Cultural Trauma – The Case of the Winner¹

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Abstract: *My study is an analysis of the emergence of the “Golden Dream” narrative in Romania, right after World War I. Along the way, I make some theoretical contributions to cultural trauma studies. ‘Winner’ and ‘loser’ are terms used to define fixed situations. Usually, only the loser (the victim, defeated) might suffer a trauma, while the occurrence of trauma is denied for the winner (the perpetrator, victor). We shall dig a little deeper and wider, demonstrating that Romania, an overall winner of WWI, will face, right after victory, a ‘cultural shock’ which has to be repressed, as part of the “Golden Dream” narrative. Through a detailed, economic, social and political analysis, I’ll be trying to argue that a shattering trauma has engendered in Romanian society; yet another addition to a whole ‘traumatic history’. The ensuing orthodox ethno-nationalism takes its root from this trauma. From time-to-time, we will take a comparative glance at the trauma of the loser, particularly when we will be discussing the omissions of an otherwise seamless narrative.*

Keywords: *cultural trauma, Romania, Hungary, authoritarianism, interwar period*

Introduction

“Where the disease is various, no particular definite remedy can meet the wants of all. Only the attraction of an abstract idea, or of an ideal state, can unite in common action, multitudes who seek a universal cure for many special evils and a common restorative applicable to many different conditions” (Acton 1862: 3).

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History does not end at one certain point, when victory is declared and defeat is accepted². Both offspring of that very moment, the winner and the loser, continue their war. Life goes on in the 'afterworld' much in the same way as it had in the realm of the living; it merely "changes venue", as Ernst Cassirer puts it (Cassirer 1954: 49–50). So, the parallel history of the winner and that of the loser begins. Both are ambiguous situations. The winner must consolidate its victory, which is a phase of extensively perceived risk and anxiety, over losing what has just been gained; this is the state of mind of a *would-be loser*. The loser must first explain the causes of defeat with this explanation not likely to show that the outcome is the result of its own fault but due to some external circumstances; foreign factors would often be blamed. Then will follow a period of planning the revenge and waiting for proper circumstances to arise; this is the state of mind of a *would-be winner*. Neither winner nor loser accepts its situation; the 'afterworld' emasculates simple reality. Both states of mind constitute a trauma which takes hold on the whole psyche while anxiety and revenge produce cultural narratives.

Taken as a whole, the history of Romania is a patchwork of victories and defeats and the lands that today constitute Romania represent much of a history under foreign domination.

In his scattered remarks, the psychiatrist Vasile Dem. Zamfirescu summarises most poignantly the psycho-cultural or ethno-psychological outcome of the Romanian historical experience. In his essays, he diagnoses a neurosis among the Romanians (Zamfirescu 2012) that, according to him, might be called "Balcanic neurosis". Zamfirescu's main assumption is that Romanians have a long-standing problem with self-esteem. History teaches them that failure is the most constant trait in the history of Romania and consequently shame, even self-hatred and self-contempt is an unconscious collective reaction to this embarrassing memory. Paradoxically, it seems that a deeply buried traumatic history is the explanation for the exaltations of nationalistic hysteria that Romania so often exhibits.

István Bibó, an eminent Hungarian political theorist and social psychologist, employs the concept of hysteria which plays a crucial role in his work and this psycho-cultural concept points to a very similar direction as we have seen in the essays of Vasile Dem. Zamfirescu's "Balkan-neurosis. Bibó concentrates on Hungary³ and to some extent, on East Central European 'small states' but Romania might easily be included in his theoretical and historical framework.

Bibó describes hysteria as a cultural-psycho-social phenomenon. The sign that a society is caught in the swirl of hysteria is when reality is conceived as a *constraint*, devoid of any alternative; a reality that inherently commands and

2 A comparison of the culture of victor and defeated, though concentrating on the latter, can be found in Schivelbusch, Wolfgang (2018).

