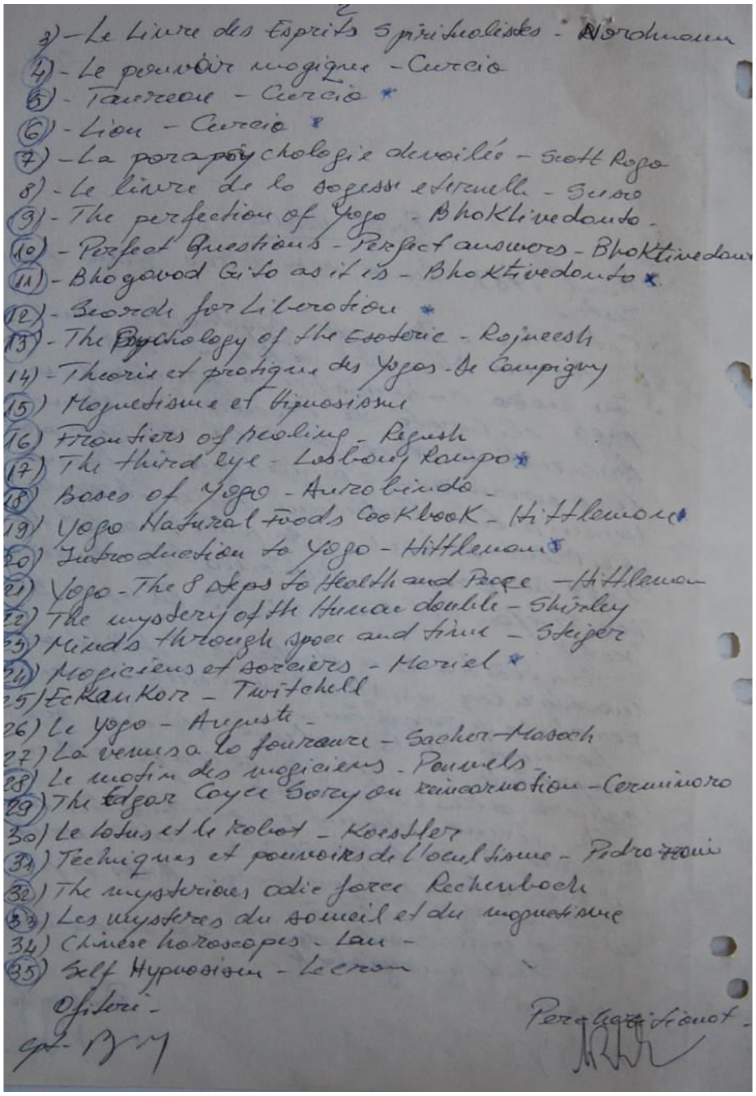
Bivolaru's sexual philosophy

Bivolaru defended his collection and interest in pornography in front of secret police officers, on the basis of his interest in tantrism, he argued that the images allowed him to connect with the women depicted in the photos, while enabling him to develop his non-seminal orgasms:

> *"I use the nude representation of women to practice Tantra yoga; in this endeavor I am able to look at the pictures and rechanneled my sexual energy towards the achievement of a higher plane of consciousness. In this way I can connect to the universal consciousness of humanity that is mostly a never-ending source of love."*[256]

Bivolaru's early philosophy was an ingenious synthetic compilation of religious and occult ideas drawn from an enormous array of sources. His philosophy was a kind of post-modern pastiche, a mélange of ideas drawn from Bhagavad-Gita, Adi Shankara, Vivekanada, St Augustin, Mircea Eliade together with more prosaic teachings of diet, allopathy and alternative medicine. [257]

[256] CNSAS Archive, Informative Stacks [Fond Informativ], I 1687 Bivolaru Gregorian *p.36*.
[257] References taken from a list of books found at Bivolaru's premises at one of the police searches, CNSAS Archive, Informative Stacks [Fond Informativ], I 1687 Bivolaru Gregorian *p.312*.


3) – Le Livre des Esprits spiritualistes – Nordmann
4) – Le pouvoir magique – Curcio
5) – Taureau – Curcio *
6) – Lion – Curcio *
7) – La parapsychologie devoilée – Scott Rogo
8) – Le livre de la sagesse eternelle – Suso
9) – The perfection of Yoga – Bhaktivedanta.
10) – Perfect Questions – Perfect answers – Bhaktivedan
11) – Bhagavad Gita as it is – Bhaktivedanta *
12) – Search for Liberation *
13) – The Psychology of the Esoteric – Rajneesh
14) – Theorie et pratique des Yogas – de Campigny
15) Magnetisme et hypnotisme
16) Frontiers of healing – Regush
17) The third eye – Lobsang Rampa *
18) Bases of Yoga – Aurobindo –
19) Yoga Natural Foods Cookbook – Hittleman *
20) Introduction to Yoga – Hittleman *
21) Yoga – The 8 steps to Health and Peace – Hittleman
22) The mystery of the Human double – Shirley
23) Minds through space and time – Steiger
24) Magiciens et sorciers – Moriel *
25) Eckankar – Twitchell
26) Le yoga – Auguste –
27) La venus a la fourrure – Sacher-Masoch
28) Le matin des magiciens – Pauwels –
29) The Edgar Cayce Story on reincarnation – Cerminara
30) Le lotus et le robot – Koestler
31) Techniques et pouvoirs de l'occultisme – Pedro [illegible]
32) The mysterious odic force Reichenbach
33) Les mysteres du sommeil et du magnetisme
34) Chinese horoscopes – Lau –
35) Self Hypnosis – Lecron

Ofițer –
Percheziționat –

Picture 13. List of books confiscated at one of Bivolaru's house searches. Source: CNSAS Archive.

One of the key elements of Bivolaru's philosophy was the principal of universal love, an understanding of the body as an entity distinct from physicality, and closer to a psycho-spiritual constituent, the subtle body of tantrism. Love, for Bivolaru, was understood as ritualized sex, empathy and universal communion. In one of his declarations at the secret police, dating back to his first encounter with state authorities in 1972, he explained his interest in yoga: *"What drew me towards this mysterious science, was the fact that it has* *as an ultimate goal, a total annihilation of instincts, preaching the idea of universal love which opens the path towards the unknown places of the unconscious".*[258]

Many forms of Tantric practice do involve explicit forms of ritual transgression. The ritual consumption of meat, wine and, in some cases, sexual intercourse in violation of class laws can be employed as a means of awakening and harnessing the awesome power or Shakti (or Sacti as the Securitate spelled it), that flows through all things. Yet at the same time Tantra was a conservative tradition, which ultimately reasserted the ritual authority and social status of the male Brahmins. Women were seen as tools in the ritual practices; women have no right to any Vedic ceremonies and no access to any mantras (sacred words). For the most part, women were subordinated to males and their ritual role was limited to being a partner for male adepts.

Initially, Tantra was a highly esoteric tradition that had little to do with sensual abandon and sexual liberation, and more with enlightenment and transgression of boundaries. It was infused with sexualized and magical undertones when these practices were discovered by European Orientalists and superimposed their own legacy dating back to medieval sexual rituals. This overlap suffered a further mutation in the 19th Century when Tantra was simply subsumed to a particular variety of sexual practice and as such integrated into the booming market of pornography and sexually licentious literature springing as an undercurrent in Victorian contexts.[259] In the interwar reinterpretations, through the works of Mircea Eliade and Julius Evola, the use of ritualized sexuality was

[258] CNSAS Archive, Informative Stacks [Fond Informativ], I 1687 Bivolaru Gregorian*, p. 28* .
[259] Hugh B. Urban, *Tantra: Sex, Secrecy, Politics, and Power in the Study of Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

doubled by the idea that violence accompanies ritualized sex acts in order to purge and defile spaces and contexts: transgression had to take the form of destruction in order to annihilate the forces of modernity and return to a pre-modern self.

Gregorian Bivolaru was himself the result of this convoluted tradition. Tantric sex, while allowing for various forms of experimentations, transgressive behavior and alternative states, it nonetheless reproduced the initial subordination of women. For Bivolaru, in his practices, women were simply vehicles for his desires and for his jouissance. While the initiating mechanisms were supposed to free the sexuality of both partners, the constant supply of young women the guru benefited from point to the hierarchy fundamentally inscribed into these relations. Given the subordination of women in these practices, while the tantrism developed by Bivolaru had transgressive features in relation to the regime, ultimately it still remained within its patriarchal and heterosexist horizon.[260]

Furthermore, Bivolaru conceived of yoga as a "mysterious science". According to his own admission the aura of mystery was what drove him towards this secret science that allows one to know the universe by knowing himself. He was referring here to the reception of Hindu philosophy in the western tradition as part and parcel of the esoteric knowledge. On the other hand, the young guru strived to gather materials on yoga from public libraries around Bucharest, often from books who had up until the mid 1960s been under key in special state archives. Most importantly, his spiritual development happened

[260] The Securitate records contain many references to Bivolaru's relationship with women. Informer notes highlight the issue, the guru's testimonies often include long paragraphs about the circumstances under which he is meeting certain women, the officer's report stress that he and his group attempt to "recruit" young women for the groups activities. CNSAS Archive, Informative Stacks [Fond Informativ], I 1687 Bivolaru Gregorian.

alongside constant interviews with the secret police, house searches and arrests, which further built upon the aura of secrecy surrounding yoga.[261] This feature of suspicion, of secrecy and conspiracy looms over the guru's philosophy and over MISA materials to this day, inscribing them as powerful objects of desire.

Among the letters collected by the Securitate there are numerous examples of him claiming to engage in remote communication with his followers. Bivolaru claimed that a form of communication was premised upon an affective disposition between two partners, usually of the opposing sex and that this communication could be powered through the channels of sexual energy that existed between the two.[262] To some extent the possibility of remote communication parallels that of sexual communion. This scheme of thought transfer seemed to be of peculiar usefulness in providing a sense of community to those like-minded people, who, due to police surveillance, distance and scarcity of means of communication, could not freely engage with each other. Bivolaru envisioned telepathy as an active phenomenon. The sender and the receiver had to be prepared for the communicational act through prior meditation as well upon having established an affective connection prior to the scheduling of the actual communication.[263] These rites and rituals ensured and reproduced a sense of collective identity for the community of yogis always under the control of state security.

[261] Gregorian Bivolaru was interviewed by the Securitate on 9 different occasions in between 1971 and 1989; he had been detained on at least 3 occasions; he served a jail sentence of 16 months in 1984 after trying escaping the Secret Police headquarters; in 1989 he was judicially interned in a mental institution for an undetermined period but served only three months (October to December 1989).
[262] Bivolaru claimed tha he once meditated his way out jail.
[263] CNSAS Archive, Informative Stacks [Fond Informativ], I 1687 Bivolaru Gregorian .

After Ceausescu's regime collapsed, Gregorian Bivolaru perfected his ideas of telepathic communication and published a number of brochures on this issue making it one of the trade-marks of his brand of Yoga. Bivolaru concluded that a collective meditation, usually in with followers arranged in a human design shaped as a spiral, is the best practice to clear the channels for thought transfer. To this day, Bivolaru, now a refugee in Sweden, allegedly uses telepathy to send his messages to his Romanian followers during two yearly ceremonies of collective meditation.

Costinești- another hide-way for nudism and yoga

By 1979 Bivolaru was again under secret police surveillance. This time, working as a pedagogue in a youth home, he had been reported by one of his co-workers for using his work-time to translate and to copy books about yoga and to openly declare his interest in fleeing the country. During his detention, he is asked to provide details about his "hobby" over and over again in numerous declarations (written and re-written). One key theme running throughout the documents refers to his contacts with foreign citizens and his relationship with women. Reading through the documents one has the feeling that the Securitate officers did not take seriously, the guru's interest in yoga, yet they were hunting for compromising details over his sexuality. Less then three years later, in 1982, Guru Grig is once again detained at the offices of the Secret police. This time he was investigated because he had also took part in the transcendental meditation sessions organized by the Romanian Academy and was thus accidentally found himself caught in the ensuing scandal. His prior antecedents only confirmed the suspicious nature of what was labeled by the Securitate as " *foreign religious grouping*"[264]; the Transcendental

[264] CNSAS Archive, Documentary Fund [Fond Documentar], D 3, p.4-5.

Meditation sect. However, Guru Grig was already a marginal character with few professional ambitions and even less connections with Communist Party Politics. The Transcendental Meditation scandal and the ensuing sanctions did not necessarily target or affected deeply someone like the Guru yet as a side-effect during the investigation his yoga materials had been confiscated during a house search. Trying to escape the omnipresent eye of the Securitate, Bivolaru went deeper into the underground, to the point where he found a job as an unskilled laborer at the Bucharest Metro. His life choice, namely yoga, was at the time increasingly a risky and unlawful business. In 1984, the Secret Police tracked the Guru once again, this time around catching him in the act of giving classes of yoga in private homes, an activity now banned and illegal. During the course of the investigation, the secret police also identified a secret location, a one room apartment where Bivolaru together with his close followers were depositing an impressive collection of books, brochures, Xerox copies, translation manuscripts, posters and videos connected with yoga, occult practices, sexuality and of course pornography.[265]

By this time Bivolaru ceased to be a solitary figure and instead became "Guru Grig", the acknowledgment of this status as the head of a fairly organized underground group[266] – MISA. Its members dedicated their time to teaching yoga, translating and importing materials, distributing them through photocopying around the network, procuring and producing erotic materials. Since the crack down on all imports, sexual depictions were hard to get by, therefore MISA members begun to produce their own, enabled also by the

[265] CNSAS Archive, Informative Stacks [Fond Informativ], I 1687 Bivolaru Gregorian. f 113.
[266] By 1984, the Secret police identifies 20 people close to Bivolaru and also delinates a further course of action in order to prevent them from engaging with the guru or from practicing yoga. These measures imply

widespread distribution of VHS technology from the mid 1980s onwards. However, this activity was not solely motivated by austerity or by a do-it-yourself mentality. It dovetailed the growth of the group and the widespread sexual practices, including group sex and collective sexual initiations, it engaged in. It is perhaps the only example of socialist tantric sex existing today. Sexually explicit in nature, the movies do not seek to generate arousal in the viewer, as it is the case with regular porn, but rather to stimulate a particular form of bodily and emotional identification. There one can best discern the two deep-seated roots of the westernization of the tantric tradition, at their most schematic level: romanticism and spiritualism. Of course, seen with today's loaded gaze, the movies appear anything but erotic. In fact, they provoke laughter, just like many of the materials produced by MISA after the fall of Ceausescu. But here it is exactly the point: one can only imagine the sexual charge these representations carried before 1989.

