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Universidad de Deusto
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STRUGGLE FOR NATIONAL IDENTITY PRESERVATION IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

A case study of Ion Drutse's prose, an echo from the Soviets metropolis



PhD Dissertation by

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Supervisors

Dr. María Jesús Pando Canteli

Dr. Aitor Ibarrola-Armendariz

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PROGRAMME: INTERNATIONAL AND INTERCULTURAL STUDIES

***Struggle for National Identity Preservation in Central and Eastern Europe. A Case Study of Ion
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Bilbao, 2016

To my family, old and new.

My mother's dream comes true

Her efforts blossom into the person I am now,

A butterfly.

Love you, mama!

And thank you

for letting me fly

to the fire of knowledge.

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Abstract

Struggle for National Identity Preservation in Central and Eastern Europe. A Case Study of Ion Drutse's Prose, an Echo from the Soviet Metropolis.

Author: Tatiana Pinzari

Despite the vast research carried out by postcolonial theorists on the colonial past of the so-called Third World countries little is known about the colonial legacy of the post-Soviet countries. The overall image that emerges from the literature review in this dissertation is that most of Moscow's former satellites had a hard time acknowledging their subaltern position. Actually, many of them, as the case study of Moldova reveals, fail to consider Soviet hegemony as a form of colonial domination.

This dissertation responds to Moore's appeal to look at the post-Soviet reality from a postcolonial perspective and analyses three novels by the Moldovan writer, Ion Drutse who apparently belongs to the socialist realism movement. The textual analysis of the duology *The Burden of Our Goodness* as well as of the novels *The Spire* and *Leaves of Yearning* has been carried out from a postcolonial perspective in the belief that it shall help us understand the identity crisis in the post-Soviet Moldova. Themes that commonly describe the postcolonial experience have been identified in these works. On the one hand these have been analysed in relation to Drutse's personal interaction with both the Soviet establishment and the (Romanian and Russian) literary canons. On the other hand, they have been related to the changes that occurred in the Sovietised Moldovan society in the second half of the 20th century. Moreover, the ways the Moldovan artist interacted with the dominant discourse is also considered when analysing the (biblical and literary) motifs and symbols that he used to build his national(ist) myths. And, last but not least, characters are analysed to identify the way the native subaltern reacted to the intrusion of the cultural "other".

The postcolonial approach to the analysis has revealed that Drutse often used literature to subvert the dominant Soviet discourse. He did so, for example, by approaching the themes of exile, the journey or domination, which he managed to represent from a subaltern

perspective and in a subaltern a voice. This alternative (hi)story exposed the crimes of the Stalin era. Also, the way Drutse used symbols to bring the nation's legendary past to life leads to the conclusion that he is no servant of the (colonial) metropolis. He is a rebel who simultaneously appropriated and abrogated the culture (language and literature) of the centre to make the nationalist discourse destabilise the dominant one. In addition, the character analysis has identified (some of) the elements behind the (still topical) identity issue in the Moldovan society. It found that the subaltern's desire to be in his master's shoes made him both embrace the Soviet utopia summed up in the concept of homo Sovieticus and to resist it.

So, Drutse's novels add a nuance to our understanding of the way identities were forged in the peripheries of the Soviet empire. The postcolonial perspective highlights the existence of a battle amongst the different forms of knowledge constructions and legitimation that operate in the contact zones. Thus, the dissertation is part of a growing body of research on non-Western perspectives on the "third-space" experience(s) as developed by Bhabha or Pratt. Also, it contributes to further research on the post-Soviet dependency system as a form of colonialism.

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Introduction

As observed in the volume *The Empire Writes Back*, it appears that in the ever-changing realities of the last two centuries nations have become more fully aware of identity issues, since more than half of the humankind has been marked by the colonial experience. Moreover, it seems that in the last decades identity issues have generally been considered a prerogative of Europe's overseas (ex-)colonies. However, it may be said that in recent years, attention has shifted to Europe's internal colonies too. Thus, Poland, Ukraine, and Lithuania are just some of the countries of the Eastern Bloc that have opened new paths in the interpretation of their recent past in the light of postcolonialism. In most instances, in the wake of nationalist movements, they have pioneered the application of the postcolonial theory in approaching the question of national identity.

Consequently, some of the Central and Eastern European countries have begun to perceive themselves as victims of Soviet imperialism, while, others seem to be still unaware of their subaltern position. Thus, the present dissertation delves deeper into the existing idea of national identity within the apparently settled nation states of Europe's Eastern peripheries. Likewise, it seeks to establish some parallels between the Western European and Eastern (Russian) imperialism. And, while scholars such as Zarycki, Sandru, Korek or Thompson try to define the impact of Soviet hegemony, this dissertation is an attempt to complete the puzzle by providing a missing link — the case of Moldova — into the national identity issue of Europe's (former) inner colonies.

Therefore, *Struggle for National Identity Preservation in Central and Eastern Europe. A Case Study of Ion Drutse's Prose, an Echo from the Soviet Metropolis* tries to provide an answer to the plea raised by David Chioni Moore who seems to have been struck by two kinds of silences. On the one hand, he refers to the silence of postcolonial studies on the subject of the USSR. On the other hand, there is the silence of scholars who specialise in post-Soviet Studies, but who fail “to think of their regions in the useful if by no means perfect postcolonial terms developed by scholars of, say, Indonesia and Gabon” (Moore, 2005, p. 519). Thus, the dissertation is an attempt to establish a productive dialogue, in matters of national identity issues, between the Western Academy and its Eastern counterparts. Accordingly, a postcolonial perspective shall be adopted to rediscover the once communist “Second World”. After all,

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despite the focus of Postcolonial Theory on the overseas (post)colonial experience, imperialism has affected Central and Eastern Europe in a similar manner. And, the recent Ukrainian crisis, just like the Transnistria frozen conflict, are just a few examples making evident the topicality of the identity issue in the post-Soviet space. After all, both are an example of how Russification and military force serve the neo-colonial ambition of Russia and provide the tools needed to control and keep within its sphere of influence the former Soviet republics.

Nonetheless, one of the arguments that most clearly evince the original and unique character of the present dissertation concerns the combination of the postmodernist, the post-structuralist and the postcolonial approach to the textual analysis of the literature created by a Moldovan/Soviet writer Ion Drutse. Thus, the critical approach to texts provides a far more complex insight into the issue of national identity and collective memory among the Moldovans. Also, it provides a range of hypotheses related to the *fundamental problem* addressed by this doctoral thesis: the cause and effect relationship between the master-subaltern interaction and the (national) identity issue in the “Other” Europe. Consequently, *the main thesis* of the dissertation is that, in the light of postcolonial theory, Drutse’s apparent compliance with the Soviet hegemony is nothing but a(n) (covert) act of subversion, an attempt to save a memory, a language, and, ultimately, an identity that are threatened by Soviet domination.

In this context, it is important to mention that although the reality of former British colonies forms the basis of much recent postcolonial theory, it also includes the experience of the colonies of the Central/South European (France, Portugal, and Spain) powers. Thus, departing from Said’s (1994) consideration of Czarist Russia as an imperialist power, the next step is to test the applicability of postcolonial theory to the case of the Soviet Union. After all, since the rise of empires—Russian Empire/Soviet Union among them—, Central and Eastern Europe, just like the Americas and Africa, have been and still are the battlefield on which various actors fight for domination in the region.

In this sense, Zarycki (2013) and Korek (2009) both represent clear attempts to consider the Central and Eastern European experience from a postcolonial perspective, an effort that dates back to the 1960s. Yet, this endeavour has been complicated by the fact that Moscow has always been denying the applicability of the master-subaltern paradigm between the centre and the satellite republics. Moreover, according to Kolarz (1964), the Kremlin has used the theory of colonialism and imperialism both for offensive and defensive purposes. It has both provided the

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arguments to attack the Communists' "political and ideological opponents" and also served as a "smoke-screen" for Soviet Russia's own imperialism (p. 14).

Moreover, Cristina Sandru (2012) claims that although, in terms of ideology, *capitalism* and *communism* have little in common, in practice, they are very much alike. This is because both were the invention of imperialist states that enslaved and imposed their hegemony in all the spheres of the subalterns' life. Actually, according to Račevskis (2015), the Soviet ideology is best expressed by the utopian concept of *homo Sovieticus* which, according to Marody (2010), is both a product and a consumer of the Soviet ideology that was deprived of any moral values or standards (p. 80). Indeed, it has had the same effects on Russia's subalterns as Christianity, rationality, and Eurocentrism had on the colonies of Spain, France, and England. First, the expansion of *homo Sovieticus* implied the denationalization of the native. The native was made to forget both his origins and his past. Second, the so-called equality of the *homo Sovieticus* was nothing but the enslavement of the subaltern in favour of the metropolis.

Therefore, as the metropolis had been eroding the singularity of the peripheral groups, preservation of national identities became gradually vital. Consequently, artists have often assumed the role of a barometer of the public consciousness, and Central and East European literary productions (Drutse's novels, in this particular case) provide evidence of the master-subaltern relationship. But, to be able to consider the case of Moldova from a postcolonial perspective, various concepts may be directly borrowed from conventional postcolonial theory and others need to be adapted to the post-Soviet reality.

For example, one of the the concepts is *imperialism*, which Ronald Suny defines as "a particular form of domination or control between two units set apart in a hierarchical, inequitable relationship, more precisely as a composite state in which a metropole dominates a periphery to the disadvantage of the periphery" (as qted in Turoma & Waldstein, 2013, p. 6). And, as Thompson and Korek have shown, the USSR was nothing but a(n) (artificial) union of republics which were all working for the good of the centre. Actually, such was the power of the centre that it brought about the extinction of (peripheral) communities, or at least their "*dispossession and privation*" (Boehmer, 1995, pp. 20-21) of an idiosyncratic identity.

Although Foucault (1980) claims that "*power* [emphasis added] is not an institution, and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with; it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society" (p. 93), there were institutions

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specifically created to sustain the central power in the USSR. There was the NKVD that made sure that the ideology promoted by the Communist Party was thoroughly observed. Indeed, together with power, *ideology*—one of the elements of empire (Boehmer, 1995, p. 90)—is what has led to the subjugation of the individual for the common good and to the Sovietization of the subaltern. Consequently, the Soviets had revised the “civilizing mission” of the West and had proceeded to the creation of a whole new race—the homo Sovieticus. So, “all that is not elite” (Spivak, 1990, p. 158)—the subaltern—had become (potential) objects of Sovietisation.

Yet, Spivak (1990) claims that there is a way out of this status as subaltern. According to this scholar, it is by acquiring a voice and resuming agency (p. 158). In this sense, both Drutse and Horia, the character from *The Spire* that most resembles the writer, represent that voice of protest. So, Drutse, just like other postcolonial writers, has learnt to use such strategies of subversion as abrogation of the imperial centre within the text, or active appropriation of the language and culture of that centre in order to fight denationalization. Ion Drutse chose to write back, sometimes in Russian—a language that had an unquestionable authority in the margins—to elude the MSSR authorities' censorship.

Thus, to contextualize the periphery-metropolis reality, the literary works of the MSSR writer Ion Drutse are analysed from the perspective of the postcolonial theory. Accordingly, the literature review is mainly focused on the postcolonial theory, which in the absence of a consistent post-communist/Soviet theory, provides the approach to the study. And, as there is a gap in what concerns a consistent body of literature on post-Soviet/communist theory, special attention is paid to the application of postcolonial theory to the writings created in the post-Soviet realm. However, the works of Ewa Thompson, Cristina Sandru, Tomasz Zarycki, and Janusz Korek—which are just a few of the names related to this relatively new field—provide an extremely productive framework on the imperialist character of the Soviet Union. So, both Western European and Central and Eastern European theoretical frameworks are kept in mind.

Moreover, as according to Ashcroft et al. (2002), perceptions existing during and after the imperial domination find their best, though not only, expression in the arts, and mainly in literature (p. 1) this dissertation is based on the *postcolonial approach* to the *text analysis* of Drutse's novels. And, as the focus of the dissertation concerns Soviet era literary production, *qualitative (critical) methods* of research are used. In this regard, both the systematic and empirical approach to literature and culture contributes to a complex analysis of Drutse's work in

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a Post-communist/Soviet context. First, the study identifies a number of common themes and symbols that appear in (Drutse's) colonial/communist-times writings. Second, the character analysis makes possible the study of both the way subversion materializes and the way the identity crisis affects the subaltern. So, postcolonial theory helps to lay out the way in which some post-Soviet writings become an expression of the struggle for the continuity of national identity within the Soviet melting pot.

In short, although the interest in the given topic originates from *observation* and discussions (of cultural changes) with fellow citizens and counterparts from former Soviet republics, the main qualitative method remains to be the *text analysis*. In addition, an anthropological approach provides the tools necessary to monitor the changes that occurred in the space between Prut and Dniester after the establishment of Soviet domination. It helps identify various *themes* and *concepts* present in Drutse's prose and define the described society as a postcolonial one. Also, the *critical analysis* of the collected textual excerpts is the basis of the investigation as it permits to study the postcolonial experience of the post-Soviet Moldovan identity from a diachronic point of view. It identifies the individual's response to changes and monitors the variations of his character.

Also, another important quality is that of *reflexivity* because the nucleus of the present dissertation has been constructed basing on a reader-response model which allows the reinterpretation (and recreation) of Drutse from a postcolonial perspective. Moreover, the choice of Drutse's novels for the consideration of the identity issue is greatly conditioned by my personal background. But, it is very productive because, as a realist writer Drutse, presents life histories that many Moldovans identified with. And, the duology *The Burden of Our Goodness* is particularly important, in this sense, for the way it depicts the evolution of the Moldovan society from the early to the late 20th century. Also, the duology together with *The Spire* and *Leaves of Yearning* is a fresco of human behaviour in the changing society. In fact, the protagonists are often in conflict with the Sovietised community that they live in. But, more than anything, they are in conflict with the (Soviet) "elite" that oppressed the lower class (often the peasants) for their own gain. So, some *sociological discussion* is also needed for the successful completion of the analysis.

Hence, my own interpretation of Drutse's texts shall go beyond the examination of postcolonial theory and his fictional works because the dissertation is intended as an

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interdisciplinary study of the national identity. In this regard, history and literary criticism combine to prove the subaltern position and the colonial experience of the Moldovan population. In this regard, apart from a consideration of the traditional, among Moldovan critics at least, structuralist and postmodern approach to Drutse's creations, the postcolonial approach, content analysis, and history are also used. So, the employed methodology provides the tools necessary to reach the *objectives* of this dissertation: to employ the postcolonial perspective in the critical dissection of Drutse's novels; to establish the way in which the post-Soviet reality has affected the national identity of the Moldovans.

By extension, for the productive use of the above mentioned methodology, it is necessary to bring together three basic concerns: history, language and (literary) theory. These are crucial to study Drutse from a post-colonial perspective and to reach the above mentioned objectives. Thus, the dissertation has been structured in two parts. The first part of the dissertation mainly focuses on the history of some of Europe's empires and colonies (British and Russian, primarily), and on the postcolonial theory that provides the much-needed approach to the investigated topic. The second part of the dissertation is designed to consider the above-mentioned issues: history—that provides an insight into the socio-historical context; theory/literary criticism—that situates Drutse in the context of world and national literature; and language—both the means and the medium through which reality was constructed (Walder, 1998, p. 58) and reproduced in the analysed literary productions.

More specifically, the *first chapter* aimed at comparing and contrasting the postcolonial and post communism or post-Soviet realities. It has as a starting point recent studies, such as David Chioni Moore's (2005), that have frequently addressed the question of the post in post-colonial being equal to the post in post-Soviet (p. 515). Also, the chapter is a short recopilation of the last decades' outstanding research by scholars from both former Soviet republics and satellites of the Soviet Union that express a growing awareness of their colonial past. Thus, arguments for the study of the USSR literature from a postcolonial perspective are systematised.

Furthermore, the reader shall find here arguments in favour of the *hypothesis* that Russia had been to Central and Eastern Europe what England was to three continents. Indeed, while (West) European powers were "civilizing" the peripheries by promoting Christianity and capitalism, the Soviet Union was crashing civilizations with the purpose of building a socialist utopia. However, in both cases, the major purpose of culture had been maimed, and the

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consequences had been disastrous. Thus, the geopolitical situation after the Second World War has driven the “other” Europe into some kind of obscurity. Actually, unlike the majority of the European colonies that had already started on their way to independence, Central and Eastern Europe was still under the hegemony of the last empire—the Soviet Union (since the 30th of December 1922). In fact, this is the descendant of the Russian Empire that had turned into Federal Russia after the October/Bolshevik revolution of 1917.

Actually, according to Ewa Thompson, for Russia everything began in the twilight of the 16th century, when Ivan the Terrible conquered Kazan and Astrakhan, “territories with well-established non-Russian identities”. Siberia came next with its indigenous population and Chinese emperors, in the 17th century. Then, in the 18th century, Poland was defeated. Consequently, a large region inhabited by Poles, but also Ukraine, Belarus and Lithuania (Poddar et al. 2008, pp. 412-413 & 415) came under Russian domination. Also, in the 18th century, just like the Irish were once looking up to the Spanish king for help in the fight against King James I of England in the early 17th century, Dimitrie Cantemir¹ addressed Peter I for support in liberating Moldova from the Ottoman Empire. So, the territory between the Prut and the Dniester had first come into the sphere of Russian interests.

Consequently, the *second chapter* “New Concepts” Categorization, attempts to relocate the postcolonial theory to the East European realm. Accordingly, postcolonial theory acquires a wider applicability in a new geographical space. Common issues are identified and concepts borrowed from the works of authors such as Ashcroft, Fanon, Foucault, Bhabha, Pratt, Said, Spivak, or Young. These provide the building blocks for the new research, and favour the understanding of how European (Western) knowledge can contribute to reconsidering our perceptions of ourselves. So, the concepts elaborated in the West are adapted to fit the case of Central and Eastern European reality.

Specifically, the following basic concepts have been considered: *imperialism, power, ideology, postcolonialism, (language) hegemony (hegemonic culture), mother tongue, subversion, national identity, hybridity, contact zones, in-between spaces*. And, to bring them closer to the field of post-Soviet theory the perspective of non-Western scholars is often contrasted with that of the Western Academy. Thus, in the process of cross-reading the concept

¹ A Moldovan prince.

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of *homo Sovieticus*, *dispossession* and *denationalization* made themselves indispensable to the investigation.

However, the point of departure is Young's (2001) claim that postcolonialism was generally considered a consequence of a long colonial history of settlement or exploitation, and, that it has just recently been viewed as a problem of cultural diversity and national identity. After all, Soviet domination is characterised, more than anything, by its zero tolerance for the subaltern's national identity. In fact, the *homo Sovieticus* was a project designed specifically to create a new citizen of the Soviet Union which would willingly give in to living under the communist regime and "which supported its functioning and persistence" (Marody, 2010, p. 80).

Nevertheless, the contact with the "other" has generated a subversive response in the subaltern population. Consequently, the post-Soviet intellectuals used fiction to subvert the dominant communist discourse and to oppose the creation of the *homo Sovieticus*. For example, Drutse employed mainly heterodiegetic narration (Tau, 2008, p. 184), which is intended to make the works acquire a more objective character and endows the narrator with both more credibility and impartiality. Thus, this and the other textual strategies employed in postcolonial writing offer the subaltern the possibility to speak out against the metropolis. It involves what Young (2001) called a "reconsideration of this history" (p. 4), a voice for those who were the target of assimilation/Sovietization. So, as there is no way to erase that past, the native intellectuals had to assume the task of revealing the story of displacement, dispossession and denationalization. And, just like Ashcroft et al., (2002) who celebrate scholars such as Edward Said who have been important in defining the encounter between the East and the West, this dissertation shall shed some light on the encounters between the subaltern Moldova and the USSR.

Therefore, the *third chapter*, in Part II of the dissertation, deals with the *problem* of contextualizing the literary works of the MSSR writer, Ion Drutse. The writer is viewed as both a Soviet artist and a postcolonial writer. Also, influences from other writers/literary traditions are traced. In addition, the hybridity of his literary productions is considered. The study of MSSR literature through the lens of post-colonialism provides answers to several questions. As for example, whether the "post" in postcolonial is really distinct from the "post" in post-Soviet. Also, the chapter is designed to answer the following questions: Is Drutse's auto exile to the heart of the metropolis an act of serving the hegemonic ideology or a form of hidden subversion (appropriation)? Is the so-called "loyalty to the regime" the expected behaviour of the *homo*

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Sovieticus or an attempt to camouflage the struggle for the survival of the national identity? After all, our thesis is that, in the light of postcolonial theory, Drutse's apparent reconciliation with the Soviet hegemony is nothing but an act of resistance, an attempt to save a memory, a language, and a nation.

Accordingly, in order to better understand the issue of national identity in the case of Moldova, an Eastern European country and a former Soviet republic, ***the fourth chapter*** focuses exclusively on the postcolonial past of the land between the Prut and the Dniester. The forced annexation of the once Moldovan, and then Romanian province Bessarabia by the Russian Empire, and then the USSR, is analysed. Two basic issues are tackled from a historical point of view, that of collective memory and that of language as the backbone of national identity. On the one hand, the history of foreign domination and the struggle for the independence of the Moldovan people is presented. Also, the various shifts of the borders of the region are considered. On the other hand, the role of language as a distinctive feature of the natives is to be considered. After all, the Moldovans are one of the few non-Slavic nations that succumbed under the Soviet/communist yoke. Also, they have been affected by Stalin's speculations about the Moldovans' past and identity. Thus, both the anthropological and sociological approach is directed at the identification of the variations of the individual and collective national identity in the context of Russian/Soviet domination. And, the position/status of religion, memory (past & culture) and language is examined through the lens of postcolonial theory, while making use of the methodology presented in the second chapter.

Finally, the ***fifth chapter—Ion Drutse's Prose, an Echo from the Soviet Metropolis***, is intended as an analysis of the issues that bring together literatures created in the third and second world. Questions concerning national identity are being addressed here. And the themes selected by Ashcroft et al. (2002), as outstanding for postcolonial literature, are also considered for interdisciplinary analysis here.

The reasons behind this selection of topics originates both in the background of the writer and the issues he approaches as a post-colonial/Soviet artist. Actually, when asked if as an exile in Moscow Drutse missed home, he said that he did not. He said that he never left Moldova, that he has been living with the worries and joys of the Moldovans through his works. Therefore, when one reads *The Burden of Our Goodness*, *The Spire*, or *Leaves of Yearning*, he/she thinks about home, about childhood, about the parents who are waiting for their children's return. So,

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home is one of the main things that, as a red line, cross Drutse's work. However, one cannot talk about home in mid-20th century Moldova without talking about exile or displacement. Thus, the first theme to be considered in the analysis is "Exile. The Problem of Finding and Defining 'Home'."

Consider *The Burden of Our Goodness* which begins with the description of how winter and the wolves made the Moldovans hostages in their own houses. Yet, two young couples from a once-famous village are anxious to get out of their parents' house and build their own home. And, when they finally seem to succeed, the First World War begins. So, the young husband has to leave his wife alone, and fight for the Russian Czar. Then, the novel tells the story of the protagonist's longing for home, the alienation of the soldier, and the sorrow of the women that have to take care of the home alone.

Likewise, *The Spire* presents the protagonist strayed, away from home and somehow at a loss. The protagonist is out of hospital and has to go home. But, he doesn't know where his home is and where he shall go. As the flashbacks flow, the reader learns that the village boy has once been recruited to be a student in the capital. While he is studying his mother dies, so, he decides to make a career in Chisinau or Moscow. But, then he is exiled to the village of his young wife.

And, *Leaves of Yearning* begins with the description of a winter day during World War II. There are two children on a bridge at the outskirts of the village. Then, some adults join them, and all of them wait anxiously for some letter(s) from their brother/father/husband. Most of those gone to war never returned to the village. And, even when the war is over people leave. Consequently, the topic that is mostly related to exile is "The Theme of the Journey", because exile or displacement implies movement.

Actually, it is the movement or the advancement of the Russian Army and/or of the homo Sovieticus what caused the movement/journey of the native peasant. In fact, this very movement is what, as the further analysis reveals, leads to the instauration of the Soviet domination on the territory between the Prut and the Dniester. So, the third theme for analysis is "Soviet Domination, a Form of Colonial Domination: Denationalization through Dispossession", which because of the communist censorship is rather veiled and needs careful consideration.

Also, Soviet domination is what triggered the "Cultural Fragmentation. Post-Colonial Corruption and the Crisis of Identity", which is metaphorically represented by the following theme: "The Construction and Demolition of Houses or Buildings in Post-Colonial Locations—

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an Allusion to the Problematic of the Post-Colonial Identity”. Simultaneously, this has led to a phenomenon known as reactive identity. Thus, the very interaction with the “other” leads to the subversion of the subaltern that is considered in 5.1.6 that is dedicated to “The Theme of the Celebration of the Struggle towards Independence in Community and Individual”.

Moreover, given Drutse weakness for metaphors and symbols, the fifth chapter shall also focus on the key symbols the author employs to refer to the burden of foreign domination. Attention is to be given to both symbols borrowed from the Romanian literary tradition and symbols the Moldovan writer built himself to describe the peculiarities of the Soviet domination in the region.

And, last but not least, this chapter shall focus on some major and secondary characters. The goal of this sub-chapter is to depict the identity crisis that the Sovietised Moldovan was going through as a result of the clash of traditional national values and the pseudo-values instituted by the communist authorities. Consequently, the evolution of the individual and the society will be observed. And the rebel native will be presented in opposition with the homo Sovieticus. So, the characters shall be examined using the interdisciplinary lens in order to provide a comprehensive image of the post-Soviet reality.

To conclude, the *sixth chapter—Conclusions, Limitations and Questions for Further Research* shows that the postcolonial approach to “Eastern Literature” contains its own sets of theoretical and practical limitations. The last section will sum up the entire debate, by reiterating the important points. Among these, one finds the idea that even (Central and Eastern) Europe is affected by the dark side of colonialism. The continent’s internal colonies (Besarabia/Moldova among them) have been exploited by the last empire — the USSR. And, their people were exterminated, displaced or Sovietised. Anyone who dared to fight against the new regime was accused of being the enemy of the state and was doomed to live in exile. Thus, this dissertation, just like Drutse’s writing in Russian (besides Romanian), aims to bring the hidden lives of the post-Soviet people and the ways of expression of the post-Soviet artists to light for an international audience. After all, for the subaltern to get a voice he, sometimes, must both appropriate the culture of the perpetrator and embark on the inverted return trip—from the periphery to the centre—to become visible and to be heard.

However, the vastness of the topic under consideration requires the imposition of some limits. Therefore, the focus of the study is to demonstrate that the case of the Republic of

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Moldova fits into the postcolonial framework. And, the limitations of the given research have forced me to leave out the literatures of the other post-Soviet republics. And, although the hallmark of literary study today is the comparative analysis, the research has focused solely on the in-depth analysis of Drutse's novels. But, in the case of continuing this investigation, the premises are set for a possible comparative study of the post-Soviet Slavic and non-Slavic literatures. So, this dissertation leaves open the possibility of further research in the field of post-Soviet studies.

PART I

The first part of the dissertation is an effort to establish connections between postcolonial and post communism or post-Soviet realities. Recent studies, such as Moore's (2005), have frequently addressed the question of the post in post-colonial being equal to the post in post-Soviet (p. 515). Moreover, in the last decades a growing number of scholars from both Soviet republics and satellites of the Soviet Union express a growing awareness of the colonial past. Thus, attempts are made here to relocate the postcolonial theory to the East European realm. Arguments for the study of the USSR literature from a postcolonial perspective are brought into light. Accordingly, postcolonial theory acquires a wider applicability in a new geographical space. Common issues are identified and concepts borrowed from the works of authors like Ashcroft, Fanon, Foucault, Bhabha, Pratt, Said, Spivak, or Young. These provide the building blocks for the new research, and help us understand how European (Western) knowledge can contribute to reconsidering our perceptions of ourselves.

Chapter I: Relocating Concepts.

Tomasz Zarycki and Janusz Korek both emphasize the fact that first attempts to consider the Central and Eastern European experience from a postcolonial perspective were registered "in the 1960s in the émigré monthly "Kultura" ("Culture")" (Korek, 2009). But, they did not find a serious response within the academic world up until recently. On the one hand, this seems to be a result of the censorship of the metropolis. On the other hand, it reflects the fact that the subalterns of the Soviet Union are reluctant to identify themselves with the countries of the third world, as they see themselves as European, thus — "civilized". Moreover, Moscow accepted no reference to the imperial nature of the reality existing within the USSR or the Eastern Bloc. And, it seems that independence has not brought liberation from Russian domination, at least not in the field of knowledge, which started to liberalize only recently.

1.1 Arguments for the Study of Central and Eastern European Region from a Postcolonial Perspective.

The study of Central and Eastern Europe as a postcolonial space is essential for the given dissertation. According to Janusz Korek (2009), the whole region has lived the experience of imperialism, both as perpetrators and victims. But, unlike Said (1994) who only speaks about Russian imperialism in Europe, Korek (2009) claims that Czarist Russia was not the only oppressor in the region. For example, Moldova had been a vassal of the Ottoman Empire and later a gubernia in Czarist Russia. And, unlike the other colonies, this small European country was mainly under the influence of empires that one would probably define as Oriental — not European. Therefore, its case is totally opposed to the traditional binary “Civilising West” colonising the “Barbarian East”. In addition, unlike the “third world” countries, the Moldovan king(s) delivered the region on a plate when first addressed the Russian czar for help in the liberation fight against the Ottoman ruler. So, Despite Cantemir’s intention to free his home country, his actions only led to the break up of Moldova and to the change of the master in what later got the name Bessarabia (nowadays Republic of Moldova).

Thus, at first glance, it seems that time and place are two basic arguments against the equivalence postcolonial — postcommunism. On the one hand, there are the overseas colonies that had set on their way to independence after the Second World War. On the other hand, there are the annexed territories that in the Post Second World War period were subalterns of Moscow. Some more views in this respect — generally quoted arguments against considering East-Central European nations from a postcolonial perspective — are summarized by Cristina Sandru (2012). One of these is that the Second World countries were/are not flattered by the idea of a potential similarity with the “third world” countries. Moreover, unlike the African or New World Peoples, the East-Central European people were well-defined nations that by 1945 existed within democratic-capitalist states. Also, the Soviet coloniser, in the view of the colonised, was often inferior to the subalterns, in what concerns economy and culture (as is the case of the Polish, or Baltic states), which hampered any considerable influence on the already forged identity of the colonised. Consequently, the polish discourse, for example, was practically impenetrable to the vision of the Soviet Union as a colonial empire up until 2005, when, according to Tomasz Zarycki (2013), the (geo-) political landscape changed (p. 191).

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However, scholars like Cristina Sandru, Janusz Korek, Ewa Thompson, and Tomasz Zarycki consider that these are not arguments enough to decline the applicability of the postcolonial theory to the case of Central and Eastern Europe. Zarycki (2013) even cites Ewa Domanska, highlighting her accusations at the address of Polish historiography for preferring the terms “vassal” or “satellite” to the more appropriate “colony” of the USSR. Moreover, Sandru (2012) refers to Moore Chioni, who stated that imperialism materialised in three ways: “classic overseas colonisation; internal colonisation; continental or dynastic colonisation.” But, she goes further arguing that the East and Central Europe is what Homi K. Bhabha was defining as an interstitial zone. It appears that the region is a result of a simultaneous influence of several hegemonic cultures (the Ottoman, the Russian and Hapsburg Empires) (Sandru, 2012, p. 21- 23).

Nevertheless, Korek (2009) agrees with Zarycki (2013) who argues that although Russian censorship promoted the publication of (Western) postcolonial studies it did not accept even the slightest allusion to any kind of “dependency” when it came to the Soviet Union and its “satellites”. The fact is the postcolonial theory served the USSR in both its fight against its ideological opponent and its attempt to disguise its own imperialism at home (Kolarz, 1964, p.14). Thus, the scholars (Sandru, Korek, Thompson, and Zarycki) agree that, in what concerns the former communist subalterns of Moscow, the critical potential of the postcolonial theory is not exploited at its full potential.

Moreover, the scholars Verderey and Shari (2009, p. 7) attempt to break the binary postcolonialism — “third world”, and postsocialism — “second world”. However, the refusal of the oppressed to see themselves as colonised complicates the task. Thus, for example, according to Zarycki (2013), Poland would rather see itself as a victim and a saviour — an active agent of change, than a colony. Moreover, the Poles generally see themselves as European while the Russians — not completely European, thus “inferior and in some sense passive” (pp. 195- 97).

To Sandru (2012) both communism and colonialism is a product of modernity, a result of the industrial revolution, and an expression of “the violence of colonial occupation, and exploitation” (p. 52). The scholar coincides with Tomasz Zarycki (2013) in the idea that communism is a form of ideological colonialism (p. 193), an oppression carried out with no arms and no territorial invasion. However, both scholars leave out the case of Bessarabia, which was (re)annexed to the Soviet Union after the Second World War by means of military occupation. In addition, consider Zarycki's (2013) argument that “when numerous Soviet citizens occupied top

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positions in the Polish military, security services, and other parts of the state apparatus”, when a complex infrastructure was built for (and controlled by) the Soviet “advisers” and their families, when Soviet soldiers walked on the streets, one could hardly ignore the presence of the Other (p. 193-194).