3 The link between Bibó's analysis and present day populism is examined by Viktor Glied, „Populist phenomena and the reasons for their success" (in this issue).

dictates a certain direction to action while not subjecting itself to a scrutiny of reasonable people who would find alternatives for that particular action. The situation of constraint has a cognitive effect for it locks the mind in just a tiny parcel of reality; a partial truth about reality. One part of the truth covers all of it. From this point on, the victim (and Bibó is talking about a particular victim, having the Hungarian Trianon-trauma in mind) only has vindications against the rest of the world in the name of that partial truth which dominates the victim's entire existence. If one would translate this theoretical assumption, it would sound like this: my truth is the whole truth and there is no more need for any quest for truth. A new trauma is then born, doubling the already existing one: the fear of losing the truth, which is mine, my beloved and perhaps only specific possession, therefore being absolute. This fear is then the essence of life and becomes part of one's identity. From this moment on, I am perfectly right and no counter-argument can convince me otherwise. The problem lies precisely in that I possess the *Truth* and nothing but the *Truth*. This is the situation of a community that has lost its sense of reality and lives outside it, in a constructed *eternity*. In some cultural trauma studies, this state of mind is described as living in a world that exists 'out of time'. "The perceived unreality of an occurrence is part of what is meant by shock, a numbing of the senses and an inability to accept or take in what has, in fact, happened. There is also a probable mixing of "this has not happened" and "this cannot happen," as well as "this cannot happen here" (Eyerman 2012).

The theoretical background of these insights can obviously be traced back to Sigmund Freud and his diagnosis of hysteria. According to Freud, the non-traumatic (i.e. that which isn't the result of a single traumatic experience) hysteria is "a series of affective impressions – a whole *story* of suffering" (Freud 1893: 290 – emphasis added).

Fundamental to Freudian theory is the idea that mental illnesses are caused by the repression of painful experiences – in the form of neuroses, obsessions and even psychoses. Individuals who are so traumatised cannot act rationally because they live in a world of distorted information and reality. The way of healing (psychoanalysis in the case of Sigmund Freud and Josef Breuer⁴) is to help people overcome distorted and unrealistic ways of thinking by enabling them to have more and better information about themselves and their situation. "Each individual hysterical symptom immediately and permanently disappeared when: we had succeeded in bringing clearly to light the memory of the event by which it was provoked and in arousing its accompanying affect and when the patient had described that event in the greatest possible detail and had put the affect into words" (Freud – Breuer 1895).

4 Many valuable insights for a psycho-cultural interpretation of hysteria may be found in Freud, Sigmund – Breuer, Josef (1895).

So, the neurosis, which originates in hysteria, is transposed by Zamfirescu and Bibó into the psycho-cultural realm and extended for a long historical period.

On the other hand, the ‘healing’ process, a return to reality, which would have the effect of dispersing hysteria by uncovering disturbing memories, is not as straightforward as it would be in psychoanalysis. In the case of ‘traumatic history’ (‘story of suffering’), a counter-narrative needs to be constructed which would result in disposing of the ‘story of suffering’. Because narratives are social imageries, few, or at the very least, the patient, would be interested in adhering to the ‘story of suffering’, rather, the ‘story of glory’, as a way to cover up the former. Convincing one single person that healing is in their main interest might be possible but such an effort concerning large communities, whose life-world is that of social imaginaries⁵, may prove to be a lot more challenging⁶.

Table 1⁷

1. Historical period	2. Form of government	3. Dominant cultural narrative	4. Special events
1918		Unity	Bessarabia, Bucovina, Transylvania, Southern Dobrogea became part of ‘Large Romania’
1918–1938	Constitutional Monarchy/	Golden Age/Dream came true	Constitution – 1923
	Authoritarian/		
	“mimed” democracy ⁸		Land Reform – 1921

5 See: Taylor, Charles (2002).

6 One of the few successful “healings”, the one I call the “Münchhausen-project”, is the German case after WWII and the development of the concept of *Verfassungspatriotismus*, a new German imagery. (See: Müller, Jan-Werner 2007). Resembling a psychoanalytic uncovering, when Germany had started to face trauma in the late 50s, as a result, a narrative emerged which resulted in a renewal of national identity. In an incredible performance, fierce nationalism was replaced by *Verfassungspatriotismus* (constitutional patriotism). In contrast, for example, a return to the “beloved” trauma might be observed in Hungary, as the analysis of the ‘historical constitution’ shows (See Vörös, Zoltán 2016: 25–38)

7 A similar timeline, though less detailed and concentrating only on political periods, is proposed by Schmitt, Oliver Jens (2018): 19–20.