During summer time, MISA convened in a remote stretch in Costinești, a popular resort on the Black Sea. The choice for the nudist beach was both spiritual and strategic. Spiritually, it was linked to the direct connection of the bodies and with the therapeutic effects of the sun; strategically, such a place ensured that while the secret police would keep an eye on them, they would be less prone to infiltrate within the group. The main activities of the group were meditation, arranged as a spiral, talks and sex. Sex with multiple partners was encouraged and spiritually motivated in the activity of the group, while also recorded in the archive of the secret police, with lavish details by overtly curious (and fascinated) officers.[267]

While it is easy to understand the role of these collective sexual practices in the spiritual economy of the group, the question that arises here is why did the secret police allow for them to take place? Not only that these practices directly contradicted the mores the regimes was trying to cultivate, but also they were largely used for producing more sexually arousing material. The explanation is that the regime itself was taking pleasure from such interactions. By allowing them, the power was producing its own forms of excitement and jouissance, its own dark secret, externalized as a subversive sexual practice. This was the case since MISA was a rather bounded and underground collectivity, with very little potential of spreading its message and practices to a wider audience. Its activities were clouded in mythology and rumor, wrapped in mystery and carried around by whispers. Therefore, its political and subversive potential was quite limited. As such, they only functioned as arousing material for the gaze of power, espousing its pervert core.

The discovery of the secret hideout did bring Bivolaru a prison sentence. From the Secret Police, Guru Grig's case, was taken over by the regular *milita,* charged and sentenced with the spread of mystical literature (art 94 from Law3/1974), for practicing a profession without adequate credentials (art 281 Penal Code), namely that of a yoga teacher, and for the spread of pornography (art.325 Penal Code), serving a year of prison time. But what

[267] The author Gabriel Andreescu remains restrained if not silent in his assertions regarding the sexual underpinning of Bivolaru's activities prior to 1989. However, undeniably the evidence for engaging in a discussion over the sexual philosophy of Bivolaru and its effects are there. See Andreescu, Chapter 1.

the authorities wanted to contain with Bivolaru's arrest, namely a clear chosen life-style, the sense of inner freedom and personal mission, would only grow in strength and add to the guru's myth with this new trial. Upon his release, Guru Grig, returned to teaching and preaching yoga and reconnected once again with his disciples through letters and remote meditation. Just like the rest of the society of the time Guru Grig continued to nest thoughts of escaping the country, considering himself a political prisoner.[268] While his popularity among groups of students was on the rise, so was the monitoring and intimidation schemes organized by the Secret Police.[269] The final act of Guru Grig's group came in the fall of 1989, when the guru was forcefully interned into a psychiatric institution.

3. The body of nation under threat

The last days of 1989 came with a promise of freedom and a discovered sense of being able to shred previously imposed inhibitions, regarding sexual activities and spiritual practices. But instead of the promised opening, the reality entailed in fact various forms of enclosures.

The rich diversity of the spiritual practices during socialism, quickly took only one predominant form: a powerful revival of Orthodox beliefs, rules and morals. In this constellation, sexuality and sexual explorations continued to remain repressed and linked

[268] I've developed this portrait by putting together information from the letters and conversations recorded and preserved in the former Securitate archive. CNSAS Archive, Informative Stacks [Fond Informativ], I 1687 Bivolaru Gregorian, Vol.2.
[269] Gabriel Andreescu, *Reprimarea Miscarii Yoga in Anii '80 [The Repression of the Yoga Movement during the 1980s]* (Iasi: Polirom, 2008).

with the Devil's workings. The public space was imbued with religiosity, powerfully linked with the prevailing anti-communism. Since the former regime was considered atheist and anti-religious, the revival of Orthodoxy was meant to overcome that legacy. In practice, it led to a new wave of dogmatism and rules.[270]

Economic factors also had played their role. After an initial brief moment in the early 1990s when people experienced a wider degree of freedom, especially freedom of imagination, that led to the re-activation of various spiritual quests –leading to the formation of an indigenous "hippie" movement vicariously recuperating the global 1968 – the social realities creped in. Pragmatism, the quest for a better job and the pressures to grab all opportunities existing around had little place for the idealism and dreams of aloof spiritual quests. Material concerns and interests prevailed and with them a renewed sense of realism and down-to-earth ideology.

Surely, some spiritual quests persisted amid these changes. Among them, MISA grew into quite a large organization, expanding across social strata and linking powerfully with international kin movements. Costinești remained their summer meeting place, attracting now the popular imagination as a place where anything goes in terms of sexuality. But MISA too was unable to remain outside the wider social pressures, and therefore while it took a distinctly Orthodox direction, it also expanded its soft porn business.

[270] Stan, Lavinia and Turcescu, Lucian, 'Religion, Politics and Sexuality in Romania', *Europe - Asia Studies*, 57 (2005), 291–310.

This, and the alternative sexual practices it engaged in, meant that it continued to attract the gaze of the secret police, only slightly reformed after 1989. On the evening of 19 March 2004, over 300 law enforcement agents, ranging from anti-terror units to prosecutors, stormed 16 buildings in a Bucharest neighborhood. They pulled over 90 people out of their beds at gun point, forced them to lye down on the floors while the premises were thoroughly searched. By the end of the night the suspects were taken in custody and more than twenty police trucks were filled with evidence. Police brutality was doubled by media intrusion which reported live the entire operation, depicted as an investigation into a widespread network of drug trafficking, human trafficking and potentially terrorism.[271]

In fact it was the disbanding of MISA and the arrest of Gregorian Bivolaru. For several years, they were under the constant scrutiny of the police, routinely searched and interrogated, as if for them 1989 never took place. For Bivolaru, the overlap between practicing yoga and police interrogations that characterized his life prior to 1989, continued apace afterwards. Just like during the old regime, MISA was deemed a threat to the body of nation, corrupting its morals and violating the borders of decency and acceptability. These actions of power point in fact to a continuity despite the rupture of 1989. Therefore, this continuity renders clear that there is something in the power itself, irrespective of the nominal political forms it took across the 1989 divide, that simply has to imagine a constant threat to the body of nation in order to elicit the need to protect it.

[271] Andreescu, *Misa: Radiografia Unei Represiuni [Misa: The X-Ray of a Repression Case]*.'Cazul MISA-Gregorian Bivolaru Nu Intereseaza Doar Presa de Scandal [The Bivolaru Case does not only interest the tabloid press] - Numarul 215-216 - Aprilie - 2004 - Arhiva - Observatorcultural.ro'.Rodica Culcer, 'Cine Se Teme de Misa'[Who's Afraid of Misa], *Revista 22, anul XIV*, 5 April 2004.

MISA was the convenient external point that could justify the “state of exception” demanding the direct intervention of power. Given the entire historical trajectory of MISA in relation to power, it is worth highlighting that transgression –just like in Sade’s case – is not external to power, it’s not a form of overriding power, but precisely the mechanism through which power asserts itself and gains reality. By allowing MISA’s and Bivolaru’s sexual practices to exist in the shadows of the society, power could stage and protect the “normality” of the rest of the citizens.

This consubstantiality between power and transgression is perceptible in the trickster figure of Bivolaru himself. Upon his arrest for charges including underage rape, he nonetheless demanded and was granted political asylum in Sweden claiming persecution for his beliefs. This was the ultimate scandal, internationally shaming Romania during its final moments of finalizing the EU accession, and thus claiming its status as a civilized European country. Bivolaru’s asylum, his physical flee from the country, was the actualization of the fact that he could not be part of the body of nation, he had to be either repressed (thrown into jail) or purged (through asylum), just as it was the case during communism. There was no place for him either in the old communist Romania or in the new European one.

Several press reports in the recent years, mostly of dubious origins, have accredited the idea that Bivolaru is still present in the life of MISA. Some reports claimed that he has secret meetings with neophyte young women who are brought to him in a secret location in Paris. Others suggested that Bivolaru is present at the MISA orgies through telepathy, directly materializing in the bodies of the participants. Such reports testify both to the long lasting influence of Bivolaru on the public imagination and to the very phantasies of this public imagination. Both enabled and repressed by the regime, marginalized for his practices and encouraged for exactly the same reason, Bivolaru perfectly encapsulates the dialectic and productive logic of power. While seemingly utterly impossible to integrate into the body of nation for which it was a constant threat, Bivolaru in fact cogently expressed the dual nature of power, in its various articulations both before and after 1989.

Gregorian Bivolaru or Guru Grig was indeed, the socialist Sade, subverting and re-enforcing the power of the regime at the same time while exposing its Sadistic nature. Moreover, Bivolaru's figure also point to how the idea of the nation itself is imbued with sexual connotations: the logic of the nation exists only in so far as there is a sexual "normality" that, at times, comes under threat from an Other that needs to be rejected or excluded. Since nation is inseparable from productive and reproductive sexuality (with all its "normal" dimensions of heteronormativity and monogamy), all alternative forms are both anti-national and abnormal. This was also the case of Bivolaru. But, as I tried to suggest in this chapter, there was an even more complicated process at play: far from simply being only the ultimate Other of the socialist regime, threatening the nation as a whole (as he undoubtedly was), Bivolaru was also a quite specific creation of state socialism and its ambivalent, paradoxical and contradictory policies. The relationship was dialectical which only enforced the trickster character of guru Bivolaru, both before and after 1989. Precisely as a trickster, his figure remains unclassifiable and wrapped in mystery and controversy.

IV. "*Je est un autre*": homosexuality, confession and the politics of abnormality

In the previous two chapters I explored forms of subversion and transgression that emerged within the domain of "normality" and "acceptability" drawn by the functioning of power. In this chapter, I look at what remains in the shadows of this process, at its repressed, abject bodies that need to be repudiated forcefully in order to bring into being the socialist sexed subject. This zone of "unlivability", as Butler calls it, is the zone inhabited by the LGBT subjects –that is, those subjects that are at once produced and excluded by the heteronormative imperative.

My case study revolves around three narratives of homosexual men, recounting their lives during Romanian state-socialism. The narratives are exemplary not only for the way in which homosexuality was constructed as a zone of abjection by the heteronormativite imperative of state socialism, but also for the way in which the homosexual subject emerged as abject in relation to the norm –the necessary outside giving consistency to "normality" – through practices of forced confession and policing.[272] Homosexual men are called upon to constantly give an account of themselves, to offer a confession to the state authorities, to verbalize their abjection in front of power. It precisely through this

[272] My reading of the three narratives is very much influenced by the work of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (University of California Press, 1990).

verbalization the boundaries between normality and abjection are constantly reinforced and the abject bodies are isolated from the body of nation.[273]

Being inscribed as abject, the abject body of the homosexual represents also a threat, a possible danger, a source of anxiety given the “gender trouble” it might create. The abnormal body of the homosexual, precisely through its inscription as abnormal and external to the normal body of nation by the exercise of power, holds enormous power of its own. Its vulnerability in relation to power, its externality is what confers it the power of transgression and, most importantly, dis-identification. By excluding the abnormal bodies from the order of things, they come back to haunt that order, to potentially disrupt and queer it. This, to remain in Butler’s theoretical horizon, is precisely what empowers even the most disempowered segments to produce destabilizing and anti-hegemonic effects.

In socialist Romania, same sex relations were inscribed as penal acts through the (in)famous article 200 of the Penal code adopted in 1968.[274] The article remained in vigor until 2000, when amid societal upheaval it was finally abrogated. People condemned under this article faced up to four years in prison, often times sanctions at work and on party line as well as the stigmatization of their close community. Article 200 was used as a blunt instrument of the persecution of homosexual men as well as a political tool to compromise, coerce or blackmail especially homosexual men to collaborate with the

[273] George L. Mosse, *Nationalism and Sexuality: Respectability and Abnormal Sexuality in Modern Europe* (Howard Fertig, 1985).
[274] ‘Codul Penal Al Republicii Socialiste România [The Penal Code of The Socialist Republic of Romania]’.

secret police as informers or collaborators. The infamous article played a key role in a new strategy of political control of late state – socialism which refrained from out in the open political persecution and instead decided to stage criminal law-suits (for petty crimes and especially for vice crimes) in order to tackle vocal dissenters.[275] Article 200 was both an anti same – sex piece of legislation as well as a very successful instrument deployed to tighten social control.

The abuses under Article 200 were further facilitated by the fact that at the time, none of the international organizations working or monitoring human rights violations regarded sodomy laws or the imprisonment of homosexuals as a human right violation. The lack of consent over the de-criminalization of homosexuality in "western" democracies further exacerbated the plight of the homosexuals as well as the usage of anti sodomy articles against political opponents. During the 1980s for example, those were deemed politically uncomfortable for the regime, would be arrested under fabricated accusations for four offenses: stealing, illegal possession of foreign currency, unfulfilling their work obligations and homosexuality.[276] All these crimes had in fact a powerful political content and effects, meant to subdue and repress undesirable bodies. This double usage of homosexuality only enriches our understanding of the politics of sexuality, where the truth of oneself is as much in the making of politics as in the reality of the subject.

But simply attending to this level of police repression is not enough. Homosexuality was severely repressed during state socialism and was often instrumentalized as a means for

[275] Deletant, *Ceauşescu and the Securitate*.
[276] Oprea, *Banalitatea Raului. O Istorie a Securitatii in Documente 1949-1989. [The Banality of Evil. A History of the Securitate in Documents 1949-1989].*

repressing political dissidents. It thus served a dual purpose: on the one hand to police all those forms of sexual practices that did not conform to the official sexual regimes; on the other hand, to police the very boundaries of the political regime that for which those sexual practices were considered normal and desirable. The homosexual was even more dangerous because of this double overlap, this double threat it posed.[277]

However, precisely this police repression and violent action over the abject bodies of the homosexuals gave rise to a space of autonomy. "Je est un autre" – the subject that is more than this direct performative creation and interpellation, a subject that nonetheless emerges from this dual process. This need to give an account of this "autre", of this different subject was visible after 1989 when, timidly, amid a still homophobic society, different gay voices could articulate their past and present experiences. They felt the need to come out again, to give an account of themselves giving an account of themselves in front of the police power during socialism.