On the other hand, Sandru’s study points out that Soviet imperialism affected not only the subalterns, but also internally, the subjects of the metropolis. However, the “Others” of Russia were to succumb to the “homo sovieticus” policy, accept their “inferiority” for being “oriental” and deny their own identity.

So, colonialism is a phenomenon that has spread all over Europe. However, it affected countries from different parts of Europe differently. And, even if most of the Central and Eastern European countries are ignorant or refuse to acknowledge their colonial past, they cannot deny the colonial experience. Their identities have been altered/forged, to a greater or lesser degree, by or in response to the Soviet ideology. And, for the time being, postcolonial theory is the approach that best suits the consideration of the post-Soviet past (and even present) of the European (former) subalterns.

1.2 Background and History. Postcolonial vs Post-communism or Post-Soviet Realities. British versus Russian Domination.

First, an important fact to be considered is that according to the statements of Homi Bhabha and John Comaroff (2002), the timeline of postcolonial history is marked by two important years. First, there is the year 1947 — “decolonization” of India, which opened the path to independence for most of the “third world” countries. Second, there is what Cristina Sandru (2012) called “annus mirabilis” of 1989 — end of the Cold War. The latter led to the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, in part due to the same “severe imperial overstretch” that Boehmer (1995) highlights when talking about the British empire (p. 98), and, consequently to the independence of the 15 constituent republics (Bhabha & Comaroff, 2002, p. 15). So, both years are important for contrasting British and Russian imperialism.

Nonetheless, none of these years marked an absolute break up between the metropolis and its subalterns. Both, former British colonies and the countries making up the Soviet Union, tried to preserve the connection with the metropolis and entered the Commonwealth. In the first

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case it is the Commonwealth of Nations, and in the second — of Independent States. One of the reasons could be what Said (1994, p.11) called a “shared memory” inherited from the “Imperium”. Nevertheless, besides a common memory the post-Soviet nations had to deal with a profound identity crisis — a consequence of the cultural, ideological, economic and political domination of the centre, as well as terror. And, according to Rushdie (2003), terror did not go away with the collapse of the Soviet Union. The scholar claims that:

The collapse of communism, the destruction of the Iron Curtatin and the wall, was supposed to usher in a new era of liberty. Instead, the post-Cold war world, suddenly formless and full of possibility, scared many of us stiff. We retreated behind smaller iron curtains, built smaller stockades, imprisoned ourselves in narrower, even more fanatical definitions of ourelves — religious, regional, ethnic — and readied ourselves for war. (Rushdie, 2003, p. 301)

So, the practical reason behind the decision of joining the Commonwealth is most likely to be the great degree of dependency of the former subaltern states and the above mentioned terror. This terror paralysed most of Central and Eastern Europe as, according to Winston Churchill, ever since the Second World War:

From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the Continent. Behind that line lie all the capitals of the ancient states of Central and Eastern Europe. Warsaw, Berlin, Prague, Vienna, Budapest, Belgrade, Bucharest and Sofia, all these famous cities and the populations around them lie in what I must call the Soviet sphere, and all are subject in one form or another, not only to Soviet influence but to a very high and, in many cases, increasing measure of control from Moscow.²

Consequently, Moscow seems to be the centre that had brought about the division between the West and the East of Europe. Nevertheless, what Churchill does not overtly

² http://www.age-of-the-sage.org/quotations/churchill_iron_curtain.html

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recognise is the West's complicity to that division. In fact, according to Ryan Hilborn's (2011) research, the world powers did nothing else but divide the spheres of influence at Yalta. Thus, the above mentioned capitals became the buffer zone between the West and the East (p. 6, 10, 31). So, they have been transformed into some kind of third space, neither European nor Asian.

And, the situation deteriorated as the identity crisis that "second world" countries were going through was getting a wider spread. And, on their way to/after independence, the Balkans as well as some other regions formerly controlled by the Soviets — Chechnya, Azerbaidzhan, Georgia, Tadjikistan and Russia itself — got consumed by civil wars. But, although most of the ethnic conflicts broke out in the early 1990s even now, in the 21st century, we still speak about the Transnistria frozen conflict, unrest in Chechnya or the Caucasus (eg: Abkhazia, Southern Ossetia), military crisis in Ukraine. So, independence did not mean peace and/or return to the European hearth to what Cristina Sandru (2012) calls the "decolonised peripheries of the western world and the newly liberated eastern neighbours" (p. 2). And, the cause of this conflicts seems to lie hidden in the colonial past.

After all, although according to Said (1994) or Hirst (2010) "every genuine form of domination (authority) implies a minimum of voluntary compliance, that is, an interest in obedience" (p. 48), the principal factor leading to domination in Central and Eastern Europe is the use of military force. However, military domination is not the only form of domination employed by the British or Soviet metropolis. After all, there is also economic, scientific and cultural/ideologic domination. And, Cristina Sandru (2012) refers to Bhabha, according to whom, "imperial hegemony is created by a variety of techniques of co-optation, obligation and persuasion with which the native colludes but which s/he also resists" (p. 44). Thus, the following lines aim to answer the question whether post- in post-Soviet is the equivalent of the post- in post-colonial. Therefore, spheres of influence of once (and still) global actors, British and Russian (USSR) Empire (Federation), as well as the foreign policy characterizing these international actors as *hegemonic powers*, are to be analysed.

First, the dissertation shall present some important highlights from the timeline of territorial expansion of the British Empire (a classical model of a colonial power) and the Czarist Russia. Ewa Thompson's (2008) presentation of a chronological account of the territorial expansion of Russia is especially helpful, in this sense. She claims that for Russia everything began in the twilight of 16th century, when Ivan the Terrible conquered Kazan and Astrakhan,

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“territories with well-established non-Russian identities” (Thompson, 2008, p. 412-413). Meanwhile, the British Empire was making its first attempts in setting up its first overseas colonies. Next Russia conquered Siberia with its indigenous population and Chinese emperors, in the 17th century. Thompson (2008) states that the native tribes were almost completely exterminated and the territory was colonised with Russians and prisoners of other nationalities. On the other hand, Britain was using shipping and trade to impose its domination in North America and the Caribbean. Then, in the 18th c., Russia defeated Poland. Consequently, a large region inhabited by Poles, but also Ukraine, Belarus and Lithuania (p. 415). Also, in the 18th century, the Moldovan prince Dimitrie Cantemir addressed Peter I of Russia for support in liberating Moldova from the Ottoman Empire, just like the Irish were once looking up to the Spanish king for help in the fight against king James I of England in the early 17th century. Whereas, Britain imposed its domination in Australia.

Consequently, what followed can be defined as a landmark in the history of Russian strive for domination in the Black Sea basin and, “a major expansion into Europe” (Thompson, 2008, p. 413). And, under Catherine I, the expansionist policy of Peter I was continued. Moreover, as Thompson (2008) reveals, the annihilation and displacement of Turkic Muslims to the Ottoman Empire set the foundations of the Russification and assimilation of the Black Sea region. However, Russian expansion did not end here. The scholar argues that the nineteenth century was characterised by the Russian expansion into Central Asia and as a consequence the Caucasus continues to be under Russian domination (p. 413). However, it is the year 1945 that, according to Ewa Thompson (2008), “marks the greatest triumph of Russian colonialism” (p. 413). But, it only lasts until December 8, 1991 when Boris Yeltsin together with his Ukrainian and Belarusian counterparts announced the dissolution of the USSR. So, at last, the Russian empire collapsed just like its western counterpart.

Nonetheless, the newly liberated republics had little to celebrate, as besides political and administrative issues they had to give up any financial claims because these implied “responsibility for debt” which the young states could not assume given the fact that all the money was in and controlled by Moscow. Moreover, with Putin’s ascension to power Russia harbours “neo-colonial ambitions” anew (Thompson, 2008, p. 414). It also manipulates (at least tries to) the decision-making process in the republics that are still in transition. Tactics used for this purpose range from the embargo on the import of wine from Moldova, for example, because

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of the pro-European policy of the new government of the small state, to the cutting-off of gas supplies to Ukraine (Korek, 2009). The annexation of Crimea on 18 March 2014 is a vivid proof of Thompson's argument. Moreover, Chechnya, a territory conquered in 1859 "after decades of fierce resistance", did not get independence and carries on with its struggle of liberation even in the 21st century.

Yet, despite the similar imperial past, according to Buckler (2009), Russia generally appeared (to the "Occidental Other") as something exceptional, a hybrid of the Occident and the Orient. However, since the 17th century, to Central and Eastern Europe, it was very much like the West to the "third world" (p. 254). This is a result of what Ewa Thompson called Russian expansion over Eurasia. However, according to Korek (2009) "the annexations, pillaging and destruction of national identity" took the shape of "works of civilization (Germany), or acts of historic justice (Soviet Communism)", or works of liberation from the Muslim domination in the case of the Czarist Russia. Nevertheless, Tomasz Zarycki agrees with Thompson's (2008) statement that neither the subalterns nor the "Other" (the Asian Russia or the West) viewed Russia's possessions as colonies (p. 412). Apparently, this is a consequence of the fact that, as Cristina Sandru (2012) explains, much of the 20th century "third world", and the Central and Eastern Europe have evolved at a distinctive pace. Then, it seemed that, the First World War would put an end to the subaltern status of many of the Central and East European nations. However, the Second World War ushered in the era of communist domination in the region, while, "third world" countries stepped on their way to independence by the 1950s.

However, a better understanding of the issue would require a deeper insight into Europe's history of both internal and external conquest and annexation (which unfortunately is impossible given the limitations of this study). Nevertheless, it seems that, at first sight, the major difference between Russia and Britain, in terms of territorial expansion, rises from their geopolitical position. For example, Ewa Thompson (2008) considers geographical (no overseas possessions, except for Alaska) and racial (both the conqueror and the conquered were generally white) differences to the features that distinguish Russian imperialism (p. 412). However, some countries due to their geographical position had little choice in what concerns their expansion. Island-states were bound to expand overseas, while states with no access to the sea could only expand "overlands". Consequently, many of Central and East European nations were under the domination of the Habsburg or Ottoman Empire. Meanwhile, territories like those of the

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Romanian principalities or Poland acted as “buffer zones” stopping the expansion of the Russian or Ottoman Empire. So, there seems to be little difference between the Russian armies that “liberated” the Orthodox Christians from Turkish domination and the Western explorers that Christianized the “Other” (barbaric) World.

Moreover, according to David Moore Chioni, Russian expansion in the 19th century was an imitation of the Western colonial drive (Moore, 2005). However, it is important to make it clear that the colonisation of Central and Eastern Europe, Siberia, the Caucasus, Central Asia and the Far East, hardly fits the cliché of a “civilising mission” as often it was a mere military subjugation of Russia’s neighbour/s (Buckler 2009, p. 255). Also, Zarycki (2013) cites Dariusz Skorczewski who, in agreement with Racevskis (2015), Korek (2009) and Thompson (2008), highlights the failure of the classic model of colonial relationship (“civilized metropolis vs. barbarian empire”) in the case of the Soviet Union. In Thompson’s (2008) vision:

Russia had little to offer in terms of humanistic learning, technology or everyday culture: the Baltic rim, the partitioned Poland, and, after World War II, the remainder of Eastern and Central Europe were more advanced than the conqueror in these respects. (p. 412)

However, Russia was not the only one to pore over the vestiges of the dominated cultures. According to Boehmer (1995) the European colonisers also considered other cultures “objects of study” and absorbed the Orient’s knowledge, which materialised in “religious texts, laws, and legends” (p. 19). And, the USSR did bring some innovations (both positive and negative) to some of the Soviet Socialist Republics (Moldavia, which previously was a Russian gubernia, is one of them). Many of these republics, contrary to Zarycki’s (2013) argument that “traces of the colonial past are usually carefully removed” (p. 198), retained the communist political and educational system even after the collapse of the Soviet Union. For example, consider the 2001 parliamentary elections in the Republic of Moldova in which the communist party gets the majority and votes its leader as president of the state. Also, Zarycki (2013) points out that often the Poles deny their colonial past until the point that they reject any kind of interaction with the Russians, be it positive (as agents of “westernization”) or negative (as subalterns of Moscow).

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On the other hand, Vardys (1964) argues that unlike the Soviet, “capitalist” colonialism, “denied to the seized countries social equality, education, and industrialization”. Moreover, the Soviets seem to “require the conquered people’s participation in certain governmental rituals” and “they do not *publicly* [emphasis added] suppress the local language”. But, the scholar claims these to be strategies of smoke screening Russian imperialism. Accordingly, Zarycki and Thompson claim that Central and Eastern European countries only rejoiced in a symbolic autonomy in their home affairs, just like the British colonies. Moreover, Moscow oppressed Europe’s internal colonies, just like the Western metropolis exploited the overseas dominions (Thompson, 2008, p. 414). And, after the Second World War, these were to bear the weight of the reparation payments for the war damage (Hilborn, 2011, p. 6), as well as the financial burden for the centre’s cultural and economic prosperity.

Nevertheless, Ewa Thompson argues that unlike the Western Colonial Empires, “Russian discourse remains impenetrable to postcolonial ideas” while the subaltern is deprived of a voice. For example, the military conflagration in Chechnya is still depicted by the dominant imperialist discourse as a war against “banditry and international terrorism rather than as a war of national liberation” (Thompson, 2008, p. 412 & 416). The scholar also alludes to the Katyn genocide, which Russia presents as a liberation action and does not admit its colonial-time crime (Thompson, 2008, p. 413). Zarycki (2013) states that the Soviet Union transformed Poland into a subaltern/periphery, but also speaks about the first colonisation of Poland (p. 203), which coincides with the annexation of Bessarabia and its further colonisation by the 19th century Czarist Russia.

Along the same lines, Korek (2009) wonders why scholars like Said (in his *Culture and Imperialism*, 1994) admit that the expansion of Czarist Russia is a pure (though different) form of imperialism; but ignore the imperial character of the expansionist policy of the USSR. As a response, Vardys (1964) reveals that Moscow’s domination of the Soviet republics “betray a traditional, though ideologically refurbished, imperialist aggressiveness of a big state toward small countries.” Both the Baltic states and Moldova “were annexed by force”. Moreover, as already mentioned above, the apparent autonomy granted to the *sister* republics was purely symbolic. Their leading parties had to “function as mere subdivisions of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and have to obey every directive issued at the party’s centre in the Kremlin.”

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Any disobedience was labelled as “localism” or “bourgeois nationalism” and was punished with removal from office or deportation.

Ultimately, the argument shall move on to the consideration of some other similarities between the Western and Eastern colonial powers. Frederick Lugard (2005) provides the grounds for one of the first similarities between the two hegemonic powers. Of course, to be able to speak about the USSR using the same lines, “Communism” should replace “Democracy” in the case of the Eastern actor. After all, democracy is an invention of the West, while communism has been brought to its outmost embodiment in the USSR. In the same way, “races”, which according to many scholars has been an invention of the West, could be replaced with “nations” — the people of Europe that were conquered and transformed into Soviet Republics. Consequently, the paraphrased title might take the following form *The Value of Soviet Rule in Eastern Europe to Soviet Communism and the Subaltern Nations*.

Consider, the following excerpt that provides a deeper insight into the nature of British domination:

(...) The creed of the “Little Englander”. At each fresh access of responsibility and expansion of the Empire he has warned us that “the white man’s burden” was already growing too heavy for this country to bear, that the British tax payer was being called on to pay the ambitions of chauvinists, and that the native races were misgoverned and robbed of their lands and their proper profits by the greed of the exploiters (Lugard, 2005, p. 36).

Likewise, the Moldovans lost their lands and proper profits when the USSR swallowed the region between the Prut and the Dniester. Kulaks have been sent to Siberia and those remaining in the country suffered from famine while the crops were rotting in the wagons loaded for Moscow. However, the English colonizers “with one hand gave the bible and with the other took the lands” of the Africans. The communists, on the other hand, took away both land and faith and gave the utopia of the communist society in which everyone is equal, which centuries of human existence has proven to be impossible. Moreover, the Russians appropriated all the financial resources redirecting them to the development of the metropolis while the peripheries

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got their lands and waters stuffed with chemicals (as in the case of Uzbekistan, Baschkortostan and Moldova) (Thompson, 2008, p. 414).

Consider, the following extract for more features of British rule:

Our people, when they go into the possession of a new territory, carry with them such a power of initiative, such an extraordinary courage and resource in the solving of new problems and the facing of new difficulties, that if they are pitted against an equal number — I care not what race it is, or what the part of world is — and if you keep politics and negotiations off them, it will be our people that will be masters, it will be our commerce that will prevail, it will be our capital that will rule, though not a sword has been unsheathed, and though not a blow has been struck in their defence. (Debate, House of Lords, 14th February 1895) (Lugard, 2005, p. 39)

First, it has to be argued that the truth of this quote is only partially true, for both the British Empire and the Soviet Union. Both of them have resorted to military force, at a point or another. And, besides power of convincing it has been terror what made the subjugated nations give in to the policies of the colonizers. Further, in the dissertation the analysis of the literary productions of the subjugated nation proves this argument. For example, Drutse often portrays fear in his novels. In *Povara Bunatatii Noastre, Frunze de Dor, Clopotnita*³, the heroes express utter reserve towards the new power, and some even consider having soldiers in their home as a guarantee of freedom from a potential arrest — a cruel reality in Stalin's time. Also, to support the disagreement with some part of the idea suggested by the above mentioned quotation consider Aime Cesaire (2005), who in contradiction to Lugard's text, besides speaking about the civilizing mission of the colonial rule also enumerates its devastating consequences (p. 48).

So, another similarity between the two empires can be drawn from the following passage that claims that:

A civilization that proves incapable of solving the problems it creates is a decadent civilization.

³ *The Burden of Our Goodness, Leaves of Yearning, The Spire*

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A civilization that chooses to close its eyes to its most crucial problems is a stricken civilization.

A civilization that uses its principles for trickery and deceit is a dying civilization. (Cesaire, 2005, p. 60)

Ultimately, the continuity of either British or Russian civilization is not the focus of this study, but one thing is clear, none of the great empires survived. According to Aime Cesaire, a relationship built on forced labour, intimidation, pressure, the police, taxation, theft, rape, compulsory crops, contempt, mistrust, arrogance, self-complacency, swinishness, brainless elites, degraded masses, which is what characterizes a master subaltern relationship cannot last indefinitely. People cannot live perpetually without any human contact, as slaves and masters. The writer goes further in the denunciations by stating that colonization equals "thingification." Also, he scorns the so called "achievements," the cured diseases, the improved standards of living, that come at the cost of a lost identity. He highlights the faults of colonialism among which "societies drained of their essence, cultures trampled under foot, institutions undermined, lands confiscated, religions smashed, magnificent artistic creations destroyed, extraordinary *possibilities* wiped out." And, when the oppressors's propaganda presents "facts, statistics, mileages of roads, canals, and railroad tracks", he is talking about thousands of men sacrificed to the Congo-Ocean, about those who, as he was writing his *Discourse on Colonialisms*, were digging the harbour of Abidjan by hand, about millions of men who were deprived of their religion, land, habits, life, rituals, knowledge and tradition. Cesaire is also doleful for the millions of victims of (colonial) terror, who have been taught to feel inferior, and to be submissive (Cesaire, 2005, p. 60 - 62).

It is shocking how true the colonizer-subaltern relationship is for the case of Moldova too. We cannot forget the hundreds of kulaks, intellectuals and clerics deported to Siberia. The latter were especially "dangerous" for the communist machine, as according to Ewa Thompson (2008) "religion and nationalism have played key roles in Russian colonial affairs" (p. 412). It seems impossible to measure the damage brought to our self-perception and our cultural and national identity. Yet, all this injustice was what made the masses rise and fight for independence, for preservation of identity. So, both "third" and "second world" colonies suffered alike from foreign domination. And, their only wish was/is independence.

1.3 Toward a Postcolonial Perspective in the Case of Moldova.

Now that the imperialist nature of the expansionist policy of the USSR has been considered attention shall focus on Moldova. In fact, a few arguments in favour of the fact that the Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic fits the label of “colony” are to be summarised. The importance of considering the particular case of the Republic of Moldova derives from the fact that even within the Central and Eastern European paradigm attention is focused mainly on the experience of the Slavic (Ukraine, Poland or Belarus) or Baltic countries. For example, Korek (2009) considers the example of Ukraine especially vivid, as this country has been colonised by both Russians and Poles (a European nation that in turn was colonised by Russians). Yet, the case of Moldova deserves attention too, in part because this little country had been under the influence of two Eastern empires, the Ottoman and the Russian Empire. However, it was the Czarist Russia, not the Turkish Empire, and later the USSR, who damaged most the integrity of the Moldovan identity. Thus, the case of Moldova is a possible answer to Fanon's question: “do any possibilities exist for creating alternative identities and strategies that would not have to be subordinated to Western modernity?” (as qtd. in Korek, 2009). The truth is Moldovan identity had little interference with Western modernity. However, considering Bhabha's theory on the hybridity of cultures and Korek's question:

The same question could be asked regarding any kind of “imposition” of another identity, regardless of whether the imposer is colonial France, Czarist Russia or the Soviet, German or American empire and regardless of whether the coloniser makes use of “War and Peace”, Hegel [Surynt 2006, 38-49], Lenin or Hollywood. (Korek, 2009)

it becomes clear that Moldovans are by far a pure nation. On the contrary, it is a nation that all along history has been under the constant influence of the more powerful neighbouring nations (the Romans, the Ottomans, and the Russians are only the most important influences). Thus, in agreement with Korek's (2009) statement, Moldovan culture, opposed, accepted or adapted elements of the dominant culture(s).

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However, the reading of what follows is what triggered the initial (personal) interest for the study of Moldovan literature from a postcolonial perspective. For example, the questions which Lynnette Kissoon asked in February 1997, "do Irish writers count as postcolonial writers? And if so, does that change the way we perceive postcoloniality?" gave birth to the following question: Do Moldovan writers count as postcolonial writers? Indeed, the purpose of this dissertation is to prove that Drutse is a post-colonial or at least post-Soviet writer. Thus, the answer of Eugene O'Brien of the University of Limerick (the arguments presented below are important because they also answer the question of Moldova's colonial past) was equally impressive. Therefore, it follows bellow:

This is a cogent question, and one which has been the subject of some debate. If by postcolonial one means writing from a place that was colonized by another government, then yes it must be. Ireland is an unusual case in that it is a first world country (some might question aspects of this) and white in racial composition. As such, it does not fit comfortably in the paradigm of the third world/racial other dimension of the postcolonial. One need only observe the paucity of references to Ireland in *The Empire Writes Back* where the issue of Ireland can be seen to destabilize the whole theoretical dimension of the book. I think that the case of Ireland, as a colonized country which fought a war of independence to free itself from British rule, is obviously broadly similar to other postcolonial cultures, but I reckon a lot depends on the definition of the postcolonial that is used. (postcolonial listserv 2/4/97) (as qtd. in Duncan, 2002, p. 322)

Consequently, the case of Moldova can also be considered from a postcolonial perspective. But, in doing so, the second chapter of the dissertation shall focus on the careful consideration of the concept *postcolonial* and of other concepts that postcolonial theory operates with. In addition, the issue of national identity (crisis) in the post-Soviet space is going to be centre of the investigation. After all, the case of Ireland seems to be mirrored in the case of Moldova. History and language have been key issues in the Soviet socialist republic. And, Drutse, the writer and politician was the one who was pleading the shift from the Cyrillic back to

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the Latin alphabet. But, more about Drutse and his struggle for the preservation of national identity follows in the third chapter of the dissertation.

Moreover, another argument in favour of considering Moldovan literature of the second half of the 20th century from a postcolonial perspective concerns the work of Anne McClintock which Duncan (2002) mentions in his essay. As it appears, postcolonial theory can equally be applied to East European literature though it does not comply with any race theories. This is related to the fact that the real issue is not race but how the one in power super-scribes an image for the oppressed. And, Duncan (2002) claims that Edward Said certainly recognizes that the issues of race and place are imaginative creations of those in power (p. 324).

Unfortunately, the question of representation is still open both for citizens of the Republic of Moldova⁴ and foreigners even after 25 years of independence. On the one hand, this is a consequence of the “otherness” built by the dominant culture and the little awareness of the citizens of their alternative history and identity. Consequently, the first impulse is to blame the older generations for living in the Soviet past, not letting it go, nurturing a continuous nostalgia for the idealized Soviet era. On the other hand, the sympathy for Russia, of both old and young, is by far irrational. After all, Russia continues to play a very important role in both the politics and economics of Moldova. Thus, it continues to exert a considerable influence on the discourse produced in the republic.

In addition, as Tomasz Zarycki (2013) repeatedly states, after breaking free from Russian domination Poland turned to the West as to a “surrogate metropolis”. Apparently, the transition path of Moldova seems to take the same direction. Therefore, it's quite reasonable that the (simple) citizens are tired of their status of subalterns. Thus, if change does not bring total independence they prefer to avoid it, they do not need a new master.

Indeed, even the journalist Pablo Gonzalez (2015) has reached the conclusion that Moldovan people are tired of being treated with condescension by the “Others”, both from the West and the East. Actually, the words of the postcolonial scholar, Boehmer (1995), summarise the general feelings of the Moldovans — we are not “less human”, or “less civilized”; we are not children or savages; we are not old people or a “headless mass” (p. 79). Nevertheless, the truth is that even among younger generations, and the experience outside Moldova — the interview of

⁴ Formerly known as MSSR, part of the U.S.S.R. in the period 1940-1990/1991 or Bessarabia — Russian governorate in the period 1812-1918 as an aftermath of the Russian-Turkish wars.

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fellow students from other post-Soviet countries—is the best evidence, we (mainly the generations born or raised in the time of the Soviet Union) are more likely to identify ourselves and sympathise with the “Soviet people”—a consequence of existing in a liminal space.

When talking to Romanians we are frequently referred to as Bessarabians, which is historically correct but it generates an unpleasant feeling, because despite the 19th and 20th century geopolitical changes, we have always been Moldovans, just like our neighbours over the Prut River from which we have been parted in 1812, and together with which we formed the Principality of Moldavia known as such since 1359 (Nantoi, 2013, p. 15). Moreover, some Romanians (and many Europeans) perceive us as Russians, even after the independence, the initial purpose of which was to join Romania (1991), and after the 20 years' policy of the Romanian government for the reintegration of “Bessarabians” by conferring them Romanian citizenship.

On the other hand, encounters with citizens of former Soviet republics generate the opposite response. Despite the shift to Russian, which inevitably occurs under these circumstances, there is a feeling of closeness. This is the result of the common past, of the values and outlook inherited from generations “built” in the Soviet times. Thus, we descendants of the Dacians (or as the Greeks called them Getae) and Romans “become” Slavic people in the Russians' view, the “prodigal son”. It is probably needless to mention the confusion of people who know little or sometimes nothing about Moldova. Americans, Africans, Asians and even many Europeans still associate the name of our country, Moldova, with the Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic, and thus deduce that we are Russians and speak a Slavic language — and we do speak it but not as a mother tongue. At least this is the conclusion reached given the experience of communication with West Europeans, Romanians, Byelorussians, Russians and Ukrainians outside of Moldova. So, these (miss-)representations are identified here as the legacy of the Soviet past.

Nonetheless, besides this natural confusion among Moldovans (a consequence of the moldovenism policy⁵), Romanians, Russians, and others, in matters of representation, issues of postcolonial theory like identity, language and culture, collective memory, as well as ethnic, political and social issues persist even after 25 years of independence. Apparently, one of the

⁵ Moldovenism—a policy implemented mainly during Stalin with the purpose of alienating the Moldovans from their origins.

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reasons concerns the economic problems the young state inherited when it decided to become independent from the Soviet Union. An important factor being that the metropolis has managed the economy of the “other” republics in a way that they could not have a sustainable economy without a continuous cooperation with the other members of the Union. Another reason derives from the restless forces of nepotism and corruption that have been flourishing during the Soviet period and were too strong to vanish with the collapse of the Soviet Union. Thus, these “internal” forces, as Homi Bhabha (2002) calls them, together with the hegemonic external agencies of “moderization” or “rationalization” (p. 16) are “helping” Moldova tread steadily on the path of independence. Nonetheless, it is worth mentioning that in 2013 the government finally put an end to the language debate. Thus, Romanian finally acquired the status of official (state) language of the republic of Moldova.

Considering all the arguments presented above, Moldova appears as a colony because for over a century it was occupied and existed under the full or partial political control of Russia in all of its metamorphosis (the Czarist Russia, the USSR, and now it is threatened by the neocolonial ambitions of Russia). Thus, Moldova was not, as the Russian discourse tried to put it, a settler colony that in the postcolonial paradigm appears as if it “could at least have the temporary illusion of a filiative relationship with that dominating culture” it was a colony of intervention and exploitation that “had traditional, pre-colonial culture(s) which continued to coexist with the new imperial forms” (Ashcroft et al., 2002, p. 25). Moreover, under Russian domination, a wide range of foreign population (both Russian and of other ethnic origins) migrated to and settled in the territory between the rivers Dniester and Prut. The czarist authorities resettled Germans, Jews and other ethnic groups to the Bugeac steppe. Thus, the Moldovans saw themselves forced to move to the centre and north of the gubernia (the process appears in history books as the colonisation of Bessarabia). In addition, during Stalin, the natives were subjugated, many of them were exiled and forced to work for the metropolis.

Thus, following the pattern of settler colonies, the piece of land in-between the two rivers has witnessed some kind of extermination, exile and displacement but it had been a “colony” of intervention and exploitation. The Czarist Russia annexed Bessarabia in 1812 after the 1806-1812 war between the Ottoman and the Russian empires for the first time. Then, in 1940, the Soviet Union reannexed the territory (which in the interwar period joined the hearth of Romania) following the points of the article 3 of the secret protocol, Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. The policies

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of the Russian metropolis, according to Oazu Nantoi (2013), had a great impact on the identity processes from the region (p. 15).

So, in the first phase, the Moldovans were displaced from the south to the north, while the south was populated with colonizers of different nationalities, Germans, Ukrainians, Gagauzians, etc. The Russian czar Nicholas I argued the colonization to be necessary as the land between the two rivers was empty. However, according to historical sources Moldova was populated long before the czar ordered the colonisation of this territory. Therefore, the policy was nothing else but a “divide and conquer” strategy. Moreover, the situation is perfectly depicted in Drutse’s novel *The White Church*. The historical novel proves that Moldovans inhabited the territory between the Prut and Dniester and lived in settled villages. However, it is also true that because of the numerous incursions of Tatars, the confrontation of the Russian army with the Ottoman one, and because many villages were burned down (as a strategy of defense and punishment), often, to survive, people abandoned their homes, and lands, and searched for shelter in the woods. Also, in the second phase, the one preceding the independence, many Moldovans were exiled to Siberia, to be exploited “for the good” of the new nation — the Soviet people. Thus, to survive people had to adapt and coexist with the new imperial forms.

To finish, it is important to highlight that according to the authors of *The Empire Writes Back*, one of the issues raised by the relationship between colonizer and colonized concerns the possibility of “decolonizing” the culture. Some of the critics consider that once pre-colonial languages and cultures are revived colonization can be completely ignored. However, the syncreticist critics claim it is both impossible and natural for the given culture to bear the mark of colonization. Yet, however slight the variation between the Romanians and Moldovans, though the latter managed to preserve the common language and culture, it supports, just like the examples of India and African countries, the viability of the opposition’s affirmation that even literature created in the indigenous language is a cultural hybrid. Moreover, syncreticism is also supported by Homi Bhabha and Pratt’s theory on hybridity and contact zones (Ashcroft et al., 2002, pp. 28-29). Therefore, this dissertation is an attempt to go beyond the general definition of colony and get an insight into the particular case of the MSSR and its “colonizer”.

So, the study will provide a further insight into the Moldovan selfhood, an insight that is intended as theoretically innovative, and politically crucial. This dissertation aims to think

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beyond narratives of ordinary and initial subjectivities and to focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of the national identity in the post-Soviet space.

Chapter II: "New Concepts" Categorization.

As the literature review has revealed there is only limited discussion on the post-Soviet/communism space as a postcolonial realm. Consequently, there are several steps to be taken before considering a "reader-response approach" to any literature created in the Eastern Bloc in the second half of the 20th century. Thus, on the one hand, this chapter is a further inquest into the main postcolonial theory works. These contribute to a better understanding of postcolonialism, and, consequently, help us understand the hazards of building the research on this foundation. On the other hand, an insight into the scholarly research on post-Soviet/communist theory, carried out by both insiders and outsiders of what has been known as the Eastern bloc, is to provide the ground for comparative analysis of Western and Eastern Imperialism.

First, it need to be born in mind that in the post-Soviet era the Moldovans have inhabited the borderlands⁶, a territory that was no longer Romanian. Consequently, likewise their counterparts in the postcolonial realm, they get to inhabit a place that according to Gloria Anzaldua is both full of contradictions, disruptions, and opportunities "of becoming her/his own self" or of building "a multiple identity" (Ibarrola, 1995, p. 21). After all, the Socialist Moldova has become a constituent part of the USSR in which national identity was sacrificed in favour of the "superior" *homo sovieticus*. So, as already seen in the previous chapter, the "superior" (master) was the Russian from the heart of the Union that was set as a model for the inhabitants (slaves) of the peripheries. Also, the creation of the new state erased the natural borders deviding the diferent nations of the Soviet Union and created new borders to separate people that have always existed as a single body before.

