Building Socialism, Constructing People

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FOREWORD

The period spanning from the late 1940s to the 1950s is possibly the most significant for the identity shift that took place in the Romanian culture as a result of the process of Sovietisation or "cultural colonisation" (a concept discussed in the current volume).

After 1947, the Romanian society entered a period of serious crisis in the context of the radical transformations required by the recently installed totalitarian regime. This involved an identity crisis or a process of identity distortion or deconstruction, followed by a reconstruction based on the Soviet blueprints and therefore a specific form of political and cultural mimicry. This process meant an artificial deviation in the evolution of all social, cultural or gender identities, transformed into propaganda instruments and assigned politically-controlled, stereotypical functions. A similar phenomenon occurred in many if not in all of the countries in the Eastern Bloc – each with its particularities, of course – as the Soviet unifying plan was guided by the idea that all "cultural difference becomes political deviance" (Brown 1993).

Under this political impact – and in the context of Soviet military occupation, until 1958 – Romanian society and culture underwent a major political, social, economic and cultural shift that – considering the transformations involved and the fact that the regime was controlled by Moscow – supports the idea of an "informal colonisation".

The Romanian society and culture were therefore forced to take a radical ideological turn towards the Soviet model in terms of both building socialism (as a social and political utopia) and constructing people. The choice for the period discussed by the current volume was motivated by the fact that, in terms of identity construction and the New Man project, the late 1940s and especially the 1950s were particularly significant as the essential period for defining, implementing and legitimising the new paradigm. An essential detail for the Romanian society and culture is that the previous tendencies of the political and cultural elites were contrary to the Soviet paradigm. Thus, in post-war Romania, the process of implementing the Soviet cultural strategies designed for Eastern Europe commenced in an unfavourable context due to the absence of a consolidated leftist intellectual milieu, combined with an actual reluctance to the Soviet ideology and cultural practices. Thus, during the decades preceding the instalment of the communist regime (in 1947-48), most of

the local intellectuals had shown no particular attachment to the Marxist ideology (Livezeanu 2000), while being strongly attracted to nationalism.

However, the Soviet paradigm was artificially transferred – through a system of new institutions and regulations – requiring a radical reorganisation of the Romanian society, which was equivalent to the above mentioned identity deconstruction followed by a reconstruction on Soviet principles (see Dragomir 2003, 309). The individual was thus transformed into a political instrument, while the Romanian cultural and media products became Soviet carbon-copies culture during this intense process of Sovietisation.

The volume focuses on the issue of identity within the context of this radical shift, following the evolution, deconstruction and reconstruction of identity at the micro and macro levels, i.e. in the case of individuals and of communities. The analysis from several theories belonging to the areas of Cultural and Media Studies, as well as the history of post-war literature (applied to the history of communism within Romanian culture). It also exploits theories of cultural contact and transfer, particularly the type of forced contact through power dominance as coined by Itamar Even-Zohar, theorising imposed contact and resistance in comparison to a system in crisis and the lack of resistance. The challenge of the volume was to verify their adequacy to the Romanian case in relation to the Soviet Union dominance.

While the issue of identity has constantly preoccupied contemporary Western research and particularly Cultural Studies (Giddens (1991); Hall (1992), Hall and du Gay, (1996); Sarup (1996); du Gay et al. (2000)), the topic as well as the associated theories and methods are still not sufficiently implemented in the Romanian space, especially when dealing with Romanian culture and periods other than Post-Communism.

Thus, the current volume proposes what I consider to be a novel approach, by studying the issue in the context of the first decade of the Romanian communist regime with the help of a series of concepts and theories associated to Western Cultural, Media and Gender Studies. Of course, Romanian communism as a general theme has been approached particularly especially by historians, both within Western research (Tismăneanu 2003, 2009, Deletant 1999, 2006, Verdery 1999) and by local researches (the latter, mostly in Romanian). However, they referred particularly to the political and historical aspects and less to culture, the cultural press being almost absent (as it is less accessible because the press archives are not yet digitalised and in most libraries the collections are fragmented). Other local researchers have examined culture and press and their evolution during the 1950s and further on, from a literary, historical

or sociological perspective (Cordoş 1999, Selejan, 2007-2010; the 2003, 2004, 2007, 2008, 2010 thematic issues of *Caietele Echinox/ Echinox Journals*, published in Cluj-Napoca, the last one dealing with this topic is the 2010 volume on *Communism – Negotiation of Boundaries*, edited by Andrada Fătu-Tutoveanu and Sanda Cordoş).

Other Romanian studies discussing the issue of identity are signed by Alexandrescu (2000), Lefter (2004) and Morar-Vulcu (2007); the last one is the closest to my approach. I should also specify articles or mentions of the topic in works by Marino (1995, 1996), Spiridon (2006, 2007) and Martin (2008). However, these studies (except Morar-Vulcu's) approached identity in different contexts and periods, referring particularly to the issue of identity recovery in post-communism and in the process of European integration. Most significantly for the current volume, the topic of identity in the Romanian cultural press has not been approached so far in English, with very few exceptions but all concerned with other periods or contexts than the current volume. Therefore, this volume also intends to fill the existing gap, offering a complementary perspective to the above mentioned – isolated or local – initiatives, by approaching the late 1940s-1950s Romanian cultural press from a different and updated perspective and using a theoretical background belonging to Western Cultural Studies as well as Media and Gender Studies.