Sedgewick's question - how does one really know is gay?[278] - gained a very precise answer during socialism: it was the police, especially through the practice of revealing, spying and confession that determined who is gay and who is not. One record from the Romanian context illustrates this point better:

> *In 1988, when I was 26, I come to Bucharest for a short stay. I was staying with a friend of mine, a man who was sharing a flat with another guy. We had some drinks and my friend showed us later in the evening porn magazines both heterosexual and homosexual. My friend's flat mate took off and we took our clothes off jumped in separate beds with*

[277] David K. Johnson, *The Lavender Scare: The Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government*, Reprint edition (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 2004).
[278] Sedgwick.

the magazines in our hands. In the middle of the night we were arrested for article 200. We were taken to the police and beaten up and forced to sign confessions saying we had sex, which we hadn't at that point. I was sentenced for 2 years and my friend got three.[279]

It is then the police, based on the citation of the law decides when and whether a certain sexual intercourse has taken place and of what nature. Police is that which determines one's sexual identity, inscribes it and judges it according to its own interests.

This is then the focus of this chapter: this mysterious "je est un autre" that concomitantly affirms the productivity of power and its surplus. Who is this Other of the Subject and how does it come into being? How does the subject gain an awareness of its own otherness, which in turn prompts the need to give an account premised upon this otherness. Precisely this otherness that the subject becomes aware of is the outcome of the process in which abjection is reworked into political agency. This is then not simply a form of resistance to the agency of power, but a form of asserting the other of the subject precisely through and as an outcome of the agency of power. Therefore, instead of simply unearthing a repressed history of homosexual practices in socialist Romania, I propose a history of socialist sexuality from the perspective of the homosexual, "abject" subject.

To that end I analyze the written diaries of three very public figures that after 1989 confronted their socialist past as homosexuals and in doing so directly challenged past and present sexual regimes and bodily dispositions. Ion Negoițescu[280], Petre Sirin[281], and

[279] Example from Florin Buhuceanu, p.24.
[280] Ion Negoițescu (nicknamed Nego) – b.10th of August 1921, Cluj – d. 6th of February 1993, Munich – was a highly respected literary critic, married three times, he left Romania in 1979 with a fellowship and decided never to return; just before he had left the country, one of his lovers turned him in denouncing his homosexuality.

Nicole Constantin Munteanu[282] were compelled to give an account of them-selves following the opening of the secret police files after 1989 amid the scandals and revelations emerging from these archives. But in so doing, they in fact returned the gaze: they forced the public to openly confront with its repressed sexuality and its disavowed abject bodies.

What all three diaries have in common, despite their differences and the different personalities of the authors, is that they offer the possibility to discern the dialectics between the politics of sexual formation and the formation of sexual politics in socialist Romania. This tension is what defines their trajectory as subjects and abject bodies. They all express a different way in which this tension was articulated, which represent the three headings under which I organized this chapter. In fact, I present three ways in which homosexuality – as a "deviant", "abnormal" practice was lived through politically during socialism.

In the first part I explore the bodily and hedonistic searches of Ion Negoitescu[283] in which homosexuality was just one form of quest and bodily pleasure, one form of sexual experimentation. In the second part, through the diary of Petre Sirin[284] I explore its opposite: homosexuality as a curse, as a monstrous identification that prompts the subject, under heavy police pressure, to commit suicide. Homosexuality here is a form of

[281] Petre Sirin (b.1926, Bucharest – d.2003 Bucharest), a prolific documentary film maker, painter and illustrator.
[282] Nicolae Constantin Munteanu (b. 16th of November 1941, Pufesti – lives in Germany), journalist; fled the country in 1977 and from 1980s worked for Radio Free Europe – Romanian division.
[283] Negoițescu, Ion, *Straja Dragonilor; Memorii 1921-1941 [The Guard of the Dragons:Memoirs 1921-1941]* (Bucureşti: Humanitas).
[284] Sirin, Petre, *Castele În Spania: Cronică de Familie (1949 -1959) [Castles in Spain A Family Chronical 1949-1959* (Bucureşti: Humanitas, 2013).

burden, an irrepressible source of shame and guilt that can only be erased through death. Finally, the last section explores the relationship between homosexuality and political dissidence through the diary of Nicolae Constantin Munteanu.[285] For Munteanu, homosexuality is perceived as a bodily disorder, an infirmity or a handicap. He refers to it as "his hunchback". One therefore is compelled to live with it, despite the mockery and violence of others. In this case, homosexuality is a prelude for political violence exerted by the state, but also the very bases on which one can mount his/her own form of political dissidence during socialism. The three diaries, therefore, present also three different periods –despite their partial temporal overlap – of being homosexual during socialism. As such they might offer a different historical conceptualization of the history of socialism, a different time frame in which the absent abject bodies become central.

Michael Foucault wrote about the pleasure that comes from having to evade a normalizing power, "*flee from it, fool it or travesty it*".[286] But this is not simply a masochistic pleasure, deriving it from the very iteration of power that deems a body abject and abnormal. It is a pleasure that derives from the power described above: the power given by the potentially disruptive aspect of a spectral subjectivity. Pleasure derives from knowing that order and heterosexual normality are always frail, in danger, in need of constant reinforcement. Same-sex desire manages to expose the very inconsistency of power: if heterosexuality is "natural" why then the constant need to culturally reinforce it? Why then the need to deploy police to guard it and reaffirm it? Pleasure comes precisely from the awareness of and ability to formulate this gap at the

[285] Munteanu, Nicolae Constantin, *Ultimii Şapte Ani de Acasă: Un Ziarist]n Dosarele Securităţii [The Last Seven Years at Home: A Journalist in the Files of the Securitate]* (Bucureşti: Curtea Veche, 2007).
[286] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*.

very heart of power, to play out this fear inherent to the matrix of heteronormativity. The abject body, the excluded form of sexuality reassesses itself in the pleasure it takes from showing off, scandalizing and resisting. The very act of confession power elicits becomes the stage on which this scandalizing effect can be performed, the process by which abjection bursts into the functioning of power. In this chapter I will trace out this mechanism in the socialist context by discussing the dialectics between the police repression of homosexuality and the power this brutal display of power generates. To put it differently, in this chapter I explore the possibilities of "reworking abjection into political agency" to invoke Butler's formula.[287]

However, despite this power, the abject body is an ungrievable subject, the subject who is not entitled to mourning since it is already excluded from the domain of law and order. The abject body therefore is just a body, pure materiality that simply vanishes away from sight. This was precisely the case for the homosexuals during state-socialism and after: they were erased from any memory of violence, from any list of victims of the former regime, from any collective remembering acts and reparatory claims. They simply could not belong to the category of "victims" since victimhood was established in relation to the functioning of a law, a norm, and the abject body is simply outside of this realm. As I will show throughout this chapter, the experience of being gay and of being interpellated as abject during state socialism (and after) was a tremendously violent experience (as it is still today in many parts of the world). Subjected to violence, the subjects deemed abject had only one-way out: the suicide. The entire history of homosexuality in socialist

[287]Butler, *Bodies That Matter*. 21.

Romania is in fact a history of silent, solitary suffering, usually followed by suicide. No wonder is such a deep-buried history.

What is more, even within the category of the abject bodies and subjects there are hierarchies that are definitory but remain hidden. As this chapter will show, while there are some records of homosexual men and their plight in relation to the normative power (enabled by a certain acceptability acquired during post-socialism), other “abject” bodies of the past remain still in the shadows, and their story forever irretraceable, especially those of lesbian women and transgendered people. This aspect points to the fact that the phallocentric and heteronormative matrix does not organize only the domain of the normal, but in doing so, it also structures the realm of abnormality itself. It is never a chaotic space, but one infused by the very dispositions of normality.

In *The epistemology of the closet* Eve Sedgewick wrote about the mystery and secrecy gay sexuality is wrapped in by virtue of being closeted. This triggers the desire to know, to reveal and bring out the secret of sexuality. The process of “coming out” is also an effect of this desire to know, the desire to bring sexuality into the purview of the gaze.[288] Similarly, in the socialist context, the secret police always sought to force people into confession, into expressing publicly their sexuality. But this drive, this pervert curiosity is never actually fulfilled; it has a performative character, eliciting the need for more and more confessions and revelations.

[288] Sedgwick, p. 40.

This “coming out” is then what creates homosexual identity. Espousing the “dirty” secret is what fixates, gives consistency to a sex, a sexual practice and a sexual identity, which in turn constructs the boundaries of gender regimes and bodily dispositions. But in the socialist context, as Cristina Vătulescu showed, the practice of confession, of narrativization was part of the penal system.[289] The accused was required to confess its crimes, to narrativize and fully assume them. This very verbalization created both the guilty subject and the means for punishment. Discipline and punish were thus indistinguishable. As I will show below this was even more evident in the case of homosexuals that, by the very fact of their sexuality, were already inimical to the regime.

It is then the police, based on the citation of the law decides when and whether a certain sexual intercourse has taken place and of what nature. Police is that which determines one’s sexual identity, inscribes it and judges it according to its own interests.

1. Becoming homosexual

Ion Negoiţescu (1921-1993) was a well-known literary critic. He hailed from a middle class background, a Romanian family in Transylvania during the interwar period. He was a noted member of the Sibiu Literary Circle and worked as an editor for the major Romanian literary journals *Luceafărul* (1965-1967) and *Viaţa Românească* (1968-1971). Nonetheless, he served two terms in jail for his sexuality. As a consequence of these persecutions, in 1979 Negoitescu fled Romania and settled in Munich. There he produced his major works of literary studies and also wrote his memoirs which he published after

[289] Cristina Vatulescu, *Police Aesthetics: Literature, Film, and the Secret Police in Soviet Times* (Stanford University Press, 2010).

1989.[290] While his homosexuality was widely known in the literary circles, by publishing his memoirs Negoitescu became the first Romanian published author to openly come out as gay.

In his memoir, largely covering his childhood and youth, he examines at great lengths and in great details the development of his sexuality. His great concern is to actively reject the label of "homosexuality" and affirm instead a polymorphous, wide-ranging, intense and exploratory sexuality. Basically, his memoir is a deconstruction of the categories of sex and gender. He is writing against the identity of "homosexual" without demanding recognition. Instead seeks to expand the very notion of sexuality and sexual acts. I would like to emphasize this point in order to show how homosexuality did not take the form of a political quest for recognition as it happened in the west for example – it would have been almost impossible given the harsh policies of the socialist state. On the contrary, the experience of homosexuality took the form of bodily, sexual and sensuous experiences, incorporated in a particular lifestyle and care of the self, which warrants the link with the nudists, the yoga practitioners despite the obvious difference between the practices and their particular position vis-à-vis the policies and stringencies of state socialism. Negoitescu's example, just like Cassian's and guru Bivolaru's, is a case in point of how alternative bodily and sexual practices could develop within and against the state socialist expected morality.

[290] Stefanescu, Alex., *Istoria Literaturii Române Contemporane 1941-2000 [The History of Romanina Contemporary Literature 1941-2000].*

By rejecting the notion of homosexuality as such, Negoițescu therefore recalls taking pleasure and deriving sexual joy from a variety of gestures, touches and interactions: kissing the neck of an old aunt, eating a forbidden cake, playing doctor with a little Hungarian girl living next door, bathing in a cold river stream in the arms of a soldier (his father's ordinance), pressing his thigh against his desk-mate or hiding in a dark closet with a schoolmate and "feeling him with his penis".[291] All these small gestures, these furtive touches, glance and sensations were charged with sexual pleasure. Therefore, sexuality ceased to be restricted to particular form of interaction, just like it was divorced from the sexual intercourse itself, especially from penetration. Sexuality becomes a particular form of interaction, a way of being in the world that was open and sensible to the bodies around and to their various forms of interaction. This pleasure is enhanced by the necessary transgression such acts entail, reminding once again Bataille's observation that eroticism lies in the act of transgression itself.[292] The very subversion of expected bodily distance, the trespassing of societal rules for the sexual behavior becomes an erotic act in itself.

This attitude was amplified as years went by. As an adolescent, Negoitescu engaged in lengthy sexual games with his father's servant soldier, perhaps just a few years older than him. The soldier encouraged caressing and fondling his penis, in a mutual exchange of intimate touches. Moreover, young Negoițescu enjoyed sexual encounters in the movie theatre with strangers whom the boy picked up, thus already understanding the unwritten rules of anonymous, fleeing male bonding. But these escapades quickly generated

[291] Negoițescu, Ion.
[292] Bataille.

feelings of unexplainable fear, the awareness of the young boy of harboring a dark secret.[293] As Negoițescu put it, he lived with the anguish of an unfulfilled duty, guilt without object or direct referent, which engulfed him nonetheless. Here we can discern the basic stages of sexual formation in Freudian psychoanalysis. First, the young boy discovery of and desire for the phallus –a literal fixation with the penis as a stand-in for the phallus – and then, the fear of castration, of loosing the phallus should the secret be exposed. This of course is the fear of castration, the specter of the disciplining Father intervening in order to impose the law and curtail pleasure.

This aspect is visible in one of the episodes narrated by Negoitescu. One day his father was summoned to school by his teacher and because of his sexual escapades and the mixture of pleasure and anxiety they generated, Negoitescu looked and behaved completely different from the other schoolmates. The teacher, unsuspecting, wanted to know whether there was something wrong at home, determining this eccentric behavior. What we encounter in this apparently banal interaction between the father and the schoolteacher is precisely the attempt to impose on the schoolboy the heterosexual norm through the commanding figure of the father.[294] By calling the father to school (a standard procedure everywhere in the world), the teacher invokes in fact the law of the Father, the basic structuring rules of the society. It is the affirmation of order and discipline against the floating and haphazard character of the son's sexual discoveries.

[293] Negoițescu, Ion.
[294] Negoițescu, Ion.

The paradox in Negoitescu's case is that the law does not impose itself through the figure of the Father, but through the figure of the "homosexual". And this is an interesting paradox, usually overlooked, which is why Butler's work is so important. Usually, in the feminist discourse, the heteronormative matrix is that which "fixates" identities and puts and end to the "flux" of childhood sexuality, interpellating the subject into certain sexual and gender categories. But, in principle, there is a similar operation at work in imposing the homosexual matrix as well. Negoitescu expresses this point with stunning clarity. Towards the end of high-school, dominated by random sexual escapades with men and women, he finally meets a "real" homosexual. He never thought of himself as one, he rejected the category since it sounded like a medical diagnosis. But, faced with the sexual innuendos of a man in front of a shop window, this category imposes itself forcefully.