8 Mattei Dogan uses the term “mimed (fictitious) democracy” in an excellent article describing Romanian political dynamics during the interwar period. (Dogan, Mattei. 1995. „Dansul electoral în România interbelică.” *Revista de Cercetări Sociale*. no. 4: 3-23.) First appearing 1946, the article analyses the electoral results of an authoritarian scheme: King dissolves parliament – King appoints a new Prime Minister – Prime Minister organizes elections – Prime Minister’s party wins the elections.

1938–1944	Dictatorships:	Missing narrative: Dissolution of Greater Romania	Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact: Bessarabia lost to Soviet Union – 1939
	King Carol II		
	Marshal Antonescu		2 nd Vienna Award – Northern Transylvania lost to Hungary – 1940
1944 August 23 – 1948	Transitional period		
1948–1989	Communist/Stalinist dictatorship	Communism/	Nicolae Ceaușescu takes power – 1965
		Homogeneous nation-state	Nicolae Ceaușescu overthrown and executed – 1989
1990–1996	Transitional period/ Authoritarian democracy	Homogeneous nation-state	Ion Iliescu President – 1992–1996
			New Constitution – 1991
1996–	Flawed democracy ⁹	Homogeneous nation-state	NATO membership – 2004
			EU membership – 2007
			Authoritarian attempts:
			Adrian Năstase, Prime Minister, Iliescu president – 2000–2004
			Liviu Dragnea, Head of Social Democratic Party, effective leader of government – from 2016
			Traian Băsescu populist President – 2004–2012

9 The state of Romanian democracy is constantly indexed as a “flawed democracy”, with a score of 6.44 (10 being full democracy, 0 being authoritarianism or dictatorship) in 2017. See the Economist Intelligence Unit’s assessment: <https://infographics.economist.com/2018/DemocracyIndex/>.

The moment

On December the 1st, 1918, a purposefully organized crowd, the *National Assembly of Romanians of Transylvania and Hungary*, assembled near the city of Alba Iulia in Transylvania and declared its desire to join their brethren “beyond the Carpathian Mountains”. The 100,000 ‘delegates’ were supposed to represent the ‘Romanian population’ of the historical region of Transylvania, many of whom were wearing national popular clothing. In 1922, Ferdinand I of Romania was symbolically crowned *King of Greater Romania*. The *Orthodox Unification Cathedral* was built between 1921 and 1923. In December, 2018, Alba Iulia was officially declared *Capital of the Great Union of Romania*. This is the exact place where the “Golden Dream” of national unity came true. The “Golden Dream” is a seamless story (some would call it mythology) about the brave millennial fight of the Romanians and their ancestors to re-unite and inhabit a certain predefined/predestined geographic area; a dream that the majority of Romanians are still dreaming but a dream that has become a curse as it keeps the Romanians bound by strong nationalistic sentiments, impeding Romania to opt for a more democratic political community.

Nationalism and democracy are not only the defining twin ideas of the 19th Century but it seems that they grew apart, resulting in mutual rejection.

Romania has yet to face the dilemma of solving the problem of the contradiction of nationalism and democracy but the “Golden Dream”, most of the time, obstructs these efforts.

1918–1939

In the very moment of political unity, unity became a normative concern for the politicians of the age¹⁰. Beyond the golden veil of the dream, the realization of unity proved to be more troublesome than ever imagined. This dream immediately expressed “desire and doubt”, as Irina Livezeanu (Livezeanu 2000: 4) points out.