The theoretical chapters, that aim to verify whether such theories and concepts can be applied to the Romanian post-war identity shifts, are followed and complemented by the sections dedicated to examining in detail the radical identity shift. As there are numerous hypostases relating to this metamorphosis, I chose to focus on the aspects considered to be the most relevant both in terms of quantity (by their predominance in the media and therefore in the propaganda) and of significance for the regime. Consequently, besides the theoretical analyses, the case studies in this volume focused on the political (re)construction of *intelligentsia* – also called "priviligentsia" by Antohi (2005) and Macrea-Toma (2009) – as an essential tool of propaganda. This was discussed mainly based on several late 1940s and early 1950s cultural periodicals (mainly *Contemporanul* and *Flacăra*) that reflected the major institutional and legal transformations that affected this category, but also by approaching the evolution of some essential cases (Petru Dumitriu, Alexandru Jar, Cella Serghi). The choice of cultural periodicals is based on the fact that they mirrored the ongoing process of implementation and assimilation of the exported Soviet cultural model, filtered, of course, by the censorship and propaganda apparatus.

Another significant category reflected by the media and present in the book is the social and gender typology of "working women". Thus, the volume discusses female identity in relation to the ideological discourse of women's emancipation within communism – considered by some authors the "total myth" (Aivazova 1997) – confronting it to the social realities. The volume approaches the changes in female identity patterns as reflected by propaganda controlled media, based on a series of visual or linguistic stereotypes. A special category discussed in this context is that of "engaged" women writers, analysed both as a professional category related to the above mentioned intelligentsia and as a minority that was necessary in order to legitimise the success of the ideological emancipation paradigm.

The late 1940s-early 1950s Romanian cultural press also contains a significant number of Soviet stereotypes on identity *versus* otherness. The distorted image of the other (the Western enemy and particularly the U.S) is complex and persistent in articles, comments, pictures, caricatures and so on, being constructed in opposition with the stereotypical self-reflection. The politically controlled media employed a series of clichés and hostile imagery in this process of enemy making that was centred on creating an Anti-American fiction or an American Anti-Utopia.

Finally, the last section of the volume is interested in the cultural legacies and cultural "obsessions" concerning the identity recovery which became visible after 1989, considering this process as a necessary post-traumatic stage deeply related to the process of identity deconstruction / reconstruction that took place in the first post-war decade.

In short, the volume focuses on a series of cultural press analyses and case studies, based on a set of influential concepts and theories referring to identity, media discourse, propaganda, legitimising discourses, in association with newly introduced concepts such as "cultural colonialism", cultural negotiation, ideological "canon" and others. The volume deals with what I considered to be the most significant identity constructs in the process of reconfiguring cultural identities. Morar-Vulcu (2007) speaks of "political identities", but I believe the cultural aspects are essential, thus we should speak of politically controlled "cultural identities". Similarly to many analysts, I considered press to be an essential instrument for spreading and then mirroring the effects of propaganda on identity pattern changes and therefore one of the most relevant environments for the analysis of the major cultural, social and political identity shift that took place in Romania in the late 1940s and the 1950s.

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PART I:

CULTURE, POWER, PRESS:
A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

CHAPTER ONE

SOVIET CULTURAL COLONIALISM: CULTURE AND POLITICAL DOMINATION IN THE LATE 1940S-EARLY 1950S ROMANIA[1]

Colonialism, Cultural Contact, Transfer or Cultural Dependence?

The concept of colonialism is, together with that of imperialism, debatable and problematic when applied to cultural issues and particularly so when discussing cultural inferences (and I would use here the concepts *transfer* and *dependence* as coined by Even-Zohar in a series of articles on cultural polysystem theory). That is why an attempt to apply this concept to the field of communist and post-communist studies (areas bearing, at a first reading, no resemblance whatsoever) can appear problematic or even meaningless. However, such an attempt has been made more than once during the Cold War (Kulski 1959, Kolarz 1964, Horvath 1972) and also, several times, after the fall of the Iron Curtain (Katsenelinboigen 1990, Moore 2001, Kovačević 2008). The topic was then approached in post-communism, and respectively in the context of post-colonialist academic debates. The general absence of a dialogue between the field of colonial and post-colonial studies and that of communism and post-communism research (the cases mentioned above are rather isolated, although significant from the perspective of the current approach), was analysed by Chioni Moore, in his 2001 study "Is the Post- in Postcolonial the Post- in Post-Soviet?". The author raised the issue of approaching communist and post-communist realities through the lenses of colonialism and post-colonialism, respectively, which I consider to be the consequence of this lack of communication.