> *...A tall, pale man, big and a bit faded, with woably skin, dressed in black, an Oscar Wilde in old age or poverty, an ex convict, he looked as if there some white powder spread all over him, with a crocked tie and un ironed trousers, someone in between a tramp and a gentlemen. Suddenly, I felt an interior shiver, as when you sense a danger. He tried to small talk with me but I felt disgusted, I wanted to get away as soon as possible from this person who seemed to me to be disturbing my pudor right there in the streets. I felt as if I was going to get sick. I had met a „homosexual" for the first time in my life and it was such a repugnant feeling*.[295]

The disgust the author experiences is not necessarily a disgust towards the man itself. It is a rejection of a sexual category. The category itself is repugnant, the end of the flux of fleeting, exploratory sexuality. In a sense, the homosexual man the author confronts does carry the law of the Father, that is, the imperative of assuming a bounded form, of getting integrated into a sexual identity. It is the imperative of becoming a fully formed subject.

[295] Negoițescu, Ion.

The homosexual man Negoițescu rejected so violently is precisely the "autre", the Other. Basically, in the figure of the homosexual, Negoițescu recognized himself as a subject and in an anti-narcisistic gesture, he begun to hate himself. Self-hatred becomes then the basis of his subjectivity. While previously, for Negoițescu homosexuality was integrated into a wider life-style of sexual quests and celebration of being different, part of a conscious provocation directed against the provincial life of his teenage years, this practice crystalized into a fixed identity, dovetailing in fact, yet again, the performativity of power.

What is important to note in this case is precisely the unavoidability of subject formation, of what Althusser called subject interpellation. One way or another, the subject will enter the symbolic order, even as an abject subject as the heteronormative matrix deems homosexuality. But homosexuality itself then appears as an effect of this matrix, a category created by its forms of subject constitution.

This aspect became even more poignant for Negoițescu with the ensuing of state socialism. State socialism –just like any state in general, one might add – was keen to create and enforce the notion of homosexuality on subjects in order to purge them. It was a category of Othering, of exclusion. During the 1950s show trials, as I show below, labeling someone as homosexual took direct political significance: it was the equivalent of a lengthy jail sentence, on par with other crimes against the regime.

Negoitescu himself was imprisoned between 1961 and 1964 for collaboration with intellectuals deemed undesirable by the regime, but his homosexual affairs, notorious throughout the 1950s literary scene, singled him out among the other political prisoners.[296] After the Penal Code of 1968, there was a special police brigade in charge with controlling and punishing the deviant morals: the vice brigade. Homosexuality, like other penal acts such as prostitution, was a prime target of this brigade, seeking to identify and punish people for their sexual behavior. This vice brigade was able to decide what was "abnormal" and what was legitimate, establishing the boundaries of respectability in the communist society.

But the decisions made by the vice brigade were not arbitrary, but structural. The legislation of the time, which grounded the penal code, was founded on theoretical principles developed in the Faculty of Law of the Bucharest University. There, reputed professors of socialist law offered definitions in their treatises of what constitutes a legitimate sexual act according to the ideology of socialism.[297] Of course, there was nothing surprising at this level for a heteronormative, conservative and prudish regime. But the difficulty emerged when trying to decide the borderline cases: oral sex in a cinema, mutual masturbation by two men and even holding hands. So, in its attempt to codify the realm of perversion, power, through the law professors, was in fact giving voice to a series of sexual phantasies and sexual possibilities that only exposed its pervert imagination and desire to know and see, already traced in the case of the nudists and of Bivolaru's yoga practices as well.

[296] Stefanescu, Alex., *Istoria Literaturii Române Contemporane 1941-2000 [The History of Romanina Contemporary Literature 1941-2000]*.
[297] Dongoroz, Vasile, *Articol Despre Pederastrie*, 1970.

But the real pervert, violent core of power was visible in the punishment of the sexual transgression, of the “vices” through jail time. Why was this measure necessary? Michael Foucault wrote that the body is the prisoner of soul.[298] In the attempt to shape the soul of the subject in accordance to the imperatives of power, the body was subjected to and was the locus of punishment, of power’s direct assertion. A similar observation seems to apply to the socialist case as well: in the attempt to model the new Man, to instill a socialist morality, power exercised its coercive and corrective effects on the body of the abnormal subjects. Punishment through imprisonment served this purpose, as well as isolating the “rotten” subject from the rest of the “healthy” body of the nation, in order to avoid contagion. Moral corruption is thus effectively anchored onto the body as a form of disease.

The premise of exerting a punishment on the body is to achieve moral betterment, a form of reforming. But as Foucault showed in *Discipline and Punish*, there is a break between the age of spectacular public gatherings where punishment was meted out through beatings, whipping or even beheading, and the age of prison and the panopticon. The former took as its immediate object the body, the latter the subject.[299] Surely, the two can be combined, when physical violence is just an integral part of the prison, as was the case in socialism as well, especially during its first part when Negoitescu was arrested twice. The point to be noted here is that by taking as its object the subject not (just) the body, the prison form of punishment aims not simply towards a moral betterment, but also

[298] Foucault, *Discipline and punish*.
[299] Foucault, *Discipline and punish*.

towards the deconstruction of the subject, followed by its reconstitution. It was a violent form of subject formation. When subject formation through interpelation fails, prison time will fulfill its functions.

After his time in jail, Negoitescu came back to public life and became a respected literary critic. His past and present homosexual affairs were widely known, but he nonetheless regained the right to publish in some of the most central cultural magazines of the time. However, he was constantly harassed and monitored by the regime. In 1971 for example, the entire circulation of one of his novels was destroyed by the authorities, which led the critic to attempt suicide. This, in fact, might be one of the explanations for his re-integration into the literary life of socialism: the creation of vulnerable subjects that the regime could constantly harass, intimidate and pressure psychologically to the breaking point.

In 1977, partly out of his ingrained non-conformism and partly as a result of these constant harassments, Negoitescu offered his support for Paul Goma's letter to Ceausescu, which drew attention to the disregard of human rights in Romania. Politicizing one's dissidence, fully embracing the anti-regime stance was a way of attracting attention and escaping the solitude of power repression, something I will elaborate upon below when I discuss Nicolae Constantin Munteanu's case. Negoitescu was immediately arrested. But not only for his political stance, but also, based on the infamous article 200, for his homosexuality. In connection with him, 30 other people were also arrested, all known for belonging to the sexual group formed around

Negoitescu. Even though the circumstances are still unclear and the secret police archive inconclusive, it seems that the main source leading to these arrests was Negoitescu's own lover, Petru Romosan, then a 19-year-old student. [300]

During his arrest, Negoitescu contemplated suicide once again: "*I wanted to 'pull one' on my torturers and destroy the object of their sadistic pleasure*".[301] However, Negoitescu was released following international pressures. He also had to retract his support for Goma. Fearing the worst -that is, internment in a mental hospital for his homosexuality, a widely used practice at the time – Negoitescu returned to the "normality" of socialism, a fact attested by the forced marriage imposed on him by the regime. After his quick departure in 1979, he managed to immigrate to West Germany in 1983 where he took up a job at Radio Free Europe as part of the circle of dissident voices gathered there. He died ten years later in Munich, the last part of his life being dedicated to writing his diary, considered by the author himself the only important work of his life, the only moment of truthfulness.

Alex Stefanescu aptly compared Negoitescu's work with "*a room searched by the Securitate, and left in a mess*".[302] One can extend this definition to his entire life. While

[300] For much of the summer of 2009, the cultural and literary world of Bucharest debated the Romoșanu/ Negoițescu case. Documents from the former Securitate archive were made public revealing Petru Romoseanu's collaboration with the Secret police as well as his instrumental role in denouncing Negoitescu. As Romosanu is now the director of publishing house in Bucharest the scandal was quite prolongued and elaborate and it included a confessional interview with Romoseanu where he admitted of having briefly signed a collaboration document with the Securitate'Petru Romoşan. Drama Unei Turnătorii Cu Homosexuali' 'A Fost Petru Romoşan Turnător La Securitate? - Numarul 486 - August - 2009 - Arhiva - Observatorcultural.ro'
[301] Stefanescu, Alex., 'Negoitescu', *Romania Literara*.
[302] Stefanescu, Alex., *Istoria Literaturii Române Contemporane 1941-2000 [The History of Romanina Contemporary Literature 1941-2000].*

his adventure started with the pleasures of sexual discoveries, it ended in turmoil and on the brink of suicide.

2. On homosexual love

Petre Sirin (1926-2003) was one of the most important Romanian documentary filmmakers, making his reputation during socialism. He was also one of the central characters of the Romanian gay community at that time. His diary "*Castele in Spania*" [Castles in Spain] is a subjective fresco of the first decade of Romanian socialism (1949-1959) and the fate of the gay community, facing trails, repression, incarceration and a wave of suicides. What differentiates Sirin's diary from Negoitescu's is that he is not the central character, but his lover Mihai Radulescu, a musicologist. Radulescu, who also had a love affair with Negoitescu, was arrested for homosexuality and committed suicide while in custody in 1959. The diary is a testament to the memory of the lost lover, interspersed with his letters and diary entries, and of the lost love relation. It offers a very subjective take on a homosexual relationship during socialism. It is also a tale about fear, isolation, loneliness, despair and constant confrontation with homosexuality as a monstrous category.

The first level of engagement with this text is a theoretical one: it basically reveals an erasure. Mihai Radulescu was arrested in the Noica-Pillat trial, a famous trial at the end of the 1950s that put in jail all the undesirable intellectuals of the time.[303] Linked with the said trial, a series of homosexual men were also trialed and sentenced in conjoined trials.

[303] Tănase Stelian, *Anatomia Mistificării [The Anatomy of Mistification]* (Bucureşti: Humanitas, 2003).

For example, Petre Sirin had been accused and trialed in 1955 together with 40 other homosexual men and had served a small prison sentence in one of the biggest anti-gay trials. But while most of “straight” intellectuals and political dissenters were rehabilitated after 1964 and through that rehabilitation they could return to their careers during socialism, the group trialed for homosexuality remained both stigmatized during socialism and also never benefited from post-factum recognition or reparation even after the fall of the regime. They remained the unspeakable and ungreivable subjects, not entitled to mourning.

Sirin’s diary reads very much like an elegy, an attempt to break this silence and to publicly grieve his lover, after so many years of repressed pain and suffering in secrecy. It would not be enough just to note here the heterosexual matrix that deems certain subjects grivable and others ungrievable, or to notice how the heterosexual matrix profoundly infuses the practices of writing history. Rather, the point here is one of extended forms of violence over subjects deemed abnormal, who do not conform to the “normal” rules of legibility of power. This dialectics defines the life of the homosexual subject: on the one hand there is the profound injunction to know, bring to light and out of the closet the homosexual subject. This is, as it were, the level of (forced) confession. On the other hand, there is the opposite imperative of keeping these experiences hidden, of obliterating them, if their narrativization does not take place in a discursive framework elaborated by the power itself.

Therefore, Sirin's diary is important in this respect not necessarily because it gives voice to a repressed history and denied experiences, but because it creates a discursive field in which confession and memory can be expressed publicly without being elicited by the power's pervert desire to know. It is a form of re-narrativizing the subject by giving an account that is different from the official account inscribed in the official archive of power. As the author puts it at one point in his diary: *"…if I don't have a future, at least I have my past*".[304] This past becomes a subjective resource for writing and giving an account of it.

The second level of engagement of the diary is given by the constant struggles with the "monstruosity" of being gay and the specter of suicide such struggles entail. Just like Negoițescu, Sirin rejected the notion of homosexuality and refused to identify with this sexual category. Nonetheless his lover, Mihai Radulescu was utterly obsessed by it, dovetailing an internalization of the stigma produced by power. He even went as far as to seek medical treatment for his disease:

> *…he used to confess to me a lot…about his childhood, about the uncertainties of his adolescence, about the despairing moments of certitude that he was a homosexual (I hadn't had those moments); about the time when he went to visit professor Parhon about his "condition" and how the old man couldn't help him a bit, encouraging him and congratulating him about his virility… He told me about his strategies he had used to convince himself that he was not a monster, a singularity and then about meeting others.*[305]

Mihai Radulescu's turmoil appears in stark contrast to Negoițescu's sexual explorations and his celebrations of sexuality, at least those described during his adolescence. For Radulescu, his sexuality marks him as a monster, a freak, fuelling self-hatred. Here, we

[304] Sirin, Petre, p.65.
[305] Sirin, Petre, p120.

encounter another example of the awareness of "je est un autre" but the "autre" is a radically different other, impossible to integrate into the realm of the Symbolic. I noticed in Negoitescu's case how his encounter with the homosexual older man in front of the shop window represented the equivalent of the mirror-stage formation, his formation as a subject and integration into the symbolic order. For Radulescu, however, this symbolization was impossible, and homosexuality remained part of the Real, the shocking, monstrous dimension of a complete Other.

This impossibility of symbolizing the monstrosity has two seemingly opposing effects: a drive towards more and more pleasure and an opposite one towards death and destruction. The entire diary of Sirin is in fact suspended between the unbearable tension of love and death through suicide.

The title of the book "Castles in Spain" is actually a cover that Sirin and Radulescu devised in order to hide their sex lives from the authorities. Members of the group assumed the names of various Spanish kings so that they could correspond with each other safely, in a coded manner. But this disguise, which aimed to deceive the authorities, represented in fact the necessary fictional supplement based on which their interaction could function. Staging this fiction of Spanish kings, the homosexual friends could imagine themselves as "normal" subjects not as abject monsters. It was the necessary supplement that could provide a phantasmatic screen for the subject to be able to function.