The basic statement is that, in 1918, Greater Romania was assembled from five distinct parts, four of them coming from three empires: the Ottoman (Southern Dobrogea but the two Romanian states, Walachia and Moldova, were largely under Ottoman and sometimes Russian domination during the 15th–19th Centuries); the Habsburg Monarchy, later the Austrian-Hungarian

10 Similarly, as the famous trope of Massimo D’Azeglio and later Gabrielle D’Annunzio says for Italy: “L’Italia è fatta. Restano da fare gli italiani” – “We have made Italy. Now we must make Italians.” (For a comparison of Italian and Central European populisms and fascisms, see: Petra Hammerli, “Common Points in the Policy of Italy and Central Europe” [this issue]. However, my point is that the investigation might be extended to East-Central Europe, comprising the Balkans as well. See also about the origins and employment of the trope: Hom, Stephanie Malia (2013).

Empire (Transylvania, Bucovina); and Russia (Bessarabia). Later on, we will concentrate mainly on Transylvania,¹¹ as this part is the common denominator of both ‘winner’ and ‘loser’ traumas.

From a directly *political point of view*, a new class of Romanian politicians has entered the scene of political struggle in Bucharest, the capital city, the place of Byzantine-type politicking: cunning, deception, intrigue, fight for personal influence, short-term alliances and personalization, rather than an institutionalization of politics. This political culture was entirely alien to the political class whose framework of political socialization had been given by the Austrian-Hungarian Empire. The previous political experience of this class of Transylvanian (and, to a far lesser degree, that of Bukovina’s) politicians centered almost completely around the issue of Romanian national autonomy within the Austrian-Hungarian Monarchy. Suddenly, this new class had to move from Vienna and Budapest to Bucharest, meanwhile losing what was previously its main political agenda. By the end of the 30s, these politicians had already been complaining about the colonization (“centralization”) of Transylvania by Bucharest.

In 1938, a *Memorandum (Memorandul rommânilor din Transilvania /Ardeal, Banat, Crișana, Satu-Mare, Maramureș/ prezentat M.S. Regelui Carol II în 15 decembrie, 1938)*, signed by 50 preeminent Romanian public figures and politicians, was presented to King Carol II in which countless grievances were listed but the main complaints were that people from the Old Kingdom were settled to serve in administration and judiciary. Also, a “rush for gold”, an eagerness for enrichment, brought with it an extended corruption so specific for Bucharest (Boia 2015: 81–83). We have to emphasize that the *Memorandum* was conceived as part of a political struggle directed against the dictatorship of Carol II by the ‘old’ Transylvanian political elite. However, it reflects that the Romanian political and cultural elite was perfectly aware of its cultural difference compared to the Romanian Kingdom but without being able to assert it politically. Any expression of this cultural difference would have amounted to high treason. This episode is recounted here exactly because it shows the extraordinary constraining and real force of the narrative, of the Golden Dream in our case.

Paradoxically, we may say that not only a large number of different ethnic groups but even Romanians of the newly acquired regions had to be assimilated into the already existing Romanian Kingdom.¹²

11 By Transylvania we understand the larger area, including the regions of Banat and Crișana/Maramureș and by the expression “Transylvania proper”, we mean the area without these regions. Throughout this paper, I am going to use the Romanian names.

12 “I suggest that the “embarrassment of riches” Romania faced with the postwar settlement was an ambiguous and difficult gift. Like the “Trojan horse,” it brought apparent and momentary glory but concealed untold social, demographic, political and cultural challenges.” (Livezeanu, Irina 2000: 7) Note that Livezeanu, in her seminal work, also talks about the “gift” of unification, which is in stark contrast to the official, interwar and present narrative which portrays unification as a millennia-long struggle.

The ‘assimilation’ of Romanians to Greater Romania prevented Romanians from launching any democratic attack on whatever authoritarian rule or dictatorship was bound to establish the real unity of Romanians. As the 3rd column of our table shows clearly, there is a strong correlation between the narrative of the homogeneous nation state and form of government that is predominantly autocracy, dictatorship or, at its best, a flawed/authoritarian/‘mimed’ democracy. The dream, which had to be turned into tangible reality, compensated for the failures in overcoming all sorts of economic-administrative-social difficulties brought about by unification, subordinating those to the national success of unity. This emerging orthodox-ethno-nationalism has proved to be the dominant and constant language of the ongoing unification right up to the present day, as neither the success of a recognized democratic achievement, nor the solution of economic problems of a relatively backward country¹³ have yet to be able to offer any alternative.