> In view of these postcolonial/post-Soviet parallels, two silences are striking. The first is the silence of postcolonial studies today on the subject of the former Soviet sphere. And the second regards the failure of scholars specializing in the formerly Soviet-controlled areas to think of their regions in the useful if by no means perfect postcolonial terms. (Moore 2001, 115)

Thus, the present argumentation departs from the series of theories developed during, but also at the end of, the Cold War, and revisited in 2001, when the debate was expanded towards post-communism, respectively post-colonialism, (Moore 2001, Kovačević 2008 and in Romania, in a special issue of the *Echinox Journal* (2001) on Post-colonialism and Post-communism). These are exceptions, however, because the connection between the two areas was most often ignored, although a reading, through the colonial lenses, of communism and in particular of the process of cultural sovietisation of the Eastern European ("satellite") countries, Romania among them, could prove very interesting.

The main interrogation of this analysis is whether an approximation would be possible at the conceptual level between the areas of colonialism and communism (focusing on the beginning of the Cold War period but discussing, in connection, the more recent theories on post-communism and post-colonialism) and, if this approximation proves viable, how we could approach in this context (and what would motivate this approach) the case of the Romanian culture as subject to the sovietising process of culture (within the late 1940s ideological shift), read as a form of "cultural colonialism". The thesis I consider is that, despite consistent counterarguments (based mainly on the distinct historical and ideological contexts), there are several features, mechanisms and processes related to the areas of colonial and, respectively, communism studies that allow the interpretation of the Eastern European Cold War realities on the basis of concepts emerging from the colonial and post-colonial discourse. Thus, this chapter analyses, in correlation with cultural colonialism, a series of concepts, such as *cultural transfer, cultural dependence* – using as a support Itamar Even-Zohar's theory on cultural interference, applied for the first time to the Eastern European space –, while dealing with the sovietising process as a phenomenon of exporting culture. The sovietisation as a process can be applied to the Romanian case through a series of figures and coordinates associated with Soviet cultural "colonialism" that can be approached both in terms of quantity (massive translations) and quality (considering the exported ideology and cultural "canon" of zhdanovism).

"Cultural Contact or Colonialism"?

"Colonisation colonises minds and emotions
as well as bodies, land, and labour"
(Brown 1993, 663)

The question posed in the title above (belonging to Stephen W. Silliman) reveals, as the top of an iceberg, the difficulties and dilemmas related to colonialism when analysed from the cultural point of view. Similarly, in communist studies, important concepts such as Sovietisation or totalitarianism also raise multiple problems. Thus, taking into consideration the complexity and difficulty of the topics of colonialism and, respectively, cultural sovietisation (together with the related concepts), even when approached individually, it is very challenging to verify whether we can speak of a Soviet imperialism and/or colonialism and, more specifically, of their cultural manifestation (discussion applied – in the second part of the analysis – in the case of the late 1940s Romanian culture).

Although the difficulty of establishing a unique perspective on colonialism has been mentioned more than once, the use of the term and its application to the communist realities make it necessary to mention some classical attempts to circumscribe it.

Ronald J. Horvath – whose theory on colonialism in relation to the Soviet power relations with the Eastern European societies (and, especially of interest here, their cultures) will make the subject of a more detailed analysis below – elaborated the following definition of colonialism based precisely on the concepts of power and domination:

> Colonialism is a form of domination – the control by individuals and groups over the territory and/or behaviour of other individuals and groups. Colonialism has also been seen as a form of exploitation, with emphasis on economic variables, as in the Marxist-Leninist literature, and as a culture-change process, as in anthropology; these various points of departure need not conflict, however, and the choice of domination as a focus here will not exclude the culture-change dimension of the phenomenon [emphasis added]. The idea of domination is closely related to the concept of power. (Horvath 1972, 46)

A second classical definition I consider worth mentioning belongs to Edward W. Said, who goes further, discussing (as most theorists consider necessary) the concept of colonialism together with that of imperialism:

> "Imperialism" means the practice, the theory and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan centre ruling a distant territory; "colonialism" which is almost always the consequence of imperialism, is the implementing of settlements on distant territory. (1994, 9)

Also in relation to the concept of imperialism, Said mentions a previous description by Michael Doyle (1986), which can be easily connected to Horvath's theory, to be detailed below. Thus, as Doyle argues,

> Empire is a relationship, formal or informal, in which one state controls the effective political sovereignty of another political society. It can be achieved by force, by political collaboration, by economic, social or cultural dependence. Imperialism is simply the process or policy of establishing and maintaining an empire (1986, 45).

The connection I suggested with Horvath's theory is based on the fact that he used the same vocabulary and perspective when discussing formal and informal imperialism (the latter being relevant for the approach suggested on Soviet domination).

Other previous contributions to be taken into account regard the potential reading of the methods and processes specific to the Soviet power system and cultural model implementation into Eastern Europe. Thus, the first intuitions on the permeability between the two perspectives and particularly the approach of the communist realities (still hidden behind the Iron Curtain at the time) appeared in the 1950s. Kulski (1959) argued – as others will agree later – that while the Soviet anti-colonialist discourse was one of the most visible and prominent propaganda weapons, the realities within the Soviet Union and the Eastern European satellite countries (and cultures, as Kulski is equally interested in this level) could also be compared at certain levels with the situation of colonised spaces: "Can one, however, imagine a worse type of colonialism than one which does not allow the subject nations to choose freely not only the themes but even the form of art?" (Kulski 1959, 124)

A few years later, in 1964, Kolarz brings even closer together the two concepts in his book *Communism and Colonialism*, in which he argues that Soviet communism is a modern version of Russian colonialism, the USSR being itself a colonial empire for the manner of treating its national minorities as well as the satellite countries.