This aspect is visible in the following diary entry of Sirin, made during his arrest and after the whole Spanish disguise was revealed and curtailed:

> *Loneliness is like a swamp that closely engulfs me into it. The mud is thick and heavy and it also through this mud that I can see people. They pass by me, they talk, they laugh… I see everything, more then they themselves know about themselves and their lives but somehow I cannot talk to them. All our connections are cut down; I cannot get closer to them because of this thick mud, I rest silent and still! It's all in vain! Even if everything ends now and we will get out of this business alive, we will never be able to regain the harmony of the past years, happiness died for us!* [306]

Basically, what this entry registers is the collapse of the possibility for subjective symbolization, for the possibility of participating in the "normal" interactions with other people. Once the fictional screen, the fictional supplement on which the subject rested disappears, the entire social assemblage appears "mudded". A clear gap separates now the subject from the society. But the entry also registers not only this alienation from the "normality" but it also carries the melancholy of the interaction in the homosexual circle. As it were, the phantasmatic screen of the Spanish kings made possible not only the interaction and symbolization with the rest of the world, but also, and perhaps more importantly, the sexual interactions within the circle itself. It was a way of transposing homosexuality from the realm of abnormality and monstrosity to a positive and erotic affirmation.

The group of Spanish kings of eight young men, all quite well educated, all living in Bucharest and all connected to the pre-communist bourgeoisie. The young men would meet up, live together for periods of time, spend holidays together, fall in love and have sex. In many ways, the Spanish court turned itself into a parallel universe where men

[306] Sirin, Petre, p.201.

otherwise on the margins would build in and act their own phantasies and their own chose life-styles. Their life-style (and sex) was not only a violation of heteronormativity but in many ways it disregarded the principles of heterosexual monogamy. This is even more surprising since they were not living in isolation with each other but in the midst of their families and usually using the infrastructure offered by this affiliation to help out friends in need.

But despite this apparent harmony of non-monogamous relationship what transpires from Petre Sirin's diary is in fact uneasiness with this arrangement. He is in love with Radulescu and feels abandoned amid his lover's affairs and other sexual interactions he himself has with members of the Spanish court. There is a sense of desperation in many ways foretelling of the sad denouement, the lover's suicide. However, the diarist notes that the others of their community also echo his own feelings. Sirin relationship with Radulescu broke down in the second half of the 1950s as both partners found different lovers. By the end of the decade, in 1959 and very close to Radulescu's suicide, they got close again and began a new living arrangement. Months later Radulescu would be denounced to the police by one of their former partners. He was arrested and hang himself while awaiting trial. His homosexuality and his close connection with Constantin Noica, a persona non-grata of the regime, made him doubly vulnerable to police pressure. Suicidal thoughts ran through the entire life of the Spanish castle community building up a tension and an expectation that the main characters would also end his own life.

Throughout the diary, the love affairs are interspersed with recordings of suicides or attempts at that. In 1951, one friend killed himself in order to evade a shameful (in his view) vice inquiry. The following year, another close friend, part of the Spanish kings, attempted suicide. The author himself, while in police custody in 1955, attempted to kill himself by not eating before being force fed by the police in the prison's hospital and survived.[307]

Love, suicide and police investigations were closely knitted together in the first socialist decade. But even though the trials for homosexuality were inseparable from political trials, homosexuality was not in itself politicized by the actors themselves. It was not a political category, or better said, a category that could generate explicit political contention, even though, obviously, it was a political category for the state, as mentioned above. For the people themselves, homosexuality remained a form of soul searching and subject articulation, largely a personal and even cultural practice, entirely subdued by power.

3. Queering state socialism

The noticeable difference between Nicolae Constantin Munteanu's diary[308] and Sirin's is that the former's is in fact a collection of secret police excerpts ammased from Munteanu's surveillance file. These excerpts are then followed by a lengthy discussion between Munteanu and his editor about the truth value of the content exposed and an interview about the historical circumstances of their production. In contrast to the other

[307] Sirin, Petre, p114-116.
[308] Munteanu, Nicolae Constantin.

diaries we find out very little about the subjective turmoil of the author, his coming to terms with his homosexuality, but we plunge instead directly into politics.

Nicolae Constantin Munteanu remains a highly visible and highly popular journalist in today's Romania. Nonetheless his present popularity amounts to a lot less then what it was during the last decade of Ceaușescu when his voice on Radio Free Europe was a recognizible feature of evening news (the real news broadcasted from the West). Before his emigration in 1977, Munteanu worked as a journalist for a popular magazine in Bucharest, mostly about cinema and popular culture. Back in the day, his articles were no less more popular then others and his presence nothing noticeable in the cultural landscape. However, upon hearing of Paul Goma's support letter for the Charter '77[309] movement, Munteanu wrote down a letter denouncing Ceaușescu's abuses and attempted to send to Radio Free Europe, inspired by and in support of Paul Goma.

But, in spite of careful planning, the person he thought was a representative of the US ambassador, turned out to be in fact a secret police officer, infiltrated in the US embassy. Munteanu's intentions were thus unmasked and he was immediately arrested. While in jail, he refused to retract his statements and his beliefs, in spite of beatings and blackmail with disclosure of his homosexuality. In reaction to his resistance, but also faced with the specter of yet another letter to soon reach the offices of Radio Free Europe, this time

[309] Paul Goma (b. 3r of October 1935 in Bessarabia – lives in Paris) is a Romanian anti-communist dissident and a novelist. While a student, Paul Goma protested the occupation of Budapest by Soviet troops and for his acts he was imprisoned and then moved into forced domicile in the south of Romania. After 1964, he returned to Bucharest and began writing a series of novels. In 1977, the author managed to smuggle a letter to Radio Free Europe where he decried the lack of human rights in Romania and announced the opening of a Romanian Chapter of Charter '77. For his deed, the Romanian government redrew his citizenship and expulsed him and his family to France. He continues to live there without Romanian citizenship.

smuggled over the border by Munteanu's lover, a foreign diplomat, the Securitate officers decided that there was nothing much to do with such a hopeless case, except to allow Munteanu to emigrate. He was soon granted a passport, fled the country and settled in Munich where begun a highly successful career as one of the most famous anti-communist voices of Radio Free Europe.

This story rests within the covers of Nicolae Constantin Munteanu, the dissident. However, in the archive of the secret police hold yet another file with a more surprising content: the file in which Munteanu is not a victim of the secret police, but an informer.
The mystery of the two files confused Munteanu to the point of not recognizing himself (the double personality of victim and informer mirroring that of the smart young promising man and the homosexual) and in fact triggered the energies for writing his book and settling account publicly.

Now, Munteanu's narrative identifies this second file in connection to his stepfather' reaction after hearing that the young man has his mind set for leaving Romania. The stepfather made a denounce with the Securitate forces accusing his step son of attempted evasion. The event is placed sometime in 1970 and indeed upon more clear scrutiny, Munteanu recalls interactions with the Securitate, more or less coerced meetings when he would have to give the officers some insignificant piece of information.[310] But this created a tremendous secret he had to guard. This, and the fact he was actually a homosexual. A double closeted truth. For Munteanu, being an informer and being homosexual were his twin poles of identity. He referred to his homosexuality as his

[310] Munteanu, Nicolae Constantin, p.54.

"*hunchback*"[311], which invokes the image of bodily deformity, of abnormality, but at the very same time it expresses the awareness of a burden. For Munteanu this double burden was then the triggering point of his desire to leave the country. Becoming political and directly facing the regime, even risking his exposure as homosexual and facing prison time, represented the only way of actually breaking the spell of the double secret.

In the secret police files his homosexuality is just hinted at. While the reports described him in the company of other well-known homosexual men, the officer in charge of the case did not explicitly refer to him as homosexual. Munteanu's sexuality was only a lead needing further investigation and further information. What is surprising to a reader is how the Secret police decided to investigate Munteanu's private life. None other then a close relative of Munteanu was tasked with the aim of finding out the truth about Munteanu's sexuality. Cousin Costica, a mid-level secret police officer, somewhat slow and dull and totally displeasing was now spying on his cousin's sexual activities in spite of the fact that there was a clear animosity between the two. Munteanu returned the gaze, and began to carefully monitor Costica's sexual activity too: "*5 years older then myself, living by himself and with no clear connections to any female figure would have seemed suspicious to anyone, I was intrigued by him and this solitary life and I tried on my terms to study him*".[312] At a first level one can only imagine that the two cousins were doing their job of surveillance, of monitoring the other as simple instruments of the power's gaze and will to know. But, of course, this activity, quickly became eroticizied in itself, it

[311] Munteanu, Nicolae Constantin, p.71.
[312] Munteanu, Nicolae Constantin, p.62.

was almost a homoerotic relation without the actual sexual content. The desire to know and to find traces of homosexual activity became in itself a form of erotic pleasure.

One particular episode recalled by Munteanu stands out in support of my analysis. After one routine meeting between cousin Costica and Munteanu, meetings where both parties kept their guards, cousin Costica decided to impart with Munteanu a secret collection of photos. Munteanu was somewhat prepared for some male bonding experience over soft porn magazines with nude German women –so fashionable at the time on the Black Sea Coast – and instead he was faced with blown-up images of women vaginas. This photographic procedure made the vaginas look monstrous and threatening, like the open mouths of some caverns recalls Munteanu somewhat amazed at the excitement of his cousin. Both men, with nothing in common apart from an accidental family tie and the Securitate looked through the dozens of such photos that cousin Costica treasured. Following this episode, Munteanu's detective curiosity only grew in intensity and managed to reveal one other hidden episode in the life of his cousin. It turned out that sexual "perversion" was also featured in the cousin's life, an orderly cadre of the Securitate. It turned out that cousin Costica was much more interested in one of his aunts, an older and married woman, than he was in marriage and baby making. Cousin Costică was peeking on his sex life in order to find clues of homosexuality while being unable to develop sexual relationships except with one of his aunts.

In this context, it is interesting to note that in his diary, Munteanu uses in fact two metaphors to describe his homosexuality. First as I mentioned above, he invokes the “*hunchback*” as a sign of deformity and handicap. Then, after he left the country, he talked about homosexuality as “*labyrinth*”[313]. Therefore, after escaping the context in which homosexuality and secret police spying were interlinked and closeted activities, homosexuality emerged as a subjective preoccupation, a personal confrontation and quest for the speaking subject. Previously, this subjective level was simply impossible to be established since homosexuality was inseparable from its construction as deviant by the discourse and gaze of power. Interestingly, however, Munteanu linked his homosexuality with nostalgia for the father he never had, and his homosexuality, the labyrinth, as being generated by his constant fruitless quest. Instead of the law of the Father – that, as I have mentioned, does not necessarily entail the imposition of a heterosexual matrix, but of any kind of sexual identity, including homosexuality – he received the simulacra of the law of the stepfather: that is, the brutal authority of the police, expressed in his denunciation.

After clearing all this territory, the final part of Munteanu’s reminiscences finally become personal and addressed his relationship with his lover, the “*stranger in the night*” as he called him. The stranger in the night is the person who smuggled a letter for Radio Free Europe across the border and paved the way for Munteanu to get rid of his hunchback. It was in a sense the person who introduced him to homosexuality beyond the pressures of the secret police.

What the three cases discussed in this chapter reveal is the ambiguous nature of homosexuality during state socialism. Homosexuality was a category designed by the state in order to first define, and then repress those people fitting this category. It was a

[313] Munteanu, Nicolae Constantin, p.71.

form of defining and then rejecting the nature of the threat to the body of nation. Homosexuality was ultimately a scapegoating category, which had clear political purposes and was inscribed in an assemblage of institutions, practices and ideologies that was aimed at keeping "pure" the body of nation and defending the "order" of things. Homosexuality was used a pretext for arrests and was linked with such penal institutions such as the prison, the mental hospital and the secret police. Therefore, my point, again, was that the state was not simply repressing the homosexuals and erasing them from the visibility of the regime. On the contrary, the state had to create this category, load it with the heteronormative expectations of order, purity and nation and then employ it as a politically repressive device. Thus, the homosexual played a very clear and particular role during state socialism: the ultimate figure of the other, the perversion and aberration of the Other. That, at times, this threat was also colored nationalistically, with the West offering the moral support (or the moral cause) to the homosexuals, it was inevitable given the nationalistic character of the regime especially in the late 1980s.

In this context it is no surprise that people rejected this label and when they had to assume it was at the end of an interpelating process driven by the state: either through a trial (like Sirin's case) or through the pressures of the secret police (like in N.C. Munteanu's and Negoițescu's cases). This is why homosexuality could not take the politically emancipatory track it took in the west, when the category of homosexuality was used by the activists themselves affirmatively. In the socialist East, this was a category largely connected to the state and its productive-repressive character. People struggled to avoid the label and to find ways to go about their everyday life. This is why I believe these cases are fascinating: while they do not express some grand political resistance against state socialism, these cases express the struggles to have a meaningful everyday life, a meaningful existence while always being just a step away from prison or mental hospital. The way Negoitescu, Sirin and Nicolae Constantin Munteanu go about their business, their love lives, their uncertainties, their doubts and quests – while being always haunted by the possibility of jail and by the shadow of the secret police – is truly remarkable. Their diaries are a testament of how a person can remain human in a context in which it is labeled politically as non-human, as a purging category. From this perspective, their position was much more politically threatening than the nudists or the yoga community, both developing in the interstices of the state's official culture. By contrast, the homosexuals were non-grievable subject, the non-subjects par excellence. They role was a negative one, their social identity was their non-identity with the majority. But, also just like the nudists and the yoga practitioners, the homosexuals made apparent the inner workings of state socialist power and its phantasmatic core. Central to it, however, was the ultimate fantasy of power and total knowledge exemplified by the secret police. To its functioning, and especially to its legacy – the secret police archive – I turn in the next chapter.

V. From textual pleasures to the erotic of the archive

In *Michelet par lui-meme*, Roland Barthes suggested that we could discern a different process of incorporating the archive: Michelet actually ate history and that made him ill.[314] Of course, for Barthes this was a metaphorical expression trying to explain the migraines Michelet suffered from when working on bridging the gap between history and History. Carolyn Steedman, makes a more compelling observation based on her research of the appearance of professional illnesses as a special category following industrialization, suggested that we should take this relationship literal: inhaling the dust of the archive leads to fever because it affects the lungs.[315] Archival fever takes a different meaning than the Derridean one. But more importantly, this link between the archive and the body of the researcher offers the possibility to re-conceptualize on different theoretical bases the relationship between writing history and the archive from a thoroughly embodied perspective. This is the purpose of this chapter.