Second, one needs to be particularly careful with what Spivak terms "simple notions of identity which overlap neatly with language or location" (Spivak, 1990, p. 38). The fact is that, as an aftermath of the Soviet expansion, the Moldovans have had a hard time to define what are:

⁶ Anzaldua's view of the US-Mexican border as an "open wound" (Anzaldua, 1987, p. 3) provides an insight into the case of Moldova as a borderland. In the second half of the 20th century one would often find himself walking along the eastern bank of the river Prut and be unable to approach the water because of the barbed wire that separated Romania and Soviet Moldova. The forcible annexation of Moldova broke the centuries old unity of the Moldovan people. Moreover, Stalin's policy of Moldovenism intended to create a breach between the inhabitants of the two banks, inhabitants that have always shared a common culture, history, and language. (for more detail see Chapter IV of the dissertation)

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the (historical) geographical limits of their nation, their past and the language they speak. Consequently, the textual analysis of Ion Drutse's literary productions (that is the essence of Chapter V of this dissertation) shall shed some light on the postcolonial identity issue in the post-Soviet/communist space. And, to be able to carry this analysis some of the concepts developed within the postcolonial framework are to be considered.

2.1 Borrowing Concepts.

Firstly, the argument of Ashcroft et al., (2002) that in the case of postcolonial literature "one of the first difficulties in developing a wider comparative approach to the literatures has been that of finding an appropriate name to describe them" (p. 22-23) is also applicable to the case under study. Thus, the dissertation intends to use "postcolonial" as an umbrella concept enclosing also the literature created in the post-Soviet space. Otherwise, it may turn difficult to trace the borders between the literatures that form the body of literary productions created in the Central and Eastern Europe. After all, Europe's internal colonies⁷ might debate whether they live(d) in a post-Soviet or a post-Socialist space. In addition, the term post-Soviet is often interchangeable with the concept post-communist. Consequently, despite Popescu's (2003) affirmation that "post-colonialism does not translate perfectly its language and strategies into postcommunism, and postcommunism, with its rejection of Marxism, cannot match perfectly the aims of post-colonialism" (p. 417), the present sub-chapter intends to present a justified selection of the postcolonial concepts applicable to the object of study.

2.1.1 General Concepts.

Imperialism is the first concept approached in this chapter because it is what triggered the whole phenomena of colonial expansion and lead to the formation of empires. The latter are defined by Turoma and Waldstein (2013) as "composite polities based on hierarchical interrelations between two types of pre-existing, well-formed, internally homogenous entities—

⁷ The republics of the Soviet Union and the other Warsaw Pact countries.

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metropolis and colonies, or core and periphery nations” (p. 6). For example, in the case of the USSR, the ethnic Russians represent the core nation and the rest of the nations are the periphery ones. And, as Thompson (2008) and Korek (2009) argue, Moscow dominated the periphery to the latter's disadvantage. In addition, as the first chapter has revealed, both the USSR and the British Empire was built and made to function by means of an imperialist policy that in Boehmer (1995) appears defined “as an imposition of power, of language, of ideology” (p. 90) of the centre. To sum up, imperialism is the product of what Ronald Suny (2001) defines as “a particular form of domination or control between two units set apart in a hierarchical, inequitable relationship” (p. 25). This, as it also appears in Sandru (2012), is

the policy or practice whereby a state extends its rule over other territories, cultivating unequal international relations of economic and political authority, coupled with an exercise of knowledge and representation that construes the metropolitan centre as superior in material, intellectual, and moral terms. (p. 18)

Consequently, imperialism (either Western or Russian, according to this study), as Boehmer (1995) highlights, often brings about the extinction of entire communities, or at least their “*dispossession and privation*” [emphasis added] to the point of screening out “their agency, diversity, resistance, thinking, voices” (pp. 20-21). Indeed, subalterns of both Western and Eastern empires perished: while fighting their masters' wars; while starving but providing the metropolis with food and other resources; while building tokens of the imperial majesty, both at home and hundreds of miles away from home; while defending their land and identity.

So, although the Western Academy mainly focuses on Western imperialism (British, French, or American), thus, ignoring “colonial-type regimes within Europe”, Sandru (2012) argues that history provides various examples of what Hannah Arendt (1968) defined as “continental imperialism” (p. 222). Furthermore, Julie A. Buckler (2009), states that recent studies prove Russia to be more similar (in what concerns the exercise of power and domination) to the West than many have thought. Nevertheless, she claims that the era of the Soviets was when Russia-West dichotomy came short of affinities (p. 251). Still, the reading of Sandru (2012) shows that, in the 20th century, the Soviet Union expanded into Asia and Eastern Europe just like the Czarist Russia. In addition, as this investigation has proven, it continued the Czarist

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policy of Russification of the peripheries. Moreover, at that stage Moscow was determined not to repeat past errors — the goal of the homo Sovieticus project — of accepting some degree of toleration of the indigenous cultural and ethnic identity. Moreover, unlike its predecessor, the USSR managed to establish both an inner (comprising the Soviet Socialist Republics) and an outer (comprising the semi-colonised satellites of the USSR) control (Sandru 2012). Besides, Smith et al. (1998) argue that for Ukrainophiles and Belarusophiles the “empire” carries the marks of colonisation (p. 40), an argument reinforced by Ewa Thompson (2008, p. 412) and by the analysis of Drutse’s novels.

Indeed, there are several features of Western colonialism that are also encountered in the example of the republics forcibly annexed to the Soviet Union. In fact, as this case study has revealed, both the inner and outer (semi-)colonies of the USSR suffered from all kinds of oppression (military, administrative, economic, cultural and ideological). There were Soviet soldiers and governors in Poland and Moldova alike. Also, Soviet domination brought about ethnic diversity and Russification (Korek, 2009), as a consequence of what Sandru (2012) called “strategic relocation of Russian-speaking population in the occupied regions” or the displacement of the natives by means of “forced labour” or “deportations” (p. 21). In addition, the dark side of continental colonialism implied, according to Smith et al. (1998), “the assimilation of elites and the suppression of all makers of separate identity” as well as the closure of churches and the banning or hybridization of the indigenous languages, as was the case of the Georgian (p. 40) or “Moldovan” language. Overall, all this together with economic exploitation, that scholars like Korek (2009) or Vardys (1964) highlight, and the physical losses — consequences of the Great Famine and of Stalin’s repressions of the so-called war criminals, bourgeois elements (or kulaks), and state/ people’s enemies (disobedient citizens or party members) — is what, according to Smith et al. (1998), fuelled the identity issue in many Soviet republics (p. 40).

Hence, the concept of *power* comes next as it is the key condition for imperialism to exist. According to Foucault (1980), “*power* [emphasis added] is not an institution, and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with; it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society” (p. 93). Also, Foucault argues that it can be either “productive” or “repressive”, “positive” or “negative”. After all, there is a cause effect relationship stemming from exerting power, which inevitably incites a struggle between two

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opposing forces and encounters resistance—"the manifestation of freedom" (as qtd. in Spivak, 1993, pp. 26, 31-33). Moreover, according to Cusco (2002), resistance is what led to the crystallization of the identity of the Bessarabian Romanians after the forcible annexation (1812) of the region by the Czarist Russia. So, power both oppressed and liberated the national identity of the Soviet people.

Along the same lines, considering Edward Said (2005), *power* as knowledge (one of the varieties of power) materialised in the dominant discourse. Consequently, apart from the technological advance, power opened the debate between "pure and political knowledge" (p.77). Accordingly, scientific communism, just like the Western science, provided "new" evidences concerning the "true" origins of the colonised, for example, Moldovan people (and language). Thus, Moscow's vision of the subaltern nation(s), through a combination of the different forms of power—political, intellectual, cultural, moral (Said, 2005, p. 80)—opened the path for the manipulation and domination of the periphery nations.

In this context, Buckler (2009) coincides with Benita Parry (2002) who states that postcolonial scholars had "recognised culture as both a means of exerting *power* and a resource in the struggle against the imperial rule" (p. 67). Actually, Buckler (2009) claims that both in 19th and 20th century Russia, literature was the (only) "forum" where social and political issues could be approached. Indeed, despite "the malevolence of the censor, and the power of the canon", both "the heroic authors and the reading public", invested literature with a special truth-telling mission (p. 253). So, on the one hand, there was, of course, the "demand literature"⁸ — a propaganda tool created to promote the state ideology all through Moldova and the rest of the USSR (and the other totalitarian states). On the other hand, there were writers, like the Moldovan Ion Drutse, that opposed the state machine and used their talent to promote the national values.

Besides, Ronald Suny (2001) and Boehmer (1995) consider that, together with power, *ideology* is one of the elements of empire (p. 90). Also, Pheng Cheah (2010) claims that ideology is "a third modality of power" (p. 183) and that it is the element that makes all types of power function, and the individual succumb to the class interests (p. 183). Furthermore, Cheah reinforces his argument by quoting Foucault who stated that:

⁸ What is meant here is the literary product of the (politically) controlled imagination and creativeness of the Soviet writers that had to create under a strict ideological supervision.

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in traditional Marxist analyses, ideology is a sort of negative element through which the fact is conveyed that the subject's relation to truth, or simply the knowledge relation, is clouded, obscured, violated by conditions of existence, social relations, or the political forms imposed on the subject of knowledge from the outside. Ideology is the mark, the stigma of these political or economic conditions of existence on a subject of knowledge who rightfully should be open to truth. (as qtd. in Cheah, 2010, p. 184)

Indeed, in Cheah (2010) appears that "ideology is doubly secondary because it is a superstructure of the political superstructure of the state viewed as a repressive apparatus of the bourgeoisie" (p. 184). In other words, ideology is a manipulation tool used by the metropolis. Apparently, it has become the "new religion" that binds all the peoples of the empire; it is the force that succumbs the rebellions before they even start; it is what muffles the voice of the individual. No military power, no terror, are needed when ideology is the sceptre.

Consequently, the discussion inevitably leads to the definition of a concept that is in some way a particular dimension of power. This is *hegemony*, which is very close to the concept of imperialism discussed above and appears as the predominant influence, as of a state, region, class or social group, over another or others by means of power (over the economy or state apparatuses; or force) and persuasive (often manipulative) means such as education. For example, it is the case of English literature in India, which according to Boehmer (1995, p. 51) was used with educational purposes, or Russian literature and the media that were used to "enlight"/manipulate the public in the Soviet republics. Furthermore, Ashcroft et al. (2007) highlight the evolution of the term from the mere "dominance of one state within a confederation" to what Gramsci called "domination by consent" in the view of a "greater good" envisioned by the dominant culture (pp. 106-107). Here is where according to Ashcroft et al. (2007) and Boehmer (1995) the role of the cultural discourse becomes most evident as it reinforces the Euro-centric values (embodied by the surrogate Englishman or the Homo Sovieticus) and the peripheral status of the subaltern.

On the other hand, Edward W. Said (2005) seems to agree with Gramsci's categorization of society into the civil and political one. These scholars consider that, unlike the first one, which is voluntary and designed to benefit the members of "affiliations like schools, families, and

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unions”, the second one is designed to exert “direct domination” by means of “state institutions (the army, the police, the central bureaucracy)”. Nevertheless, a form of “cultural leadership”, which Gramsci calls *hegemony*, appears even in the manifestation of culture, which is supposed to serve civil society, “where the influence of ideas, of institutions, and of other persons works not through domination but by what Gramsci calls consent” (p. 75-76).

Consequently, (cultural) *hegemony* leads to the creation of “parallel worlds” full of replicas of the metropolis both in architecture and in the arts. Apparently, the best way of dealing with alterity, both for the western (British Empire) and eastern totalitarian imperialism (USSR) — a fair copy and in a way continuation of the first one’s ideals — was to “homogenize it”, to transform it into a clone of the “superior” centre (Boehmer, 1995, pp. 53-55), to assimilate it. For example, in the case of the Soviet Republics this materialized through standardized art and architecture productions. Indeed, anyone who has been in Moldova, or other former Socialist republics, easily identified Soviet type bus/train stations, schools, apartment blocks, houses and streets. Similar projects were carried out all over the Soviet republics, regardless of national or geographical peculiarities. For instance, Drutse describes some of these projects in the novels that are analysed in the fifth chapter of this dissertation.

Following this line of argument, one should add *language hegemony* to the list of strategies used to marginalize what used to be the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic. Apparently, the arguments Macaulay (2005) presents in his “Minute on Indian Education, February 2, 1835” are actual even in the case of 20th century Soviet Union. On the one hand, there is Macaulay’s (2005) general opinion that the subaltern cannot achieve any considerable “intellectual improvement” if he does not master English (the language of the metropolis), which seems to be superior to any other languages both in the West and East. On the other hand, this historian claims English to be the successor of Greek and Latin as a lingua franca and one of the languages of Western Europe that “civilized Russia” (pp. 123,124, 126). Consequently, when English brought western knowledge to Russia, Russian at its turn became the carrier of this knowledge. Thus, the superiority of the Russians and the language hegemony of Russian in Central and Eastern Europe is reinforced. Moreover, it seems that efficient communication within the conglomerate of nations, that an empire (the USSR) was, could only be achieved by the introduction of a common (superior) language. Naturally, if the subaltern wanted to be heard in Moscow, Russian was the only mean of communication.

2.1.2 Specific Concepts.

In the light of the above presented discussion, the *mother tongue* played a crucial role in the resistance process, as according to Spivak (1993) it is “a language with a history”, a language that links us both to our ancestors and our descendants, now and ever (p.27). The mother tongue has always been the vehicle of both cultural values and collective memory. There is, however, another aspect to it which resulted particularly threatening to the continuity of the Soviet domination in what used to be the Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic. Russia — which identifies with the core of the Russian Empire and the USSR — argued its presence in alien lands to be a rescue or civilising mission, just like, beginning with the second half of 19th century, British imperialism came to equal “expansion of, and British responsibility for, the ‘white colonies’” as it appears in Boehmer (1995, p. 29). However, the fact of sharing the same mother tongue with Romania — first recorded as the Kingdom of Romania, the forerunner of the modern Romanian nation-state (Boldur, 1992) — rises the following question: Whom were the inhabitants of Eastern Moldavia (also known as the district of Bessarabia) saved from (pp. 438-445)?

Consequently, the Moldovans' mother tongue was opening a serious breach in the alleged salvation theory of the centre, and explains both the Russification and the Moldovenism policy adopted by Moscow. Thus, the Moldovan, who just like the Oriental (woman), which according to Said (2005) “never spoke of herself, never represented her emotions, presence or history” (p. 75), are victims of hegemony, or *subalterns*, according to Spivak (1990). The latter argues that “the subaltern is all that is not elite” (p. 158). In this sense, it seems that the communist authorities complied with the literal meaning of the ironic passage from Marx according to which peasants “cannot represent themselves; they must be represented” (as qtd. in Spivak, 2010, p. 30). Subsequently, as the fourth chapter of this dissertation reveals, peasants were dispossessed of their lands which were then joined to form the *kolkhoz*⁹. This was managed by a leader, supposedly a representative of the people. However, as the text analysis of Drutse's novels proves, these were people that, driven by their thirst of power and financial welfare, became

⁹ This is the abbreviation for Russian *kollektivnoye khozyaystvo* that means in English collective farm. <https://global.britanica.com/topic/kolkhoz>

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nothing but servants of the communist regime. They were a Soviet replica of what Macaulay (2005) called:

interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect. To that class we may leave it to refine the vernacular dialects of the country, to enrich those dialects with terms of science borrowed from the western nomenclature, and to render them by degrees fit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great mass of the population. (p. 130)

However, these words acquire a sarcastic connotation in the context of Moldova, as what this class did was basically spoil the indigenous language and culture. Drutse's major characters that best fit this class of interpreters are: Mircea from *The Burden of Our Goodness*, who under the new regime became a member of the leadership of the kolkhoz; Rusanda, the peasants' daughter from *Leaves of Yearning*, that the new regime chose to make a teacher; the university professor, Ilarie Turcu and the school director, Nicolai Trofimovici Balta from *The Spire*, who had no limits in their serfdom to the new regime. Although a further analysis of their personality is to be carried out later on, it has to be said that they are the perfect embodiment of the kind of subalterns Drucilla Cornell (2010) claimed to have been "subjected" and consequently "transformed to become eligible for their so-called entry into the 'civilized' world" (p. 106). After all, as the characters' analysis in the fifth chapter of this dissertation reveals, to be accepted as a member of the Soviet "elite" natural talent and education is not enough. So, those who studied in the Romanian school had to be instructed in terms of Soviet ideology (Rusanda); those who wanted to manage the kolkhoz had to learn how to be evil enough to win the confrontations that were a must-have at the meetings (Mircea); the (gifted) young intellectuals had to learn how to be useful to their superiors (Ilie/Horia).

Yet, Spivak (1990) claims that there is a way out of this status of victim by acquiring a voice and resuming agency (p. 158). In this light, both Drutse and Horia, the character from *The Spire* that most resembles the writer, represent that voice of protest. They are the agents of subversion that dedicate their life to the rescue from the oblivion and recording of "the complex practices and beliefs of the community" which Rajeswari Sunder Rajan (2010) highlights in her

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essay “Death and the Subaltern” (p. 132). At a first glance, Horia bears some resemblance to Robinson Crusoe’s Friday, whom the scholar considers to be the subaltern that “cannot” speak.

Apparently, at some point, the Moldovan counterpart, discovered by the academician, Ilarie Turcu, in one of his expeditions to the peripheries, refused to speak in an act of what Rajan (2010) calls “resistance” (p. 121) because he realised that his idol exploits and misuses his ideas. Moreover, his act of communication (the map of the historically important sights and monuments, and the lessons he gives as a history teacher) seems to be “an instance of failure” (Rajan, 2010, p. 121) as it appears to fail to sensitize the receiver.

Nevertheless, it needs to be borne in mind that the “failure” is due to the blockage imposed by the communist authorities and not the inability of the receiver to decode the message. When first identified as a threat to the state ideology, Horia was banned from the capital. Then, already in exile, his young audience was being threatened with failing the graduation exams — the ticket to a different, maybe better, life — if they responded to their teacher’s teachings. Still, Horia’s message, unlike Spivak’s Bhubaneswari Bhaduri’s, did reach his students, mainly one of them, Maria, who overcomes all the threats of the school director and stands firm as a defender of the historical truth against the “other”. She, like the elders of the village, who protected the old chronicle from the outsiders, took a stand and supported the historian in his struggle for the rescue of the nation’s history. Thus, despite the general tendency in a postcolonial location, the link between generations is strengthened. In addition, Horia who as a village boy responded to the Soviet teacher’s calling and went to the capital to “be educated”, appropriated the oppressor’s weapon to fight denationalization. So, when he (is made to) moves back to the village he combines tradition and science to rise the people’s awareness of their national identity, and emancipates the young generations.

Consequently, our attention is also drawn to one other pillar of the present investigation, one of the key concepts of the dissertation — *postcolonialism*. The western academy provided a complex definition of the term which, according to Ashcroft et al. (2002), has become so polemical that it may even get confusing (p. 193). Therefore, the difference between *postcolonial* and *postcolonial* is to be dealt with. Firstly, it has to be highlighted that although Ashcroft et al. (2002) seem to insist on the usage of the hyphen, in “Re-thinking the Post-colonial” scholars use both of them to refer to the same thing (p. 213). Moreover, the definitions provided, in one of them the scholars referring to the “chronological meaning” — the one

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“designating the post-independence period” (Ashcroft et al., 2002, p. 194, 197), echo what Padmini Mongia (1996) stated about the concept:

the “postcolonial” has accrued an enormous amount of weighty baggage. Firstly, the term itself operates in at least two different registers at once: it is a historical marker referring to the period after official decolonization as well as a term signifying changes in intellectual approaches, particularly those which have been influenced by post-structuralism and deconstruction. Secondly, in the last ten years, the term has been deployed to replace what earlier went under the names of “Third World” or “Commonwealth” literature, to describe colonial discourse analysis, to detail the situations of migrant groups within First World states, and to specify oppositional reading practices. (p. 2)

Furthermore, Duncan (2002) highlights as a shortcoming of the post-colonial theory the fact that there is no unified front, he himself “finding flaws” in the theories of Spivak and Tiffin, for example. Padmini Mongia (1996) goes even further claiming that the authors of *The Empire Writes Back*, in their definition of “post(-)colonial” as something that covers “all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day” (Ashcroft et al., 2002, p. 2), as something that is an offspring of the experience of colonization, raise more problems than intended to solve (p. 6).

Thus, in the given methodology chapter special consideration is to be paid to the definition of the term postcolonial, without any special consideration for the use of hyphen. On the one hand, Robert J.C. Young (2001) presents postcolonialism as a result of a long colonial history of settlement or exploitation; and according to him, it is just recently viewed as a problem of cultural diversity and national identity. Moreover, he (2001) states that “colonialism was merely the unfortunate accident of modernity, its only problem resulting from the fact that the west mistook technological advance and the power that it brought for cultural superiority” (p. 5).

On the other hand, in agreement with Dawn Duncan’s (2002) “A Flexible Foundation: Constructing a Postcolonial Dialogue” that also reflects the positions of such scholars as McClintock 1994 (p. 293) and San Juan 1998 (p. 3) (as qtd. in Duncan, 2002):

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Scholars continue to argue about what the post in postcolonial means. ... Certainly post contains the notion of after. However, would many of us be willing to argue that the identity crisis, the resistance to a prescribed identity coming from the empire, the need to reformulate and voice an identity which is now partly shaped because of the entrance of empire, only comes after the departure of the colonizer? The after reference for post-colonial more fittingly applies to after the onset of colonization, when the identity conflicts originate and shape the contributing cultural identities for years to come. Texts that emerge after the point of colonization and up to a stabilizing in the construction of identity can contribute much to the voicing of and understanding of the postcolonial condition. (p. 325-326)

Moreover, it is the (first) entrance of the empire (the Czarist Russia) that launched the process of "crystallization of the Romanian identity" (p. 73) after 1812, which Andrei Cusco (2002) describes in "The Attitude of the Local Romanian Population of Bessarabia towards the Russian Authorities and the Problem of 'Reactive Identity'". Similarly, Ashcroft et al. (2002) support the idea of "post" as something that started with the process of colonization by considering slavery as an example of something that existed before, during and after imperialism (p.200). These scholars also claim that "the idea of the "post" as a space-clearing gesture is a useful one" whenever the limitations of time and space are put aside (p. 208). It seems that what really matters about postcolonialism is the opposition to colonialism. Therefore, in postcolonial criticism and imagination, national identity, which according to Robert J.C. Young (2001) is quite a recent issue, appears as a contested socio-cultural, three-dimensional entity generated by the interaction of the hegemonic and subaltern cultures. Thus, Cristina Sandru (2012) summarizes the opinions of scholars like Spivak, Bhabha and Ashcroft et al., and states that "no uncontaminated culture of pre-colonialism is available for retrieval" (p. 40) because the "hybridization" process is irreversible, once the interaction occurred. Thus, this view of postcolonialism provokes

the charge that post-colonialism refuses to acknowledge that the colonized can ever entirely free themselves from colonial influences. This is only true, in so

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far as we never entirely discard any part of our history, but we may appropriate and transform it in infinite ways, and the recuperation and re-acknowledgement of the pre-colonial is part of such a transformation. (Ashcroft et al. 2002, p. 195)

In addition, Young (2001) claims this is the very goal of postcolonial cultural critique which cannot be detached from the experience of the people affected by colonization and its aftermath (p. 4). This is particularly topical in the case of Drutse's novels that reflect the changes that the Moldovan society underwent as a consequence of the establishment of Soviet domination. So, the present study shall be supported by the idea of postcolonialism as a complex and irreversible phenomenon that alter-ed/-s the national identity of the subaltern regardless their status (colonised or independent).

Actually, all these considerations of postcolonialism, together with the experience of living in the USSR and the considerations of works by scholars—presented in the first chapter—specialising in post-Soviet studies, inspire the conceptualization of post-Soviet/communist as something very close to what postcolonialism is. After all, both are characterised by a subaltern-master relationship. Moreover, like other subjugated nations, the nations making up the Soviet Union generally viewed the (Russian) authorities as the “Other” because they were forced into this union without any consent from their side. In addition, the expansion of the Soviet Union coincided with the process of consolidation of the national identity. Thus, tremendous efforts were made to assimilate the natives and to make them useful to the state machine. Consequently, the metropolis (western/eastern) promoted identicalit—the *homo sovieticus* of Moldavia, Ukraine or Lithuania were intended as clones of the Russian—and implemented a set of measures intended to eradicate the natives' “rituals, beliefs and traditions” which according to Wisker (2007) held the nations together (p. 49) and introduced new values and rituals. So, the alienation of the *homo sovieticus* lead to the loss of his/her sense of belonging and identity—an idea reflected in a famous Soviet song which claimed that “one's home is not a house or a street it is the Soviet Union”. And, last but not the least it should be admitted that post-Soviet is not much different from post-communist. Actually, it is rather a matter of perception, and, it seems that communism is what came to the peripheries with the Soviets. In deed, the Soviets, both in the metropolis and in the periphery, were governed by the Communist Party and its ideology. Also, it is the communist utopia that was the backbone of the *homo sovieticus* and the Soviet Union.

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Nevertheless, one needs to be aware that the two are interchangeable only within the Central and Eastern Europe realia—the communism of China, for example, is not considered.

Therefore, before further consideration of the issue of *national identity*, the concept of nation needs careful consideration. The reading of Ernest Renan's essay results extremely useful in deciphering the notion of nation. Several ideas appear particularly interesting—no nation has ever been a pure race; the catalyst of nation formation had practically always been violence (Renan, 1990, pp. 8-11). Actually,

The hideous extremity of Serbian nationalism proves that the very idea of a pure, 'ethnically cleansed' national identity can only be achieved through the death, literal and figurative, of the complex interweavings of history, and the cultural contingent borderlines of modern nationhood. (Bhabha, 1994, p. 5)

In this sense, when referring to Goethe, Bhabha (1994) also finds that culture is both transnational and translational (p. 11). In addition, Renan (1990) highlights other factors that had contributed to the process of nation formation—the will of people to forget the violence and unify; religion (Christianity—in the case of the European states); language; the system of promotion based on personal merit (the nobles in the Anglo-Saxon countries, the bureaucrats in MSSR); the sense of belonging to patria. Nonetheless, Renan (1990) also argues that race, language, material interest, geography, military necessity and/or religious affinities are not enough to create a nation. He defines nation as:

a soul, a spiritual principle. Two things constitute this soul or spiritual principle. One lies in the past, one in the present. One is the possession in common of a rich legacy of memories; the other is present day consent, the desire to live together, the will to perpetuate the value of the heritage that one has received in an undivided form. The nation like the individual, is the culmination of a long past of endeavours, sacrifice, and devotion. Of all cults, that of the ancestors is the most legitimate, for the ancestors have made us what we are. A heroic past, great men, glory, this is the social capital upon which one bases national idea. To have common glories in the past and to have a common will in

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the present; to have performed great deeds together, to wish to perform still more—these are the essential conditions for being a people. One loves in proportion to the sacrifices to which one has consented, and in proportion to the ills that one has suffered. One loves the house that one has built and that one has handed down. The Spartan song— “We are what you were; we will be what you are”—is, in its simplicity, the abridged hymn of every patrie. (p. 19)

Therefore, regardless the invaders' policy of assimilation, the inhabitants of the peripheries shall never (fully) identify with the perpetrator. After all, a nation is (often) a product of the equilibrium between the collective memory, the cult of the ancestors and the desire to correspond to the latter. Thus, nation derives from the people's sense of belonging to some particular piece of land¹⁰ that a man inherits from his parent and passes down to his child.

In addition, Bhabha (1990) claims that nation is an ambivalent concept which implies a transitional social reality, it depends on “the language of those who write of it and the lives of those who live it” (p. 1). In the introduction to *Nation and Narration*, the author familiarizes the reader with the idea of Tom Nairn who names the nation “the modern Janus”, marked by both progression and regression generated by the uneven progress of capitalism. Yet, this reality is also relevant in the case of communism. Indeed, it is vividly depicted by Ion Drutse in his novels. And, the readers can see that although the new social order seems to bring about progress, it also brings about *dispossession*. The Socialist order shatters the basis of the (Moldovan) society by depriving it of its past, traditional values and religion. Consequently, dispossession is the prerequisite for denationalization. After all, as it appears from *The Empire Writes Back*, after language, the sacred is the other pillar of the postcolonial society. Firstly, because “indigenous concepts of the sacred have been able to interpolate dominant conceptions of cultural identity”. Secondly, “Western forms of the sacred have often been appropriated and transformed as a means of local empowerment” (Ashcroft et al., 2002, p. 212).

However, the case of Moldova is quite peculiar in this sense. First, unlike the Catholic resistance against Soviet ideology provided by the Church of Poland or Lithuania (Tart, 2010, p. 96), the Moldovan Church was Orthodox, just like the Russian one. Consequently, in this sense

¹⁰ The various implications of “land” shall be considered further in the fifth chapter of this dissertation, where the symbols of Drutse's novels are analysed.

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there was (almost) no difference of Christian values. So, although after the first interactions with the Russian power, the people of Bessarabia were resistant to the new master—who only saved them from the Muslim hegemony rule to introduce theirs—later they were lured to the new metropolis. Also, despite what Cusco (2002) called “reactive identity,” the seeds of assimilation were planted by means of the church and education, and became particularly strong “after the introduction of the well-known ‘triad’ ‘Autocracy, Orthodoxy, Nationality’” (p. 83). Second, when as an aftermath of the World War II, Russian domination is reinstated and Russification resumed, it was too late for the Moldovan church to fight for the salvation of the Moldovan identity because the communist regime closed down all the churches. This way the centre pushed the colonized into some sort of alienation which Fanon considers to be “the end of the ‘idea’ of the individual, [...] of the Enlightenment idea of Man” (as qtd. in Bhabha, 1994, p. 41). Thus, the Soviets denied the colonized the freedom to be what their ancestors were. The subaltern’s only allowed religion was communism, his only allowed values were those promoted by the centre. Ultimately, the *denationalization* of the peripheries culminated with the creation of the *homo sovieticus* which left no room for the perpetuation of the colonized’s (national) self.

Subsequently, the Soviet ideology, “summed up in the utopian concept of *homo sovieticus*, played a role identical to the one Christianity, rationality, and Eurocentrism had played in serving to promote the imperial interests of Spain, France, and England” (Račevskis, 2006, II / The Soviet Myth, para. 9). Indeed, the only way of binding more than 100 distinct nationalities together was by eradicating the “differences” and by introducing a new set of values. Thus, the cult (and terror) of Stalin was the catalyst of Sovietization and denationalization. After all, ever since the ancient times religion and/or the cult of the leader was the glue holding together an (over-stretched) empire.

Therefore, before further consideration of national identity within the context of Central and Eastern Europe the elucidation of the concept *homo sovieticus* is imperative. In this sense, of special value is Mira Marody’s (2010) view of *homo sovieticus*, first as a product and then as a consumer of the Soviet system. According to the scholar, the concept refers to those “characteristics of people living under the communist regime” and “which supported its functioning and persistence” (p. 80). Moreover, Marody (2010) argues that what defines *homo sovieticus* is the absence of any moral values or standards, “passivity, lack of initiative, demand attitude” (p. 80).

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In other words, *homo sovieticus* was supposed to become a mere work-machine at the service of communism. Here, it is convenient to bring Corbu's (2004) statement that any of the famous characters of the world literature have glorified **work** in all its manifestations. However, he claims that it was not the anonymous, collectivist, depersonalized work that communism promoted, it was the personalized and individualized work, the embodiment of a strong ethic and moral vein (pp. 18-24). Consider, the Moldovan peasant that has always been an active subject in the relationship man-land, and not a passive object that had to wait for the centre's orders/decisions before he would be sent to carry out any field related work. Work, argues Corbu (2004), is supposed to be both a source of existence and of inspiration. Thus, it cannot be separated from the people's culture/identity. So, the *homo sovieticus* lost the connection with the ancestors' land. Consequently, continuity was disrupted and denationalization of a people initiated.

This reality is vividly depicted in Drutse's novels. The heroes reveal the painful reality that the subalterns of Moscow, the members of the rising proletariat, experienced. For them "the access to the image of identity" passed through "the *negation* of any sense of originality or plenitude". Moreover, due to "the process of displacement and differentiation (absence/presence, representation/repetition)", they became occupants of "a liminal reality" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 51). The "total transformation of Man and Society" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 40) in terms of gender role, culture and class occurred in the interstitial space as a result of the communist project and in accordance to the political conditions of the moment. Those who resisted the transformation automatically became *enemies of the people* (in fact, enemies of the center) which corresponds to Bhabha's (1994) argument that "identities of difference are often constructed" based on the "binary logic – black/white, self/other" (p. 3). So, Fanon's (1986) statement "What is often called the black soul is the white man's artefact" (p. 16) is a perfect definition of the "other" be it in Africa or the Soviet Socialist Republics.

Moreover, it seems that Fanon's (1986) articulation of "a *black* man's wants" expresses the longing of the inhabitants of any periphery(s)— "to be a man among other men" (p. 112). According to Bhabha (1994), it lies between "desire and fulfilment, between perpetration and its recollection. ... Neither future nor present, but between the two" (p. 54). So, the flaw of the dominated nations seems to reside in the very desire to be in the master's shoes. Nevertheless, as for the identity issue, being aware of their status as victims that cannot fight oppression, makes

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the dilemma more complex, especially when they appropriate the image that the centre builds for them. Consequently, they often become accomplices of the denationalization project.