As anticipated, I also believe it is worth discussing Ronald J. Horvath's 1970s approach, as essential in its complexity, both in terms of the phenomenon of colonialism in general and of the perspective which

correlated the phenomenon with the Soviet case. Similarly to Said's approach, two decades later, Horvath perceives the two concepts, i.e. imperialism and colonialism, as closely connected and both as forms of what he calls *intergroup domination* (Horvath 1972, 47). Extremely interesting is the ground of separation he suggests between the two, ground which constitutes a distinction between his and Said's later perspective, and makes Horvath's approach more open to the connection between colonialism and communism. Thus, Horvath argues that "the important difference between colonialism and imperialism appears in the presence or absence of significant numbers of permanent settlers in the colony from the colonising power" (1972, 47).

The mention of "absence of significant numbers of permanent settlers" is essential for the Soviet case, which Horvath explicitly places within colonialism, speaking of the colonial / imperial features (initially not distinguished as separate) of China and the Soviet Union:

> China and the Soviet Union condemn America for being an imperialistic power, and yet from one point of view both countries have been and are themselves colonial and imperial powers. (1972, 45)

Horvath's theory is that the exclusive use of the conceptual complex around colonialism within the Western discourse regarding the domination of what was called the Third World (1972, 48) is restricted without support, while the phenomena related to colonialism are much more comprehensive and allow a complex classification. Thus, Horvath makes the distinction between (1) formal colonialism, (2) informal colonialism, (3) formal (direct) imperialism (administrative imperialism), and (4) informal imperialism (Horvath 1972, 49), the Soviet case, the author argues, being included in the last category, as

> Informal imperialism is synonymous with neo-colonialism, semi-colonialism, and economic imperialism and is a type of intergroup domination in which formal administrative controls are absent and power is channelled through local elite. Under this definition, the satellites of the Soviet Union and British-dominated territories such as Northern Nigeria fall into the same class, to be differentiated later on the basis of the relationship variable. (Horvath 1972, 49)

The Soviet "satellites" are also explicitly mentioned because Horvath considers it a proper concept for this type of imperialism. However, while I agree with including the Soviet Union in this category, in view of the features enumerated in Horvath's definition, in which the terminology is concerned, I support the option for the concept of *cultural colonialism* in

the case of the process of Sovietisation (option detailed below, when Sovietisation itself will be discussed), following Said's distinction between imperialism, i.e. the expression of imperial theory and attitudes, and colonialism, i.e. the implementation of ideology. But I shall detail this option below, as in the presentation of Horvath's theory there is still one point which deserves attention, relating to the features of "culture" as part of a complex dynamic process. In his view, in all of the cases, the colonial power domination functions at the cultural level as a phenomenon of transfer between a "donor culture" and a "host culture", "with a vast amount of cultural transfer going, as the name implies, from donor to host". (1972, 47)

I consider the concept of *cultural transfer* particularly relevant when discussing the case of Romanian culture, due to its location in an area that has been exposed throughout history to cultural interference and transfers. When applied to the Soviet case and its satellite cultures, this concept allows a connection, as previously anticipated, with Itamar Even-Zohar's polysystem theories and his preoccupation for cultural transfer and interference. This connection starts from the conceptual resemblance between the ways in which the two authors approach the phenomenon of cultural transfer: if Horvath spoke about donor and host cultures, Even-Zohar coins the notions of *source* and respectively *target cultures*. Going one step further, the latter speaks of the resulting phenomenon of interference, defined as "a procedure emerging in the environment of contacts, one where transfer has taken place" (Even-Zohar 2010, n.pag.). Also interested in extensive classifications, Even-Zohar speaks – among several other categories of cultural transfer – about the case in which power and dominance (again similar with Horvath's perspective) are the cause of the source-to-target transfer:

> A culture may be selected as a source culture when it is dominant due to extra-cultural conditions. Naturally, a dominant culture often has prestige, but the dominant position does not necessarily result from this prestige. (Even-Zohar 2010, n.pag.)

Although the explicit reference that Horvath made to the Soviet Union is absent from Even-Zohar's classification, there are similarities between the two argumentations and use of concepts. These similarities – as well as the comparison of the features described above – support the extension of the category and its applicability to the Eastern European bloc and particularly to the Romanian case. A point which, however, raises several questions regarding this type of cultural "colonialism" is the issue of

resistance to the cultural transfer when the latter takes place within the totalitarian context:

> Power dominance of the imperialistic kind thus forces contacts on a system and may therefore engender interference in spite of the system's resistance. Yet in cases when the target system is not yet established – or in crisis – it might not develop any rejecting mechanism. (Even-Zohar 2010, n.pag.)

At a closer look, at the end of the 1940s in Romania this lack of resistance of the intellectuals can be interpreted as a symptom of a cultural crisis as well as of fear, given that the political repression was extremely aggressive in 1948-1953.