From an economic point of view, unity brought about huge challenges as the level of economic development of the Old Kingdom, in comparison with those three empires to which the acquired new regions previously belonged, presented differences that proved to be very hard to bridge.

In contrast, Hungary, the ‘loser’, has not been forced to grapple with such economic challenges.

In the following table, we find a comparison between Romania and Hungary’s GDP/capita.

Table 2: Comparison between Romania and Hungary’s GDP/capita

GDP per capita		Change (dollars, HUN)		Change (dollars, ROM)	Difference, HUN/ROM, %
(1990 International Geary-Khamis dollars) ¹⁴	Hungary		Romania		
Year					
1900	1,682		1,415		118
1910	2	318	1,66	245	120
1913	2,098	98	1,741	81	120
1926	2,162	164	1,258	-483	171

13 “Another reality must not be disregarded and that is the fact that many of the political leaders in the provinces had serious reservations towards some political realities in the Old Kingdom and expressed their criticism of the political principles, corruption, backward state of the peasantry and especially of the centralist policy supported in particular by the liberals.” (Sorin, Radu 1918: 138–167): Romania and the Great War: Political, Territorial, Economic and Social Consequences.

14 The data presented in this table is extracted from the Maddison Project Database, 2018: <https://www.rug.nl/ggdc/historicaldevelopment/maddison/releases/maddison-project-database-2018>. The ‘difference’ has been calculated by myself.

1929	2,476	314	1,152	-106	214
1938	2,655	179	1,242	90	213
1948	2,2	-455	816	-426	269
1965	4,41	2,21	2,386	1,57	184
1980	6,306	1,896	4,135	1,749	152
1989	6,903	597	3,941	-194	175
1998	6,464	-439	2,971	-970	217
2008	9,5	3,036	4,895	1,924	1,94

Source: (Maddison 1995); (Maddison 2003) and (Murgescu 2010)¹⁵

What is especially noticeable is the decrease of Romania's GDP by 1926 (-483 international dollars) and 1929 (-106 – the year of the beginning of the Great Depression). In the same period, Hungary saw a constant increase in GDP. Even if GDP calculations are not entirely reliable for these periods, we will not be off the mark by that much so can draw a relatively accurate general conclusion. Romania has paid, literally, a huge price for unification, while Hungary – strange as it may sound – economically was not visibly affected by losing Transylvania, registering one of its largest increases in its GDP from 1913 to 1929¹⁶. By the end of WWII, Hungarian GDP/capita was more than 2.5 times higher compared to that of Romania's.

Overall, it might be concluded that the GDP/capita in 1938, presenting small fluctuations after 12 years of unification, did not even reach the level registered for 1926.

Another aspect of the economic problem was the ethnic dimension of ownership. Statistics indicate that in Great Romania, minorities owned more than 51% of individual commercial and industrial firms – out of a total of 229,042 – and Romanians less than 49%. Only in the former Wallachia were the Romanian owners the majority but in Moldova, slightly more than 40% (while Jewish were 52%), in Bessarabia, around 17%, in Bukovina 14% and in Transylvania proper, 36%.

¹⁵ For more details on Romania's economy, see Bogdan Murgescu's magnificent monograph on the subject: Murgescu, Bogdan (2010). Murgescu, regarding the economy of Romania, for the interwar period, argues that, contrary to public memory, these 20 years were far from being the "Golden Age" of economic prosperity.

¹⁶ This statement is rather risky and – I must acknowledge – is largely unfounded. It is a shortcut to research that has to be carried out and not a conclusion of research that has already been carried out. Without these findings, we won't really know if the acquisition of new territories has had any measurable effect on this rather bad performance of economy in Romania regarding the interwar period. Of course, there might be other explanations as well, for example, the land reform in 1921 which created small, economically not viable lots replacing large estates. However, even a superficial approach suggests that integrating different economies that were integrated before in another economic network – Transylvania and Bukovina to the Austrian-Hungarian Empire, Bessarabia to Russia – might cause a kind of "transformational crisis".

This leads us further to the socio-cultural troubles caused by victory.