In conclusion, one must consider Anthony D. Smith's (1991) vision of national identity as of a people that share the following fundamental features: "1) an historic territory, or homeland; 2) common myths and historical memories; 3) a common, mass public culture; 4) common legal rights and duties for all members; 5) a common economy with territorial mobility for members" (p. 14). Thus, the strong interrelation between nation and identity becomes obvious. However, as Bhabha (1994) claims "the question of identification is never an affirmation of a pre-given identity, never a self-fulfilling prophecy—it is always the production of an image of identity and the transformation of the subject in assuming that image" (p. 45). Thus, the modification of whatever interior/exterior factor alters the "product" which, for many reasons, in its process of self-definition is often lured to appropriate the image conceived by the "other". An example of this negation of the inner self and appropriation of the imposed "personality" is Mircea from Drutse's *The Burden of Our Goodness*. The hero, just like the real life persons, reflects the changing realities of the twentieth century. The human is no longer portrayed as either good or bad, he is a complex and round character that is

tethered to, not confronted by, his dark reflection, the shadow of colonized man, that splits his presence, distorts his outline, breaches his boundaries, repeats his action at a distance, disturbs and divides the very time of his being. ... the idea of man as his alienated image; not Self and Other but the otherness of the Self inscribed in the perverse palimpsest of colonial identity. (Bhabha, 1994, p. 44)

Thus, the native becomes the "other", the intruder that no longer respects his parents' traditions. The fact is that, as Smith (1991) points out, identity is a product of a combination of factors, which include: space/territory, class (as a socio-economic element), religious and ethnic identities, as well as political community. This leads to Bhabha's (1994) conclusion that "cultural and political identity" are constructed through a process of "alterity" which seems to be a direct consequence of hybridity. In this context Bhabha (1994) even makes reference to the stirrings of the feminist movement, as opposed to the male working class one, in the 1984/5

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strike in England. Bhabha (1994) claims that “political change” can only be achieved through a rising awareness of the hybridity of the society, more so a multinational society. This requires the ethnic, class and gender identities to (re)negotiate their position, and move away from the peripheries (pp. 25, 27, 28). Thus, regardless the common language, culture and past, the Sovietised natives often become the “other” in their attempt to imitate the master. Yet, there are also natives that by means of an interior struggle transform themselves and reinscribe the natives’ tradition within the dominant discourse.

Drutse’s works abound in examples of characters who rebelled against being turned into “homo sovieticus”. For example, this is the case of Horia and Haret Vasilevici (the history teacher and the teacher of French from *The Spire*), Nica, Onake and Nutza (*The Burden of Our Goodness*). As Corbu (2008) points out, Drutse himself claims that he is only interested in the destiny and dignity of Moldova the way it was, is and will be in the course of time. In the years of Soviet domination, the writer felt it was his duty to show the (communist) world that God, Miorita, Stefan cel Mare, Eminescu and Alexandri are part and parcel of our being. Yet, Drutse also considers that we must preserve the positive from the experience of the last half a century too (Corbu, 2008, p. 100). After all, as the postcolonial theorists claim, it’s impossible to move on without accepting the past, the whole of it, be it independent, or part of other nation-states or empires.

Considering everything said so far, there is one concept that is indispensable to the proposed analysis—*hybridity*. Bhabha (1994) highlights the importance of hybridity, which according to Ashcroft et al. (2007) is closely related to ambivalence (p. 11), both being crucial in the subversion of the hegemonic culture. According to the scholar the very acquisition of voice by the natives is what generates hybridity and breaks the monologue of the perpetrator’s discourse. Moreover, the centre-periphery dichotomy is questioned both when authority is placed in a colonial context and when the inhabitants of the liminal spaces migrate to the homes of their masters. In this sense Drutse, just like many postcolonial writers, is just one of the many expatriates. Thus, the “other” narratives produced within or beyond the contact zone (sometimes in the very heart of the metropolis) can no longer be excluded; and, thus, shatter the basis of classical canons. So, Bhabha (1994) claims that “*hybridity* [emphasis added] is a problematic of colonial representation and individuation that reverses the effects of the colonialist disavowal, so that other ‘denied’ knowledges enter upon the dominant discourse” (p. 114)—according to

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Boehmer (1995) is used to reinforce the colonial perspective (p. 44)—and undermine its authority (Bhabha, 1994, p. 114). According to Bhabha (1994), “this partializing process of hybridity is best described as a metonymy of presence” (p. 115).

Further insight into the definition provided by Bhabha (1994) reveals, that, although at a first glance it might seem that hybridity refers to any mixing of Eastern and Western culture, it actually refers to any mixing of dominated and dominating culture. Moreover, the scholar mostly viewed hybridity as a subversive tool which the colonized might use to free themselves from oppression. After all, according to Boehmer (1995) the very interaction with the “Other” lead to the perpetrator’s vulnerability (p. 34). Thus, although, in what concerns hybridity there is a whole set of differentiated sub-categories (racial, linguistic, literary, cultural, and religious), given the focus of this study it is more useful to speak about the linguistic, literary and cultural one, as they best reflect hybridity in the case of Moldova. After all, as Corbu (2004) puts it up, the culture of our ancestors emerged where the Latin, Greek, Muslim and Slavic cultures came into contact (p. 33) with the native element.

Therefore, first and foremost, comes linguistic hybridity which catches the eye of the observer as it is the vehicle of literature and in some way of culture too. Generally, linguistic hybridity concerns the adoption of elements from foreign languages into a given language, which is quite common nowadays. However, in the context of this research linguistic hybridity is a token of cultural domination. Nevertheless, both dominating and dominated languages are subject to it. According to Bhabha (1994), “in the very practice of domination the language of the master becomes hybrid” (p. 33). Thus, for example, we speak about words of Indian (pajamas, bungalow, and mulligatawny) or African (mumbo-jumbo) origin in English. However, in the case of the Romanian language speculations went further. Thus, for about twenty years, scientists have been debating whether Romanian is to be called Moldovan because of both the (imposed) Cyrillic alphabet and the many Russian borrowings and loan translations that entered the natives’ language in the colonial past. For example, Drutse’s works abound in jargons such as “nacealnici”, “rasporejeni”, “spravka” and calques “primeau suda”.

However, unlike James Joyce’s protagonist of *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Stephen Dedalus, an English-speaking Irishman in Dublin at the turn of the century, most of Drutse’s heroes can hardly speak Russian, the language of the metropolis. Indeed, as it appears latter in this dissertation, language is the backbone of the Moldovans’ identity, and the natives

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struggled to keep it alive. Therefore, when some of Drutse's characters utter Russian words or phrases these are seen as alien and inappropriate to the context. Nevertheless, as the next chapter shall reveal, the writer himself managed to appropriate the "other" language, thus, providing the subalterns a voice, an alternative (hi)story. Also, in contrast with quite a number of prominent intellectuals who rebelled against the usage of the hegemonic language (be it English or Russian, in the case of the post-Soviet space), he could not afford this luxury. To him that was the only tool that could provide him with a voice, heard both within and beyond the borders (Russia, Ukraine, and the rest of the Soviet Republics) of his patria; a voice strong enough as to oppose the dictatorial memory manufactured by the centre, and to avoid the latter's censorship.

Second, *literary hybridity* is represented in the colonial era literary productions of both metropolis and periphery. As the very title of Ashcroft, et al. (2002) suggests, one way of considering literary hybridity concerns the empire writing back. Thus, the latter often adapted the dominant culture literary forms to challenge the Canon. For example, Amardeep Singh (2009) makes reference to three well-known examples. He highlights the works of Aime Cesaire (*Une Tempete*), Jean Rhys (*Wide Sargasso Sea*), and Tayeb Salih (*Season of Migration to the North*) who rewrite the basic plot and form of British narratives that invoke Africa or the Caribbean from an African or Caribbean point of view. Similar examples of postcolonial revisions might be considered Drutse's historical balad dedicated to Leon Tolstoi — *The Return of the Dust to Earth* (Intoarcerea Tarinei in Pamint/Возвращение на круги своя). Also, the next chapter that is dedicated to Drutse, identifies more features of literary hybridity in what concerns the writings of the Moldovan writer.

Third, our attention shifts to cultural hybridity which goes hand in hand with *mimicry*. These are inseparable because whenever there is a clash of cultures, the "strongest" one imposes the negation of the "weaker". Thus, the subaltern is forced to imitate the manners and appearances of the master. This is why Drutse's villagers don't recognise Rusanda, after her appointment as a teacher in the school village, or Simionel, whose silence over the assault Balta bought. However, the most dramatic change concerned Mircea's behaviour and attitudes towards his family and the patriarchal values that used to govern in it. The most striking example concerns the closing of the novel, when he organizes a party in the honour of his new-born son. Though traditionally a family event, the whole leadership of the village is invited to the party, but not the grandfather of the new-born.

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In other words, *mimicry*, as seen in Bhabha (1994, p. 86) is the process by which the colonised transforms into an almost exact copy of the coloniser. However, according to Bhabha (1994) *mimicry* is at once “resemblance” and “menace” (pp. 90-91). On the one hand, *mimicry* is crucial for the creation of the *homo sovieticus*—imposition of the Russian/Soviet model over the identity of the nations of the periphery. On the other hand, it is a mean of subversion. After all, if communism promotes equality there can be no subalterns and masters. Consequently, the native begins to employ the strategies of the dominant discourse to make his voice heard. So, ambivalence becomes shaped even within the USSR and the ambiguity of the communist doctrine opens a breach for subversion.

Finally, religious hybridity is to be dropped out of this discussion as the Soviet era Moldova was being pushed towards atheism rather than any other religious system. Moreover, any kind of religious manifestation was banned because often (the Polish case is an example) it was the pillar of national survival. However, it has to be mentioned that the eradication of religion is somehow an embodiment of the collapse of the patriarchal value system. Thus, Mircea's (*The Burden of our Goodness*) obedience towards the new regime and oblivion of his roots appears both as a loss of the national identity and as a form of subservience to foreign cultural values.

Nevertheless, discussion over hybridity or *mimicry* is incomplete without a definition of *contact zones* that so much affect the identity creation in the peripheries. Therefore, the contact zones as “social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination—such as colonialism and slavery” (Pratt, 2008, p. 7) can be viewed as the perfect environment for hybridity. The scholar also uses this term to refer to “the space of imperial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other, and establish ongoing relations usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality and intractable conflict.” To Pratt (2008), *contact zone* is also a synonym for *colonial frontier* (p. 8). So, it seems that it is the place where what really matters is the interaction between the autochthonous and the agents of the metropolis.

Furthermore, the concept of Pratt complements the concept devised by Bhabha (1994)—*in-between spaces* (temporal & spacial) or *the third space*, which as it results from the example provided by the scholar, is transversal just like the staircase in the museum. Apparently, it is

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what makes cultural hybridity and (relative) equality in diversity possible as it is an “interstitial passage between fixed identifications” (p. 4). According to the scholar apart from inhabiting “an intervening space” the dwellers of the third space are “part of a revisionary time” and have the power “to redescribe our cultural contemporaneity; to reinscribe our human, historic commonality; *to touch the future on its hither side*” (Bhabha, 1994, p.7). Thus, in agreement with Bhabha (1994) the agents of culture, which is the case of Horia for example (the protagonist of *The Spire*), can create the future by renewing the past, “refiguring it as a contingent ‘in-between’ space, that innovates and interrupts the performance of the present. The ‘past-present’ becomes part of the necessity, not the nostalgia, of living” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 7). Moreover, according to the scholar:

The intervention of the Third Space of enunciation, which makes the structure of meaning and reference an ambivalent process, destroys this mirror of representation in which cultural knowledge is customarily revealed as an integrated, open, expanding code. Such an intervention quite properly challenges our sense of the historical identity of culture as a homogenizing, unifying force, authenticated by the originary Past, kept alive in the national tradition of the People. (Bhabha, 1994, p. 37)

Actually, following the scholar's arguments it results that there is no pure culture in today's world where the borders shift continually. Cultures, just like peoples evolve at a different pace, which leads to the appearance of a third space. And as Bhabha (1994) argues:

the in-between space—that carries the burden of meaning of culture. It makes it possible to begin envisaging national, anti-nationalist histories of the ‘people’. And by exploring this Third Space, we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of our selves. (p. 38)

In conclusion, it can be said that the postcolonial framework elaborated by the Western Academy is the backbone of the present investigation. It provides the necessary tools for the analysis of the identities forged within the post-Soviet/communist reality of Central and Eastern

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Europe. Moreover, it reveals that Europe's inner colonies (for example, Moldova) were afflicted by imperialism just like their overseas counterparts. Thus, they had to fight assimilation by all possible means and resist Russification¹¹. However, despite the perception of the Russians as the "other", the tactics employed by the Kremlin made the masses mostly gave in to the communist ideology by turning into homo sovieticus. After all, as Corbu (2004) stated the state belongs to the citizens while culture—to ethnicities (pp.27-28). So, the citizens had to respect the Soviet norms and laws. Yet, even if the M.S.S.R was created (and controlled) by Moscow the history, language, origin and the national cultural traditions of the Moldovans are not the same as the origin, history and traditions of the existent state. And, there were individuals that through hybridity got empowered and managed to avoid repression, and encounter the means to fight for the preservation of the national identity.

2.2 Textual Strategies in Post-Colonial Writing.

At this point it has to be mentioned that this dissertation is designed to probe the effectiveness of the textual strategies employed in post-colonial writing in relation to the post-communist literary productions. This approach is partly based on the way David Chioni Moore (2005) perceived the apparently non-colonial events from the Soviet republics as a process of decolonization. Thus, Moore (2005) points out the gap existing between the studies of the post-colonial and the post- in the post-Soviet. Also, he claims that despite the potential to complement one another, the two fields have generally ignored each other. Consequently, Moore's attempt to include the so-called "Second World" nations under the umbrella of postcolonial studies has opened the path for setting parallels between the post-colonial and the post-Soviet. This, together with the concepts presented above provide the means for analysing the case of Moldova from a postcolonial perspective.

First, it should be mentioned that postcolonial theory generally focuses on how artists manage to reflect the colonial past, and to fancy new identities that would be able to adapt and/or persist, given the new socio-historical circumstances, without losing their (national) identity.

¹¹ Generally, forced cultural and linguistic assimilation of the non-Russian minorities — first, within the Russian Empire and then within the USSR.

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After all, literary criticism has been the epicentre of the movement, and literature provided the means to fight oppression. So, post-colonial writing had to find new textual strategies to describe the changing realities.

Second, it should be clarified that in the colonial past the superiority of the English language, within the post-colonial world, seems to have derived from its quality as an agent of the hegemonic culture, as presented in Macaulay (2005). Besides, it has been the carrier of the Western knowledge/civilization. Likewise, Russian language, was attributed similar qualities within the Central and Eastern Europe. After all, the Soviet empire needed a lingua franca to make communication between the hundreds of nations of the Union possible. This, together with the race/class theory, somehow “legitimized” the superior and subaltern relationship in the peripheries. In addition, Rushdie's (1991) quote:

You talk about the Race Problem, the Immigration Problem, all sorts of problems. If you are liberal, you say that black people have problems. If you aren't, you say they are the problem. But the members of the new colony have only one real problem, and that problem is white people. British racism, of course, is not our problem. It's yours. We simply suffer from the effects of your problem.
(p. 138)

The essence of this argument appears to be that, after the imposition of the imperial hegemony in the peripheries, the metropolis finds the conquered people to be a problem. The latter seem to be some barbarians that resist approaching modern civilization. However, the new masters fail to comprehend that the subalterns are no savages, that they have got their own language and culture. In addition, Bhabha (1990) states that: “In each of these ‘foundational fictions’ the origins of national traditions turn out to be as much acts of affiliation and establishment as they are moments of disavowal, displacement, exclusion, and cultural contestation” (p. 5).

Thus, “the others” described by Edward Said (2005) finally become subjects and not mere objects of colonization and consequently decolonization process. This being in fact a way of reacting to the silencing and marginalizing of the post-colonial voice by the imperial centre, a

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struggle shaped out as a formal subversion and thematic contest, both as abrogation of this imperial centre within the text and active appropriation of the language and culture of that centre.

Actually, according to Boehmer (1995), the “other” became a constant appearance in the texts of the “metropolitan writers” mainly when the first began to appropriate European genres and language “to express their own identity” (p. 102). Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (2002) define these textual strategies in *The Empire Writes Back*. Thus, **abrogation** is defined as the “refusal of the categories of the imperial culture, its aesthetic, its illusory standard of normative or ‘correct’ usage, and its assumption of a traditional and fixed meaning ‘inscribed’ in the words”; while **appropriation** is described as “the process by which the language is taken and made to ‘bear the burden’ of one’s own cultural experience”. (pp. 37-38)

Therefore, in post-colonial criticism and imagination, national identity is a contested socio-cultural, three-dimensional entity generated by the interaction of the hegemonic and subaltern cultures. This entity makes the borders between “dominating and minority cultures” fade by erasing the boundaries between past and present, myth and reality, “other” and “mother” tongue, thus, intensifying the subaltern’s identity crisis. Likewise, in the case of Moldova, the identity crisis was a product of the clash of the Soviet/Russian and the indigenous culture of the Moldovan majority. Consequently, Drutse’s novels, focus (mainly) on the issues of the community, which seems to fall apart under foreign domination, rather than of the individual. Of course, there is always an individual, a chosen one, to watch on the community and send/keep the message of survival alive.

Actually, Drutse often depicts the rebellious individual as a hero and/or a martyr (see Chapter V, 5.3)—that is a strategy of resistance often employed by the Soviet writers. According to Smith et al. (1998) in terms of culture, the subalterns of the “Asian” Russia rather than being assimilated resisted. And, the strategies of resistance ranged from “nationalist mythologies, heroes and martyrs, and the depiction of the strivings of the nation towards eventual redemption” (p. 41). In short, both historians and people of art joined efforts to put history into the service of the oppressed, despite the attempt of the dominant culture to manipulate it as a tool of power at the service of its political and economic interests.

As an illustration, there is the case of Ion Drutse—one of the connoisseurs of both Moldovan present and past, an artist and a politician, that converted history from a symbol of manipulation into a symbol of salvation. In search of inspiration, Drutse turned to national myths

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and heroes. The personal myths that he creates in his novels have the function of breaking the monological narrative of world history, as seen by Moscow. Moreover, the national myth that he recreates together with the dialogue he establishes between the dominant and the marginalized culture (the use of both Romanian and Russian in writing makes the dialogue especially productive) reveal that the problem of the indigenous is an issue of an oppressed national identity and not of alterity. Therefore, the use of third person narration, which is also highlighted by Gusev (2008, p. 134), as well as the dialogue and the internal monologue create a particularly vivid picture of the psychological evolution of Drutse's protagonists. Actually, these seem to carry small parts of the author himself in them. In addition, these strategies reveal the soul and the inner anxiety of the heroes (Corcodel, 2008, pp. 152-153; Dolgan, 2008, p. 166) that struggle to conserve their complex human nature and not turn into servile homo sovieticus.

However, the verbal image of otherness the metropolis produced had affected greatly the Moldovan reality. This becomes particularly evident in the novels analysed in the fifth chapter. *The Spire*, the protagonist of which is fighting against the windmills of Soviet bureaucracy to the point of becoming a martyr of modern history, is just one example. The young gifted historian—discovered by the Sovietised university lecturer—makes his way to the capital of the republic, from a small Romanian village, with the goal to become a renowned historian in the Soviet metropolis. Unfortunately, Horia's nationalism is labelled as propaganda against the Soviet regime. Consequently, he is marginalised and excluded from the scholarly discourse built in the academic centres. Nevertheless, as it turns out at the end of the novel, this liberated his mind from the serfdom to which his mentor subjected him ever since his enrolment, and lead him write the story of the most outstanding national outpost—the Capriana village and its spire. After the disaster of his face to face confrontation with Balta, the loyal servant of the regime, he transforms his pen into his sword which in postcolonialism is seen, according to Burke (as qtd. in Manzanos Calvo, 1995, pp. 54-55) as a symbolic action. Equally symbolic is the fact that Horia's beloved speaks French to her offenders, the language of the revolution which proclaimed the “liberte, egalite, fraternite”.

Nevertheless, the postcolonial metropolis “employs certain narrative strategies, like a regime of truth and a set of binary closures, which of necessity generate a whole system of artificial hierarchies and differences” (Sanchez, 1995, p. 32) which are also employed by Moscow. For example, in the historical discourse, the real causes of the great famine that swept

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away so many lives from the Bugeac steppe¹² had been kept under the seal of silence. Likewise, the appropriation of the peasants' land¹³ and the exile of the hundreds of kulaks¹⁴ had been described as an indispensable measure for the creation of the perfectly equalitarian communist society. In fact, the latter was presented by those in power as a liberation mission¹⁵, somehow similar to what the West did in places like New Zealand, Australia, the Caribbean, the United States, and most African countries. Thus, the communist (colonial) discourse apart from building hegemony, disguised it. So, the postcolonial approach is to remove the veil of innocence the Russians used to cover their actions which, as this dissertation reveals, were directed at turning Eastern Europe into a buffer zone that would secure the Soviets from western attack. Also, as Hilborn (2011) claims, this zone was made to carry the burden of the reparation payments for the war damage caused by the Germans (p. 6, 10).

To sum up, it has to be mentioned that textual strategies in postcolonial writing offer the subaltern the possibility to speak out against the metropolis. It involves what Young (2001) called a "reconsideration of this history" (p. 4), a voice for those who were the target of assimilation. So, as there is no way to erase that past, the native intellectuals have to assume the task of revealing the story of displacement, dispossession and denationalization. Consequently, the victims shall recover from the experience of trauma generated by the re-writing of history by the dominant (dictatorial, during Stalin) discourse, and re-encounter their roots. For example, Drutse employed (mainly) heterodiegetic narration (Tau, 2008, p. 184), which makes the works acquire a more objective character and endows the narrator with both more credibility and impartiality. Thus, parting from Ashcroft et al. (2002) argument that textuality is in a way the key to deciphering the "imperial-colonial literary encounter" (p. 30) this dissertation should shed some light on the USSR- Moldova literary encounter.

2.3 Subversion and Resistance Techniques in Postcolonial Writing.

Once the writer made his choice—abrogation or appropriation—he/she had to encounter the techniques that would make his message stronger but secure from the censorship of the

¹² A region of Moldova.

¹³ This was the precondition for the creation of the kolkhozes.

¹⁴ Independent farmers or well-to-do peasants that were considered class enemies in the Soviet Union.

¹⁵ A liberation from the yoke of the Romanian capitalist system.

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metropolis. Consequently, the artist often subverted the dominant discourse by emulating the great names of the canon. An example to be considered is Drutse's short and laconic style that so much resembled that of Chekhov.

However, speaking about canons, it has to be revealed that, in what concerns postcolonial writing, (British) writers used "projection" as both a way of "cognition" and domination of the large variety of "peripheries", ever since the beginning of colonisation (Boehmer, 1995, pp. 59, 91). Likewise, Ewa Thompson (2008) finds that one of the compulsory readings in Russian schools was "A Lullaby" (1839) by the Russian poet Mikhail Lermontov. Apparently, the poem, whose major actor is "the evil Chechen", written even before this nation was first subjugated in 1859 (p. 415) provides a good example of projection. In other words, by means of the dominant discourse, resistance to colonialism within (the) Russia (n Federation) has been presented as a rebellion of the subaltern.

Therefore, Benito's (1995) consideration, that the subversion of history is made possible through the presentation of "fictional worlds of an ancestral culture radically opposed to that represented in the dominant historical discourse", is particularly important. The scholar claims that, by means of *parody* and *irony*, postcolonial writers create the so-called "inversive discourse" and calls them "modern Calibans" that "appropriate the structures and systems of the dominant culture to subvert its foundations" (Benito, 1995, p. 34-35). Boehmer (1995) agrees with Benito on that "assimilation" of the dominant culture is "an important mode of resistance" as it allows the artists to "preserve appearances—or to mimic standard responses—while yet speaking as Other" (pp. 174-175).

As for the post-Soviet writers, what Tiffin (1988) calls "the counter culture of imagination" (p. 173) was the only way to redeem the displaced and fragmented indigenous culture, given the pressure of the Russian censorship. Accordingly, postcolonial, and by extension post-Soviet, literary productions are sourced from the historical archives but are reinvented by the authors so that

through polyphony, hybridisation, and the continual erosion of all the traditional strategies of European containment, post-colonial texts liberate themselves from both historical capture and contemporary containment; and

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escape relegation as “other” by recuperating “self” in the process of annihilating such constricting binaries. (Tiffin, 1988, p. 179)

Accordingly, the postcolonial fiction managed first, to deconstruct the “oppressive narrative strategies” and second, “to erode the imperialistic epistemologies based on boundaries, binary oppositions, and fixed images (Sanchez, 1995, p. 35). Therefore, the literary formation Drutse received in Moscow favoured and facilitated the appropriation of the language and forms employed by the perpetrator. Thus, for example, his *The White Church*, *The Return of the Dust to Earth* and the *The Last Love of Peter the Great* are the kind of historical narration (be it novel or novella) that, in agreement with Oskotski (2008), flourished in the Soviet literatures (p. 143). However, Drutse’s novels, where reality and fiction combine in a poetical way, came to reveal that political boundaries cannot alter the core of one’s identity. Accordingly, his works, dressed in the wolf’s skin, were in essence continuing the literary tradition of such Romanian writers as Sadoveanu and Creanga. Thus, for example his major protagonist, Onake Caraboosh, continues to be the same sharp-witted peasant from Ciutura, be it as a citizen of the Russian Empire, Romania, or the Soviet Union.

Of course, the achievement of the above mentioned goals required the use of some specific techniques. Hence, special attention is to be paid to what Ashcroft et al. (2002) consider “common techniques” (p. 27) of postcolonial writing. The first one, discontinuous narratives, is easily identifiable in *The Spire*, in which the limit between memories and reality, past and present is sometimes very thin. In fact, as the reading of the novel reveals—Oskotski (2004, p. 62), Russian literary critic and historian confirms it in his essay—it is a mixture of narration of events and flashbacks (memories), the stream of consciousness technique reveals the internal monologue of the protagonist Horia Holban, a monologue that pervades the narration.

Second, irony—the technique that draws a parallel between the Russian short story writer Chekhov and Drutse. With respect to this, Corcodel (2008) claims that, in Drutse’s universe, humour is the very essence and shield of life. The Russian genius’s irony, and, by extension Drutse’s, though subtle and difficult to identify, are generally employed to reveal human flaws (p. 153-154). Nevertheless, the technique the two artists share often resides not in the irony of words but in the (often sarcastic) choice of proper names for the (antagonist) characters. As an

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illustration, are the following: Balta¹⁶ and Baltatu¹⁷ in *the Spire*, and Otchumyelov¹⁸ and Hryukin¹⁹ in *A Chameleon*.

The third, allegory — a common technique of postcolonial writing, is mostly a feature of Ion Drutse's short stories and (children) tales, the most polemicized among them being *The Tale of an Ant*. However, the investigated novels are full of examples of personification (allegory) and symbolism which seem to tell no story but help the writer encode ideas and messages which the censorship would otherwise block. In addition, Gusev (2008, p. 133) notes the abundance of examples of personification of nature present in Drutse's works. However, both Gusev (2008) and Cristea (2008) misinterpret the use of personification, which Drutse employs to create his (allegorical) symbols, claiming that it is only employed to create an atmosphere and intensify the reader's emotional experience. In fact, some of these symbols (mostly tokens of the peasant's universe) are, for example: the apparently weak, wild sapling (in *The Spire*) that Horia's father-in-law takes from the hill to plant in the orchard²⁰; the red puppies²¹ that flourish in Onache's yard towards the end of the war, after the death of his two sons. Thus, *The Spire*, *The Burden of Our Goodness*, and *Leaves of Yearning* provide a significant number of symbols — the black butterflies, the sunflower, the spire, the wood and the river which are also highlighted by Dolgan (2008, p. 169)—and motifs that are almost an allegory and shall be considered further in the fifth chapter of the dissertation.

And last but not the least, Ashcroft et al. (2002) make reference to a powerful resistance strategy—the use of magic realism (p. 27). Although Drutse's work has often been labelled as belonging to the movement of socialist realism there are elements of magic realism in his works. Apparently Drutse's magic realism is like the Latin Americans' one which according to Boehmer (1995) is a combination of the “supernatural with local legend and imagery” (p. 235). The

¹⁶ The closest English equivalents — pool/slough, and has mostly a negative connotation; more so in the expression *a lasa balta ceva* — leave something unfinished, and *a ramine balta* — to be abandoned or to stagnate.

¹⁷ It means gaudy, unstable/weak vessel. and vulgarly ironic — wearing city outfit, which also means one is like a chameleon that wears the colours of the background, and is spineless.

¹⁸ It derives from the Russian slang verb — *otchumeti*, meaning to act crazy.

¹⁹ It derives from the verb *hryukati*, meaning to oink.

²⁰ Young Horia also came from what for Drutse is an equivalent of the hill — the mountain — to the plains of Moldova and proved strong enough to defy the new regime.

²¹ Despite Coroban's (2008, p. 236) allusion that the red flower symbolises the liberation brought about by the Red Army, the puppies most likely symbolise both the invasion of the latter and the blood (death) that was shed by the Moldovans — sons of the land, just like the puppies that came out of the seeds that originated from the confiscated land of the Moldovan/Romanian boyar — in a war that was not theirs.

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scholar argues that “by mingling the bizarre and the plausible so that they become indistinguishable, postcolonial writers mimic the colonial explorer’s reliance on fantasy and exaggeration to describe new worlds” (p. 242). On the other hand, spiritual realism, combined with legendary elements, plays an important role in Drutse’s (re)creation of the “mioritic” landscape. Consider the appearance and disappearance of Molda in crucial moments of the novel; the black butterflies on the hearth of his home in the last moments of his life; the musicians that accompany Onake for his entire life, and their disappearance at the end of the novel; the voice Horia hears when a crucial decision is to be made: to return to his mother’s home or stay in his wife’s village and fight.

An illustration of magic realism is the short story “The Lonely Shepherd”²² which, unfortunately, given the limitations of the study cannot be analysed thoroughly. Yet, it is impressive that when back home, after the exile to Siberia, the shepherd built another house which just like the old one respected the old traditions and not the new style (Codreanu, 2008, p. 124) imposed by the Soviet authorities. Nevertheless, the real magic comes in the end, when after being left to die, he was buried in isolation with no cross on his grave. Then, when spring failed to come to the village, green grass, as if seeds from the mountain were hidden in the deceased’s pockets, grew *only* on the grave of the old man and brought comfort to the villagers. So, even dead he staid faithful to his paternal mission and watched over the village, that betrayed him while he lived.

Consequently, magic realism cannot be built without personification or symbolism and motifs. Moreover, these were important strategies that allowed the Moldovan writer elude the censorship of the metropolis. Therefore, one aspect of the analysis of the selected novels—presented bellow in the section 5.2—is dedicated to the symbols and motifs Drutse used to subvert the dominant narrative. Indeed, the tapestry of motifs and symbols employed by the Moldovan writer is pretty amazing as it includes motifs/symbols standing for all the aspects of human life, social, cultural, historical and spiritual.

²² “Toiagul Pastoriei”

2.4 Recurrent Topics in Post-Colonial Writing.

Following the same line of discussion, it is to be said that the literature review provides a wide variety of topics that are generally approached in postcolonial writings and that complement this investigation. First, as the reading of Boehmer (1995) revealed, colonialist literature/narrative (the most appealing probably *Heart of Darkness* by Conrad who was profoundly marked by the reality of Russian imperialism in Poland) approaches mainly topics like: “the introversion of the colonial mission, or colonial drama; the masculine aspect of that drama; the representation of other peoples; and the resistant incomprehensibility or unreadability of the colonized beyond” (p. 60). Similarly, Drutse reflects (in *The White Church*) the opposition between the world of Ecaterina the Great, the empress of Russia and Ecaterina the Small from the periphery village of Ocolina, two opposing forces—of the crown and of the spirit. Alike, there is an opposition between the monarch and the free spirit of Tolstoi in *The Return of the Dust to Earth* (Intoarcerea Tarinei in Pamint/Возвращение на круги своя) (Oskotski, 2008, p. 146). Moreover, there seems to be some similitude between the Russian genius and Marlow. Both, have seen enough of the life of the subalterns of the crown to become sceptical of imperialism, but lack the inner force to fight it.

However, the works under analysis mainly focus on the true fabric of the subaltern society—that is being altered by outsiders—and not so much on the colonisers’ vision of the periphery. The world that Drutse reproduces in most of his works, as well as in the investigated novels, is a fair copy of the dominated Moldova; a country undergoing a deep identity crisis—to stay faithful to the patriarchal values and risk one’s life or to serve the new regime and survive. Nevertheless, Corcodel (2008) spotlights that the martyred nation often envisions its salvation through religion (p. 155). In this sense, women, though apparently in a lesser degree, are also part of the drama as they generally rally against change and stick to the Christian values. Though, the protagonists of the studied novels are all men, the novel *The White Church* and the play *The Parlour (Casa Mare)*, for example, have women as protagonists. These appear as either keepers of the tradition or tormented souls that struggle to find their place in the changing world, just like the male protagonists of the investigated novels are.