In the previous chapters my discussion revolved around the complex relationship between the gaze of the state and the bodies of the socialist citizens in various circumstances and shaped by a series of contradictions, opposing forces and strategies of empowerment and subjection. I also noted the role of the secret police in this mechanism and of its recording devices, surveillance strategies and modes of operations aimed simultaneously at registering and constructing the reality. But this discussion would be

[314] Roland Barthes, *Michelet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).
[315] Carolyn Steedman, *Dust: The Archive and Cultural History*, Encounters (New Brunswick, N. J: Rutgers University Press, 2002).

incomplete if I were not to include the very standpoint from which I write. For, what is often forgotten in the analyses of "actually existing socialism" is that these analyses are produced in a post-socialist context, if not in a non- and anti-socialist context.[316] In other words, what I seek to do in this chapter is to discuss the epistemological foundations of my own inquiry and to clarify the set of discursive, institutional and ideological apparatuses that enabled me to carry out the discussion in the previous chapters.

My exercise in reflexivity is motivated by the need to point out a particular political mechanism that is often overlooked: namely, the transformation of bodies –real, moving bodies in time and space – into bodies of archive, into bundles of papers, files, registers, tables and numbers. In consequence, my contribution in this chapter is not only methodological but also theoretical: how is historical becoming archived, how is it spatialized and boxed into the archive? How this archive in turn may or may not allow a retracing of the historical becoming it purports to encapsulate and preserve?

Such concerns have been raised before, focusing especially on the political character of historical writing. The current critical theory of the archive as a sui generis institution is robust enough and properly covers these topics.[317]

What is different in my investigation is, on the one hand the particular context of my research, and on the other hand, my focus. The salient feature in this context is the

[316] Poenaru, Florin, 'Contesting Illusions: History and Intellectual Class Struggle in Post-Communist Romania' (Central European University, 2013).

[317] Vatulescu.

peculiar nature of the secret police archive in relation to other state archives used by historians as sources of data. The secret police archive was constructed mostly undercover, spying on people who largely remained unaware of its content, purpose and magnitude of information contained there. It was at the same time official and clandestine, present in people's minds, but also quite invisible.[318] It became visible only after 1989, when the regime that built it disappeared. But unlike the regime, the archive remained and posed one of the most difficult questions of the transition years, not only in Romania but everywhere else in the former Eastern bloc.

In the second part of this chapter I show how despite being a very hated institution, the hiddenness and secrecy of the secret police archive engendered a genuine love for it, a passionate desire to know its content, to explore its secrets and to penetrate its mysteries. I argue that in this mystical transformation from an object of hatred to an irrepressible object of desire, the voyeuristic logic of the previous regime was maintained. Its desire to know, to see and to find out secrets was replicated by the historians working today with this archive.

On this background, in the final section of this chapter I suggest that instead of the love of the archive (that presupposes archive as an external object of desire and conquering), we need to discover love *in* the archive, that is, we need to rethink the bodily, sensuous and emotional relationship between the historian and the archive towards a new form of incorporation that Michelet in his own way prefigured.

[318] A similar observation is made by Verdery, *Secrets and Truths*.

1. The Monster Inside: dealing with the Secret Police archive in post-communism

The archive of the former Securitate is no ordinary archive since the information contained in its files is the result of police work and had the aim of singling out the people considered deviant from the socialist social norm. However, precisely the vast amount of information the secret police managed to muster, and, even more so, its intimate nature, rendered these files appealing during the post-communist period.

By inscribing these files as sources of data about the past, the files were endowed with the possibility to retrace the past and therefore were incorporated in various historiographies. The opening of these archives in fact led to what I call the graphomania of post-communism. Surely, many observers have noted the burst of memory studies and the seemingly infinite number of diaries, memoires, recollections, reminiscences about the communist past, to the extent that for a while the post-communist East seemed to be really affected by a deep-seated melancholia.[319] Unable to get rid of the past and focus on the future it strived for, the East seemed to succumb to a fetishistic fixation on the most minute details of its past, ready to bore everyone willing to listen with its past experiences, from the most tragic of the early years of communism, to the most commercial, "Good-bye Lenin"-style reminiscences. And, in fact, there were many people out there willing to listen, the boom in memory in the East matching a certain reconfiguration of historical research and cultural studies programs in the West.[320]

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[319] Boym.

While this boom was undoubtedly a major phenomena in the post-communist East –much more important that I can convey here – it should not be easily overlapped with the particular genre I have in mind when I talk about graphomania. By this phenomenon, I seek to designate the particular type of literature that was produced as a result of opening the secret police files. It took two main forms. First, there were narratives of people who were able to read their secret police files and then to produce a narrative of this experience in the light of its content, revelations and reconsiderations that necessarily followed. Second, there were the narratives of those people directly affected by the first narrative who felt the need to give their own account, to explain themselves, to contextualize, to rebut claims or to make their own counterclaims.

This literature captures the actual broader societal effects of opening these archives in post-communism had, well beyond the abstract intentions or plans of the former dissidents and intellectuals. This aspect is important because it complicates even further the status of these documents as sources of historical inquiry, beyond the habitual methodological concerns expressed when dealing with archival material. For, the opening and reading of the secret police files led to a process of biographization, of getting hold, again, of one's persona, confiscated by the purview of the state. More than a confession or memorialization, it represented the unbearable traumatic moment of confronting one as a Stranger, the proper image of the split subject. The secret police file, unlike other records, was not limited to the documentation of an incident or of a concrete crime, but rather it was itself an attempt to reconstruct a biography. However unlike a regular biography, they had an enormous power to alter the life that it was recording.[321] Therefore, these files cannot be read by ignoring this interlinked dimension of biographization, of recreating the self from the debris left behind by the secret police in its files.

As Cristina Vatulescu noted, the archives of the secret police were formed, among other things, by the subject's deposition about him/herself.[322] In all files, there is a testimony the subject is compelled to give to the authorities, explaining his/her actions, or at least narrating his/her biography. In post-communism, this logic was prolonged by the very act of opening and reading the file. The subject feels again compelled to write, to give an account of him/herself in front of a less tangible power, but equally compelling: that of the societal Big Other. The logic of confession, of narrativizing one's self inherently shaping the making of the file by the secret police survives in the post-communist context where it is re-enforced by the quest for the truth about the Other.[323]

To find the truth about the subject and to acknowledge guilt by confession are the two mechanism of subjection identified by Michael Foucault.[324] A similar mechanism is at work in the post-communist context in relation to the communist past: people are solicited to talk about themselves, to confess their past sins and to ask for forgiveness. Since it was almost impossible to live during socialism and to come out of it unscathed by the interaction with the regime, the opening of these files interpellated all subjects as

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321 Cristina Vatulescu, *Police Aesthetics: Literature, Film, and the Secret Police in Soviet Times* (Stanford University Press, 2010), p.13.
322 Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*.
323 Florin Poenaru, p.185
324 Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*.

guilty. But what was even more important was that the guilt was not equally distributed, therefore, one had to explain his/her particular guilt, which led to a nation-wide competition of guiltiness.

I emphasize this point in order to highlight the fact that the opening of the archive of the former secret police was deeply tied with emotions, personal interests, desires, memories, fears, anxieties, strategic expectations, hopes and amnesias that filtered the content of the files. As it were, it would be a mistake to neatly separate between the content of the files and the emotional sphere generated by it both before 1989 –during the process of its making – and after 1989 – during the process of its opening and reading.

What exactly then is a secret police file? What is this strange object that elicits all sort of emotional responses, desires, fears and theoretical meditations? While most researchers have been eager to find out the content of the file itself, little attention has been paid to the ontological status of this object. By asking what is a file, I seek to draw attention to another common-place assumption in the archival work: namely, that "the file" is the smallest unit of the archive and the archive is nothing more than the organized collection of such neatly delineated objects.

Following Verdery and Vatulescu the first thing to note about the secret police file is that it was never completed and never united in a single narrative but rather it worked as a heteroglossic element.[325] Most of the files in the secret police archive –including the ones I read for my research – are files that did not seek to indict the target of the surveillance,

[325] Verdery, *Secrets and Truths, p 40*.Vatulescu, p. 20-30.

but to constantly monitor it. The mandate of the Securitate was preventive rather then punitive. While there is a stated purpose for the opening of a file, like suspicion of Zionist beliefs in the case of Nina Cassian, or suspicion of participating in a ritual murder in the case of Bivolaru, in fact this initial motive is rarely reviewed and even if it was later dismissed, the monitoring of the person continued unabashed.

Moreover the files were never a final document. The surveillance was interrupted for reasons that do not have anything to do with solving the "case". These files were called "files of informative surveillance [dosare de urmarire informative]. Basically, there was no other scope for them, but to endlessly accumulate data about the target, without any real purpose in sight and with no particular reason, at least not an apparent one. As such, these files were potentially infinite and also they could contain anything that the secret officers and their superiors considered worth collecting. Since there were no real guidelines this usually meant everything: from transcriptions of intimate conversations, to receipts, to photos of the target's acquaintances, to profiles of the surrounding neighbors, to literary tastes, to daily routine, to shoe-sizes, to drawings of their house plan, photocopies of manuscripts, letters. Just like a Borgessian metaphor, the file was supposed to cover the reality entirely, to retain everything within its folders.[326]

Because incomplete and potentially infinite, the file bears another important feature: it has no (narrative) structure.[327] In itself the file amounts to nothing, without the expert eye of the superior officers who could bring together various threads. Surely, the file contains

[326] Poenaru, Florin, p 181-2007.
[327] Vatulescu, p.50-55.

some basic, common elements, such as regular summaries of the activities conducted by the case officer, or regular depositions of the informers. But other crucial bits of information are in other files and in other divisions, such as the transcripts of the surveillance tapes or the notes of the undercover following of the target. Only superior officers could read the file in its entirety. After 1989, some files were reunited together by the archive's employees, others are still scattered around in their initial fragmentation.

By being incomplete, potentially infinite and fragmented the file acquired consistency only in the eye of the upper echelons – mastering the language and the codes of the institution – and, after 1989, through the expert mediation of the custodians of the archive. As such, the file itself is incomprehensible. In order for its content to be fully available – to, literally, make sense – it requires translation from the institutional jargon of the secret police to the natural language of the lay or professional historians. As it were, the file is inseparable from this extra, additional knowledge. Without it, it would remain an opaque object, incomprehensible.

This should alert us to the fact that the file is then not simply a source of knowledge, a piece of information that will generate historical knowledge, but is itself the historic product of a system of knowledge and is available as such only when the codes of this system of knowledge are deciphered. Therefore, the file –and even more so the content of the file – is not an object but a relation, a dense network of knowledge, meanings and paper traces.[328]

[328] Verdery, *Secrets and Truths*; Poenaru, Florin.

But by focusing on the textual level of the file, this relational dimension was entirely lost in the post-communist quest for truth and hidden information. To this textual pleasure I now turn, showing how the textual pleasure in post-communism mirrors the sexual pleasure of the communist state.

2. The naked truth and the desire for the archive

I mentioned in the previous section that the opening of the former secret police archive was imbued by a desire to know its secrets, to reveal its hidden parts and to expose the "naked truth" about the Other. But precisely a similar desire informed the making of this archive in the first place: the secret police officers, in keeping with the socialist state's dispositions, wanted to known the secrets and hidden information the citizens were keeping. The role of the secret police was to render every citizen legible, to strip them of their secrets, intimate knowledge and private activities.

By having their lives neatly recorded, filed, registered and numbered, the targets of surveillance were simply stripped naked of their social veil (in the Goffmanian sense) and rendered visible to the eyes of the authorities, who could read, see, comment and order based on the evidence taken from these files. But this nakedness in relation to the gaze of the Other persists in post-socialism too, when the eyes of the secret police officers are replaced by the eyes of the official state investigators and researchers. Striped by power, they continue to remain naked, even though their actual bodies have long been transformed into and transposed onto paper.

This, I believe, is how the desire for the archive is born, a desire that undeniably marks the experience of reading these files in post-communism: it is the desire to identify with the powerful gaze, to have the same viewpoint as that of the power, to be able to gaze unfettered to the naked lives and bodies of others. The desire for the archive, for its hidden secrets is therefore not simply instrumental – a piece of information that could be useful in a research or in a blackmailing attempt – but an overall erotic feeling derived from looking at naked bodies and from having the power to do so at discretion. Surely, this is manifest in the form of textual pleasure –the pleasure of reading the files – but what lurks behind is the fantasy of the process of textualization itself: that is, the moment when actual human beings and bodies were stripped naked of their social self and recorded in the files of the secret police. From this perspective, the gaze of the historian reading the files and that of the secret police officer who wrote the file in the first place are indistinguishable.[329]

In fact, we can discern at this level the thoroughly masculine nature of the historian's gaze more generally since its aim is to "penetrate" the hidden secrets and to lift the veil in order to reveal the naked truth. As Bonnie G. Smith wrote, the gender of history is necessarily masculine, since historiography itself, as a modern discipline was not only defined by the figure of the male historian, but the métier itself was developed against the canon of historiography employed by women writers. The standard practices of the

[329] I draw here again on Ginzburg insights into the working of the Inquisition archive, Carlo Ginzburg, *Clues, Myths, and the Historical Method* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992).

history writing in modernity were set out from the beginning against the legacy of female scholarship.[330]

In the development of the historiography as a distinct field of scholarship, the role of the archive – and to be more precise, the national and imperial archive – was salient. Mastering the archive, relying on its documents is what offered legitimacy to the historical narrative, together with the pretense of objectivism and universality of the writing, both objectivism and universality being fantasies made possible by the very reliance of an imperial archive with its own matrix of selection, inclusion and silences.[331] Therefore, the figure of the male historian reading in the archive came to represent the standard image of the historian in the past two centuries, to be contrasted with that of women as amateur historian. In fact, it was only in the late 1960s that the previous canon began to be broken, when not only women's histories were included in the standard historiographical representations, but also, more importantly, a particular perspective and understanding of doing history as a discipline. In this sense, Papailias work on the nature of historiographical sources, memories and archives in Greece is important, because it manages to contest the fixation with official archives as sources of data for the historian's craft, while at the same time resisting the temptation to move the alternative sources of documents from the realm of the history to that of memory.[332]

[330] Bonnie G. Smith, *The Gender of History: Men, Women, and Historical Practice* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1998).
[331] Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Beacon Press, 1995).
[332] Penelope Papailias, *Genres of Recollection: Archival Poetics and Modern Greece* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

This temptation has a long history in the discipline. The centrality of the archive made a distinction not only between a professional and an amateur, but also between history proper and memory. While historiography was the domain of men, the memory was relegated to the domain of the feminine, precisely because of its unreliability compared to that of the archive. Basically, the archive and the mastery of it is what offers legitimacy to a historical narrative, what differentiates between a professional and a charlatan, and according to Smith, between a male historian and a woman amateur.[333]

Therefore, the official writing of history is inseparable from the official institution of the archive. What gives the archive its status qua archive is precisely its position as a central institution of the state apparatus: the archive is marked as such by the power of the state.[334] An archive has the status of an official institution only through the seal of the state representatives. Because of that, access to the archive is not free for all: it requires certain permits and qualifications. So here we discern a circular relationship: what defines the professional status of the historian is his mastery of the archive, but at the same time only a historian can access the archive, based on his academic credential. This self-enforcing referentiality is meant to keep away the non-professionals, the non-historians from the realm of writing the history.