While the theories presented above were designed during the Cold War, the perception of the Soviet Union as an empire and a colonial power continued after the fall of the Iron Curtain, starting with the period of political shift. In 1990, Katsenelinboigen characterised the USSR as an empire built on several circles or levels, Eastern Europe – including Romania, of course – being part of the third circle, that of the countries which did not formally belong to the Soviet Union, but were subordinated to it, particularly "since the latter's troops m[ight] suppress any attempt they ma[de] to extract themselves from the empire" (Katsenelinboigen 1990, 93). This mention of the army is significant for the theory of Soviet colonialism, as the colonising process also involved, in the classical sense of the concept, a military occupation, as well as other characteristics which can be found in the case of the Soviet occupation of the Eastern bloc. Among them, political control and lack of political independence, domination and restrictions at all levels, from economy, education to culture and circulation of people and cultural products (books, periodicals etc.):

> [B]y most classic measures: lack of sovereign power, restrictions on travel, military occupation, lack of convertible specie, a domestic economy ruled by the dominating state, and forced education in the coloniser's tongue-Central Europe's nations were indeed under Russo-Soviet control from roughly 1948 to 1989 or 1991. (Moore 2001, 121)

The parallel evolution of the two disciplines (one focused on the colonial and postcolonial phenomena, the other on the study of communism and, more recently, post-communism) was however interrupted – as it happened before with the few (yet significant) perspectives mentioned – in 2001, by David Chioni Moore's analysis of the possible connection between the postcolonial discourse and the post-Soviet one,

while in Romania, in the same year, a special issue of the *Echinox Journal/Cahiers de l'Echinox*, edited by Corin Braga, focused on the two phenomena (addressed separately but also in comparison). While several studies in the latter also deserve attention, David Chioni Moore's study is essential not only for (re)opening an academic debate on the conceptual dialogue and connection between the two areas, but also for his innovative perspective on the sovietisation phenomenon. Thus, using the classical framework of colonialism as a reference, he speaks of the Soviet case as one of "reverse-cultural colonisations" (Moore 2001, 121). By suggesting a possible application of the postcolonial theoretical framework on the post-Communist Eastern-European countries, Moore put forward a model to follow in the attempt to establish a theoretical and conceptual dialogue between two areas marked by what I would call post-traumatic experiences. He insisted on the possible approximation between the two situations in the recent decades of recovering territories and identities (in the same direction, Kovačević (2008, 1-3) spoke later about the Eastern-European cultural "blackness", which is being "bleached"). Despite their focus on the (post)colonial and (post)communist phenomena – and therefore not on the Soviet cultural "colonisation" itself, although they necessarily refer to the historical background – these studies are useful for the current approach, particularly because of the limited number of inquiries concerning this topic. Such an attempt to bring together the two areas (although the comparison/parallel remains a rather distant approach throughout most of the studies present in the volume) can be found in *Echinox Journal*/ *Cahiers de l'Echinox* 2001 thematic issue on post-colonialism and post-communism. If the attempt to establish a dialogue between the two areas was probably premature – although perfectly synchronised with, for instance, Moore's argumentation on the topic – as the majority of studies (preoccupied either with post-colonialism or post-communism) reveal, there are, however, a few approaches which consider the application of the post-colonial theoretical and conceptual pattern to the post-communist case. Probably the most significant example belongs to the theorist Ion Bogdan Lefter, who agrees that, despite the lack of formal affiliation to the Soviet Union, Romania – as well as the other countries in the Eastern European bloc – "was not independent *de facto*. ... The presence of the Red Army on their territories – the author argues – played the role of a political pressure and coercion factor" (Lefter 2001, n.pag.). Despite the fact that the Red Army troops withdrew from Romania in 1958 (earlier than from other Soviet satellite countries), the political and cultural control remained, the sovietised Romania displaying the

characteristics identified at all levels: the paternalist state, the control over all political, social, economical or cultural activities:

> The empire tried in every way to impose its culture: Soviet propaganda, socialist realism, *And Quiet Flows the Don* and all the rest have been "exported" to us. In the 1950s, there was a specialised publishing house called Cartea Rusă [The Russian Book] and so on and so forth." (Lefter 2001, n. pag.)

In the Romanian case the Soviet control implemented the formula suggested above by Horvath when speaking about the imperial domination as being "channelled through a local elite" (Horvath 1972, 49), both political and cultural, partially imported and partially fabricated.

Implementing Cultural Colonialism: The Romanian Colonised Culture

After examining the colonial facet and several attempts of applying its features to the communist studies, the next and final step in the analysis would be to justify the conceptual option for colonialism and verify its consistence in relation with the imposed terminology concerning Sovietisation and, furthermore, to study the option for cultural colonialism, by moving the argumentation to the field of culture.