Second, from *The Empire Writes Back* results that

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a valid and active sense of self may have been eroded by dislocation, resulting from migration, the experience of enslavement, transportation, or “voluntary” removal for indentured labour. Or it may have been destroyed by cultural denigration, the conscious and unconscious oppression of the indigenous personality and culture by a supposedly superior racial or cultural model. The dialectic of place and displacement is always a feature of postcolonial societies whether these have been created by a process of settlement, intervention, or a mixture of the two. Beyond their historical and cultural differences, place, displacement, and a pervasive concern with the myths of identity and authenticity are a feature common to all postcolonial literatures in English. (Ashcroft et al., 2002, p. 9)

However, as the present investigation reveals, these are the features of the Moldovan literature too, be it written in Romanian or Russian. Consequently, it is quite significant that, on the one hand, Boehmer (1995) and on the other hand, Drutse himself, claim that nationalist writers are never truly away from home; they carry home (be it Yeats's romantic and utopian Ireland or Drutse's Ciutura/Ocolina/Valea Razesilor/Capriana — the mythological/legendary homeland of the peasants and warriors; Horodishte — the childhood home village), its people, and spiritual traditions with them wherever they go. Thus, one can deduce that the nationalist writers of Europe's both inner and outer colonies direct their attention to “childhood, homecoming, and return” which are endowed with the qualities of “a healing myth of origin” (Boehmer, 1995, pp. 117, 119). Moreover, in the case of the Moldovan writer, the literary productions are both a recreation of the fundamental myths of the Romanian literature and a creation of his personal (hybrid) myths.

Accordingly, the aesthetic myth “Mesterul Manole”, according to which creation equals suffering, is mainly embodied by the character of Horia and the spire itself. The erotic myth of “Zburatorul”—a handsome demon, that makes girls experience love for the first time—is embodied by the protagonists (Gheorghe, Nica/ Mircea, Horia) of *The Leaves of Yearning, The Burden of Our Goodness or The Spire*. The myth “Traian and Dochia” of the Romanian people's ethnogenesis, as well as the “Miorita” myth which symbolizes the pastoral existence of the Romanians, are both identifiable in the creation of Drutse—a proof of the strong connection of

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the Moldovan writer with the Romanian literary tradition. This, as well as the writer's interest in the nation's "other" history reaffirm Homi K. Bhabha's (1990) statement that:

Nations, like narratives, lose their origins in the myths of time and only fully realize their horizons in the mind's eye. Such an image of the nation—or narration—might seem impossibly romantic and excessively metaphorical, but it is from those traditions of political thought and literary language that the nation emerges as a powerful historical idea in the west. (p. 1)

Therefore, Drutse's efforts are all focused on reproducing the image of the Moldovans as a nation not as mere "homo sovieticus". Nevertheless, both alienation of the subaltern and the identity crisis is, inevitable when both physical and cultural displacement, so characteristic of the whole of Common Wealth and the CIS, occurs. And it is by far only the case of what Ashcroft et al. (2002) define as "overly oppressive forms of colonization such as slavery and conquest" (p. 9). The (re)construction of place is where this alienation can be identified. Here is where Boehmer (1995) and Ashcroft et al. (2002) agree on the point that "the gap which opens between the experience of place and the language available to describe it forms a classic and all-pervasive feature of post-colonial texts" (p. 9). According to Ashcroft et al. (2002) this is typical of societies whose language is being annihilated or discredited by the colonizing power (p. 9). Thus, Drutse's novels are often full of mixtures and crossings of languages which Boehmer (1995) also calls "creolized modes of expression" (p. 118) but the main language of creation continues to be Romanian, whenever the target reader was the native. However, the use of Russian (or other mixtures and crossings) becomes indispensable when it comes to the depiction of the vanishing spiritual and harmonious patriarchal society that is being replaced by the pragmatism and realism of both Europe and/or its last empire—the USSR.

Nevertheless, other recurrent topics in postcolonial writing are best reflected in the essay "Novels of Memory: The Subversion of History in Ethnic Literature" (Sanchez, 1995). The very title of the essay suggests one of the key topics in postcolonial literature—memory. It appears that writers reconstruct the matrix of their group identity in the imaginary world of literature. Thus, on the one hand, history that is otherwise silenced and manipulated by those in power, as seen in the essay of A. M^a Manzanás Calvo (1995), stops being "selective and subjective" (p.

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51). The novels, that most frequently are bildungsroman, convert into autobiographies of some particularly charismatic protagonist that comes to stand for the complex identity of the oppressed. This hero is empowered to expose both the dictatorship of the regime and the amnesia, or the silence, of the subordinated society. The very being of the protagonist defies the order established by the metropolis and claims the right to individuality: political, cultural, linguistic—and last but not the least—historical.

On the other hand, Benito (1995) provides an analysis of some particularly valuable postcolonial writings which focus on the given topic. First, the scholar offers the example of George Lamming's novels, where the setting is "a polarized landscape, a world separated by artificial boundaries" (p. 35). This is also the world in which Drutse's characters struggle to preserve, or recover, their identity. However, as both Pratt and Bhabha state, the identity moulded in a contact zone is always a hybrid, and there is no way to return to the point zero. Unfortunately, it seems that similar to Okonkwo, the protagonists of the novels under investigation cannot see this point. Thus, the heroes of Drutse's novels have to find a way to accept the change without losing their identity, a reasoning also conveyed by Obierika from Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. Second, Benito enlarges the spectrum of history by drawing the readers' attention to the novels of Toni Morrison and David Bradley. Morrison, for example, comes up with the concept of history as "memories within" that are generally transmitted by word of mouth, as seen in "Novels of Memory". While, Bradley highlights the role of the native historian formed in the educational centres of the metropolis, the new Mustafa (as discovered in Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North*) that keeps a written record of the events. Apparently, the writers agree on the importance of breaking the silence, and filling in the gaps of history with both ancestral knowledge and lived experience. Thus, postcolonial writers create a more subjective history, a history that combines memory and imagination, but also a history that is more accurate in its complexity (Sanchez, 1995, p. 36).

So, Drutse, just like Sherley Anne Williams or Toni Morrison, as quoted by both Benito (1995) and A. M.^a Manzanaz Calvo (1995), carries out what Morrison calls "literary archaeology" by contrasting the information he encountered in both Soviet and Romanian archives with his people's (or/and his own) "lost" memories. The author undertakes the revision and recreation of the history of domination in the Republic of Moldova; a task that could only evade the communist censorship with a great effort of imagination and (sometimes) by appropriating the

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language of the oppressor. Fiction and language managed to encode truths that undermined the monologic historical discourse of Moscow. It's not surprising that many of his apparently innocent first and second hand historical accounts that were successful in the metropolis, were banned at home, where servile subalterns protected the interests of the centre.

One example of a reconstructed historical discourse is Drutse's novel *The White Church*, (which because of a different historical setting is not included in the research) which apparently is nothing else than a historical novel that describes the Russo-Turkish wars. However, to the educated native, it reveals the continuity of our people in the region and its historical, social and cultural unity with the Romanian nation. This novel undermines the arguments of the Russian czar in favour of the colonisation of Bessarabia, supposedly a bare land, as it proves that the territory was already inhabited by indigenous people by the time the Russians came to the region. The same argument is picked up in the novels which make up the focus of the given dissertation: *The Burden of Our Goodness* (through the symbol/legend of the mysterious dog — Molda) and *The Spire* (through the legend of the spire), and only tangentially in *Leaves of Yearning* (through one of the characters—old Danutza and his songs).

Another example, of revived life stories, derives from the protagonists of the above mentioned novels. First, the most complex example, is that of the history teacher who is driven by his love of the science of history to the universities of the metropolis. Horia, the history teacher, is deeply influenced by the assumptions of traditional historiography. But, from the very beginning of his career, Drutse's hero, unlike the latter, is determined to employ the acquired knowledge in the restoration of the national history. His first steps as an inspector of the Institute for the protection of cultural monuments were to travel the country in search of historical relics and create a map of the historical sites, which his superiors interpreted as "propaganda". As a consequence, he ended up crashed in Capriana village but determined to write the legendary history of the place, a place that in 1989 became a symbol of national revival. Second, Onake is the hero who suffers from the changes brought about by the authoritarian regime. He too opposes the change but is too weak to fight it. His boys were killed in the Second World War, and his son-in-law is corrupted by the new regime. Moreover, his only daughter is caught between two worlds, the one her father stuck to and the other that her husband aspired to. Thus, the communist did not come "quietly and peacefully" (Achebe, 1958, p. 68) as the white man did, yet he did trigger the disintegration of the dominated society. So, at some

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point, even Onache's beloved daughter comes to reject the sacred customs of the family. Her rejection is symbolised by her not wanting to sow maize in her yard and her having no time to take care of her father. The constant undermining of the natives' sacred beliefs and traditions was meant to erode the core of their identity and introduce the dictatorship of the metropolis. Apparently both communities' beliefs appeared as irrational to the imperial society.

Nevertheless, according to Valentin Oskotski (2008), the "firm line of continuity between epochs, and the unity of the generations" make up the backbone of Drutse's work (p. 143). For example, Caraboosh is portaid as the guardian of tradition (he only celebrated two holidays—Christmas and Easter) and history. Nothing changes even when he loses both his wife and his land (both a result of a malicious plan of the metropolis designed to make people give up their possessions in favour of the collective farms, and thus lose the essence of their being). The narrator only relieves him from his "duty" when he gets to have an heir. This is metaphorically born on the Christmas Eve, which the narrator calls "the holiday of the return to the old hearth of miracles", the holiday that transforms the miserable life of the peasants into a fairy-tale. This is when his daughter also returns to the hearth of the ancestors, and becomes aware of her true identity. For instance, this awareness is expressed by her longing for her father's carols, which she could not remember the day her youngest son was born. So, as she sends for him, he comes to his daughter's home for the last time, and sings his last carols. Then, when alone again, the protagonist stops hearing the music that accompanied him during his whole life and dies symbolically, in front of the hearth of his home. Actually, just like the cave of Morrison's Milkman, the hearth is a "site of memory", as Benito claims in his essay. In addition, the hearth is a symbol of the old man's (re) encounter with Molda (the mysterious and legendary dog), his return to the origins. Nevertheless, further analysis of the symbols, characters and topics generally approached in postcolonial literature is presented in the fifth chapter of this dissertation.

However, it should be pointed out that according to Ashcroft et al. (2002) "a characteristic of dominated literatures is an inevitable tendency towards subversion" (pp. 31-32). Therefore, as the present paper reveals special strategies and techniques are required to approach topics that are taboo in a dominated society and would otherwise be banned by the censorship of the center. Sometimes, as the third chapter reveals, appropriating the language of the perpetrator is crucial in fighting the censure.

PART II

Post-colonial societies were never simply “culturally” controlled, because culture went hand in hand with political, economic and military domination. But imperial culture, and literature in particular, had a specially important function in enabling comparatively small occupying forces to exert hegemonic control over large populations. For this very reason it became a site of resistance as the cultural orientation of post-colonial writing opposed, interpolated and then transformed the canon of English Literature itself. (Ashcroft et al., 2002, p. 199)

This quotation sums up the arguments behind the second part of the present dissertation. As already mentioned earlier, the postcolonial approach provides the tools needed for the analysis of the literary texts produced in the post-Soviet Central and Eastern Europe. Thus, the analysis of the issues that bring together literatures created in the so-called Third and Second World is to shed some light on the national identity issues afflicting Europe's (former) internal colonies. More specifically, questions concerning the national identity of the natives of the present-day Republic of Moldova are to be addressed. Various types of subversion (mimicry, mockery/resistance) are going to be identified in the literary productions of Ion Drutse. The role of (collective) memory, traditional culture, language and religion, in safeguarding the natives from the identity crisis, needs to be determined and borne in mind. The consequences of the artificial engineering of a nation state in terms of place and displacement, together with Rushdie's questions on one's home and individual identity of the migrant/exile should also be taken into account.

As an illustration, once there was a joke on Facebook that asked who the Moldovans are and what their home is. The (painful) answer that followed stated that “our home was the world but the headquarters was in the Republic of Moldova.” This seems a close adaptation of the once famous Soviet song, the lyrics of which said that “my home is not a house or a street, my home is the Soviet Union.” So, this part of the dissertation is to examine the factors that led to the identity crisis of the Moldovans in the post-Soviet era. Thus, the colonial experience, the denationalization/de-territorialisation of the Moldovans, the cultural alienation—more and more Moldovans are feeling strangers at home and flee the country—and the language issue is to be

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examined through the lenses of postcolonial theory, while making use of the tools described in the previous chapter.

Chapter III: Contextualizing Central and Eastern European Literature in Post-colonialism.

As already mentioned earlier on in this dissertation, literature provides both an insight into and a proof of the colonial character of the Soviet regime. Both Russian and Soviet literature abound in examples of “orientalism” — so-called superiority of the Russian nation over its neighbouring peoples. For example, Thompson (2000) considers *War and Peace* — apparently an imperialist novel just like the Western “orientalist” novels analysed by Said. This, according to her, presents the territory between Russia and the German-speaking countries as a wasteland occupied by no other nations with definite national identities (pp. 85-108). Thus, there are two reasons to consider the classic of the Russian canon a colonialist novel. Firstly, it expresses Russia's self-confidence as a colonial empire, while at the same time suppressing the narratives of the defeated peoples. Secondly, Thompson (2000) claims that Tolstoy's masterpiece contributes to the consolidating power of national mythology, and, presents Russia's well-developed national consciousness (p. 106). Subsequently, the novels by Ion Drutse, *The White Church* or *The Spire* appear as anti-colonial novels by fighting precisely the thesis reflected in novels like *War and Peace*. The Moldovan writer contradicts the view that Russians hold of Moldova as a wasteland by presenting both the life of the people affected by the never-ending incursions of the invaders and the colonisation of Moldova as a consequence of the policy of the Russian Czar. So, writers have also portrayed the problems of Central and Eastern Europe in a similar way to politicians and scholars.

Furthermore, during the Soviet era the new state ideology fostered the creation of homo sovieticus — all the nations should be like their bigger brother (the Russians) — and obey the totalitarian leader²³. Likewise, the Moldovans for example, were told who they were, or to be

²³ The communist propaganda put scholars and artists to its service. On the one hand, in the case of Moldovan literature, for example, the events and realities related to the life of the people when Moldova belonged to Romania were criticized and depicted as negative. On the other hand, the so-called technological, social and cultural advances imposed by Moscow were eulogized.

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more precise who they were not — Romanians. The fact is that the Soviet metropolis acted like a mirror reflection of the West and created a false representation of the peripheries as “other”, most often the non-European “other”. So, the Central and Eastern Europe came to suffer from a complex of inferiority for not being European enough, while not being Eastern either.

However, a better insight into the issue is to be gained by a closer examination of Drutse's personality. Actually, Drutse is the exile that was not afraid to make use of the master narrative to expose the crimes of the totalitarian regime against its people. Although, the writer was supposed to spread the Soviet “propaganda”, he did nothing but write back. Moreover, as Dolgan (2008, pp. 160-171) also claims, Drutse employed poetry to oppose the canons of socialist realism. In a similar line, his novels, as confirmed by Agache (2008, p. 138), only deceptively respected the imposed model of the realist novel. In fact, they reflected life as it was, not just as a binary of new and old, where, according to Dolgan (2008), the new defeated the old (p. 160). Consequently, the writer managed to preserve his peoples' awareness of themselves as descendants of the (Romanized) Dacians and as heirs of Stefan cel Mare and Eminescu, which, according to Eckhart Tolle, is the greatest agent of change and thus recuperation of the true identity.

The next step is to identify the literary movement Drutse belongs to. After all, according to Arnold, this is the role of the critic (as qtd. in Badescu, 1989, p. 245). Consequently, it needs to be mentioned that regardless of Drutse's belonging to the so called “socialist realism”²⁴ our new approach to his novels will reveal aspects so far ignored in his work. Thus, in order to catalog Drutse's writings into any literary group, the historical and socio-cultural background the works were created in, as well as the issues approached, need to be considered. Although, this task will receive particular attention in Chapter IV, below comes a short overview of the events that marked the nation in the 20th c.

Hence, before presenting the situation of the post-war Moldova (Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic, 1940's -1980's) there is a short leap back into history to be made. First, one should be aware that the controversy over this piece of land starts in the year 1812, the year of the forcible annexation of Bessarabia by the Russian Empire as an aftermath of the Russo-Turkish Wars. Then, the First World War followed and the inhabitants of the periphery suddenly became free, and joined Romania. However, the union with what was seen as the hearth of the

²⁴ A literary movement that dominated the literature of the socialist republics.

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nation was short. After the Second World War the territory was annexed by Russia anew, and barbed wire separated the two banks of the river Prut. Consequently, many fled to Romania, others were exiled to Siberia (most of the well-to-do families, thus the genetic fond of the nation being destroyed). In addition, those who survived to the Famine (1946-47)—which made the indigenous population shrink to half the number of the pre-war period—became victims of denationalization/Sovietisation and Collectivization²⁵.

Nevertheless, the literature of the time depicted the war that broke Stephen the Great's Moldova into two as the victorious/liberation march of the Red Army. Then, after the devastation of the war, the disaster of starvation was skilfully hidden. Of course, this was caused by natural catastrophes but it was deepened by the totalitarian system with the purpose of making the natives forget their ethical and moral problems. Similarly, collectivisation was not presented as a forcible seizure of property, which it was, but as a benevolent act on behalf of the village representatives. So, socialist realist artists (generally) depicted reality in revolutionary and triumphant colours. In addition, according to Hilborn (2011), this Soviet imposed art form sought to hush “the national oppositions which arose as a challenge to foreign rule, and any deviation was punished, which can be seen in the Soviet Union's handling of the Prague Spring” (p. 8).

However, Drutse defies the basic principles of socialist realism. Indeed, according to both national and international (Romanian and Russian) critics, he is closer to the literary movement specific to the pre-Second World War Romanian space—Samanatorism²⁶, or to Rural Prose²⁷. Specifically, Drutse is interested in the preservation of the authenticity of the region, as well as the reflection of the fierce opposition between nature and its advocates (the natives/peasants) and civilization and its agents of progress (the adepts of the communist ideology). Thus, the Moldovan writer seems to fit into the category of regionalist or local colour movement too. Besides, these literary movements seem to echo one another. But, the postcolonial framework—apparently including the above mentioned literary movements—is the only one that provides the tools necessary to tackling the issues of national identity that Drutse approaches. Thus in continuation, some of the dominant features of these movements are considered.

²⁵ This was a policy adopted by the Kremlin and pursued to dispossess the people of most of their land/property.

²⁶ A literary movement that flourished in Bessarabia only after the Second World War.

²⁷ An artistic orientation that spread all over the Soviet Union Republics.

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First, in the historical context of the post Second World War Bessarabia, the main concern of *Semanatorism* was the preservation of the past and the village, where, according to the Romanian writer Lucian Blaga, eternity was born. This echoes Boehmer's (1995) argument "that a people's identity, though long suppressed, lay embedded in its cultural origins and was recoverable intact, unadulterated by the depredations of colonialism" (p. 100). So, culture must have led the national revival movements both in the post-colonial and the post-Soviet space.

Consequently, as with earlier—Irish, for example—nationalism, Drutse rather than bringing the new into literature was reviving, or at least trying to revive, what the post-colonialist Boehmer (1995) called the "rich, pure, and authentic native culture" (p. 100). Likewise, he focused on redeeming the human qualities that were being destroyed by the totalitarian system. Actually, that was the only way of preserving the essence of the Moldovan nation that was being robbed of the most beautiful and holy that it had, of its identity. Of course, to accomplish this goal Drutse's characters are transformed into guardians of the nation's beliefs and traditions. This was particularly important for Bessarabia in the 60's, 70's when the village was losing its connection with the past, history, ancestral customs, spiritual matrix, and archetypal roots.

Indeed, Drutse's work encompasses major issues of the agenda of *semanatorism*: history—a reflection of the nation's past; customs—an imperative for the survival of the nation; folklore—a way of reviving the national spirit; the language of the ancestors—a token of the people's self-consciousness. Besides, as it has been mentioned above, the same features (history, tradition, national peculiarities, anxieties and even fears related to the uprooting of the peasant, etc.) were defining the so-called rural prose. The latter is a movement which flourished in all the literatures of the Soviet Union as a reaction to the threat posed by the totalitarian system (Bilețchi, 1998, pp. 93-97), a catalyst which, to paraphrase Achebe, was making things fall apart in the periphery. So, these features also reflect some of the concerns of postcolonialism. In addition, according to Ashcroft et al. (2002) within "European thinking, history, ancestry and the past form a powerful reference point for epistemology", while, in post-colonialism "time broadens into space" (pp. 33 – 35).

Actually, *semanatorism* on the two sides of Prut (nowadays Romania and the Republic of Moldova) is both the same and different. It is more or less the same in what concerns issues and different in chronological limits. Similarly, post-colonialism and post-communism, or, post-colonial and post-Soviet reality are concerned with the annihilation of the subaltern identity and

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its subsequent resistance to the centre. So, this dissertation aims to analyse the literature created in the post-Soviet space from the perspective of postcolonial theory, which favourably complements the tools provided by the above mentioned literary movements. And, the following sections will reveal how Drutse the artist and the political activist both appropriated and abrogated the strategies of the dominant discourse.

3.1 Ion Drutse in the Context of Modern World and National Literature.

During times of universal deceit, telling the truth becomes a revolutionary act.
(George Orwell)

Given Said's (2005) argument that cultural and political facts do not exist in some archival vacuum this section focuses on the context of modern world and national literature that most influenced Drutse's writing. In addition, it provides some insight into the intertextuality of his creations. In other words, our attention focuses on the way socio-political circumstances, literary formation and knowledge, as well as the imposed communist ideology affected the Moldovan writer's creativity. After all, this dissertation is directed to the application of the postcolonial knowledge to the post-Soviet realm. And, Said's (2005) affirmation that "Orientalism has to be studied as a dynamic exchange between individual authors and the large political concerns shaped by the three great empires—British, French, American—in whose intellectual and imaginative territory the writing was produced" (Said, 2005, pp. 80-83) is to be effectively transferred to the reality of the space formerly dominated by the last European empire.

For instance, Negura (2009) claims that the instauration of Soviet domination in the MSSR²⁸ inevitably lead to the division of the local administration and intellectuals "in two antagonistic groups" — the ones in favour and the ones against the new regime. Moreover, schools, mass culture institutions and literature were made to contribute to the creation of the homo sovieticus. Consequently, intellectuals, many of them members of the Soviet Moldovan Writers' Union (MWU), supported—of one's own free will or not—the imposition of what

²⁸ Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic, 1940-1991.

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Negura (2009) called “an exogenous axiological system” promoted by the Soviet authorities. Nevertheless, some writers resisted and refused to put their “knowledge and abilities” (Negura, 2009) into the service of Kremlin.

For instance, Drutse never confronted the Soviet authorities directly but, despite the fact that he became a member of the MWU partly due to Khrushchev’s *indigenization* policy, he was a rebel. Also, Drutse, who graduated from the Romanian school and trained in Soviet higher education institutions was some kind of model for the younger writers. He was one of the artists who perpetuated the Romanian and universal literature and culture among the younger generations of writers whom Soviet schooling deprived of this formation. Consequently, the “thaw generation” and its followers were the first to challenge the Russification of the Moldovan population and to claim the adoption (return) of the Latin alphabet. Unfortunately, what followed was nothing but stifling and intensification of the censorship and of the reprisal measures implemented by the local authorities. Nevertheless, later the writers’ claims combined with their posterior engagement in politics lead to Moldova’s national rebirth and to the 1991 declaration of independence.

Yet, the independence—just like the instauration of the communist regime earlier—would bring about a scission. This would be represented by “two emblematic literary figures from the Soviet era Moldavia, Grigore Vieru and Ion Drutse, the former a strong advocate for the reunification of Bessarabia and Romania, the latter living for decades in Moscow, strong advocate of Moldovan specificity” (Negura, 2009). As a result, Drutse—whose work is the focus of this dissertation—is caught in a whirlpool of polemics and prejudices as to where his loyalties lay. Thus, the following paragraphs attempt to shed some light on the role Drutse played in the struggle for the Moldovans’ national identity preservation.

On the one hand, as Dolgan (2008) claims, Drutse’s works were read both at home and abroad (Moscow, London, Paris, Berlin, Riga, Bucharest, etc.). Scholars from the USA (Keith Hitchins) and Germany studied his creation. Modern theories were applied to the investigation of his works, among them: Mikel Dufrenne’s (one of the French structuralists) poetic principle, which according to Dolgan (2008) conveys some kind of freedom, lightness and cheerfulness to the work of the Moldovan writer (p. 162); or the concept of the Italian semiotician, Umberto Eco—the poetics of the open work; or the modern outlook of the French psychoanalyst Charles Mauron, whose work *Des métaphores obsédantes au mythe personnel* contribute to a better

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understanding of the personal, national and universal myths that Drutse has created (Dolgan, 2008, pp. 9-10).

On the other hand, Drutse's myths are particularly important because, just like within the postcolonial framework, in accordance with Slotkin they function as "the primary language of historical memory" (as qtd. in Sanchez, 1995, p. 37). Actually, as section 5.2 will reveal, Drutse uses universal and national (Romanian) myths and symbols to (re)create his personal myths about truths that otherwise would never be voiced. In addition, the myths seem to represent a considerable part of colonial nationalists' investigation, as Boehmer (1995, p. 102) claims. Moreover, Manzanos Calvo, (1995) observes that within postcolonial theory scholars from a wide range of fields: religion, philosophy, art and psychoanalysis among them, consider "myth-making" crucial (p. 47). Consequently, it appears that in many aspects Drutse, a post-Soviet/communist writer, is to be better understood by means of the tools provided by the postcolonial theory. Therefore, this dissertation is to provide a postcolonial reading of his novels, that as part of the fabric of modern world literature are to be dissected and rediscovered. So, a complex insight—which comes farther—into the influencing factors that lead to their creation is imperative.

First, it should be mentioned that Theodor Codreanu, Valeriu Cristea and Ion Rotaru are just some of the Romanian critics who consider Drutse a descendant of the Romanian classics—Neculce, Creanga, Sadoveanu, Cosbuc, Caragiale, Slavici, Rebreanu and Eminescu. Likewise, when considered in relation to his contemporaries, Drutse is placed next to Marin Preda, Eugen Barbu, Fanus Neagu, or Nicolae Velea—Romanian canon writers—and is often viewed as the greatest of today's Moldovans. Moreover, Drutse is considered "a truly popular/people's writer", he is "an innate story teller and a great scholar who knows Romanian well—from the purest of its sources", claims Dolgan (2008, p. 16). Similarly, Ion Rotaru (2008) states that right from his debut, Ion Drutse's short prose stood out on the background of his fellow writers' creations. The critic wondered at the way small masterpieces like: "Gospodaritul", "Niculae Anton si cei sase feciori ai lui", "Padureanca", "Piept la Piept", "Sacul matusii Irina", "Rubanca", "Bobocul",

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“Arionesti”, “Malul de piatra”, managed to escape the Bolshevik censorship in the ‘50s, in full rise of Proletkult²⁹ (p. 65).

Nevertheless, the artist had to pay a fair price for the views expressed in his works. Gheorghe Mazilu (2008), for example, considers that the writer’s (auto)exile was more a result of the intrigue of his fellow writers than a consequence of the disapproval of the Moldovan communist leader Bodiul Ivan (p.116). It seems that corruption and lack of moral discipline among the native intelligentsia was more dangerous than the censorship of the centre. However, one thing is clear, Drutse never acted as he was told, neither before nor after glasnost³⁰. Indeed, his goal was to keep alive the memory of the nation, to preserve it from total annihilation by the communist state machine that was controlling Soviet Moldova. Moreover, although within the postcolonial framework “the necessity to remember” is viewed as an “indicative of the extinction of memory” (Manzanas Calvo, 1995, p. 46), in the post-Soviet space it was the key to national survival. In this context, Drutse’s (poetic) work results crucial for the struggle for the preservation of national identity as it was an expression of truth and optimism in a time of oppressing naturalism that underestimated the power of the individual (Dedkov, 2008, pp. 178-179).

Moreover, when it comes to national identity, both Mazilu and Negura (2009) mention that, even after the independence, Drutse, who had a living memory of both past and present,

²⁹ Proletkult—a political and ideological movement launched in Soviet Russia right after the coup (d’état) of the Bolshevik party in October 1917. According to the doctrine of proletariat it has the following goals and principles:

1. Destroy the old culture and build a new one, a culture to serve both the workers and the peasants, a culture to serve the communist ideology;
2. Art has to reflect only the achievements of the laboring class and peasants, the socialist model of production, *the bright image of the communist* (a standard hero) because the *proletarian experience of life* and the *proletarian experience of art* are poles apart from the life and art experience of the bourgeoisie, only *technical experience* is to be borrowed from *the past*;
3. The artist/ arts most come down from the *ivory tower* and go into plants, factories, work sites, and collective farms (kolkhozy);
4. Scholars also are to come down from the *ivory tower* and produce either exclusively practical knowledge which would serve *proletarian life* or theoretical which would serve the theory of scientific communism.

In the artistic fields proletkult generated socialist realism. In literature, theatre and cinema were created works either of *agit-prop* (a coinage built from the words *agitation* and *propaganda*) or of praising the leaders (reinterpreted historical figures or communist leaders) in a style which the popular humour called “d-ob-i-to-c” (which in Romanian means – stupid farm animal, but serves as an acronym for the slogan: “Datoria obsteasca intelectuala, tovarasi: cultura!”/ “culture - intellectual public duty, comrades!”)

³⁰ Social and political reforms promoted by Gorbachev which were supposed to guarantee more rights and freedoms for the Soviet people.

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differed from his contemporaries as to what is to be the present and the future of the nation. On the one hand, (initially) the writer believed in the union with the mother-land. This is seen in *The White Church* where Ecaterina the Small of the Moldovan plains joins her efforts with the young man from the Romanian mountains to build the whitewashed (typical of the plains) wooden (typical of the mountains) white church. The latter, according to Dedkov (2008), is a symbol of the nation's hope, purity, and cultural and spiritual union (p. 179). On the other hand, unlike some contemporaries, who pleaded the union with Romania—given the unity of history, language and culture of the two states—and denied the era of Slavic domination, Drutse expressed his reserve towards the union. He claimed that the history of the nation, the whole of it is to be remembered. The writer stated that we cannot change our history, while history does change us. Accordingly, after a century and a half gap in the evolution of the two sister nations (Romanians and Moldavians), the in-between space, which according to Dedkov (2008) the Moldovans inhabited for so long (p. 179), inevitably led to hybridity. Consequently, in 1990-1991 the yearned for union with Romania failed.

Actually, the clarity with which Drutse sensed the changing reality—the resistance of the multicultural population³¹ to a possible union with Romania—is probably conditioned by the fact that he descended from a family in which Romanian archetypal elements were interwoven with Slavic ones. The fact is that as his father was a native Moldovan and his mother a Ukrainian Moldovan Drutse realised better than anyone else that he could not deny his origins. He could not forget that our ancestors gave their life to protect the land we were born on, but neither could he forget that his mother gave him life. This awareness was what made him strong, made him a survivor and a fighter. Otherwise, he would have become a *mankurt*³² which Chinghiz Aitmatov has presented in his *The Day Lasts More than a Hundred Years*.

Furthermore, Codreanu (2008) states that Drutse's literary vision and creation had been marked by two important events. First, there was the outburst (within the USSR) of the rural archetypal writers' movement (some outstanding representatives being Valentin Rasputin and Cinghiz Aitmatov) and second—Gorbachev's perestroika. As for the first one, Igor Dedkov (2008) adds that both the works of Drutse and his Soviet counterparts—the Russian Fiodor

³¹ A consequence of the Russian colonisation policy.

³² *Mankurt* entered everyday speech to describe the alienation that people had toward a society that repressed them and distorted their history. In former Soviet republics the term has come to represent those non Russians who have been cut off from their own ethnic roots by the effects of the Soviet system.

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Abramov, the Armenian Grant Matevosean, and the Abkhazian Fazil Iskander—reflect profoundly nationalistic worlds. Dedkov (2008) claims that national destiny intertwines with the destiny of the rest of the world like the roots and branches of a tree, be it in Drutse's Ciutura, Abramov's Pekashino, Matevosean's Tzma kut or Iskander's Ceghem (p. 176). Also, Dedkov admits the uniqueness of the Moldovan peasants' universe despite the parallels between the peoples of the union.

However, despite (or due to) the general acclaim of the Soviet critics, Romanian counterparts—Theodor Codreanu (2008) and Mihai Cimpoi among them—accused Drutse of having a double personality, Romanian and Slavic. They criticised Drutse's actions as being expressions of moldovenism. Nevertheless, they had to admit that the Romanian archetype was prominent in Drutse's creation (p. 123). Likewise, Gusev's (2008a) speculations that Drutse cannot write about land and village life because apparently his metropolitan life had nothing to do with none of them (p. 135) seems groundless. After all the colonised subaltern lives in the in-between space. He can relocate to the metropolis but home (the village of Horodishte) is always within one's heart. Thus, as both the postcolonial critic, Boehmer (1995), and Drutse himself claim, nationalist writers are never truly away from home. They carry home³³, its people, and spiritual traditions with them wherever they go. Therefore, it becomes obvious that Drutse, who as Gusev (2008) claims writes about village life (which apparently equals him to a rural prose writer), goes beyond the superficial reproduction of the latter and approaches issues that deal with both national (in most of Drutse's works) and Russian (perpetrators') identity (in the works dedicated to Tolstoi, Chekhov or the Russian leaders).