This is poignantly the case with CNSAS. In order to be able to access its files, one needs a special permit from the institution itself, which sometimes is a very lengthy process. Applicants must detail their intention, define the scope of their research, prove their

[333] Smith.
[334] Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, Religion and Postmodernism, Paperback edition 1998 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

qualifications and wait for a verdict. An independent researcher, with no institutional credentials, will most likely be denied such access. This not only favors the historians employed by the archive itself, who can enhance their work by having privileged access to a very coveted material, but it also restricts tremendously the type of readings and interpretations these files can receive.

Moreover, it is not only a matter of interpretation but of academic positioning. When I approached the institution with my research that studies issues connected to intimacy and sexuality under state socialism, I was immediately told that such topics do not fall into the research objectives condoned by the institution. As I was explained, one of the duties of CNSAS was also to protect the intimate lives of those targeted by the Securitate. With all the media scandals based on secret police files the institution was surely failing. As it were, the official archive can only receive official interpretations and around officially sanctioned topics of investigation. With CNSAS the case is ever more poignant as the mission of the institution is already spelled out in its legal foundation. The criminal nature of former Securitate, the documents regarding attempts to oppose the system as well as documents related to the crackdown of the opposition are the main lines of research. Thus mechanisms of terror, resistance, opposition, dissidence and means of control and repression are the main topics to be read from the files. The historical narrative that is created out of these documents is also, to a large degree, already spelled out in the official introduction:

> *Knowledge of the recent past represents a priority for Romanian society and this is why the administration and the historical use of archive of the Former Securitate needs to be established. The archive consists of relevant documents pertaining to actions opposing*

the communist totalitarian regime as well as refrences to the repression of such actions. Knowledge of these facts is necessary in a European Romania. The public knowledge of these abuses will contribute to a better understanding of our present and a more adequate projection of the future of Romanian society[335]

What is constitutive of the archival desire and fever –sexual metaphors of an act of penetration – is not only a drive towards secrecy and restricted access, but also one towards the endless accumulation of documents and data. This goes both ways: first, as Cristina Vatulescu noted, the former secret police wanted to archive *everything*, to record every bit of social reality; secondly, the researcher itself seeks to have access to, to read everything that it is in the archive.[336] This is what I call the insatiability of archival desire: irrespective of the number of documents already present or accessed, it is never enough. The aim is to cover everything, to know everything. As such, this is not simply the standard collector's desire, since a collection always presupposes a certain form of distinction, a certain categorization that necessarily needs to leave certain categories out in favor of the ones deemed worthy of collection. By contrast, the archival desire seeks to incorporate everything, if possible. While for the collector, value comes from the distinctive feature of the collected object (that differentiates it from other objects), for the historian everything is of value by virtue of the pastness of the object itself. The very existence of something makes it recordable in an archive. The archive, even that of a socialist state, perfectly encapsulates the logic of endless accumulation, so specific to capitalism. Moreover, the professionals working with the documents inevitably live under this institutional spell and are shaped by the same logic of preservation and accumulation.

[335] Romanian Government, 'Ordonanta de Urgenta a Guvernului nr.24/10 Martie 2008 Privind Accesul La Propriul Dosar Si Desconspirarea Securitatii.[Emergency Ordinance no.24/10th of March 2008 Regarding Access to Former Securitate File and the Deconspiration of the Former Securitate'] (Monitorul Oficial Nr.182, 2008).
[336] Vatulescu.

Steedman also pointed out, the desire to explore the totality of the archive, the seeming infinity of the archive, leads to profound anxiety for the researcher since the researcher always has a limited amount of time in the company of her object of fascination. Compared to the vastness of the archive, the individual researcher will never be able to master its quantity. Frustration ensues, and with it a deep sense of loss and melancholia: it becomes an issue of longing for what will never be accessed in the archive, for all the things that will remain unread, undiscovered, unveiled.[337]

Therefore, the inherent desire for total, complete knowledge that underpins the formation of the modern archive, as Foucault noted, is dialectically accompanied by the very impossibility to fulfill this desire. Basically, the archive creates a desire but precisely because of its very existence (with its logic of accumulating everything in huge numbers) it makes impossible the very satisfaction of that desire. What needs to be noted further is the following paradox: as I mentioned above, every archive is by definition only a fragment, despite its vastness and pretense of totality. But this fragment acts in itself as an infinitum for the researcher. What appears only as a fragment from the outside, from the inside it can stand in for the infinity itself. In his *Earth and the Reveries of Repose*, Gaston Bachelard aptly noted that once we begin to think in the space of the small dimensions – the interior of a point as he puts it – these small objects acquire cosmic proportions.[338] The process at work here is the following: it is the acknowledgment that

[337] Steedman.
[338] Gaston Bachelard, *Earth and Reveries of Repose: An Essay on Images of Interiority* (Dallas Institute Publications).

infinity is not a spatial dimension, but a projection of the desire. Something like the archive appears infinite precisely because of the desire to know everything.

Therefore, what offers specificity to the archive of the secret police in post-communism is the overlapping of the two desires discussed so far: the general desire to know everything and the particular desire to know the truth about the Other, to bring to light what was hidden and secret. The desire to know and the desire to know the truth – the two are related but nonetheless distinct. To this two desires we should add a third feature that I believe is salient in offering the shape of the love for the archive of the former secret police in post-communism: namely, that given its content (police reports, forced confessions etc.), this archives enables the projection of a certain image of the communist and post-communist social body. It is a dualistic perception framed within the binaries of "purity and danger". On one hand the opening of the archives was supposed to purify and cleanse the social body of the unwanted remains of the past; on the other hand through this very process of cleansing, all the impurities of the past had to be brought up into daily public sphere. Therefore, the desire to open and read these archive dovetail a desire for and a fascination for filth. Before it can be repudiated, it has to be confronted and inspected first.

How is then this achieved in practice: how is the cleansing of the social body – imagined as corrupt and infested by the legacy of the communist past – realized through immersing into its filth? Stallybrass and White, observed that the role of the carnival is precisely that of achieving social order and stability by ritually staging chaos and disorder. The role of the carnival is that of bringing out to light what is being repressed in an organized fashion in order to erode its power and annul its efficiency. To put it differently, the role of the carnival is that of letting the "steam off" so that, at the end of it, things could go back to normal without really affecting the social edifice. While everything is permitted during the carnival, and the world seems turned upside down, the marker that this is only a temporary moment, a "game" is symbolically inscribed by the use of masks and costumes. Their role is not so much of disguising the real self, but of reminding that the real self does not fully get involved in this ritualistic transgression of the order.[339] The mask operates as a break with the real self, so that the transgression is being done by a mad, unknown Other. After the carnival, the real self can simply go back to business as usual.

At a first glance, a similar mechanism was at play in the opening of the secret police files during post-communism. In order to "let the stem off" of the hidden secrets of the secret police files, the carnival of lustration and purification was put in place by the state and by the civil society. At regular intervals, different people were identified as collaborators of the former secret police, brought into public light for shaming and asked to offer their confession and apology. This would offer a justification for dwelling on the filth accumulated in the secret police files, but also operate as a sort of "normalization" of their influence in the public sphere: once they were in the open, they would lose their symbolic efficacy.

[339] Stallybrass and White.

These periodic carnivals, with their stated aim of cleansing the social body of its past impurities and dangers, enabled in fact the pleasure of dealing with the filth of the secret police archive under the pretense of a bigger, more noble goal. As it were, these carnivals are neither about the purification of the nation, nor about the machinations of a nefarious elite trying to reproduce social order. They are the constructed medium through which it becomes socially acceptable –even mandatory – to enjoy the dirty details of the secret police archive. By putting up this mask of historical justice and dealing with the communist past, the ritual of reading the secret police files offer the pleasure of reading something that was not supposed to be read out in public, of something forbidden.

A certain parallel with Michael Foucault's description of the confessional practices, or with Carlo Ginzburg's investigation of the witchcraft trials can be aptly invoked here. By eliciting a full detail of the guilty sexual practices (also associated with witchcraft), the priest and the inquisitor respectively, take pleasure precisely in the act of narration. By eliciting this kind of confession, especially in front of large gatherings, what is achieved in fact is a collective enjoyment of sexuality, under the pretense of carrying out a punishment. While the "guilty" party is sacrificed, this enables the rest of the society to freely enjoy the most forbidden pleasures.

The love of archives in post-communism signifies then also this possibility to satisfy one's desire for transgression and jouissance – and to be more precise, for taking pleasure from what is otherwise deemed filthy and undignified – under the mask of performing a historic duty. But is there a way out of this relationship? Is there a way of reading these archives without succumbing to the desire and enjoyment they offer? Is there a way not to fall in love with these archives as a researcher, and to not participate in the collective fantasy of the carnival? I was haunted by these questions during my own work in this ill-fated archive, while reading the secret police files of the subjects of my investigation I summoned in the previous chapters. They became not simple methodological concerns, but genuinely theoretical and ethical ones, with profound emotional undertones that waved into my research. I will elaborate on these concerns in the next section.

3. "I can't love you, unless I give you up"[340]

The first thing to be noted in the case of the post-communist love for the archive is that, unlike other situations of love, the object of love is returning love. As it were, the archive provides for the moment of jouissance. But as Freud already observed, this realization does not have as a result the quenching of the desire, but its enhancement.[341] Of course, in the case of the love for the archive this is a narcissistic love insofar as the object of love (the files) do not have intrinsic value in themselves: they are loved for that little bit extra they can provide about the subject (the I or the Other) by way of imparting its secrets. Basically, the love-value of the archive resides in the fact it contains something more about oneself, something related to oneself, but nonetheless different. So, while theoretically the opening of the archive was supposed to be the quest for the Other, it in fact is in fact a desire for oneself as difference.

[340] Salecl, Renata, 'I Can't Love You Unless I Give You Up', in *Gaze and Voice as Love Objects*, ed. by Salecl, Renata and Zizek, Slavoj (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), pp. 179–208.
[341] Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010).

Freud wrote that there is only one barrier for the love of oneself: the love for others, the love for objects. In the case of the secret police archive, the two are conflated: the almost fetishistic and positivistic love for the files themselves serves as an opportunity for the love of oneself. Objects don't function here as barriers but as mediums. Even when one is not directly involved in the archive it is impossible not to fall into the love machine of the archive. For example, when doing my research I quickly fell in love with Nina Cassian and her amazing story. She had proven to be not only an independent woman, a wonderfully talented poet (at least in my personal reading), a trickster-experimentalist but also a person with authentic intellectual capabilities able to recognize the shifts in Ceausescu's communism for what they were – anticommunist and fascist.[342] As it were, the space of the archive –being a space of desire – necessarily becomes a space of love and of the erotic, which is very hard to escape even, or precisely, when the aim is to unmask or indict someone.

One of the longstanding debates in the archival studies is whether the best strategy of reading them is to read along or against their grain – that is, in short, whether to take the view point of their producers –and thus look at how institutions of power functioned – or to try to take a counter-hegemonic perspective and see the archive from the standpoint of the people recorded in it.[343] Both variants have been present in the opening of the Romanian secret police files, guided by their respective ideological and political assumptions and interests.

[342] The characterization of Ceausescu's epoch as anti-communist and antifascist belongs to Nina Cassian. This opinion was expressed in a private conversation recorded and transcribed by the Securitate,CNSAS Archive I256690 Nina Cassian, Volume 6, p.245.
[343] Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), Chapter 2 The Pulse of the Archive.

However, I took a different path. First, my use of documents from the secret police archive came late into my research, after initially I conducted interviews and used different forms of archival materials: personal, un-institutionalized, emotional and embodied such as photos, interviews and conversations in Bucharest and Californian gardens, manuscripts of novels never meant for publishing, songs, etc. These were my prime sources guiding my inquiry and my narrative. The files appeared as an extra opportunity, a peculiar source, especially given the emotional circle surrounding their opening. While I believe these files hold enormous potential theoretical value – as I tried to make clear in this chapter – I am not sure they necessarily have a similar value in terms of sources of data as such. As I mentioned already, since I had various sources of information I could spot mistakes in the secret police files that would otherwise go unnoticed or taken for granted. While these mistakes might have historical value when dealing with the history and philosophy of the secret police, they are hardly relevant for a different approach, or when having different research interests.

At the same time, while the attention the secret police paid to my informants was staggering and sometimes exceeding my expectations, their notes were in a sense disappointing. I already knew more about my field than the former secret officers, for bad or for worse. Furthermore, given my feminist allegiance and the materialist focus on my research on body and bodily processes, I had a hard time fully assuming the gaze of the secret police officer when reading the file. As it were, I could not *not* see the perversion and the entire heteronormative and macho logic that structured the institution itself.

Therefore, while these files were doubtlessly important, I read them not only with suspicion but also with some sort of distance and estrangement, as in the theory of estrangement. Therefore, my strategy towards these files was one of making them strange, looking at them as strange objects in themselves.

This markedly separates my approach from the one specific to the love of archive. In my view the files themselves – and of course their content and history of making – become strange, alienated objects that need to be carefully interrogated. Therefore, instead of taking this objects for granted, and falling in love with them, I "gave them up" in favor of a critical reflection of their epistemological condition. To put it more generally, instead of continuing this phantasmatic performance of the love for the archive (finding the file, reading it, making moral judgments based on its content, producing a narrative at the end of the reading), I thought that this performance should become an object of analysis and explicitly brought into the space of inquiry.