According to the census carried out by the Hungarian authorities, the percentage of different major ethnic communities¹⁷ in Transylvania in 1910 were as follows: Romanians: 53.7%, Hungarians: 31.6%, Germans: 10.7%. This general picture should be refined. In rural areas, Romanians had a larger majority, while in some big cities, they were sometimes in perceptible minority.

To suggest the level of cultural shock at national level (as people living in this region might have been used to but now, having the upper hand, they gave free flow of their resentment because of the former ethnic hardships they had to endure), I am going to compile a table¹⁸ that includes the major cities (county capitals) in Transylvania¹⁹ and shows the number of citizens speaking Romanian, Hungarian and German.

Table 3: Number of citizens speaking Romanian, Hungarian and German

City	Total inhabitants	Romanian	Hungarian	German
Cluj	100,844	34,836	54,776	2,702
Timișoara	91,58	24,088	32,513	30,67
Oradea	82,687	20,914	55,039	1,118
Arad	77,181	28,537	41,161	4,617
Brașov	59,232	19,378	24,977	13,276
Satu Mare	51,495	13,941	30,308	669
Sibiu	49,345	19,006	6,782	22,045
Târgu Mureș	38,517	9,493	25,359	735

17 Speaking the language of a community meant belonging to it. Gipsies were mostly speaking Hungarian and they were not considered an independent ethnic group. The same is true for the Jewish population and smaller ethnic minorities. Even if this is not an incorrect methodology, it might distort somewhat the results of the census in favour of Hungarians.

18 Extracted from the 1930s census: Recensământul general al populației României din 29 decembrie, 1930 vol.II. Part 2. Neam, Limbă Maternă. Religie [Folk, Mother Tongue, Religion] It is interesting to note that the official document of the results of the census uses the term "folk" [neam], which cannot be translated as nationality or simply as people. Its connotation entails a good deal of ancestral belonging. My translation as "folk" makes reference to the German "Völkisch" expression, which originates in Johann Gottlieb Fichte's romantic nationalism and is the core element of ethno nationalism (later further developed by revolutionary conservatism and used by Nazi ideology – and today a component of populism). Refer to note **Chyba! Záložka není definována.** as well. The majority population has been greyed out.

19 Transylvania is taken into account here with the regions of Banat and Crișana-Maramureș that historically, for a period as an independent state, belonged to it.

Lugoj	23,593	9,722	6,226	6,756
Dej	15,11	6,114	5,521	158
Bistrița	14,735	5,671	1,479	4,677
Sighișoara	13,033	8,761	7,138	11,394
Alba Iulia	12,282	8,058	2,49	618
Sf. Gheorghe	10,818	2,02	8,357	206
Deva	10,509	5,471	4,298	393
Odorhei	8,518	931	7,295	168
Diciosânmartin	6,567	1,957	3,878	172
Miercurea-Ciuc	4,807	570	4,007	76

Overall, the urban population in Transylvania saw a radical change²⁰, if one compares 1910 to 1930. In urban areas, the Romanian population increased from around 20% to 35% and the Hungarian one decreased from around 60% to 37%²¹.

This situation created a sharp division between the ethnically more homogeneous populations who were thus considered more ‘authentic village’, whereas the cosmopolitan city, which was multiethnic, was more populated by ‘aliens’.

The religious divide went along the same lines²².

Wallachia, composed of two regions, Oltenia and Muntenia, the Orthodox were an overwhelming majority: 99% and 94% respectively; in Dobrogea, the competing Church was Islam: 72.3% Orthodox, 22.1 Islam; in Moldova, Bessarabia (today: Republic of Moldova), Bukovina, there was an extensive Jewish community: 6.7%, 7.2% and 10.9, while Orthodox was 88.2%, 87.6% and 71.9% (and in Bukovina, 11.5% were Roman Catholic).

20 Some of this change can be attributed to a natural ‘dissimilation’ process, after the long period of assimilation policy of the Hungarian Kingdom.