So, Drutse's works should not be grouped with the bulk of literary productions that were considered plain rural prose, which often was demand (propaganda) literature. It is true that Agache (2008) has labelled Drutse as a loyal partisan of the metropolis and an anti-Romanian. Yet, she had to admit that Drutse's creations, have preserved both the continuity of the Romanian literature in the Soviet Moldova, and the national values of the Moldovan people affected by dispossession and denationalization (p. 136).

³³ Home is home both in postcolonial or post-Soviet location, be it Yeats's romantic and utopian Ireland or Drutse's Ciutura/Ocolina/Valea Razesilor/Capriana — the mythological/legendary homeland of the peasants and warriors; Horodishte — the childhood home village.

3.2 Ion Drutse—the Artist (the poet, the essayist, the drama and prose writer).

Apparently, one of Drutse's great achievements resides in the fact that he managed to relieve both national and Soviet literature of the pejorative label of "peripheral literature" (as qtd. in Melnic, 2008, p. 240). However, what made him a national writer, besides the accurate reflection of the national consciousness and essence (Melnic, 2008, p. 241), was the depiction of the/(his) aspiration for freedom and justice of the human being. Moreover, Drutse's works are an artistic expression of his quest for discovering the man and the world in its full complexity. Also, as Mazilu Gheorghe (2008) said, Drutse's writing was not a hobby, but an attempt to change and improve the moral and intellectual potential of the human being (p. 113).

Unlike many socialist realist contemporaries, who viewed man as a puppet in the hands of destiny, mere pieces in the machine of progress, Drutse proves to have a transcendentalist vision of man and acts similar to what Said (1994) defined as "organic intellectual" (p. 4). No wonder that, as Dolgan (2008) has pointed out, when it comes to the depiction of life, the writer proves to be a great poet. Even in a time when the censorship banned everything that did not focus on the class struggle and/or the state ideology (Simut, 2008, p. 173), Drutse managed to provide a unique artistic interpretation of reality. He created a fusion of his senses, reason and folkloric vision of the world (Dolgan, 2008, p. 10), as well as love for the human being (Gusev, 2008, p. 126) in its most basic form.

Although, it is true that Drutse could not openly write about the union with Romania (Simut, 2008, p. 172)—a topic of great interest to the writer—, his positive attitude towards what was the cradle of the Romanian people is obvious. On the one hand, his works approach the subject of the continuity of the Moldovans in the region. On the other hand, as Cimpoi (2008) has pointed out, Drutse followed the lyrical and symbolic narrative formula of such Romanian canon writers as Ion Creanga and Mihail Sadoveanu (p. 60). Moreover, his union with this tradition is reflected in what Simut (2008) has identified as the cult of tradition and nature; the mystery of the seasons and the natural phenomena; the respect for the patriarchal order of the peasant's life and the negative impact of the two World Wars on the latter (p. 172). Simut (2008) also adds that no matter the efforts to Sovietise the Moldovans, Drutse's heroes preserved their

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identity, faith and nationalism—expressed through love for homeland, ancestors and traditions (p. 173)—which to them were the only way out of the life—a sort of Prometheus's torture—under the new regime.

Moreover, apart from the use of the ballad principle, Drutse the artist has always stood out for a narration impregnated with emotions and a strong empathy for the protagonists. As already shown above, the writer is a master of allusions built on a wide use of metaphors and symbols. The latter served Drutse to approach topics that were perceived as taboo in the communist society, but, also had led to numerous confrontations with the local critics and officials that had obviously read between the lines and perceived nationalist issues that Moscow did not.

Consequently, Drutse's lyricism and humanness served to defy Stalin's vision of man, according to which people (*homo sovieticus* like Turcu, Baltatu and Balta) are just some mere *pawns* helping the *state machine* to work properly. In addition, the key words characterising his artistic creations, are summarised by Dolgan (2008) as follows: goodness or kindness, love and humanness, faith and dignity, truth and beauty, holiness and tradition, yearning (*dor*) for everything that is of our ancestors, courage, resistance and worthiness, all of them carrying a considerable biblical charge (p. 11). Thus, his lyricism, which was often considered an echo of the tendency that dominated Russian, Ukrainian, and Kirgiz literature, conserves, as Cimpoi (2008) reiterates, a traditional character. This is also reflected in the fact that Drutse respects the cult of narration and of the narrator. Actually, narration prevails in his works, and sometimes it is mixed with foreshadowing—consider *The Burden of Our Goodness*. At the same time, according to Cimpoi (2008) the events are revealed gradually in his narratioin thus preserving some degree of loyalty to the oral tradition (p. 59).

Additionally, Drutse comes closer to the Romanian tradition due to his vision of the rural life. As a rural artist/local colour writer, he seems to agree with the Romanian classic Lucian Blaga³⁴, whose famous aphorism is “eternity was born in the village”. On the one hand, the village is the community that is closest to nature, thus, his prose abounds in signs of respect for nature's laws—clauses that respect the natural order, simplicity and meaningful silence. Drutse's silence needs to be noticed, the reader has to know how to interpret both what is stated and what

³⁴ Lucian Blaga was a Romanian philosopher, poet, playwright and novelist, one of the brightest figures of the 20th c Romanian culture.

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is never voiced, because silence is the artist's way of resisting complete synchronization with both the innovative tendencies of the 20th c prose (Cimpoi, 2008, pp. 59-60) and the Soviet propaganda. Thus, his silence about the technological progress that the new regime was so proud of is nothing but a tacit criticism of the imposed modernization.

On the other hand, Drutse's village³⁵ acts as a whole, as an organism which is alive, breathes and faces bravely the vicissitudes of fate and history. Therefore, Drutse's works cannot do without its collective character—the village. For this reason, the writer alludes both to the continuity of the nation and to the famous saying: “united we stand, divided we fall.”

Moreover, continues Cimpoi (2008), Drutse's characters share common features with the ones created by the above mentioned Sadoveanu. Alike the latter's peasant, Drutse's villagers suffer from the invasion of civilization, an invasion that is being more dramatic in his artistic creations (pp. 59-60). Civilization seems to have shaken the ethic basis of society—a consequence of the discreditation of values. Thus, it seems that for individuals—Horia, in *The Spire*; Onache, in *The Burden of Our Goodness*; Gheorge, in *Leaves of Yearning*—who abhorred the conversion into a homo sovieticus, the only solution was to shut oneself off from the world. This somehow echoes a similar situation within the postcolonial space. It seems that just like within the postcolonial world, “things fall apart” in the *mioritic space*³⁶, and the heroes, that are not ready to accept the new style of life and dread the pseudointellectuals, try to achieve salvation by means of the sacred.

Furthermore, Drutse's heroes, considered both individually and collectively, actually come to represent the prototype of the hero in a restless search of the absolute, a character that appears quite often in the Romanian literature (both oral and written). Yet, Hitchins (2008) claims, Drutse has not idealized his peasant because he realized that with the advancement of civilization the village cannot exist without being affected, without changing, contrary to what some Romanian populist writers of the late 19th c and early 20th c thought. The American historian Keith Hitchins (2008) considers that change for Drutse is something that neither can be avoided nor has to be fought against at any price. After all, though helpless, the true peasant has

³⁵ For example, Horodiste, from the autobiographical short story of the same title; Ciutura, from the novel *The Burden of Our Goodness*; Ocolina, from the novel *The White Church*.

³⁶ Mioritic space- the Romanian geographic landscape with mountains and valleys that favours the rearing of sheep; referring to the spiritual universe specifically Romanian, the matrix of which is the Romanian geographical space

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always known to detach himself from the “great historical events” and live in a world of his own (p. 105). In addition, Drutse’s apparently helpless peasant does not readily embrace this so-called advancement. And, by detaching from the imposed reality he/she is like the sun flower seed (a symbol that Drutse frequently uses) that breaks through the obstacles and flourishes when better times come.

Similarly, Drutse, in search of better creative circumstances, created a world of his own, a world where the influence of the Romanian tradition combined occasionally with that of the Russian cultural model. Thus, the hybrid character of Drutse’s works, a fact that both the Moldovan scholar Cimpoi Mihai (2008) and his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Gusev (2008, p. 126) have summarised in their essays, seems to reaffirm the want of a postcolonial approach to the farther text analysis. Moreover, as a confirmation of the above mentioned parallels comes the similitude between Drutse and Chekhov, in what Cimpoi (2008) defines as the tendency of (re)creating a whole universe in a limited space (p. 61). In addition, the Moldovan scholar, Corbu (2008), highlights Drutse’s particularly subtle irony, for example, in the case of building the antithesis between the two villages symbolically placed on the two banks of the Dniester River (p. 88) — one under Romanian rule and the other under Soviet domination. Thus, Drutse contrasted the spirituality of the patriarchal and the vanity of the socialist society.

Consider, the short story “The Lonely Shepherd” in which the “architectural” requirements imposed by the new regime situated the village first in the ranking of the best new façades of houses. However, this contrasts with both the spirituality of the once free Moldovan village, or, the goodhearted old shepherd. The *mercy* of the new authorities and fellow villagers lead the latter to the cold mines of Siberia and then to a cold death in the lonely home. So, Drutse’s goal was to recreate the peasant’s complex spiritual world on the background of a “vanity fair” promoted by the totalitarian regime, in which the modern man, “homo sovieticus” was a puppet.

In short, the modern man—the intellectual; the president of the collective farm; the school director—appears in Drutse’s works not as a eulogy to the *new life* but as a way of bringing out the issues of the subaltern society. This is for example the case of Drutse’s “Samariteanca”, which somehow reminds Chekhov’s short story “The Niny”. Drutse, in a witty and beautifully grave style, makes the reader a witness of the life of a nun who became the cook of the tractor drivers and mechanics of a SMT (station of machines and tractors) that the Soviet

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authority set up in a monastery. Also, Gusev (2008) traces some similar features between Drutse's *Doina* and Aitmatov's *White Boat* (p. 130). Both works deal with overcoming the pressures of the communist society/authorities on the individual, that is pushed to give up her/his quest for self-fulfilment. The writers who appear to identify themselves with the protagonists, however, overcome the barriers and search for something new. In continuation, the Romanian scholar, Rotaru Ion (2008), adds that Tolstoy's model is evident both in *The Burden of Our Goodness* and *The White Church*. The latter in particular was created after consulting both the Romanian-Phanariot chronicles and the rich historical archive of Moscow, and just like Tolstoy, Drutse converted documents into fiction (p. 69).

Thus, as it has already been mentioned, Drutse depicts life as it is, and, acts as a guardian of the coming generations' conscience. Similarly, Rotaru (2008) states that unlike his fellow writers who in search of *new* sources of inspiration created some cheap and banal works, Drutse managed to remain original by following the models of the predecessors (pp. 67-70). Also, according to Corbu (2008), unlike his comrades who created within the frameworks of the socialist realism, Drutse refused to reproduce the party ideology in his works and remained faithful to the important life issues. Thus, he affirmed himself in opposition to the totalitarian regime and its ideological and propaganda machine (p. 87). In addition, as Dolgan (2004) has claimed, the writer has always connected with the values of the nation: the people and the nature of the land, the history and centuries' old customs, folklore, language, philosophy and wisdom, the whole spirituality intertwined with song, mythology, mioritic nostalgia (*dor mioritic*), sacred and biblical (pp. 15-20).

3.3 Ion Drutse, a Postcolonial Writer—Life and Career. Political and Literary Activity.

Within one generation people loose even the memory of what used to be before. The writer has a responsibility to remember what it was like before, and to keep talking about it. (Chinua Achebe, as qtd. in Needham, 1993, p. 11)

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To put it another way, Drutse, as a post-Soviet writer, needs to speak about the present without forgetting the past. Besides, the previous sections reveal that he both remembered and reminded his reader the history and the traditions of the ancestors. This being the case, special attention will be paid to Drutse's life and career as reported to the postcolonial theory, values and events. After all, the social and political background of the genesis and evolution of Moldovan Soviet literature throughout and in the post-Stalinist period proves that Drutse's approach to writing subverted the "communist canons." Thus, the web of individual and collective stakes and interests that contributed to the creation of Drutse's resistance literature is to be considered. Moreover, one should bear in mind the closing lines of Negura's (2009) article:

Moldovan writers were given the mission to adapt a foreign literary model (socialist realism) to a local cultural context. This adaptation process generated certain tensions and compromises between the writers themselves (and the various groups of writers making up the Moldovan Writers' Union throughout time), the Soviet power (both central and local), and the target audience of this literary production.

In other words, writers like Drutse were expected to collaborate with the perpetrator and promote the alien, communist values and ideology. However, Drutse, both as a politician and as an artist, stayed faithful to the national ideals and dedicated his life to the preservation of what, in similar circumstances of foreign domination, the postcolonial writer Chinua Achebe labelled as "the memory of what used to be before" (as qtd. in Needham, 1993, p. 11).

Actually, despite the centre's project of engineering the Moldovan identity which somehow resembles the education policies of the colonial powers in the so-called Third World, the post-Soviet writer used as a source of inspiration everything what national culture used to be. Thus, similar to postcolonial artists, Drutse was in the epicentre of national resistance — a model to be followed by contemporaries — and made of "culture — in the form of reinterpreted history, religious revivals, elegiac and nostalgic poetry" (Boehmer, 1995, p. 100) what the postcolonial theorist, identified as the engine of the nationalist movement.

Consequently, as Drutse himself confessed both he and his reader have always been seen as suspects. Apparently, when after the II Writers' Convention in 1965 Drutse demanded the

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return to the Latin alphabet for the national language, he has been labelled as “Romanian nationalist, class enemy, and traitor of the patria”. Likewise, he has been called anti-Romanian, anti-unionist, and traitor of the nation after the Great National Assembly (named this way by Drutse) (Druta, 2008, pp. 5-6). Similarly, his reader—the Moldovan—has been seen as an intruder in the East, because of speaking a Latin language, while, the West—noting the amount of Slavisms present in the language—considers us a Slavic crossbreed situated at the periphery of the Latin world, and, meant to bring about instability and conflict into the Old Continent. Besides, in the 21st c the situation did not change too much in this respect. And, the only way to clear one’s reputation, considers Drutse, is by staying loyal to one-self and to everything our ancestors defended so bravely.

Hence, it is obvious that since his debut in the 50’s, when after Stalin’s death the Khrushchev Thaw began, Drutse asserted himself as an embodiment of moral and spiritual resistance to everything that undermined the national, the human, the sacred. He spoke out on issues such as language, experimentation, introduction of alien social and economic structures, and the ecologic problem brought about by industrialization and agrarian reforms both in Press and in Parliament. Not to mention that, Drutse the writer, made use of typically Western literary genres. The (historical) novel, short story, essay, and play, that have a pretty long history in the Romanian literary art, helped him break the monopoly of the demand-literature created by both artists from within and from without the periphery. At the same time, Drutse had to appropriate Russian language (especially when writing for the public of the metropolis) and cultural elements as already mentioned before. This seemed to be dictated by the necessity to escape the censorship of the servile Moldovan authorities and by his auto exile to Moscow. So, Drutse, just like his post-colonial counterparts, had to “appropriate, translate, decentre and hybridize discourses inherited from the coloniser” (Boehmer, 1995) to stimulate what in postcolonial theory has been defined as an originally anti-colonial response among the subalterns (p. 100).

Indeed, Drutse’s outstanding activity in the literary, cultural, social, and political spheres has intrigued literary critics both at home and outside Moldova (especially Bucharest and Moscow). In fact, Dolgan (2008) highlights that Drutse’s works: *The Burden of Our Goodness*, *The White Church*, *The Spire*, *Casa Mare* (1962; *The Parlour*), *Beautiful and Holy*, *The Birds of Our Youth*, *Doina*, *The Sleigh*, “The Lonely Shepherd”, *The Tale of an Ant*, reflect the true identity of the nation which makes up the nowadays Republic of Moldova (p. 9). Apparently,

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Drutse managed to rehabilitate our human side and, as Mazilu (2008) claims, he refused to speak about us as of a colonised, servile, obedient and idyllic people. Thus, Drutse made use of special ways of unveiling the virtues and the spiritual beauty of the Moldovans (p.116), features that revealed our individuality within the melting pot of the Soviet Union and fostered our resistance to Sovietization.

Of course, the roots of the writer's unique, for that time, vision of reality go back to his early childhood. Drutse grew up under the influence of two cultures—Moldovan (on his father's side) and Ukrainian (on his mother's behalf). His (hybrid) intellectual formation began, as Ilie Rad (2000) points out, in the Romanian school from Ghica Voda, near Balti. Then, in 1945, Drutse graduated from a course for tractor drivers, and, in 1946 from a forestry course. Meanwhile, he was elected secretary of the Ghica Voda village Soviet and then recruited to the Soviet Army. In addition, he graduated from the Higher Literary Courses (1956-1957) organised by the Literature Institute "Maxim Gorki", Moscow (p. 24). For this reason, Drutse managed to coin characters in which a native could often identify one's neighbour, first school teacher, a soldier of the Red Army or one's grand-father/mother. Also, this made Corbu (2008) state that the novelist manifested himself as a true connoisseur of the individual's mind and soul from the very dawn of his career. Likewise, Corbu (2008) claims in the same essay that although Drutse was an expert in what concerns society as a whole (in its historical evolution), he mainly focused on the spiritual and life issues of the modern man (p. 80). Yet, as both the textual analysis of Drutse's novels and Agache (2008) and Gusev's (2008, pp. 127-128) considerations of his works reveal, the author worried about the continuity of the nation, especially that of its major social class—the peasants, the people of the land. This seems to reside in the way the individual tackles change and the threats of the new life circumstances—the invasion of civilization/sovietisation that brought about industrialization and denationalization (or creation of the homo sovieticus). Thus, as the farther character analysis will reveal, the collective character often appears in opposition with the individual to reflect better both the inner and outer changes that the subaltern undergoes in the Soviet era.

In addition, Ion Rotaru expresses high appreciation for the essay "Calea robilor" ("The Way of the Slaves") by the author and political writer Ion Drutse. According to Rotaru (2008), the essay is nothing else but a message of a Romanian who claims the rights to existence of the (eastern) Romanians (p. 71). Bruchis Michael (2008) agrees and highlights the fact that even

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Drutse's early works approach reality in a distinct way, in a manner different from the 1950's templates. Bruchis (2008) underlines the fact that Drutse's heroes do not act according to party protocol, they act according to real life situations. This, as well as Drutse's skill in depicting human feelings and soul crisis, generated accusations of isolating his heroes from everything that is new, from contemporary life and social changes—which seems to suggest Drutse's disapproval of the *new* (p. 74).

Similarly, Dolgan (2008) expressed the common idea that Drutse illustrated more than just the poetic beauty and imperishable wisdom of the Moldovan society, its incorruptible faith and dignity. The writer also narrated the nation's endless tragedies, its power of resistance, and rebellious spirit which consequently forged the identity of the citizens of the young nation state. Along the same lines, Dolgan (2008, p.11) has asserted that Drutse has always been in a continuous confrontation with: The Power, the old totalitarian regime, the conservative critics and his fellow writers, whose mediocre writing he opposed. After all, Drutse's works were different. He did not respect the socialist canons which demanded ordinary characters in ordinary life situations. And, despite all the pressures, Drutse's fundamental principles made him build extraordinary characters in extraordinary situations.

Moreover, the search of true human values and principles, made Drutse focus on some objectives which, as Corbu (2008) states, summarize the following principles into four clusters. The scholar considers them to be essential to our existence as an independent nation. In short, the first cluster is represented by customs and national folklore; second is national history from the old times until nowadays; third—the history of the regional and world cultures and civilizations, which is indispensable to the correct and complete interpretation of the national phenomena; and last but not the least, the life and fate of great figures of national history. Thus, Corbu (2008) reached the conclusion that Drutse, as a true realist (local colour) writer, knew how to create authentic fiction in which the past was put into the service of the future; knew how to interweave both bible and national myths, legends and history to create works that are national both in form and in content (pp. 81-82).

Actually, Drutse did not give in to the pressure of the Soviet censorship, which as Melnic (2008) states expected the writer to realise the necessity of becoming the promoter of the ideals of the communist ideology. Moreover, in the light of the socialist realist movement, this was presented as the writer's freedom (p. 239). Instead, Drutse focused both on the issues of national

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identity and on the reflection of the nation's tragedies. These range from the alienation of the peasant from the land by means of collectivisation and exile/deportations to the drought and the artificially provoked famine which set the ground for the sovietisation (or the dependency relationship between Moscow and the peripheries) of the subaltern. Thus, by speaking out the truth to power, Drutse fulfilled what Said (1994), when referring to postcolonial reality, called "the public role of the intellectual as outsider, 'amateur', and disturber of the status quo" (p. x). And, although from the very beginning Drutse knew where his loyalties lie, his contemporaries suspected him. Probably, the problem goes back to the fact that Drutse comes from a community that combined different ethnic identities. However, as an intellectual he made the political choice to follow the road less travelled by. Consequently, he had to relocate to Moscow. So, Drutse—the Soviet counterpart of the postcolonial "immigrant intellectual in the metropolis" (Spivak, 2002, p. 47)—became what within postcolonial theory Reda Bensmaïa has called a "phantom mediator" (as qtd. in Spivak, 2002, p. 47). Thus, the writer became a resident of the metropolis, where he was trying to alter the boundaries, but he never became Russian, his soul was/is in Moldova.

Oviously, there were some critical reviews of Drutse's works, too. First, Cristea's affirmation that "when it comes to the creation of true literature, even an ant is enough to a great talent" (as qtd. in Dolgan, 2008, p. 11)—apart from being a confirmation of the writer's talent—is a reference to a polemicized tale for children, written in 1957. It deserves our attention because this apparently naïve children's tale was labelled by a contemporary writer as a work of communist propaganda, an expression of moldovenism, and of Drutse's loyalty to the communist regime. Yet, Cristea—the Romanian critic, appreciated the drama of the piece and suggested its inclusion into the school curriculum. Moreover, the majority of critics believed the accusation to be unjustified because Drutse moved to Moscow in 1969, more than a decade after the publishing of the tale. Also it's important to mention that the reason behind the writer's relocation was not the wish to serve the KGB but the desire to publish his daring works that were not being published at home. So, the writer had to appropriate the culture and the language of the metropolis. Dolgan (2008) points out that the writer even confessed that to him there is nothing more valuable than stay faithful to oneself, adding that the religious principles that he so much respects wouldn't leave him break his moral code (p. 13).

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Second, Ion Rotaru (2008) claims that until December 1989, when Drutse was conferred the status of academician, his work was quite unknown in Romania. The scholar affirms that this is due to the fact that some critics viewed Drutse as having drifted somehow apart from his motherland (particularly for having moved to Moscow, and having started writing in Russian) (pp. 64-65). Besides, the Moldovan scholar Cimpoi (2008), affirmed that from 1994 onwards the writer stood in with those who had reprimanded him. Cimpoi also accused Drutse of moldovenism and of trying to preserve “the seeds of socialism and the Russian model of Christianity” (p. 59). However, Rotaru (2008) wonders why no similar attitude was expressed in relation to other outstanding writers who wrote in other international languages.

Indeed, given the socio-political context in which Drutse created his works, Rotaru (2008) is puzzled by the way his early works managed to escape Bolshevik censorship. But, he admits that the only available record of Drutse's first short stories is *Scrieri*, 1989, 1990 publishing house Literatura Artistica and the Chisinau: Hyperion edition, which have some notes that mention that the author revised and corrected the 1950's versions. The novel *The Burden of Our Goodness*, which took twenty years to be published, the supposedly first version being vaguely dated: 1961, 1967, and 1984 (which means that the version of the novel presented in *Scrieri I*, along with the early short stories, was preceded by several versions) was far less fortunate. On its appearance, the severe wave of criticism expressed both at state and party forums, made the book to be removed from bookshops on having sold only 200 copies. This Rotaru considers to be a consequence of the fact that “Drutse's great talent made him say what he had to say even in the darkest years of Soviet and Bolshevik oppression in Romanian Bessarabia (p. 70).

Nonetheless, Corbu (2008) reveals that about half a century ago, after the premiere of one of Drutse's plays some Romanian artists concluded that Drutse didn't come from the Romanian culture (p. 100). However, another Romanian critic, Zigu Ornea, contradicts this argument and claims that the Romanian reader thinks about Sadoveanu³⁷ when reading *The Burden of Our Goodness*. Yet, it is also true that, as already mentioned in the previous section, Drutse's works share some common features with Russian, Ukrainian, and Kirgiz literature. For example, Drutse's humour and drama are to some extent similar to Tolstoy, Gogol and Chekhov's style. Thus, once again a similitude with postcolonial writers is noticed (Narayan, for example)—

³⁷ Romanian canon writer.

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Drutse uses the background he got in Moscow, to speak about Moldovan reality. Also, Corbu (2008) confirms that as part of the Soviet Union, the Moldovan nation was in a continuous contact with the other “sister” nations. Consequently, the continuous cultural exchange had led to hybridity and left its print on Drutse’s works. After all, according to Bhabha (1994) *hybridity* is about “representation and individuation that reverses the effects of the colonialist disavowal, so that other ‘denied’ knowledges enter upon the dominant discourse” and undermine its authority (p. 114). Ultimately, this apparent “resemblance”, which Bhabha (1994) also views as “menace” (pp. 90-91), led to Drutse’s international (Unional) recognition which made the local authorities grant him the State Award for the play *Casa Mare (The Parlour)*, the story “Ultima luna de toamna” (“The Last Autumn Month”), and the novel *Balade din cimpie (The Ballads from the Steppes)*.

However, as Bruchis (2008) states, the second part of *The Ballads from the Steppes—The Burden of Our Goodness*, as well as the film script of *The Last Autumn Month* reveal the author’s honesty to himself. The film, which received various awards at cinematographic festivals in the USSR and abroad, faced the hostility of leaders of the communist party in Moldova, hostility no other native writer had ever faced. The party leaders could not accept the fact that the hero of the film wandering around Moldova didn’t reveal even the minimum of welfare or high degree of mechanisation of agriculture. As a consequence, the film presentation was postponed several times, to be finally launched during summer holidays when the cinema was mostly full of children, not adults. The novel *The Burden of Our Goodness* encountered a more hostile reaction. In an article published in *Enciclopedia Moldoveneasca* in 1971, the second part of Drutse’s duology is criticised as being subjective and archaic. The writer himself is being accused, in a letter of I. Bodiul³⁸, of “idealising the past and praising patriarchal values” when he “should be aware of the importance he as a writer had in building new socialist life in the Soviet Moldova (*Литературная газета*³⁹, 7 July, 1971). Consider Drutse’s recollection of his landlord’s warning, a Ukrainian retired from the Soviet Army and collaborating with the new government, who told him “Vaniusha! There is a wall in front of you, and it is dead white under that wall from human bones. You will perish, Vanea!”. Drutse only answered jokingly that “life

³⁸ First secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Moldova.

³⁹ *Literaturnaia gazeta*.

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itself is a wall that one either goes over or lies under..." to which the landlord added that he was told to spy on Drutse's every movement⁴⁰ (Druta, 2008, p. 6).

In addition, Michael Bruchis claims that conservative Moldovan critics were encouraged to persecute Drutse, while party leaders did everything to prevent Drutse from getting the above mentioned State Award. The works that most bothered the Moldovan critics were *Casa Mare*—a play published in the magazine *Drujba Narodov*⁴¹ of Moscow in 1960 and *Leaves of Yearning*—a novel published in Chisinau in 1957, and translated into Russian in 1958 with the title *Gheorghii, vdovii sin*⁴². The latter, generated a negative response at home. But, it received a general acclaim abroad both from literary and theatre critics. These praised Drutse's talent and the unique universe of creation—a proof that the writer felt the tradition of his people, and made a wise analysis of the inner world of his characters. Similarly, in February 1977, the newspaper *Sovetskaia Moldavia*⁴³ published a devastating article on the novel *Zapah Speloi Aivi*⁴⁴ (*The Perfume of the Ripe Quince*, a Russian variant of the novel written in Romanian with the title *The Spire*) (Bruchis, 2008, pp 76-77).

The fact is that Drutse stood out among his contemporaries for his poetic vision of the emotional and ethical world of the characters. Moreover, he challenged the regime by including in his works an account of the characters' inner conflicts rather than a dry portrayal of the advancements of the Soviet society (Dolgan, 2008, p. 215). Loyal to the same principles is Drutse's play *Doina*, which he tried to publish in the magazine *Nistru*⁴⁵. The work was a fresco of the negative phenomena which characterised Soviet life in general and not just a witty critique of undesirable, isolated and casual phenomena accompanying changes in socialist societies. The latter are depicted by the writer as being dominated by vices, such as: slowness in the decision making process, drunkenness, profiteering and bribery which struck roots in the Moldovan

⁴⁰ "Vaniuşa! Pered toboi stena. Pod ătoi stenoii belim belo ot costei celoveceskih. Pogibneş, Vanea!

La care eu, întorcându-mă în glumă, zic:

Ce să-i faci! Viaţa, la urma urmei, este şi ea un zid pe care ori îl treci, ori rămii să zaci acolo.

[...] Mne priczano za toboi slediti ... Za cajdım tvoim şagom ..." Ion Druță Chişinău, 30 martie 2004 (Druta, 2008, p. 6)

⁴¹ *Дружба Народов*.

⁴² *Георгий, вдовый сын*.

⁴³ *Советская Молдавия* — the official organization of the CC of the Communist Party of Moldova.

⁴⁴ *Запах Спелой Айвы*.

⁴⁵ Nistru is also the Romanian name of the Dniester River.

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village, in party and state institutions, as well as in judicial and educational (higher education especially) institutions. This and the secondary meaning encoded between the two layers of narration made Emilian Bucov turn down the publication of the play. Moreover, when Drutse refused to follow the publisher's recommendations to eliminate the protagonist Doina, the play was banned from being published in Moldavian. However, it was successfully published in Russian (in the Moscow magazine *Teatr*⁴⁶ 6, 1971). Meanwhile the authorities from Moldova tried to prevent a larger recognition of the play among the Moldovan public. The reason behind this was the fact that Tudor Mocanu⁴⁷, in order to avoid possible consequences of his ill management, allows the novice Ivan Frantzevici to violate Doina, a girl whose person and symbolic name seems to be an allusion to the historical homeland of the Moldovans from the eastern bank of Prut. Thus, the authorities tried to prevent the spread of the idea that the Soviet "other" is a menace for the subaltern.

Even the success of the play *Pasarile Tineretii Noastre*⁴⁸ both in Moscow and other Union capitals, did not ease the tension between the writer and the local authorities who pretended to enjoy the play which was finally staged in Chisinau too. As a matter of fact, both *Doina* and *The Birds of Our Youth* (as well as the novel *Zapah Speloi Aivi*⁴⁹ published in the magazine *Iunosti*⁵⁰, 9, 1973 and the play *Sviataia Sviatih*⁵¹) share a common symbolic code with the second part of the duology *The Burden of Our Goodness*, which together with other novels make up the focus of the fifth chapter of this dissertation.

So, the hostile relationship with the authorities and the awareness of the future that expected him back home, made Drutse write in Russian, from the metropolis. However, he kept writing about home, about Moldovan reality. Drutse's only works that did not refer to Soviet Moldova, were the essay "Ulibaiushiisea Chehov"⁵², the novel *Vozvroszenie na Cruggi Svoia*⁵³ and the volume of stories *Berezi, Hleb, i Mujestvo*⁵⁴.

⁴⁶ *Teatr*.

⁴⁷ One of the protagonists of the play and one of the kolkhoz leaders.

⁴⁸ *The Birds of Our Youth*.

⁴⁹ The Russian variant of *Clopotnița* or *The Spire*.

⁵⁰ *Юность*, nr. 9, 1973.

⁵¹ *Святая святых*.

⁵² "Улыбающийся Чехов". In English: *Smiling Chekhov*.

⁵³ *Возвращение На Круги Своя*. In English: *The Return of the Dust to Earth*.

⁵⁴ *Березы, хлеб и мужество*. In English: *Birches, Bread and Courage*.

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In the light of the above mentioned details, Drutse seems to embody the common features of a subversive writer. His works were intended to raise people's consciousness, to make them remember who they are and where they come from. Critics definitively agree that Drutse's works approach the traditional themes of life and death, but also those of the origins of the nation. Thus, despite the initial critics' favourable appreciation, the local authorities (just like the colonial ones) were persecuting him. However, outside Moldova, where Moldovan history, traditions and customs as well as specific national features of students and intellectuals were unknown, his works were not fully understood, hence, out of suspicion. Thus, when Drutse appropriated the language of the Power to evade the censure of the local authorities, he used the weapon of the metropolis against its indigenous servants. The power of the Communist Party of Moldova was restricted to the borders of the Soviet republic, and as long as the authorities in Moscow were not "bothered" by the Moldovan writer, it could do nothing to prevent Drutse's works from being published. Besides, as he was mostly writing about Moldovan reality, the Kremlin could not understand the full meaning of his works, while the Russian reader was often unable to read between the lines. As a consequence, they (but not the Moldovan reader) only cared about the often oversimplified and poor in emotions subject staged by Russian directors. And, the message encoded on the second level of narration (Bruchis, 2008, p. 79) was perceived only at home.