Renata Salecl wrote that while romantic love strives to enjoy the Whole of the Other, of the partner, the true sublime love renounces it, since it is well aware that we can only enjoy a part of the body of the Other.[344] This is my point regarding the archive of the secret police as well. In the case of the love of the archive we are dealing with a romantic love that seeks to grasp the whole archive in its (imagined) infinity. Finding love in the archive means precisely to renounce this phantasmatic imagination: it is a full acknowledgement of both the fragmentary nature of the archive and of its status as body. In so doing, the abstraction operated by the archive that transforms the body into textual

[344] Salecl, Renata.

abstraction is annulled towards a view that takes materiality and corporality as its focus. Love in the archive simply presupposes the renunciation of (an impossible) totality offered by the archive, the phantasmatic idea that reality can be neatly grasped and archived. But this does not mean just recognizing fragmentation, as the post-modern thought did. It means that "bodies of archive" – the fragments comprising the archive – take on a literal meaning: the history of the archive and the attendant desire that comes with it is a history of sexed bodies in motion and interaction.

Love in the archive also entails retracing the living, moving bodies within the bodies of documents. This was my intention throughout this dissertation as well: to capture the dynamics of actual bodies in history and in space, to offer the bodies central stage. For, this is one of the actual functions of the archive: disembodiment, the obliteration of the actual body in favor of the body of documents. My aim was to re-assert the power of the living body over the abstract body of the archive. While much of the critical (feminist) literature has been preoccupied with "giving voice", it is perhaps time to develop a critical literature preoccupied with "giving body". Bodies do matter.

Conclusion

Gheorghe Crăciun, a Romanian author, described in his novel Pupa Russa the ordeals of a young woman during socialism, from her childhood until her premature death.[345] More specifically, the novel details her bodily and sexual experiences: from the male schoolmaster touching her in an overt sexual manner, to her father's beatings, to the informal rules of belonging to a women's basketball team and to the untold number of sexual encounters with party apparatchiks, some consensual, others forced upon her. Leontina Guran, the name of the protagonist appears in fact to be the object of constant sexual exchange between men and institutions. But despite these various demeaning experiences, she nevertheless manages to take pleasure in her body and re-eroticize it in intimate, solitary contexts whenever she eludes the company of "others": while taking a bath, while sun-tanning on the seaside, in her bed before going to sleep. The novel does a good job of focusing on both aspects and on their mutual constitutive relationship.

I tried to convey something similar in this dissertation as well: not to simply suggest that resistance is possible and inevitable in all circumstances, but to point out how repression and pleasure are inextricably linked together in various ways, especially in the particular case of state socialism. Just like Craciun's overall literary project, which makes it quite unique in the idealist Romanian literary scene, I sought to bring the body at the center of the state socialist experience, in fact to write its history from a bodily and embodied perspective. This salient locus then would be then the ideal venue where to discuss

[345] Crăciun, Gheorghe, *Pupa Russa* (Bucureşti: Art, 2007).

together in mutually informing ways issues of sexuality, gender, pleasure, emotions and sensations that are not usually part of histories of state socialism. In fact they are quite marginal or rendered insignificant when simply circumscribed to the "resistance" paradigm that necessarily accompanied the well-known "totalitarian" paradigm employed to describe socialism.

Therefore, at a more general level, my dissertation sought to open a new way of looking at state socialism, one in which the body is central. Making the body central to my investigation enabled me to offer three theoretical openings. First, it re-grounded the history of state socialism from the (rather abstract) discussions with ideology, politics and economics towards lived and embodied experiences. Secondly, by making the body central it allowed me to bring in a series of connected topics and phenomena, for example the constitution of bodies during socialism, either normal or deviant that would otherwise be simply relegated to the realm of socialist policy when in fact they dovetail more complex relations. Thirdly, by focusing on the body I was able to bring forth experiences and personal histories of people like the nudists, the yoga practitioners and homosexual men. Their particular common situation within socialism, but also their evident differences, would have been lost without the common theme of the body.

I do not mean to suggest by this that the body was absent entirely from histories of state socialism. But when it was present –as it was the case in studies of Romania given the harshness of Ceausescu pro-natalist polices – it was integrated into a familiar story of power and resistance. The body appeared to be the locus of exercising both power's effects and the site for developing resistance possibilities. I wanted to go beyond this simple dichotomy by noting the productive character of power that creates a surplus it cannot contain, an unintended set of relations and reactions beyond its manifest intentions. Such unintended and unexpected outcomes of power generate a series of manifestations that cannot be simply boxed as acts of resistance.

I illustrated this argument with the three case studies of this dissertation: the nudists, the yoga practitioners and the homosexual men. What unites the three cases together is their particular place within the social regime and bodily dispositions of the Romanian socialism. They were phenomena engendered and enabled by the state revealing at once both the productive and repressive character of power. This enabled me to discuss them together and show points of convergence and difference. I placed the discussion of these three cases on the background of the regime's ideals of order, normality and body regimes encapsulated by the project of the new Man. In doing so I did not aim to show how the three case studies diverged from the ideal, but how these categories were always defined and redefined in particular, contextual situations. Far from simply dovetailing instances of resistance to the normality imposed by the regime, the three case studies I analyzed also showed important aspects of state power: its voyeuristic, sadistic and pervert character. These then allowed for particular type of resistance in which the features of power were revealed in the constitution of communities of nudists, the yoga practitioners and of homosexual men. Therefore, this enabled me to argue that one important way in which dissidence functioned in state socialism was not to retreat from state power but to show its inner workings and internal paradoxes, to reveal its structural antagonisms and repressed phantasies. Methodologically, I combined detailed historical investigation with an instrumental take on psychoanalysis, without, however, striding to far from the interpretation people I interviewed had themselves developed either at the time or retrospectively.

But my investigation took a different layer of meaning when I realized that I cannot take out the picture the working of the secret police, central to the functioning of the socialist state and power edifice. The secret police was simultaneously a subject and an object of my investigation, and a source of data through this archive opened for research after 1989. The secret police also made the discussion about state power less abstract since it allowed to grasp the functioning of a very concrete institution, characterized by a special logic and using a certain category of state employees. All of the sudden I realized that, perhaps, the secret police officers should have been a fourth case study alongside the three I discussed here. But this is an avenue of research I plan to pursue in the future.

The body of archives left behind by the secret police became thus a problematique in its own right, complementing the discussion of the actual, lived bodies of my dissertation. This transformation from bodies to bodies of text enabled me to rethink the role of the archive but to also reconsider the ontological status of the body, from lived experience to an archival category. Only in so doing, the imbrication between the body and the state could be illuminated in its entirety.

I believe that this particular way of looking at state socialism from an embodied perspective – which naturally elicits issues connected to gender regimes, sexuality and the sensuous – are long overdue. Similarly such an approach can through a different light on topics related to spiritual practices during socialism, which until now have been integrated into concerns with escaping socialism or resisting it. I suggested that it was more than that, and such practices, albeit spiritual and integrated into a specific care of the self that was at odds with the official one, took the body seriously. Instead of simply being a rejection of the regime's materialism, they embarked on a path of rediscovering the body and its phenomenological status. These spiritual quests were then quite material and quite focused on the everyday.

This aspect was enhanced by the overall presence of the secret police, which aimed at keeping bodies under surveillance and control, restricting their movements and interactions. Also, the body was always the ultimate locus on which the power of the state was exercised: state punishment, either through incarceration, beatings, rape or assassination, was directed towards the body. The body was the ultimate target. This also individuates my case studies from other discussions of resistance during state socialism: my subjects were not regular dissidents writing pamphlets and samizdat works (some of them were that too, obviously), but people whose main form of expression was the body and through the body. This was so because this was the ultimate place of power's action, the level of subject constitution and formation. This was thus the place where power cold be effectively confronted. I believe such form of embodied and bodily dissident practices were not entirely given their due in discussions of state socialism, except in extreme forms, that is when the bodies were physically annihilated (murdered dissidents, etc.)

Framed in this way, the focus on the body elicits a discussion about subject constitution and I made this connection when discussing my case studies in relation to the socialist project. But as such this can open up a discussion about the socialist modernity and its governmentality, an issue I could only briefly touch upon in this dissertation. As Michael Foucault noted, transformations in governmentality which entailed a different approach to the government of bodies –including a particular care of the self – was specific to the ensuing of the western modernity.[346] State socialism was a particular version of and reaction to the western capitalist modernity, but there are no significant analyses yet of its governmentality beyond the totalitarian and repressive paradigm. The history of the socialist body would be an integral part of it.

What was salient for the socialist modernity, in Eastern Europe more generally, and in Romania more specifically, was the quick transformation of backward peasant populations into urban proletarians under the leadership of the party. This process was not smooth or linear and it entailed significant violence and uprooting. As such, it took various contextual forms and it had unexpected and unintended outcomes. In the Romanian case, one of the reasons for this was the fact that the elite of the communist party was still significantly linked with a rural or semi-urban background and milieu of formation. Neither peasants nor proletarians, the Romanian communist party rulers had to invent themselves just as they had to transform the society. But their initial ethos could

[346] Michel Foucault.

not be entirely erased after assuming power and in fact major elements of their habitus became part of the official national doctrine, alongside the socialist realism imposed by the USSR. This fact was visible in the staunching critiques Nina Cassian and her group put forward against the top echelons of the party, or the type of contempt Vladimir Tismaneanu –son of a illegalist family – had for the local apparatchiks. Less educated, less urbanized and lacking both the cosmopolitan education of international communists as well as their commitment to communism as such (not to its Stalinist developmental mutation), the Romanian local leaders –especially during Ceausescu's independence policy –were able to codify as national culture their own tastes, mores and values, and with them, certain regimes of bodily practices, sexual behavior, gender regimes and relations. These were markedly patriarchal, monogamist, heteronormative, and with more than a shade Orthodox, despite the official atheist outlook of the regime.

These features were the harbinger or Romanian communism –accentuated during the 1980s – but they did not disappear after 1989 either. To some extent they were exacerbated since these features simply dissolved in the society and ceased to be the mark of the communist party, which was outlawed. Put differently, while the party and its top echelon leaders disappeared from central stage, their legacy remained untouched at the societal level. The 1990s, with its chaotic transition pressures, only made things worse in fact. The societal upheaval determined by the profound socio-economic and political transformations led to a re-patriarchialization of society, albeit men were usually losing their jobs (and self-esteem) while women (also facing the ax) continued to do the household and be the sole breadwinners of the family, especially in mono-industrial cities. Before the 2000s, when work migration will alter these patterns, the 1990s was, to a large extent, just the continuation of the 1980s, just in more dire and unpredictable economic situation.

At the same time, the overall competition for resources and for a better spot in the new society, created not only an exacerbated sense of individualism and cynicism, but it also colonized the public space with explicit macho (and martial) values. This was perhaps the novelty of the 1990s, which would remain until today a very important feature of the Romanian society. The ideal person of the transition is able to out-compete and outsmart and the rest and show this conspicuously. Ultimately, it is a world of men, in which women, like many other things, are just trophies. Such interactions only fostered the conservative role of the extended, clan-like family.

On this background, transition entailed in general a conservative turn, except for very brief moments of exploration immediately after 1989, a moment still engraved in many people's memories as surreal. Between 1990 and around 1994 or so, especially for the younger cohorts, there was this moment of sudden outburst when everything seemed possible. It was the belated and unacknowledged Romanian 1968. This is when 2 Mai and Vama Veche, but also Costinesti, exploded as destinations for (young and not so young) people in search of the experiences communism denied. It was a frenzy of activities, including sex, spiritual quests, music, poetry and free love –that transient moment of bodily and emotional liberation after each revolution.

Of course it could not last, due to two interlinked pressures: economic enclosure and commercialization. Already by 1996, the transition ceased to be the rosy dream of betterment and economic difficulties set in. A lot of the enthusiasts of the 1990 were forced into migration for better jobs, especially the technical and humanist specialists, the main population of 2 Mai and Vama Veche. Others too followed suit and, even without migration, they had to embrace the new realities of the transition and start making a living in keeping with the inflated prices. As such, commercialization set in, and the enthusiastic and spiritualist dreams of the early 1990s were displaced and replaced by the early 2000s by conspicuous consumption. The dramatic transformation of Vama Veche, 2 Mai and Costinesti from remote and cultural resorts to mainstream family venues with inflated prices is a case in point. Nudism, spiritual quests, intimate interactions and a sense of community were all made history by the wave of gentrification of these places. Nostalgia quickly set in as well as some feeble (and largely commercial) attempts at recuperation. Even organizations like MISA veered towards commercialism, amplifying the soft-core porn business which attracted more participants but also the eye of the state.

Things did not get better for the homosexual men either. Still outlawed until 2001, the campaigns for sexual rights, same- sex marriage and had to be and financed through western organizations and resulted in long local battles by a handful of activists during the late 1990s and 2000s.[347] Today the situation seems to be normalized – gay pride parades are not constituting the wrath of the extreme right, except for a handful of regulars – but the normalization seems a bureaucratic one, meaning that it did not

[347] Shannon Woodcock, ‘A Short History of the Queer Time of Post-Socialist Romania, or Are We There Yet? Let’s Ask Madonna!, in *De-Centering Western Sexualities: Central and Eastern European Perspectives* (Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2012), pp. 63–84.

engender a more societal confrontation with gender norms and sexual expectations. Except for a handful of activists in Bucharest and Cluj –and a tiny fraction of leftist intellectuals – such issues are still taboo and at best avoided for the mass of the population, especially in a climate of recrudescent orthodoxy and pro-family policies.

What really seems to be a novelty is the disappearance of the socialist state's overarching gaze and its replace with a logic of commodification. In theory, everything is permitted now, put in practice only the production of commodities is feasible. This raises the question about the fate of dissident and contrarian movements after 1989. Are such dissident groups, like the nudists, the yoga practitioners and the homosexuals (meaning sex activists), still possible during capitalism? The answer appears negative and the only places of some dissident activity (real or imagined) takes place among marginal artistic groups, working in the interstices of the economy for survival, and among NGO activists, working at the core of a neoliberal project market. While their logic might be different, both groups are caught in a similar pressure to produce sealable commodities, and both groups must conform to this expectation in order to survive.

Economic pressures thus replaced the political pressures of socialism which in turn affected the role of the body: from a locus of confronting state power, the body is now the tool for ensuring economic survival in increasing dire economic situations. The bodily explorations of the nudists, the yogis and homosexual men during socialism are long gone.

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