First, the terminological issue: can *Sovietisation* – as in "cultural Sovietisation" – be at least partially associated with the concept of cultural "colonialism"? As anticipated, *Sovietisation* is an essential concept to take into consideration when analysing the processes and phenomena taking place in the Eastern European (the Romanian case included) societies and cultures starting with the late 1940s. After the Second World War, the Romanian realities were the "product of two simultaneous processes: Sovietisation and satelitisation. The 'Iron Curtain' was mainly the result of the alternation of what Caroline Kennedy-Pipe called 'strategies of occupation and consolidation'" (Tismăneanu 2009, 5). Moreover, the concept of *Sovietisation* is essential for a discussion about the Soviet strategies of imposing and generalising its control, domination discourses, strategies and mechanisms to be considered when establishing a dialogue with the features of the colonial discourse and practices. The process of defining *Sovietisation* would involve a vast consideration of processes and mechanisms and therefore a separate analysis. However, the main features of the concept need to be mentioned when discussing it in comparison with those of *cultural (informal) imperialism,* mentioned previously, or *colonialism*, as suggested here. Thus, Rupnik's definition (1989) gathers

the features of the concept of Sovietisation around the idea of control, arguing that "the Sovietisation of East-Central Europe meant total control of society by each country's Communist Party, but also total Soviet control of the Communist Parties themselves" (qtd. in Connelly 1999, 295). This definition corresponds to Horvath's classification, in which *informal imperialism* (synonymous with *neo-colonialism, semi-colonialism*, and *economic imperialism*) means the exercise of power through the local (political) elite, in this case the Communist Party leaders. This mediate exercise of domination – specific to this type of informal imperialism but also, as previously shown, to the typical Soviet attitude as well – was defined by Connelly as *self-Sovietisation*. Thus, he argued that "Soviet security concern kept the channels of information to Eastern Europe narrow and left Communists there no choice but to discover and implement the Soviet system themselves" (Connelly 1999, 55).

The term is accurate when we examine the fact more closely and accept that while at the surface – and at the level of propaganda – the projection was of "voluntary" or self-Sovietisation, the entire process was actually minutely controlled by the Soviet centre. However, there are authors – such as Tismaneanu (2009) – who claim that the process involved voluntary participation, not only imposed control, and in some cases self-Sovietisation (in Connely's terms):

> The Stalinist blueprint for Eastern Europe was based on a unique strategy of transforming national political cultures into carbon copies of the USSR. The leaders of the local communist parties and the growing administrative and secret police apparatuses enthusiastically implemented this blueprint, transplanting and even enhancing the characteristics of the Soviet type of totalitarian system. (Connelly 1999, 107)

There is an entire specialised field of research to decide between the two or establish the precise limits between control and repression, on the one hand, and the voluntary copying of the model, on the other. What is really of interest here is the generalization of the model, therefore of control and, particularly, of the functioning of the concept when applied to culture. Thus, within culture, the principle of Sovietisation functioned the same as in all other fields ("Soviet literature and the arts exist to serve political ends and must spurn the Western notion of 'art for art's sake'" (Bolsover 1948, 170), although its practice and rules were specific. In this respect, I would mention the label Soviet "regimenting of intellectual life and culture" (Tismăneanu 2003, 109) currently used in the literature focusing on the Romanian culture. It suggests the unnatural way – for a culture – of becoming uniform and obedient under the rule of the party-

state apparatus, "a powerful agent when it came to Sovietising culture" (Rolf 2009, 628), a process that many, including Malte Rolf (in a study on "Sovietising Culture under Stalinism"), do not see as a voluntary or enthusiastic acceptance. However, while the latter may have been possible for some due to the privileges offered to those showing such an enthusiasm, it is probably the case of individuals rather than of "cultures". The process is defined – in Rolf's terms – as a "long road to a fixed set of Soviet cultural references" controlled by a "wide variety of institutions, agents, pressure groups, and cultural activists participating in shaping the Soviet cosmos" (Rolf 2009, 601).

The uniformity resulting from obedience to a model ("Soviet culture produced and reproduced itself by repeatedly referring to a cluster of symbols and rituals defined as 'Soviet'" (Rolf 2009, 604)), can be explained in terms of standardisation and carbon copies (as shown before), as the language (the famous "wooden language" of the time), themes and perspectives were unified almost to the level of the Orwellian dystopian vision of culture.

> This monad-like unity resulted in the widespread standardization and dull monotony of the cultural landscape. ... Soviet cultural homogeneity and monotony have often been explained as the result of the levelling and oppressive effects of totalitarian censorship. ... No doubt, official guidelines and censorship played a crucial role in shaping culture in the totalitarian dictatorship. ... They all took part in this lengthy process of Sovietising culture and establishing the symbolic landscape of the union's territories. ... Sovietising culture was a work in progress, and various experts of cultural production had an influential voice when it came to defining an adequate "Soviet style". (Rolf 2009, 601)

This complex process labelled as Sovietisation involved the radical cultural reshaping or mutation towards the Soviet carbon copy, through the implantation and transplantation of the characteristics of the Soviet model, and with the help of a large variety of tools. These varied from privileges for "those who had learned to speak Soviet" to a repression mechanism whose victims were "those who were reluctant to join in" (628). I believe all these justify a conceptual association with *colonialism* (as defined by Said) rather than with *imperialism* (in his own words), leading to the formula suggested here, *cultural colonialism*. The option is justified by the fact that, although the *imperialism* – perceived as the theory and complex of attitudes – existed in an informal, unrecognised form in the Soviet case, it would probably not cover exclusively the manner in which the model was "implemented" – applied and enhanced – in the satellite countries.