21 See: (***) 1938–1943: 149) Enciclopedia României, ed. Gusti, Dimitrie. This is due in part to the fact that roughly 200,000 Hungarians took refuge in Hungary and also because an intended (the policy of replacing the staff in administration and members of judiciary) and spontaneous (businesses seeking new opportunities) colonization of newly acquired regions had taken place. The colonization was later carried out thoroughly by Nicolae Ceaușescu, beginning from the 60s until the end of the 80s. The major cities in Transylvania, as they were inhabited by ‘foreign elements’, had to be dismantled and in their place, new cities had to be created. This destroying-by-constructing policy had its natural underpinning in Stalinist ideology. Constructing heavy industries, large factories and homes for the displaced rural people forced people to become workers and to comply with the ideology of creating a ruling, working class, loyal to the regime.

22 Data compiled from the 1930 census.

In Transylvania proper, the situation was very complex:

Table 4: Religions

Orthodox	27.8%
Greek Catholic ²³	31.1%
Roman Catholic	12.8%
Reformed, Calvinist	15.5%
Evangelical, Lutheran	7.6%
Jewish	2.5%

Table 5: Religions in Banat

Orthodox	56.1%
Greek Catholic	3.6%
Roman Catholic	34.2%
Reformed, Calvinist	2.2%
Evangelical, Lutheran	1.5%

Table 6: Religions in Crişana-Maramureş

Orthodox	36.8%
Greek Catholic	25.2%
Roman Catholic	15.3%
Reformed, Calvinist	12.8%
Evangelical, Lutheran	1.1%
Jewish	7.0

The Romanian Kingdom suddenly found herself facing alarming yet unknown religious diversity. (It goes without saying that the majority of the rural population was Orthodox and in the case of Transylvania, partly Greek Catholic, with the exception of Szeklerland, inhabited by ethnic Hungarians who were majority Roman Catholic.)

²³ Ethnic Romanians, accepting the authority of the Catholic Pope but preserving the Byzantine liturgy.

Some other factors have also contributed to the cultural shock and ‘inferiority complex’ of the ‘winner; (and meanwhile, to the ‘superiority complex’ of the ‘loser’).

One tangible element is the literacy rate of the Romanian and Hungarian population, which registered as 34.8% for the former and 54.8% for the latter (** 1938–1943: 147).

From all this data and tables, we may draw up a partial conclusion: the trauma of the ‘winner’ consisted of a cultural shock that was felt mostly in the Old Kingdom. Greater Romania was to be created not only by the enlargement of a previously relatively insignificant country at the borders of Europe and the administrative tasks this enlargement imposed, rather, by an inevitable, although belated, industrial and cultural modernisation as well, under the pressure of ethnic and religious diversity. “The Romanian elites had to cope with regional cleavages and a national and confessional heterogeneity that had hitherto been unknown to the leaders of the Regat [Old Kingdom]” (Radu and Schmitt 2017: 4).

By 1938, the monumental narrative of Great Romania had been created. Under the golden sand of the dream, a traumatic history and the cultural shock of the unification were buried and for a large part, remain there even today. In 1938, the first volume of the monumental *Enciclopedia României* was published. Assembling leading social scientists, philosophers and *homme des lettres*, this narrative of the “Golden Dream” served multiple purposes. The editor of a planned 6 volume set (only 4 were published), Dimitrie Gusti – a path-breaking Romanian sociologist at the time but in the meantime, a supporter of the King’s dictatorship and close to the Iron Guard – the editor, employing somewhat ‘misty’ wording, sets the scene for the mythology of an ever-existing nation that achieved unity, with the *Enciclopedia* as its equivalent in the history of ideas which reflects this unity. This is a teleological narrative of history fueling continuously the ideology of an orthodox ethno-nationalism and the Golden Dream of a homogeneous nation-state which has found its most radical immediate warrior in Corneliu Zelea-Codreanu and in the Iron Guard led by him but which, in milder or harsher forms, survived during the last 100 years.