As a conclusion, one has to agree with Ornea, the Romanian critic who considers that the Moldovan writer cannot be confined within the limits of a single modern literary movement. Despite, common attempts to classify Drutse's work as belonging to such movements as: socialist realism, rural prose, mioritism, moldovenism, poporanism or populism, this dissertation is an attempt at reading Drutse through the lenses of postcolonial theory. Although, this approach might seem too daring, both the message of Drutse's works and the critics' almost unanimous opinion that Drutse was one of the few Moldovan writers that dared to tackle such vital issues as mother language and national history, in a time of total Soviet domination, endorse it. This will be confirmed in the next chapter where this issues are aproched from a historical point of view. Moreover, Drutse's work, as both Dolgan (2008) and Cimpoi Mihai (2008) claim, came to embody the strength and spiritual resistance of the young nation (p.14). As a confirmation, there is Cimpoi's (2008) allusion to the "wall" that appears as a metaphor, for example, in the play *Cervus Divinus* and stands for the official censure. The latter became particularly unbearable for Drutse after the appearance in 1970 of the second part of the novel *The Burden of Our Goodness*

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(p. 58). Finally, Dolgan's (2008) identification of the writer with Onake Caraboosh, the protagonists of the above mentioned novel, reflects Drutse's qualities as a person and artist:

He was a peaceful and kind-hearted person who was fond of everything that surrounded him — people, fields and cattle. When his soul got in touch with something, the connection lasted for ever, and, he was able to toil over a weak sapling that came up in the back of the yard for years. ...He was always thirsty for people. So his gate, his door, and his soul were always open. ⁵⁵ (p. 166)⁵⁶

To sum up, Drutse was fortunate to be born (1928) in a free country and got to know the life of free people. Thus, his career was dedicated to maintaining alive this free spirit among his people. Hard work, exile, and the threats of the communist authorities could not prevent him from fighting for the survival of the national identity.

⁵⁵ Om pasnic, intelegator, el se indragostea de toate cite le vedea in jurul lui — oameni, semanaturi, vite. Cum se atingea cu sufletul de ceva, legat raminea pe-o vecie, si era in stare ani la rind sa se tot poraie cu o umbra de copacel, rasarit intr-un fund de ograda. ... Era setos de lume intotdeauna. Si poarta, si usa, si sufletul ii erau vesnic deschise.

⁵⁶ All translations, unless otherwise noted, are my own.

Chapter IV: The Issue of National Identity in Central and Eastern Europe. The Postcolonial Past of the Land between the Prut and the Dniester.

The previous chapters have revealed that history and language are two of the basic issues approached by postcolonial writers. And, as the analysis of Drutse's novels will reveal these issues are also approached by the Soviet artist. Actually, Buckler, (2009) enlarges upon the role of literature in postcolonial studies by arguing that, in both 19th and 20th century Russia, "literature [...] provided a forum for debating social and political issues". She claims that despite "the malevolence of the censor, and the power of the canon", both "the heroic authors and the reading public", invested literature with a special truth-telling mission (p. 253). Consequently, Boehmer (1995, p. 105) and Buckler (2009) agree that the latter, along with "common culture, language, or history", served as the catalists of national identities formation and of a massive mobilization against the perpetrators, both across Russia and across any colonial territories.

However, before proceeding to the analysis of Drutse's novels the issue of history and language need to be considered from a historical point of view as these are crucial for understanding the subaltern condition of the Moldovans. After all, as Sandru (2012) claims, collective memory and story-telling are the strategies that give the subaltern a voice. Thus, the displaced identity encounters home, even if it is fictional (p. 11).

4.1 History as Collective Memory— a Way of Opposing Denationalization.

I will tell you something about the stories ...

They are all we have, you see,

all we have to fight off

illness and death.

You don't have anything

if you don't have the stories ...

So they try to destroy the stories

let the stories be confused or forgotten.

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They would like that

They would be happy

Because we would be defenceless then. (Chinua Achebe, as qtd. in Sanchez, 1995, p. 41)

First, it has to be mentioned that, according to Dolgan (2008c), history, both in *Leaves of Yearning* and *The Spire*, is an active force that contributes to the consolidation of values in time (p. 407). The reading of the postcolonial theorist A. M^a Manzananas Calvo's (1995) essay reveals that Ralph Ellison provides a rather complex image of history and its role. As represented in the essay, history is a very powerful instrument that can either reflect or distort reality; keep alive or erase an identity. However, for history to complete its messianic role, it needs to be written (p. 47). Also, the writing of history may lead to the empowerment of the "unheard" which Sanchez-Pardo (1995) identifies with the creation of a "re-visionary historiography"—a key strategy of decolonization (pp. 62-63).

It is in this point that the native informant steps in by providing an exhaustive account of the inherited knowledge and/or the lived experience. Moreover, Mikhail Bakhtin (1982) claims that history is more than just a text, it is what provides the large variety of meanings of life (p. 569). So, the native's account is to compensate for the drawbacks of the (dictatorial) historical discourse which, as Benito (1995) claims, is always full of gaps. But, "fiction can fill the gaps and re-establish fluidity" (Sanchez, 1995, p. 31, 41).

Moreover, considering Boehmer's (1995) argument, the filling of gaps allows both, the restoration of an identity and the construction of "a vision of an independent future." The scholar also draws the reader's attention to Bankim's affirmation that "without a history recounting their own 'greatness'", (Bengalis) people could "never rise to their full stature" (p.122). Similarly, the task of the post-Soviet historian is to bring to light the truth. This concerns primarily the secret events that were hidden in the Russian Archives, that were left out on purpose by the Soviet historians, and were coloured by the latter's agency and intentionality. This means the natives had to acquire a new voice, a voice which, as conceived in Drutse's duology, was lost when the first contact with the Soviet Red Army occurred. Later, this voice was taken away intentionally, by making the natives speak the alien language of the invader—Russian. So, to undo the devastating effects of the linguistic and historical marginality that led to the "denial of

historicity” to conquered nations, which Benito (1995) defined as the “suppression of their history”; they are to discredit the authority of the “imperialist history”, the “true history” of the “other” (p. 32).

4.1.1 On History and the Origins of the Romanian Nation.

Ion Ciocanu (1990) mentioned that our people overcame all kind of hardships, preserved the language of their ancestors and their national pride, due to the continued contact with the masterpieces of such classics as Georghe Asachi, Bogdan Petriceicu Hasdeu, Vasile Alexandri, Ion Creanga, and Alexei Mateevici (p.53). Moreover, Corbu (2008a) claims that Drutse's works: *The Spire*—also under the title *Horia*, as a play; and *The White Church*—not part of the present dissertation given the different historical setting—approach directly Bessarabia's historical issues. For example, *Horia* (from *The Spire*) teaches his pupils that history is the science that studies life, from its origins up to now. And life is, in the protagonist's opinion, the passage of man through the world that occurs in the life span between birth and death. Life seems to be the passage of a people through the world of peoples, just like it is the passage of the world through the life of a man. Thus, he concludes that life is a form of being of everything that is alive. And everything that surrounds us—the plants, the stones, the rain, etc.—is part of life and shall leave its print on history. And, history is not just an amount of information, it's a necessity, it's our past (*The Spire*, pp. 478-479). Then, *Horia* continues:

(...) history should not mean only broken pieces and clay pots that the scholars encountered at the periphery of Orhei! History does not focus only on sacred images and spires erected on the top of the hills, no matter their age or majesty. The flight of the space-crafts, the rain from the night of the 10th to 11th of April, the mess from our school, is history too [...].⁵⁷ (*The Spire*, p. 546)

⁵⁷ ... istoria n-o fi insemnind numai cioburi si vase de lut scoase de savanti la marginea Orheiului! Istoria nu se concentreaza doar in icoane si clopotnite ridicate in virfuri de deal, oricit de vechi si oricit de marete ar fi ele. Istorie se cheama si zborul navelor spatiale, si ploaia din zece spre unsprezece aprilie, si daravera din scoala noastra. [...] (*Clopotnita*, p. 546)

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According to Corbu (2008), this means that in an epoch when everyone was obliged to promote the idea of a single country, a single nation—the Soviet country and nation—, Drutse dared to claim that the history of our small Moldova goes beyond the revolution of October 1917, which the official propaganda was trying to make us believe was the only important date. No matter the obstacles, Drutse's characters always return home, they return to the land which their ancestors left them as a legacy (p. 95).

Hence, according to Smith et al. (1998), the Slavic nations—Ukrainians and Belarusians—struggle to prove their individuality within the group of Slavic peoples (p. 31), while the Moldovans fight to prove their continuity and belonging to the Romanian one. The nation struggles to prove that, when it comes to the territory between the Prut and the Dniester⁵⁸, they are the indigenous. They are not some mere nomads that settled in a region, which the Russians pretended to have been like Marlow's Africa in Conrad's well-known novella— “a blank space in the map” (p. 29), as Benito (1995) puts it. However, the effort is huge because the history of Moldova has been (re-)written, to serve the interests of the metropolis, ever since the Russian government showed an interest in the region. Nevertheless, according to Spivak (1990) it is not so easy to deny history (p. 43). So, with the independence, scholars got the freedom of redeeming the past. They began to recover forgotten heroes, old names of settlements, and old customs and traditions from the dark of the communist era.

Moreover, a hindsight into the history of Moldova reveals that the existing identity issues derive mainly from the myth built by the Soviet metropolis, as it is the case of Ukraine and Belarus. According to Smith et al. (1998), in the case of the latter, the origin of the problem goes back to the czarist and Soviet policies (p. 31). Similarly, the myth that the Moldovans was a nation different from the Romanian one goes back to the time of Russian domination. Thus, the contemporary borders of Moldova, just like those of most of the former Soviet republics, have nothing to do with what Benedict Anderson (2006) defined as the territorial limits of nations as “imagined communities”.

Consequently, the artificially imposed borders, names of geographical locations and social phenomena are, according to Benito (1995) just some of the methods of exerting cultural and political domination on the “other”. The colonizers focus on the creation of “distorted

⁵⁸ The Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic (Moldavian SSR/MSSR) was created after the annexation of the territory between the Dniester and the Prut to the USSR.

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images” of the “other” (p. 29). The need of building the homogenous “homo sovieticus” made the metropolis resort to the gradual suppression of the subalterns’ idiosyncrasy. The actors of national resistance (the intellectuals and the local elites) were silenced and isolated from the rest. This is the case embodied by the protagonist of Drutse’s novel *The Burden of Our Goodness*. Caraboosh, and his friend (later, his enemy) were placed by the author on the margins of Ciutura—in the liminal places of an imagined community. The vernacular culture they represent is a product of the experience of social marginality, and a symbol of the nation’s (latent) perpetuation. So, when the new Soviet administration was established in the community, both were seen as a threat to the Soviet regime.

Actually, Keith Hitchins considers that although Drutse is firstly an artist, who respects narrative technique (in what concerns theme, subject, characters, language, etc.), he proves to have a perfect understanding of the way history influences society and individuals. The novelist presents history both as an active force, which forges personalities along centuries, and as a conserver, if not a creator, of values. Hitchins (2008) places Drutse among historical ethno-symbolists who, unlike the primordialists and the modernists, advocate the continuity of the nation formation process between the past and present—although they also admit the considerable influence of present social and economic changes (p. 104). Similarly, Ibarrola, (1995) reiterates this approach by arguing that “history is a flux from which no period can be completely bracketed out and that, consequently, any attempt at a definition of one’s identity must invariably contemplate past, present and even foreseeable future” (p. 155-156). So, an insight into the “other” history of Moldova is to be provided in what comes further.

First, it should be considered that ever since the Romans extended their domination over the Carpathian-Danube region⁵⁹, the European civilization left its mark on the evolution of the indigenous people—the modern day Romanians. Boia (1997) writes that, until the 19th c, the latter generally referred to their homeland as Dacia. Then, the German model led to the consolidation of the people’s national idea and the inhabitants of Moldova, Wallachia and Transylvania acknowledged their common (Romano-Dacian) origin and language, shared history and specific spirituality. Ultimately, in the 19th century, the inhabited territory got the modern generic name Romania (pp. 15-16). So, Romania, apart from being the country of the Romanians, has generally been the homeland of the Moldovans and Transylvanians too. It is a

⁵⁹ www.unrv.com/provinces/dacia.php

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social organism that had been created to join the people that from the earliest times existed in a cultural and social symbiosis. Thus, according to Boia (1997) Bessarabia, just like the other part of Stephen the Great's Moldova, should be part of Romania on the ground of both the ethnic and historic right (p. 215).

Second, attempts to achieve national unity go back to the times of Mihai Voda Viteazul—the first king to join the “separated parts of old Dacia” (Boia, 1997, p. 25). This, according to Boia (1997), inspired the vision of unity and uniformity of the Romanian nation-state that consisted of three rather similar entities that came closer due to their distinctiveness from the rest (pp. 160-165). Thus, during the first period of Russian domination, the latter's practices have, indirectly, led to the crystallization and gradual consolidation of the Bessarabians' nationalist spirit and to the strengthening of their collective identity.

In fact, Dragnev (2001) highlighted the fact that, in the medieval times, the term Moldovan was a political rather than ethnic denomination. Moreover, the contemporaries viewed the Romanian princedoms as entities inhabited by the same nation (p.153). Thus, scholars of the 16th (Nicolaus Olahus) and 17th (Miron Costin) century, as well as Mihail Kogalniceanu (1843) considered the citizens of Moldova, Wallachia and Transylvania—Romanians. Despite some visible difference in the dressing of the people of each region, the scholars highlighted their common origin, language, religion and traditions. Also, according to Dragnev (2001), the literary works of Varlaam and Vasile Lupu established Romanian language as a mark of the ethno-linguistic and cultural unity of the people. And, the truth is that the evolution of the Romanian nation is closely interconnected with the evolution of the Romanian language. Still, in Bessarabia, given the circumstances of Russian domination, the natives continued to identify themselves in accordance with the province/country of origin rather than ethnicity. Accordingly, Moldavian was how the spoken language in use was named (pp. 153-155).

Actually, Cusco (2002) claims that the ethnic name “Moldavian” was primarily a territorial designation which referred to the old Moldavian Principality. It continued to circulate in Bessarabia as the “regional designation” even after the creation of Romania. Also, Cusco (2002) believes that the name of “Romanian” (român/rumân)—its medieval social meaning being essentially synonymous to the notion of “peasant” or “serf”, and, later, to that of “man”—did not bear any ethnic connotation for the Bessarabian peasants. Thus, it could not have served as a “national designation” (p. 71).

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Nevertheless, there are various documents that prove that many Russians were aware of the fact that the inhabitants of Bessarabia were Romanians. All through the 19th c, the governors of Bessarabia were constantly reporting to Nikolay I and Karl Nesselrode, the czar's chancellor and foreign minister, on the situation in the province and the spirits of its population—the Wallachian (meaning Romanian, not Moldovans). Moreover, the union of the principality of Wallachia and Moldova was perceived as a second Poland, designed to weaken Russia (Varta, 2001, p. 158). Also, in 1828, Veltman, A. F., Russian field-grade officer, writer and archaeologist, published a *Sketch on the Old History of Bessarabia*. He claimed that the history of Bessarabia was tightly connected to that of Moldova and Wallachia—both of them governed by kings imposed by the Sultan — and needed no further research (as qtd. in Ciobanu, 1992, p. 19). Likewise, Kohl, I. G., admits that the rapture of Bessarabia was a “vivisection” that should have made Moldova bleed for a long time. Nevertheless, these separated entities, according to the Polish historian —I. I. Kraszewski— continued to share both the Romanian language and population. The number of the minority population reached 14 percent only after Bessarabia's 1812 annexation and its farther colonisation (as qtd. in Ciobanu, 1992, p. 23).

Therefore, it is quite surprising that the early adepts of Bessarabia's “otherness” forgot that it had never existed as an independent state neither before nor after 1812. Actually, the territory between the Prut and Dniester had been part of the small states (princedom) that joined to form the principality of Moldova in the 14th century. Thus, agreeing with Varta (2001), it seems a mere utopia to claim that, after the 1812 rapture, Bessarabia could be the successor of the historical kingdom of Moldova. This seems particularly groundless given the fact that after 1812 the right-side of the Prut Moldova did not cease to exist as a state. Moreover, it chose, voluntarily and unforced, to form a union, on equal rights, with Wallachia. Meanwhile, Bessarabia was nothing but a Russian province (from 1873—a governorate) administered exclusively by Russian authorities and undergoing a complex process of russification (p. 157).

Finally, a nation at the crossroads of Eastern and Western Europe, Romania's continuity within the Slavic sea was continuously threatened. The “Orthodox spirituality” that saved the nation from the oriental cultural influence, lured this Latin people to the Orthodox Slavs that threatened to swallow and assimilate them (Boia, 1997, p. 19-20). Also, the country had been a buffer zone in the way of the expanding ambitions of the Ottoman and Russian Empire. And, the big (European) powers often used it as an exchange coin in their negotiations over the Balkans.

4.1.2 The Issue of Bessarabia.

Apparently, as Eagles (2014) summarizes, the premises to the issue of Bessarabia go back to the times of Stefan cel Mare (1457-1504), the fiercest defender of the frontiers of Eastern Moldova. It was in 1484 when the Ottomans conquered southern Bessarabia and ever since extended their partial control over Moldova (Constantin, 1995, pp. 15-16). Subsequently, Dimitrie Cantemir (1710-1711) asked Peter I to help him free the country. And, although the Russians had not managed to drive the Turks away, they had got very interested in the Moldovan lands that provided access to the Black Sea. And, according to Constantin (1995), since then, it invaded Romanian territories twelve times (p. 16). Consequently, the Russo-Turkish wars (1736-1739, 1768-1774, 1788-1791) lead to the Bucharest peace treaty (16th of May 1812) that settled that Turkey ceded Eastern Moldova to the Russians. So, both Ciobanu (1992) and Constantin (1995) agree that, against any legal (Moldova was only a vassal state of Turkey⁶⁰), ethnic or historical rights, Russia annexed a province of peaceful people (Ciobanu, 1992, pp. 48-52). And, Constantin (1995) highlights that thus the basic principles of international law had been infringed (p. 17).

Then, some of the population, who were terrified, fled to the Principality of Moldova that remained under Ottoman suzerainty. The exodus of the natives made the Russian emperor, Alexander I (1801-1825), offer some degree of autonomy to the province, at least at first, — a Moldovan governor, the use of Moldavian language in the state institutions, and the observance of the old Moldovan laws. However, as Ciobanu (1992) stated, the peasants were dissatisfied. They pleaded to live the way their ancestors had lived because, for the past four centuries, the Turks had never interfered with their customs and laws (p. 53). Nevertheless, after a short period of quasi-autonomy, the region was transformed into a Russian gubernia. Consequently, the region was governed by Russians and according to Russian laws. Even though Romanian had been banned in Bessarabian institutions, the indigenous population managed to preserve and call for respect for their native language (Ciobanu, 1992, pp. 55-56). Thus, these would have laid the foundations for the nationalist movement that claimed the union with Romania.

⁶⁰ https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vassal_and_tributary_states_of_the_Ottoman_Empire

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Accordingly, 2 December 1917, the parliament of Bessarabia—Sfatul Tarii, made up of 150 deputies—proclaimed the Moldovan Democratic Republic. And, 27 March 1918, voted the Union with Romania. So, by December 1, 1918 the Great Union of Bessarabia, Bucovina and Transylvania (Constantin, 1995, p. 21), that Drutse refers to in the following lines, took place.

[...] Their waiting was extremely chilly because with the joining of Bessarabia to the Romanian state, Dniester became a border. And, beyond that border remained the men of the steppes mobilized into the czar's army at the beginning of the war.⁶¹ (*The Burden of Our Goodness*, p. 43)

Nevertheless, the jubilation was relatively short, as on 23/24 August 1939 was signed the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, and the additional secret protocol that divided the spheres of influence in Europe between the USSR and Germany. This meant the Russian Army was threatening the integrity of the Romanian nation-state. Thus, the pressures of the USSR and the lack of support from the European powers drove Romania to abandon neutrality and ask for the help of Germany (Constantin, 1995, pp. 42-59). However, the latter, together with Italy, granted green light to the USSR's annexation of Bessarabia. So, 26 June 1940, Molotov presented to the Romanian minister, Davidescu, an ultimatum that demanded the return of Bessarabia and the Northern part of Bucovina, as a compensation for the 28-year long exploitation of Bessarabia. Romania was given 24 hours to accept the ultimatum; otherwise the Soviet Army would have entered Romania (Constantin, 1995, pp. 72-74).

Subsequently, 28 June 1940 began the evacuation of the Romanian Army and state institutions from Bessarabia and Bucovina. However, instead of the four promised days of delay, the Russian Army occupied Bessarabia and the North of Bucovina in two days' time, thus breaking the Romanian-Soviet agreement from Odessa (Constantin, 1995, p. 91). Moreover, the Soviet authorities made everything to prevent the Bessarabians and Bucovinians from fleeing to Romania. Additionally, the local communist party ordered the people to go and meet the Soviet troops. Also, various acts of anarchy and banditry were organised by various minority groups

⁶¹ [...] erau pline de infrigurare asteptarile celea ale lor, caci odata cu alipirea Basarabiei la statul roman, Nistrul devenise granita, si dincolo de acea granita ramineau barbatii cimpiei mobilizati la inceputul razboiului in armata tarului. (*Povara Bunatatii Noastre*, p. 43)

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instigated by communist agitators. Those were sent ahead the Soviet Army with the purpose of rising rebellion among the minority population (Constantin, 1995, pp. 101, 103).

Then, immediately after the invasion, as Constantin (1995) summarizes, the Soviet authorities proceeded to the modification of the social and political order, of the nature of property and economic organisation, destroyed the system of norms and values that were the basis of the traditional Romanian society. Romanian was replaced by Russian in official relations and a new administrative division of the territory was imposed. Military and public administration was passed into the hands of the Soviet authorities that appointed (civil) servants from the USSR. And, the NKVD⁶² arrested all the persons considered suspects of negative attitude towards the new regime. Of course, the first suspects were the members of the Bessarabian parliament that previously voted the union with Romania (pp. 101-103). According to Romanian sources, from 25000 to 30000 of Romanian Bessarabians were assassinated before the fall of 1941 (Constantin, 1995, p. 107).

Later, the Soviets proceeded to the mutilation of Bessarabia's territory. The Kremlin transferred the South—the districts Cetatea Alba and Ismail—and the North of Bessarabia, with the district Hotin, as well as the districts of the annexed Bucovina to the Ukrainian SSR. On the one hand, the loss of Hotin meant both the loss of one of Bessarabia's fundamental economic sources and the connection with the cradle of formation of the Romanian civilization. On the other hand, it lost access to the sea or the Danube in the South, which ruined any illusion about getting independence. Moreover, the land, big enterprises, banks, credit institutions, transportation means, printing houses, hotels, pharmacies, theatres and the houses of those who fled to Romania were nationalised (Constantin, 1995, p. 106-107). And, the colonisation of Bessarabia with alien population, mainly from Russia, Byelorussia, and Ukraine, was initiated.

4.1.3 Life in the Moldavian SSR.

Communism, claims Boia (1997), brought about a pseudo-modern society as together with modernization it brought about a shattering of the existing structures (p. 19). Moreover,

⁶² Commissariat of Internal Affairs — the secret police agency in the former Soviet Union.

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according to Enciu (2001), the behaviour of the Soviet authorities on the territory between the Prut and the Dniester was typical of a conqueror in a subdued, hostile territory (p. 134).

On the one hand, the Kremlin brought about the (so-called) modernization of agriculture, industry, culture and education. The communists did bring larger access to primary, secondary, professional and higher education. However, it was fully ideological, and so was culture. In what concerns agriculture, the first step in its development was the creation of the kolkhozes and their further amalgamation. Consequently, the MSSR became the “blooming garden” of the Soviet Union. Then, with the purpose of increasing the production of fruit and vegetables, the excessive (abusive) use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides followed. Likewise, in what concerns industry, most of the 600 industrial enterprises were built on the territory of the former MASSR—a typically colonial policy. Moreover, the newly built industry, unlike the previously existing (and at that time closed) one, was completely dependent on the 72 industrial centres of the USSR. Moldova imported all the necessary materials in exchange for its food products. Thus, if the average amount of meat per capita was 48 kg in the USSR, it was only 8 kg in Moldova; milk—290 l. in the USSR and only 164 l. in Moldova; eggs—147 pieces in the USSR, only 128 in Moldova. As a result, the modernization of agriculture and industry made the mortality rate of the population grow from 6,4 for one thousand inhabitants in 1961 to 6,8 in 1962, while among the rural population it grew from the 6,5 to 7,0. Also, the life expectancy decreased from 69,1 years in the 1969/1970 to 65,6 years in 1979/1980—the lowest from all the Soviet republics, and below the average of the USSR. So, the territory between the Prut and the Dniester became the “hinterland” of and dependent on the metropolis (Enciu, 2002, pp. 121-125).

Consider, the excerpt from *The Burden of Our Goodness*:

It was quiet in the village Soviets during the day. However, there was plenty of shuffling of papers and squeak of pens from dusk to dawn. The man, whose turn it was to be added to the list, was asked to come and was interrogated thoroughly. Specially, people were asked to come by midnight and close to the dawn when the peasant's mind was tired from lack of sleep and his respect for the authorities was immense.

Every list was typed in a particular way. Every bit of paper had its set of questions. They wrote everything in those papers. They wrote the name, surname

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and the father's name there; the year of birth, of the person and of the rest of the household; the origin and the social position; the man and the wife's relatives; the land. They wrote how much land one had; what was the proportion of productive land, of meadows, and wood. They wrote how many trees and how many wine vines one had. They wrote how many and what kind of cattle one had, and how many of them were about to calve. They wrote how many fowls people had—hens, ducks, turkeys and geese.

But at the head of all the lists was the one that included the person's debt to the state—the amount of bread, milk, meat, eggs, and wool that one had to give to the state, the amount he has given and the one that was to be given still.⁶³ (The Burden of Our Goodness, p. 197)

On the other hand, the disastrous policy of the Stalinist regime led to the (organised) 1946-1947 famine; the liquidation of the private property; forced collectivisation; mass deportations of innocent people; the persecution of the (Romanian) intellectuals and clerics; imprisonment and executions carried out after extemporaneous trials prepared by the repressive organs (Palade, 2001, p. 162). Postica (2001) adds political terror, forced requisition of food, destruction of culture and national patrimony, and alteration of the national consciousness to the list (p. 170). Apparently, it was all for the sake of introducing Russian nationalism (as in the times of Nikolay I), which according to Boia (1997) was imposed at the cost of mutilating the authenticity of the national culture (p. 72).

Moreover, after 1947 a “new” Marxist/Stalinist history was imposed in the MSSR and the other Soviet republics. For example, Smith et al. (1998) reveal that Russian scholars were those who wrote the history of Uzbekistan (p. 73). The fact is that neither Uzbek nor Moldovan

⁶³ [...] ziua prin sovietele satesti era cam pustiu, iar din amurg si pina in zori numai fosnet de hirtie, numai scirtiit de penite. Omul caruia ii venea rindul de-a fi introdus in lista era chemat de acasa, intrebat si iscodit dupa toata legea. Mai ales era chemata lume multa asa cam pe la miezul noptii si ceva mai incolo spre zori, cind mintea taranului este obosita de nesomn, iar stima lui pentru autoritati — nemarginita.

Fiecare lista isi avea tiparul ei, fiecare farimitura de hirtie venea cu iscodirile sale. Si cite nu se scriau in listele celea! Cum ii spune omului: numele de familie, prenumele si numele dupa tata. Anul in care s-au nascut el si ceilalti ai casei. Originea si starea sociala, neamurile lui, neamurile nevastei si neamurile lor. Pamintul. Cit pamint arabil are omul, cita pasune, cite hectare de padure, citi copaci, citi butuci de vie. Vitele: cite vite si ce fel, cite sterpe, cite a fata. Pasarile: gaini, rate, curcani, giste.

Apoi urma lista listelor: datoriile omului fata de stat. Ce cantitate de pane, lapte, carne, oua, lina avea sa dea omul statului, cit a dat si cit a mai ramas sa duca. (*Povara bunatatii noastre*, p. 197 - 199)

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historians had the liberty to defend their version of history. Moreover, many gave in and “wrote” the history that served the metropolis. However, one has to bear in mind that most of the historians that did not embrace the Soviet ideology were silenced, many of them dying in prisons (Boia, 1997, p. 66). Similarly, when in July 1941, the Romanian Army liberated the territory (only until 1944) they found a desolating picture of the genocide committed by the NKVD and the Soviet Army. Constantin (1995) claims that many unidentifiable tortured bodies were encountered (p. 195).

Then, the historians loyal to the new regime “overlooked” the fact that the first 154 kolkhozes created in 1946-1947 were a consequence of the peasants' impoverishment and bleakness. These, as Postica (2001) claims, were provoked by the requisitions and the famine that is vividly described in the following excerpt from Drutse:

The '46 and '47 have passed. The Plains of Soroca, barren up the hill and down the valley, covered with dust which was all over the horizon, were struggling out of breath. There was not a (green) leaf in the whole plain. [...]

The fertile land had a harder time to come back to life. The drought consumed everything that could serve the man. Yet the weed knew how to protect its seed, so that after the first drizzle the things that grow without having been sown covered every piece of land. So, people could neither recognise nor approach their hectares. [...]

However, Lord could not be blessed because there were no ploughs, no horses, no seeds. The rusty and broken ploughs lay behind the house, while the only man that knew how to cure them—the village smith—died from famine. The few jades that were left, after having survived more thanks to their animal patience, were waiting for their masters to lift them with the ropes and take them out of the stables. As for the seeds, people hardly remembered the way these looked. Only those who had some forces left and went to the train station knew how they looked. There was enough bread at Paminteni station. There was a lot of corn at the edge of the station. There were heaps as high as the telegraph posts and as large as the area of a house there. There were all kinds of corn there poured on bare land. There were white, yellow, motley and/or long and thin corncobs,

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there were different cobs just the way different were the hands that planted them. Before the famine they were carried to the station and were said to be the property of the state. They have been there during the whole winter without being covered, so that now they were suffocating from the inner heat.

However, this corn could not be sown. But the land was waiting for seeds. And in spring when it was already late to sow, the village Soviets began to give people corn seeds. They were giving people corn with huge seeds that resembled the teeth of a horse, it was even called *horsetooth* (from Russian). These were brought by train from far away, and were sprinkled with some kind of chemicals. They said that they were sprinkled by agronomists to resist the drought but also people were told to avoid touching them. They said that the powders used were some sort of poison and that they would all die if they consumed it. However, after the two years of famine people feared nothing. And as soon as they reached home they divided the received corn in two. They washed half of it, dried it in the sun, took it to the mills, made some porridge and only after that they took the other half to the fields. ⁶⁴ (*The Burden of Our Goodness*, pp. 216, 219-220, 221)

⁶⁴ Trecut-au patruzeci si sase, patruzeci si sapte. Cimpia Sorocii, stearpa si-n virf de deal, si-n fund de vale, cu plete de colb, fumegind dintr-o zare in alta, se zbatea cu sufletul la gura, si nici un fir de frunza verde in tot lungul, in tot largul ei. [...]

Mai greu prindeau viata paminturile roditoare. Seceta a ars tot ce poate prii omului, buruiana insa stie a-si pazi saminta si dupa prima ploita tot ce creste ne semanat a acoperit tarina palma cu palma, incit nici sa-ti cunosti hectarul, nici sa te apropie de el. [...]

Proslavit inasa numele Celui de sus nu avea de unde fi, pentru ca nici tu pluguri, nici tu cai, nici tu saminta. Plugurile zaceau pe dupa casa ruginite, stricate, iar singurul om ce stia a le doftori — fierarul satului — murise de foame. Cele citeva gloabe, ramase mai mult prin rabdarea lor de vita, asteptau prin grajduri sa vina oamenii sa le ridice cu fringhiile, cit despre saminta — oamenii aproape ca si uitasera cum arata ea, saminta ceea.

O cunosteau la fata numai cei care mai pastrau un pic de putere si se duceau din cind in cind pe la gara. Acolo, la Paminteni, era pine destula, mai ales papusoi erau. Hat la marginea garii se inaltau gramezi nalte cit stilpul de telegraf si lungi cit ar fi tinut un loc de casa. Stateau papusoi ceia turnati jos, pe pamintul gol, si erau acolo de toata mina — ciocalai lungi si subtiri, ciocalai albi, galbeni, tarcatei, feluriti, cum felurite sint bratele ce i-au crescut. Adusi in pragul foamei si descarcati aici, au devenit averea statului. Dupa ce au stat descoperiti o iarna intreaga, s-au aprins inaustrul lor si acum movilele celea suflau fierbinteala.