Further on, I shall try to summarise what constituted the implementation of this "cultural colonialism" starting in Romania in the late 1940s. The cultural colonisation had two levels, the first, consisting of a generalized transmission of the ideological "canon", represented the first level, which was materialised by the second level, i.e. the vast, quantitative cultural "export". In its "colonising" process, the Soviet centre found it essential to promote its ideological message for culture (extremely monotonous, as described before, and yet extremely persistent and ubiquitous within propaganda), and to request imitation from the cultures which were meant to become satellites and its people mere copies of the "homo Sovieticus" pattern – in both life and culture. This Sovietisation principle presents similarities with the colonisation mentality, as it was based on the idea that the colonised (or Sovietised) culture benefits from a positive, civilising or freeing influence from the superior culture. The ideological texts starting with the late 1940s in the Romanian press never ceased to express this principle, in praising the priceless Soviet help and model. However, the "model" was more than a figure of speech, as the Soviet canon – the socialist realist principles – had to be obeyed in the "regimenting" style described above. It is a process which accepts comparison with classical colonialism, also implying "a canon that depends on discursive criteria established in the metropolitan centre" (Mignolo 1993, 125). Furthermore, the obedience required by the superior centre in reshaping the former, *degenerate* – again the colonial discourse is easily recognisable – *bourgeois culture* into the robust "new" one did not take place merely at the discursive level. Legal measures were also adopted in order to regulate cultural production and reproduction, such as the Decree for Book Editing and Dissemination issued on 14 January 1949, reproduced and praised in articles published by *Flacăra*, the official cultural periodical, as a "New Instrument for Stimulating Literary Creation". The decree reflected the cultural policies specific to cultural Sovietisation: nationalisation and centralisation of publishing houses and all printing, control over the copyright, control over all cultural publications and reproductions, etc. The process of imposing the "metropolitan" canon was complex and well organised, balancing "stimulating" instruments – a complex system of awards and subventions – with repression. However, the phenomenon of repression – including the purge – is a different matter, while the scope of this approach regards the manner in which the Soviet model was exported within the framework of this "cultural colonialism", as well as in the process of acquiring and generalising its control through the local political elites.

> The circulation of a socialist realist literature, already produced under strong heteronomous conditions, was politically subordinated to its double hypostasis, the export and the import. The context of the start of the Cold War – characterized by extreme bipolarization of political and literary issues – is precisely the context in which the "expanding" ability of socialist realism could have been maximal or, on the contrary, show its limits. (Popa 2003, 261)

This cultural circulation and expansion, in other words the process of cultural transfer presented above, had two embodiments: what we can call the *direct transfer* – through a massive export of literature (process detailed below), translated or not – and the *indirect transfer*, resulting from the local literature, produced as a consequence of the "colonial" model exposure. While a further comment will be made on the direct cultural export or transfer, several quotes from the official press of the time offer a clear image of the ideological level of the Soviet cultural "colonisation". They represent just a few examples extracted from the massive production of stereotypical ideological texts – either translations or local productions – that invaded the Romanian 1948-1949 publications:

> I have mentioned the role of educators that writers had to play in relation to their readers. But, first of all, they were themselves being "re-educated" through Soviet theoretical materials (reflecting and strengthening the new socialist order, Soviet art and literature teach all working people to assimilate genuine human ethics, the Communist ethics. (Trofimov 1951, 20)

The Soviet materials were strengthened by their local carbon-copy imitations – articles or books copying the ideas and wooden language of the "metropolitan" centre:

> There is no doubt that by constantly learning from the works of the classics of Marxism-Leninism and their great followers, being inspired by the example of Soviet literature ... and fighting until the end against any outburst of the rotten bourgeois ideology, our writers will have increasing successes on the way of developing literary creation, filled of the spirit of the Party, a weapon of mass struggles. ("Probleme actuale…" 1951, 212)

The writer (the singular referring to the category or typology as designed by the regime) was not only expected to be familiar with this doctrine but also to master its intimate mechanisms in the literary production and, moreover, to be able to convince and educate others according to it. Cultural elites were expected to become

> fighters on the front of building socialism, and not simple witnesses, the writers are connected to the people's work. … out of the same feeling of brotherhood between the poet and the worker, both in the same class position, emerges, of course, the depiction in our literature of the Plan … which became a comrade of the working men. … Workers work …, peasants work … and progressive intellectuals work and the same do the writers, animated by their great mission to contribute to the education of working people in the spirit of socialism, to depict the new reality in valuable artistic achievements, the working class struggle, the victories of the people, the moral beauty of the free man. … Assimilating the Marxist-Leninist learning is a task given to the writers. Enlarging their theoretical knowledge, which will help them observe life in its essence, working with a gardener's passion to perfect their artistic craft, our writers will create the great work people are expecting from them. To create the sincere work … expressing through literature the essential things in life: the truth of class struggle, the fight against exploiters, and the fight for socialism, for the new man. (Popescu 1950, 217, 219, 232)

The propagandistic message was therefore intensively disseminated and its assimilation by the culture – now reduced to the status of a satellite – was imperative and immediate. The standardised discourse was ubiquitous not only through its repetitiveness but also through the impressive quantity. The cultural transfer was not only monotonous and unidirectional – from centre to the "colonised" periphery – but also massive. While Soviet literature was exported in impressive quantities due to the monopoly on publishing and translations, quantity was also requested from the local writers, who were asked to produce as much as possible, actually to [re]produce the model, but – quite significantly – for local use and not for reciprocal export.