Closing remarks

The Hungarian story is based on the moral superiority of the Hungarians in the Carpathian Basin. The key element of this cultural narrative is the ability to form a state. Statehood is considered the top performance of a community²⁴. Independence is strongly related to the freedom of the state so Hungarian his-

24 This utterly German, romantic vision of the state found its full expression in Georg Wilhelm von Hegel’s philosophy of law and was further developed by the Hegelian historians of the 19th Century.

torical narrative is most often the history of freedom-fighting. This also suggests that – from the Medieval Age onwards – there was a permanent need to fight to regain the state because Hungary was caught between the Great powers: in this way, an independent state is more an aim than an existing reality.

The Romanian teleological story²⁵ centres on bravery. The Dacians were brave in fighting the Roman conqueror Traian, the early Wallachian and Moldavian Kings were brave in fighting the Ottomans; later, in the 19th Century, the Romanian Kingdom was brave in fighting for unification of Wallachia and Moldova and soon after, fighting for independence, ultimately getting involved in the Turkish-Russian wars of the late 19th Century. And then, of course, utmost bravery was clearly shown in 1918 when Greater Romania came into being and so history came to its natural conclusion. This story also suggests that chance should be excluded from the explanation regarding historical realization.

Missing narratives (greyed out in Table 1) tell a lot about the main narratives. World-shaping narrative *cum* reality, ‘moral superiority’, collapses when Hungarians have to face the blame for collaborating with the Nazis in the Holocaust. Romanian bravery would collapse when Romania ceded Bessarabia and Northern Transylvania without any fight. These are the breaches in the wall.

The studies on cultural trauma have certain common characteristics: usually making a sharp distinction between the *perpetrator* and *victim* (‘winner’ and ‘loser’), dealing almost exclusively with the trauma suffered by the victim and utterly denying the existence of a similar trauma for the perpetrator²⁶. Our case study would suggest that cultural trauma does affect both parties involved in a conflicting situation. The starting positions are incomparably different but the narratives explaining each position may show striking similarities.

Another common perception of cultural traumas is that traumas are attached to “volcano-like”²⁷ *events*, rather than long periods of time. It seems that the event-centered concept of trauma is an American or more broadly speaking, a Western category that is rooted in progressivist cultural tradition. Western political realizations (notably: democracy) and the scientific-technological achievements of civilization stay at the top of historical development so they are all indisputable proof of success-stories, even if national histories won’t constitute uninterrupted success-histories. For East-Central European or Balkan states, the traumatic events should be complemented with the notion of

25 “The historian who stands on the side of the victorious is easily tempted to interpret triumphs of the moment as the lasting outcomes of an ex post facto teleology.” (Koselleck, Reinhart 1988).

26 One case in point can be France and Germany where French researchers are outraged at the mere thought that Germans might claim for themselves traumatic experiences as a result of WWII, while they are considered the perpetrators. The perpetrator is guilty and doesn’t deserve the same compassion as the victim. Germans might claim that even if they are denied the status of victim, nonetheless, they suffered a cultural trauma.

27 Trauma is defined by Arthur G. Neal in this way: “volcano-like event that shook the foundations of the social order.” (Neal, Arthur G. 1998: ix)

traumatic histories, where long periods of time might be regarded as enduring traumas. The common outcome is the “Balkan-neurosis” or hysteria, which manufactures harder-than-reality realities through cultural narratives in order to block any exit towards the solution of the conflict between nationalism and democracy. This is only possible when cultural narratives are stretched to incorporate the omissions which were carefully left behind in an effort to get the cultural narrative itself. (This might be the “Münchhausen-project”, referred to in note 4).

Creating a new cultural narrative might prove to be a fantastic endeavor as it contradicts the ‘reality’ already fixed in the existing narrative.

A narrative is meant to be a public discourse or story to create an image. It is not a historical description so there’s no point in confronting it with historical evidence; this is why these narratives are artefacts of cultural archeology.

The *image* freezes historical explanation, rendering it a homogeneous picture of a continuous present. However, there is going to be a breach in the wall, through which another history or reality could be spotted.

“Telling omissions” are those embarrassing rifts that call for historical research and moral reasoning which are so important for a healthy present and realistic future. From the point of view of an existing cultural trauma, these occurrences tend to be fatal, shaking the very foundation of it. Winner and loser are both in love with their own trauma, as it represents the ‘essence of life’.

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