When analysing the massive "export" of Soviet literature through translations we can identify a paradox: while on the Romanian book market of the interwar period the donor or source cultures, through their prestige (in Even-Zohar's terms), were Western European literatures – and the most recent French or British titles influenced the transformations taking in place in the style of local writers –, during the Soviet cultural "colonisation" the target or host culture was forced to accept a massive cultural transfer imposed on extra cultural grounds, based on political domination.

In this context, one of the specific features of the Soviet "cultural colonisation" associated with the process of Romanian Sovietisation was the fact that, although influent as a second language taught in school, Russian did not become an official language in Romania or in other satellite countries. In return, it was a "colonisation by translations",

impressive through its dimensions. However, the language issue was not at all simple: on the one hand, the Soviet anti-colonialist message explicitly rejected the imperial strategies that were associated with the Western capitalist powers, promoting in return a "voluntary" union and alignment or "regimenting", in Tismaneanu's terms. On the other hand, there were – as Lefter (2001) emphasised – tendencies to implement the Russian language in one form or another, especially at the beginning of the Sovietisation process. Regarding translations, the export was impressive, both in quantity and in procedures:

> In 1949, the writers considered emblematical for the Soviet socialist realism, such as Gorki, Ostrovski, Sholokhov, Fadeiev, Simonov, Ehrenburg and so on, are massively translated in Romania. In 1953, as results from a balance of the first years of functioning of the Russian Book publishing house (which was part of the infrastructure organised in Romania so as to make possible this intensive literary transfer), this publishing house had published so far only 1,650 tiles in 22,550,000 copies. (Popa 2003, 262-263)

The quantity was impressive, with 15,000 copies for a regular book, around 40,000 for a "bestseller", reedited in 6 to 8 editions each. This truly intensive cultural "colonisation" through translations required, because of its proportions, to be justified by those in charge of the centralised publishing infrastructure. They legitimised it as the result of an enthusiastic, large-scale publishing zeal, deriving from a local "thirst for knowing the experience and achievements of the liberating friendly country" (Popa 2001, n.pag.). The representatives of the Russian Book publishing house – part of a larger association for the Soviet-Romanian connections (ARLUS) – promoted their lack of selection criteria for themes or value as a form of openness. Quantity was the only aspect considered, again in radical opposition to the complex publishing house planning of the Romanian interwar period.

The translation "enthusiasm" was, however, unidirectional – from the Soviet centre to the satellites –, in comparison with thousands of Soviet titles, only a few Eastern-European writers were translated into Russian: four in 1950, six in 1951, and only one contemporary writer. Nevertheless, the local writers were required, as shown above, to *produce* (actually to *reproduce*) a significant quantity of works as part of the national plan.

> The metamorphosis of the intellectuals into "workers with the mind" ... served to demonstrate that they were not in fact different from the masses. ... Entering the general production process, he has, as any worker, an amount of work to achieve. (Osman 2004, 50)

The personal projects of these writers disappeared and were replaced by massive collective "plans", parts of the economic State Plan. Especially during the first economic plan (1949), the Romanian cultural press witnessed a national obsession for this idea of literature being part of the *Plan*. The following excerpts are samples from interviews given by writers to cultural periodicals in 1949

> It is wonderful to say out loud: "Yes, comrade Party, I am ready to receive comrade Plan" (Gică Iuteş). "Previously, the writer had projects. Now, following the example given by the working class led by its party, our party, he has a plan. … My plan? Four books. It's not much. But socialist competitions shall also start within literature. I'll try to exceed my plan and exceed myself. … The field activity, in the living core of things, in plants, mines, building sites, in villages will be of course one of the main preoccupations of the Writers' Association in the Popular Republic of Romania" (Eugen Jebeleanu). "This year I'll try, through efforts, to improve my craft" (Lucian Bratu). "I also plan at least four works on the subject of the work of conscious peasants (sic) … who clearly perceive their duties and rights" (Gh. Vida). (Selejan 2007, 19-21)

As anticipated, the priority was the amount of work rather than the quality: the number of books, poems, etc. became the most important criterion in justifying the activity of the writers now regimented in literary institutions. Therefore, each of them promised – or rather "engaged" – to *produce* four or six books/poetry volumes/plays in the year to come, compared to the still "modest" number of the already written volumes. This rhetoric of the "workers with the mind" was maintained for decades, as in the 1980s we encounter similar discussions on the dimensions of literary "production" of the "workers with the mind", sometimes as an argument for the Writers' Union legitimacy and funding (Macrea-Toma 2009, 147). Thus, the materialisation of Sovietisation consisted in what can be defined, at different levels and to a certain degree, as massive cultural transfer, export or colonialism, a quantitative and ideological well-organised cultural domination.

Conclusions

Whether it is possible to find common ground for what appear to be two parallel academic approaches remains a debatable issue, as arguments can be found both in favour and against such a connection between the two theoretical frameworks. However, several theorists have found interesting the application of the colonialist theoretical and conceptual