Oricum, pentru semanat papusoi nu mai erau buni. Paminturile inasa asteptau si iata ca intr-o primavara, cind se trecuse vremea semanatului, sovietele satesti au inceput a da saminta la oameni. Dadeau un fel de papusoi cu grauntele mascat cit dintele de cal, si chiar asa li se si zicea papusoiilor celora: *konskii zub*. Erau adusi cu trenurile hat de departe, au venit in sat gata dezghiocati, stropiti cu niste chimicale. Se spunea ca au fost stropiti de catre agronomi ca sa tina la seceta, dar, totodata, li se dadea oamenilor de grija sa nu cumva sa se atinga de saminta primita. Prafurile celea, se spunea, sint un fel de otrava si vor muri cu totii ca mustele. Trecuti prin cei doi ani de foame, oamenii nu se mai temeau de nimic. Cum ajungeau acasa cu saminta primita, o si imparteau in doua. O buna jumatate o spalau, o uscau la soare, o duceau la risnita, injghebau o fiertura si abia pe urma porneau cu cealalta jumatate la deal. (*Povara Bunatatii Noastre*, pp. 216, 219-220, 221)

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This excerpt from the second part of the duology, that caused Drutse most of the problems with Bodiul, reveals the indifference and the meanness of the communist power. Also, it explains what the premiss that made peasants give up “voluntarily” their land is.

However, historians distorted the truth in what concerned the 1949 dispossession of the “chiabur-s”⁶⁵. These claimed the dispossession to have occurred simultaneously with the process of collectivisation, or as a consequence of the latter. However, as Siscanu and Postica (2001) report, tens of thousands of peasant families have been arrested and deported in early July. Thus, the threat of Siberia made the number of peasants “willing” to enter the kolkhoz double. So, by August/September 1949 there were 1705 kolkhozes in Bessarabia (p. 173). Thus, one may find completely reasonable Siscanu’s claim that everything was part of a Soviet plan of communisation of the post-war Bessarabia (cited in Enciu, 2001, p. 134).

Another fact consciously omitted by the historians of the time refers to the way the peasant-landowner had been transformed into a proletarian, a new man⁶⁶. Enciu (2001) enumerates coercion, imprisonment, deportation, a devastating taxation policy, and a general climate of individual and collective terror among the strategies used by the Soviet party and state apparatus (p. 136). According to Postica (2001), there had been three main waves of deportation. The first one was in June 1941 when 3470 families (22548 people) of anti-Soviet elements were deported. The second one was on 5-6 July 1949—11293 families (over 35000 people) of chiabur-s, former landed gentry, and big merchants were deported. The third one was in 1951—723 families (more than 2600 people) of the Jehovah sect were deported. The argument behind the deportations was that the “hostile elements” could provoke the outburst of a (military) conflict and the battlefield was to be secured (p. 174). Some of the strategies listed above were also employed to put down the rebellions by the natives that escaped deportation. However, the exponents of the communist ideology kept silence about the existence of any anti-Soviet and anti-communist resistance movement in Bessarabia because its acknowledgement would question the legality of Soviet domination.

⁶⁵ Chiabur — kulak or well-to-do — had an ideological meaning that permitted Stalin “accuse anyone perceived as standing in the way of his socialist offensive as being, not a human being, but a ‘class enemy’” (Grenke, 2005, p. 64).

⁶⁶ A homo-sovieticus.

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Moreover, Enciu (2001) also insists that the servile scholars did not just silence the truth, they invented arguments to support the truth that served the metropolis. Thus, many historians participated in the farce that negated the ethnic unity of the Romanians and the Moldovans, who, were presented as fierce enemies. Accordingly, stress was laid on Moldavian and not Romanian to be the language they spoke. Similarly, the historians negated the common historical evolution of Bessarabia—that used to be a province of the principality of Moldova—and Romania. The centuries long past was annulled (pp. 137-138). The year of a new countdown was set to 1919—the year following the so-called annexation of Bessarabia by Romania, and the consecutive (artificial) formation of the Moldavian ASSR⁶⁷—, and 1940—the formation of the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic.

In addition, the 1918 union of Bessarabia with Romania was depicted as an act of annexation (Varta, 2001, p. 156), and the 1940 invasion of the Red Army was regarded as a liberation march intended to free Bessarabia from the Romanian bourgeoisie and landed gentry. Similarly, the truth about the events of 1812 were distorted. The Czarist occupation is presented as an act of liberation from the Ottoman domination and inclusion of Bessarabia into an economically and spiritually “favourable” environment. However, nothing is said about the denationalisation of the autochthonous population both during the first and second annexation. Varta (2001) alleges that the toxic effects of the russification and assimilation policy were concealed. Moreover, Bessarabia was immersed into complete isolation from anything that was Romanian space, history or culture (pp. 156-157).

Apparently, the anti-Romanian propaganda reached the levels of a mass hysteria and hatred of the whole Romanian nation, its language, history, and culture. The Romanian teaching system was abolished, and the newly-built one was over-politicized. The Soviet educational system, apart from eradicating the spiritual Romanian/human values and destroying the national heritage, was designed to redirect people to the so-called Marxist-Leninist (class) values. On top of that, after having changed the name of the language spoken in Bessarabia, the Soviet authorities introduced the Cyrillic alphabet and fully destroyed the Romanian book resources (Postica, 2001, p. 172).

⁶⁷ An artificially created nation state built on the left bank of the Dniester and intended to create a breach in the unity and suzerainty of Romania.

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Consequently, since the early years of Soviet domination, the Romanian Bessarabians grew discontent with the communist authorities' policy that aimed at the denationalization of the natives, and the genocide of the local elites. Romanians, and even some of the minorities (among them even Russians), eventually longed for the times of Romanian administration. And as Postica (2001) wrote, apart from silent noncompliance, peasants protested against and refused to pay the agricultural taxes. Also, they refused to deliver grain and other food products to the state—the so-called *postavka*. Hundreds of peasants tried to repatriate to Romania. A growing number of young men evaded both the military service in the Soviet Army (or even deserted it) and (sometimes forced) labour on the plants of the USSR. The general elections of the state organs were boycotted. Anti-Soviet and anti-communist leaflets calling people to join the resistance movement were disseminated around the country. There was a growing number of cases of physical and armed attacks on the state institutions, and the Soviet and party workers in the villages. The rebels who incited these actions were labelled “*chiabur* and nationalist elements”, death enemies of the Soviet Power (pp. 170, 175). So, most of them—members of the most conscious strata of the society— were fiercely punished and/or deported. Also, in the years of famine, they were left to die. About 200000 people died of famine because, even in the years of poor or no harvest, Soviet activists searched the peasants' attics and cellars for the last grains of maize or wheat (Postica, 2001, p. 173).

As a conclusion, one can say that life in the Moldavian SSR was nothing like the life of a liberated people. Its first distinctive mark concerns the deportations, the most innocent of which were in the form of military service or work on the plants of the USSR. The worst were the deportations to Siberia and other bare lands of the Union. Most of the deported died in the salt mines of the metropolis. Similarly, a great number of natives that were not displaced died from famine and persecutions. So, most of the remaining population knelt in front of the Kremlin and complied with its policies—collectivisation, alienation from the national ideal and russification.

In this light, in agreement with Corbu (2008), the notion of “nation”, in the case of the Bessarabian space, is rather complex. Corbu states that the nation forging process in the world Drutse's characters represent is unique and different from that of the counterparts from the right bank of the Prut. Although, never formally named a colony, the space between the Prut and the Dniester River had been a space of colonial encounter, a third space as Bhabha would define it. It had been a free land until the Turkish Empire and then the Russian one took control of the

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region. Corbu mentioned that from the 186 years from the annexation, the space between the Prut and the Dniester Rivers was under Russian domination for 106 years, for 25 years it was part of the Romanian state, and 46 years under the Soviet regime, and then it became an independent state. Thus, the nowadays Moldovans are a nation that shares some common features with both the Romanian and the Russian nation; the very things that make them different from Romanians make them similar to the Russians and viceversa (p. 98).

4.2 Language—the Backbone of National Identity.

According to Braithwaite (2007) “one step towards seizing, reclaiming and redeveloping a sense of identity is through language” (p. 120). Moreover, Boia (1997) claims that the formation of the Romanian nation is more than anything else the story of the formation of the Romanian language (p. 140). Actually, Boia (1997) suggests that, despite the earlier union of the principalities, the term “Romanian” is not widely used until the first half of the 19th century, when it gradually displaces the appellative Moldovan (p. 146). So, this part of the dissertation shall bring to light the issue of national language/mother tongue on the territory between the Prut and Dniester—the setting of Drutse’s novels.

Likewise, it is important to point out that, when referring to the language of the indigenous population in the post-Soviet borderlands, the term of “native tongue” or “mother tongue” was widely used in Ukraine (Smith 1998, p. 119) and Moldova alike. It seems that the communist authorities, and also the new government were confused as to the appropriate name of the state language. However, the highly ambiguous term “mother tongue” did not help in solving the language issue. Consider, for example, all the minority groups whose mother tongue was neither “Moldovan”/Romanian nor Russian. Yet, often Russian, as Buckler (2009) claims, was and “still is the lingua franca of the former republics” (p. 255) and its minorities. The reason behind this fact, claims Sandru (2012), is that, in the process of “colonisation” by the Soviet Union, one of the first measures was the introduction of the compulsory study of Russian (p. 56). Thus, the language of the metropolis overshadowed the “mother tongue” of the majority population.

Moreover, one of the distinctive features of Soviet colonialism concerns the “brutality and thoroughness of its oppression” which is best illustrated by the “uses and abuses of language

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in the Soviet system” (Racevskis, 2006). Apparently, just like in the overseas colonies of the West, the control over language has always been one of the fundamental strategies of domination. Thus, the situation presented in Macaulay (2005) is particularly noticeable in the Soviet case, mainly in what concerns the imposition and establishment of Russian as the lingua franca of the Soviet empire. Moreover, the Russian education system was built in a way that prevented the appearance of any other “variants” of the “standard version of the metropolitan language” which both in the Soviet and the Western colonial space were viewed as “impurities” (Ashcroft et al., 2002, p. 7).

Thus, in the light of the above presented arguments, several questions arise. For example, what was the evolution of Russian on the territory between the Prut and the Dniester? How did Romanian/Moldavian language manage to preserve an important position, if not a privileged one, despite the apparent “eagerness” of the Soviet Moldovans to adopt the imposed values? How did the Moldovans manage to preserve their roots given the fact that the climate for the perpetuation of the native language and culture was far from being favourable? What were the consequences of the “Berlin Wall” erected along the Prut, the river once connecting the hearth of our culture with this stolen piece of land? And, last but not the least, what were the soft power policies that led to the instauration of Russian language hegemony?

First, it has to be mentioned that the answer to these questions requires a diachronic overview of the evolution of the language of the metropolis in the annexed territory. Thus, as it results from the previous sub-chapter, the issue of “Moldovenism”—promoted by Stalin—goes back to the times of the first annexation of Bessarabia. However, back then, despite huge efforts invested in the russification of Bessarabia, the encountered resistance made the Russian Government ease the pressure. Thus, at the beginning, Romanian was used in public administration, official documents were published in Romanian, religious books were printed in Romanian, and teaching was done in Romanian until 1867 (Ciobanu, 1992, p. 18).

Moreover, ever since the first steering of national awareness, Romanian intellectuals—Kogalniceanu among them—highlighted the importance of maintaining the use of the national language in churches, public administration and schools (Boia, 1997, p. 37). Also, the Latin character of Romanian—a fact confirmed even by Svinin, Russian writer and high official (Ciobanu, 1992, pp. 18-19)—despite the influence of the Slavic culture and/or the Orthodox religion, proves the continuity of the Romano-Dacians in the Carpathian-Danube region.

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Hence, even though later Romanian had been banned in Bessarabian institutions, the indigenous population managed to preserve and call for respect for their native language. For this purpose, church and educational institutions joined efforts. The seminary founded in Chisinau in 1813, and the Lancastrian schools that kept functioning after the annexation of Bessarabia, taught both in Romanian and Russian. The peasantry, which until 1860 was actively involved in the opening of schools, demanded the teaching of reading, writing, and sermons, in Moldovan, and the teaching of the grammar of the Moldovan language. Nevertheless, even when in 1871 Romanian was officially banned in the remaining schools, the teachers had to make use of the native language. The fact that the Moldovans' children did not learn Russian meant that teaching must have been carried out in Moldovan, even though the teachers were often of Russian origin (Ciobanu, 1992, p. 56).

Similarly, the church fought to preserve Moldovan in Bessarabia. The metropolitan (bishop) Gavriil Banulescu-Bodoni and his successor Dimitrie Sulima made the diocese printing house print almost all the prayer books, the most important of the scriptures, and the bible that were published in the Romanian Principalities. But, the archbishop Pavel Lebedev, a fierce enemy of Romanian, ordered the burning of all the books published in Romanian. Then, his successor, Serghei, managed to close down the printing house. Nevertheless, the native language continued to be used in the divine service. And 23 years after the closing, the printing house (re-) opened, loyal to its nationalist principles.

Furthermore, the fight for the native language was held in families too. The family life of both peasants and landed gentry and clerics instructed in Russian schools took place in a strictly nationalist atmosphere. On the one hand, the peasants never learnt Russian. For example, in Part 6 of the autobiographical story *Horodiste* one reads that the author's father has never come to master Russian properly. And, the writer explained this by the fact that the father belonged to that category of Moldovans that spoke correctly only one language (Druta, 1989, p. 34). Even those who learnt Russian in the army or during the primary training easily forgot it when out of military service or school. On the other hand, the nobles consciously carried all the mailing in Moldovan and attended theatres that staged plays in Moldovan too (Ciobanu, 1992, pp. 56-57).

However, the situation changed dramatically after the second annexation of Bessarabia. There were (almost) no autochthonous or church institutions left to stand for the preservation of Romanian. Most of the churches were closed, intellectuals deported, Romanian book resources

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burned. In other words, reiterating Hilborn's (2011) opinion, the territorial expansion of the USSR, as a result of the 1939 Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and World War II, led to the application of the processes of Russification developed throughout the 1930s to the Union's Eastern European "holdings" (p. 5). For example, on large territories of Ukraine and Belorussia—which fortunately was not the case of Moldova—the indigenous language almost disappeared, the use of Russian pushing it to the peripheries. So, during Stalin, Russian was imposed over all the subaltern cultures of the USSR and, its supremacy was (forcibly) acknowledged by the majoritarian native population.

Moreover, many of the remaining intellectuals got corrupted and transformed into servants of the metropolis. Consider the following excerpt that describes a dinner for the communist officials at the school headmaster's house:

Balta, seated at the end of the table, silently showed everyone that he is more than pleased with everything. The names of the villages that he worked in, the faces and the voices of the guests seated around his table changed. However, the cutlery, the jokes and the sweating smile with which Balta urged his guests to have some more did not change. The price of the wine, *the orthography* [emphasis added], and the fashion of skirts changed, but the order and customs of Nicolai Trofimovici's house didn't budge.⁶⁸ (*The Spire*, p. 473)

It seems that for the sake of personal benefits the headmaster was willing to sell everything, wine and language alike. This is particularly painful because as becomes evident in the novel, he was teaching native language and literature. And, as he relocated from one village to another, there were many broken identities left behind. This excerpt also reveals the actuality of Boehmer's (1995) highlights that concern Fanon's statement in *Black Skin, White Masks* from which it results that together with language people "assume a culture" (p. 207). Thus, Russian language has brought to the Soviet Moldova Russian culture too. Consider Horia's (the

⁶⁸ Asezat in capul mesei, Balta demonstra tacut tuturor ca e cum nu se mai poate de multumit de toate. Se schimba denumirea satelor in care lucra, se schimbau fetele si glasurile musafirilor de la masa lui, dar nu se schimbau tacimurile, glumele si zimbetul asudat cu care Balta isi indemna musafirii sa mai ia. Se schimbau preturile la vin, se schimbau normele ortografice, se schimba moda la fuste, dar nici ca se clinteau din loc ordinea si obiceiurile in casa lui Nicolai Trofimovici. (*Clopotnita*, p. 473)

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protagonist from *The Spire*) reference to Eminescu and Pushkin alike as symbols of a library—knowledge.

After all, the so-called egalitarian communist system left no choice to the so-called sister republics. Consider the case of Moldova, where according to Constantin (1995), teaching in Russian became compulsory beginning with 9 August 1940 (p. 107). As already mentioned above, the Latin alphabet (that was employed both for Romanian and the minority Gagauz language) was replaced by the Cyrillic one. The “Moldavian” language was allowed only in the primary schools. The gymnasiums (schools), eparchy schools, theological and teaching seminaries—everything that during the first Russian domination fought for the conservation of Romanian and the national identity—were annihilated. Moreover, the absurd “Moldovenism” thesis, which argued that the Moldovans and the Romanians were two completely different peoples, was imposed all through the Moldovan educational system (Constantin, 1995, p. 108).

In fact, what preceded the beginning of the new school-year in September 1940 was nothing else but the speedy relocation of 500 teachers from Russia and 300 from Ukraine to Bessarabia and the North of Bucovina. This, as Constantin (1995) argues, marked the start of an intense process of Russification of the public teaching that aimed at the annihilation of the Romanian ethnic character of the conquered part of Moldova (p. 108).

As an illustration, come Ciocanu's (1992) findings in what concerns the ratio of teaching in Romanian and Russian throughout the Soviet epoch. Thus, it appears that, out of seven kindergartens six were Russian and one Moldavian. Similarly, if there were two schools in a locality the teaching was not carried out in Russian in one and Moldavian in the other so that the parents could choose which to take their children to. The teaching was carried out in both languages, so that Russian was present in both schools and the position of Moldavian was undermined. Moreover, how could there be Moldavian schools in districts like Cotovsc, Moldova, if out of the seven existing kindergartens just one was a Moldavian one? Also, in the case of technical (vocational) schools, even if there were twenty-two Moldavian groups and four Russian, all of them were both taught Romanian and in Russian. Consequently, the Moldovan students didn't even know the name of their specialty in Moldavian. However, no one bothered to teach (proper) Romanian to the Russian groups.

Actually, this was the general climate that had been formed along decades all through the Soviet Republics. Thus, the reality existing in Moldova, claims Ciocanu (1992), was perfectly

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identical to that reflected in the *Pravda* article dated from 7 May 1987 by the Armenian writer Silva Kaputikian. She claimed that the sphere of practical use of the mother tongue (Armenian in that particular case), both in Unional and local scale institutions, was getting more limited by every passing year. Inevitably, parents were made to choose Russian schools for their children's training (p.16-17). Actually, once Emilian Bucov said that if you knew Russian you could communicate with anyone (referring to the other nations of the Soviet Union). Thus, many Moldavians, just like the other ethnicities of the country/Union, readily learned Russian. Moreover, writers like Ion Drutse have even written some of their works in Russian (Ciocanu, 1992, p.10).

However, as the analysis of Drutse's novels reveals, Russian continued to be the language of "the others". Even though Russian helped the writer bring the truth about this piece of land to a larger audience, he made sure to have all of his works published in "Moldovan"⁶⁹, even if some of them were initially written in Russian. Thus, despite Maxwell's theory (Ashcroft et al. 2002, p. 24) about the two categories of writers—the one who brings his own language to an alien environment and the one who brings an alien language to his own social and cultural inheritance—Drutse somehow managed to fluctuate between the two. He is the Moldovan who ended up writing about his own culture in both Russian and Moldovan, and about an alien culture in an alien language—Russian. But, even though Drutse's creations in Russian are particularly valuable, the dissertation focuses on the productions that appeared in Romanian.

In fact, by writing in Romanian, Drutse contributed to the preservation of the national heritage. This was particularly important given the situation of the artists in the Soviet epoch. Actually, Negura (2009) claims that both in MASSR (1924-1940) and, then, in MSSR (Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic, 1940-1991) "the local administration and intellectuals were divided in two antagonistic groups". First, the Moldovenists were those who supported the idea of a separated "Moldovan" language. Second, the Romanianists were the ones claiming "a literary 'Moldovan' language every bit identical with the language written and spoken in Romania". Also, Negura (2009) adds that in 1959 the communist party leaders required the "nationalist" writers to behave. Consequently, the writers could only evade the official

⁶⁹ Moldovan is presented here in inverted comas because during the Soviet era, and even after the independence, it was claimed that the state language was Moldovan. However, there is no American language or Canadian, or Australian...there is only American English, Canadian English or Australian English. Moreover, the "Moldovan" language recently has been officially recognized as Romanian language.

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propaganda and stay loyal to the Romanian culture in private⁷⁰. Otherwise, they run the risk to be considered enemies of the people. Consequently, through russification⁷¹ the metropolis managed to weaken, and eventually make disappear, the connection with the original Romanian culture.

Such an attempt is reflected in Drutse's novel *The Spire*:

- Were you also asked out of Chisinau?

- Oh, no, I can't complain about that, I left myself. After over a year of work, when I was already settled down, there came all of a sudden a scientific conference. The topic was to determine the origin of our language. Of course, the debate was over the Latin and the Slavic origin of the language. ⁷² (*The Spire*, p. 460-461)

However, it seems that there was some hope in what concerned the salvation of the national language. The fact is that during the meeting of the Writers Union, Nil Ghilevici, a Byelorussian writer, suggested to address the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR with the petition that each national republic would have as a state language the language of the nationality that gave the name of the republic (Ciocanu, 1992, p.5) rather than Russian.

Still, despite the strong desire of the intellectuals and artists for the recuperation of the pre-colonial language and culture there was little they could do. Moreover, hybridity unavoidably affected the natives' language(s). And, Drutse's case is a vivid example of this, as the author himself admitted that the experience of Russian domination could not be erased. Many of his characters use Russian borrowings and translation loans.

To take a case in point, consider the following letter from the teacher Gheorghe Singereanu who wrote with regret that:

⁷⁰<http://www.criticatac.ro/19669/engineering-moldovan-identity-moldovan-writers-stalinism-independence/>

⁷¹<http://education.stateuniversity.com/pages/991/Moldova-HISTORY-BACKGROUND.html>

⁷² - Te-au pofitit si pe mata din Chisinau?

- A, nu, pacat sa zic, am plecat singur. Dupa un an si ceva de lucru, cind toate erau bune si frumoase, a cazut asa ca din senin o sesiune stiintifica la care ni s-a propus sa stabilim originea limbii noastre. Se discutau, fireste, doua versiuni: cea „latina” si cea „slava”. (*Clopomita*, pp. 460-461)

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When I was a child, the villagers used to possess a beautiful language. It used to be full of sayings and it was pleasant both to the ear and to one's understanding. It was the language that the peasant used to express his/her joys when celebrating the birth of a child or someone's wedding. It was the language used when seeing someone off in his/her last way or when seeing off and meeting one's sons to and from the army. However, gradually something heterogeneous started mingling in. The leaders of the village, true-born residents, blabbed out, here and there in their speech, words that were somehow "different". Then, at some point, their language became anecdotic ... *Comrades kolkhozniki and kolkhozniti, let us consider our sobrania open...*⁷³ (Ciocanu, 1992, p.16-17)

Thus, apart from being displaced, the native language was altered. Borrowings and calques from Russian became a norm. Actually, even after the independence, as a high school student I remember to have been teased by peers for being somehow snobbish for talking too pure a (Romanian) language. In fact, both in the post-Soviet and in the post-colonial space the spoken language was affected by hybridity. This is a particularly inevitable phenomenon in the case of "polyglossic societies" (Ashcroft et al., 2002, p. 38) like the Moldovan one that was so much affected by the metropolis colonisation and Russification policies.

The upshot of all this is that the linguistic consciousness of the nation got severely damaged. Even when in 1989, as an official language already, the Latin alphabet which was identical to the alphabet of Romanian being re-established (thus the sole difference between the "two languages" being eradicated), the confusion about the Moldovan-Romanian linguistic identity persisted. The state language was only called Romanian in the *Declaration of Independence* of 27 August 1991. The constitution of the Republic of Moldova (1994) however stated that the official language of the country is *Moldavian language* which was to *function based on the Latin alphabet*.

⁷³ Satenii, pe cind eram copil, aveau o limba frumoasa, plina de zicatori, placuta si auzului, si intelegerii. Cu ea tarantul isi exprima bucuriile la cumatrii si nunti, cu ea isi petrece mortii pe ultimul drum si tot cu ea isi petrecea si-si intilnea feciorii din armata. Dar incet incet ceva eterogen se baga la mijloc. Conducatorii satului, localnici get-beget, in discursurile lor scapau cite un cuvint mai "altfel" apoi la un moment dat limba lor devein anecdotica ... Tovarashi Colhoznici si colhozniti. Razreshite ca sobrania noastra s-o scitaim deschisa... (Ciocanu, 1992, p.16-17)

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Then, the confusion went further as the school curriculum provided the study of the subject “Romanian language” which was even taught using books from Romania in the first years after independence. The 1994 decision of the Academy of Sciences of Moldova also stipulated that the Moldavian language should be named Romanian and the “Article nr. 13” of the constitution had to be revised. However, it took almost two decades to do it. The issue has recently been solved through the decision of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Moldova.

Nevertheless, even now—25 years after the independence, there are people living in Moldova, among Moldovans and do not (want to) speak neither Romanian nor “Moldovan”. And, as a consequence of the so-called superiority of the language of the former imperial centre, one may often run into a shop assistant or public officer that only speaks Russian.

In conclusion, one must say that language—the backbone of national identity—had never been completely broken in Moldova. But, despite the resistance of the natives, it has been severely damaged. Many generations of Moldovans had grown with the handicap of not knowing what the language they spoke was. But what is worse, they were taken away the language their ancestors mastered. Thus, one may often encounter an old unschooled person speaking a purer Romanian than that of the post-Soviet graduates.

Chapter V: Ion Drutse's Prose, an Echo from the Soviet Metropolis.

5.1 Changing Realities in Drutse's Novels: *The Burden of Our Goodness, The Spire, Leaves of Yearning.*

The post-totalitarian system touches people at every step, but it does so with its ideological gloves on. This is why life in the system is so thoroughly permeated with hypocrisy and lies: government by bureaucracy is called popular government; the working class is enslaved in the name of the working class; the complete degradation of the individual is pretended as his ultimate liberation; depriving people of information is called making it available; the use of power to manipulate is called the public control of power, and the arbitrary abuse of power is called observing the legal code; the repression of culture is called its development; the expansion of imperial influence is presented as support for the oppressed; the lack of free expression becomes the highest form of freedom; farcical elections become the highest form of democracy; banning independent thought becomes the most scientific of world views; military occupation becomes fraternal assistance. Because the regime is captive to its own lies, it must falsify everything. It falsifies its past. It falsifies the present, and it falsifies the future. It falsifies statistics. It pretends not to possess an omnipotent and unprincipled police apparatus. It pretends to respect human rights. It pretends to persecute no one. It pretends to fear nothing. It pretends to pretend nothing. (Havel, 1991, p. 136)

This quotation provides a rather comprehensive summary of the way reality changed for the subalterns of the USSR in the second half of the 20th century. In fact, together with the information presented in Chapter IV, it somehow explains the events narrated by Drutse in his novels. Actually, Drutse seems to fight what Bhabha (1994) called “‘fixity’ in the ideological construction of otherness” (p. 66) by providing an alternative picture—not the statistics—of the Soviet Moldova. Thus, the Moldovan writer juggles the reality of his homeland with the image promoted by the Soviet propaganda in order to avoid censorship. Drutse is continuously on the

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cutting-edge between avoiding being smashed by the Power and staying loyal to his national ideals. Actually, only by coming closer to the colonizer he managed to speak the truth about the colonised.

Consequently, Drutse, the poet, drama and prose writer, creates what Bhabha (1994) called “an internally structured archive” that “is built up from the literature that belongs to these experiences” (p. 73). The writer shifts from one literary genre to another in order to reach a wider audience both at home and beyond the limits of Moldova. Thus, children and adults, (field/industry) workers and students get a glimpse of both the idyllic Moldova of our ancestors and the grotesque creation of the Kremlin. Subsequently, the readers rediscover the natives’ customs and traditions. Their hibernating consciousness awakens to the call of the national ideals and, similar to what Bhabha (1994) claimed in relation to the postcolonial reality, “a new median category emerges, a category that allows one to see new things” (p. 73). Thus, occurs the collision of the indigenous and the Soviet. And, the irony and frankness Drutse uses to provide samples of language, culture and socio-political life in the Soviet epoch makes people see reality the way it is, not the way the authorities wanted them to see it.

Hence, literary works are, as Benito (1995) reiterates, the tools of deconstructing the monologue of the imperialist narrative and create a dialogue that fills in the blanks of the indigenous people’s history (p. 34). Indeed, Drutse’s literary works appear as a barometer of the changes that were registered in the 20th century’s Moldova. However, it has to be mentioned that the choice of Drutse reflects my own (cultural) background and interests. And, although other choices could have been made, his novels are worth the effort as they focus on the identity issues and the tragic (colonial) history of the inhabitants of the land between the Prut and the Dniester River as a consequence of the two World Wars.

So, as already mentioned in the previous chapter, and as seen from Drutse’s works, this region was rather poor and had no significant natural resources. However, likewise some of the former colonies of the West, it provided a strategic advantage to its masters. And, ever since the consolidation of Russian imperialism, Bessarabia has been valued as an access point to the Black Sea which was dominated by the Ottoman Empire at that time. Thus, the parties that signed the Bucharest peace treaty (16th of May 1812)—the Ottoman and the Russian Empire, two expansionist states—decided the fate of Bessarabia. Consequently, it has been separated from the principality of Moldavia by arbitrary natural boundaries which never existed before, and the

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dominant Moldovan population lost their lands in favour of the colonists invited by the Russian czar through the 1812's colonization programme. And, as Moraru Anton (2011) and Kalmbach (1951) reveal, it had been transformed into a colony for future settlement, Russification, and denationalization of the natives. Further, these events gave ground to the 1940's invasion of the Red Army, the forcible re-annexation to the USSR, and the mutilation of the land between the Prut and the Dniester River, which had previously chosen to join Romania.

Therefore, the postcolonial methodology is crucial in dealing with the national identity issue approached in the works of the Moldovan post-Soviet writer. Drutse, like Tagore and Gandhi, who according to Boehmer (1995) provide “an image of a pre-industrial homeland” (p. 119-120), often eulogizes the glorious past when keen warrior-peasants⁷⁴ defended their homeland. So, even if Drutse appropriated Russian, just like Yeats or Narayan did with English, he wrote in Romanian — the language of the ancestors. Therefore, despite the fact that *3anax Спелой Аўвы* was first written in Russian (1973), and only published in Romanian with the title *Clopotnita (The Spire)* in 1984 (Dedkov, 2008, p. 177), and *Frunze de Dor (Leaves of Yearning)* and *Povara Bunatatii Noastre (The Burden of Our Goodness)* appeared in Russian as well, the given study shall be based on the Romanian versions of the three novels.

Besides, “the world-wide spread of anti-colonial nationalist feeling in the twentieth century” goes back, as Boehmer (1995) claims, to 1919 “when the rights of dependent nations were officially acknowledged at Versailles” (p. 106). On the one hand, this seems to have reached Moldovan intellectuals—Drutse among them—and arisen their nationalist awareness. On the other hand, it coincides with the historical setting of time in the duology *The Burden of Our Goodness*. Thus, the bildungsroman becomes the pillar of the current investigation as its first part—*Balade din Cimpie (The Ballads from the Steppes, 1963)*—refers to the period before the First World War up to 1947/48, and the second one—*Povara bunatatii noastre (1968)*—focuses on the aftermath of the Second World War (Simut, 2008, p. 172). Also, the kaleidoscope of changes echoes in the novels *Leaves of Yearning* and *The Spire* that are also analysed below. But, the novel *The White Church* has only tangentially been approached in this investigation. Despite the complex portrayal of Moldovan identity that it provides, its historical setting refers to

⁷⁴ The inhabitants of Drutse's legendary Capriana or the mythic Valea Razesilor. Both were inhabited by *razesi* who in the feudal system were free peasants/people and small landowners that paid no taxes and only owed military support to the king. In Moldova, mainly in the frontier regions, they formed a considerable part of the rural population.

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the period from mid-18th to early 19th century when Russian domination was not yet fully established in the region. So, despite its great value—*The White Church* accentuates the continuity of the Moldavian nation and its perpetual fight to overthrow foreign (Ottoman, in this case) domination—it is being dropped off for two reasons. First, it is a historical novel, not a realist one. Second, it covers a reality much too complex to be approached within the time and space framework of the given dissertation.

Of course, there comes a short presentation of *The Burden of Our Goodness*, *Leaves of Yearning* and *The Spire* before the three of them are thoroughly analysed. First, the novel *Povara bunatatii noastre*, which Elena Tau (2008) calls a work of resistance literature (p. 184), was proposed for the USSR state award. However, the communist authorities from Chisinau protested. On the one hand, they were discontent because the class conflict⁷⁵ and the struggle of the party to introduce a new “egalitarian” social order was not properly reflected in the novel. On the other hand, Drutse focused on the tragedy of the Bessarabian village in the mid-20th century. Apparently, he paid “to much” attention to how the autochthonous population was affected by: the forcible annexation of the province; the years of war; the change of the frontiers; the drought and famine of 1946-1947; the forcible collectivization, deportations, (religious) persecutions, the institution of quotas; and other collective and personal tragedies.

However, Drutse the narrator seems to be quite objective. He refrained from making a propaganda of the active social life of the “new, Soviet community” but he did not criticise it either. For example, he does not criticize the atheist bolshevism. He just states, “with calm”, that in Ciutura there is no priest left and the village church had been closed long ago, or that Christmas and Easter were the only important holidays for the peasant Onache Cărăbuș (Onake Caraboosh). Then, Cristea (2004) reiterates that the protagonist, could do nothing but regret the disappearance of the old customs, and avoid in any possible way the new authorities (p. 37)—symbolised by the two Volgas—as if it were a swamp that lured one to the abyss.

Similarly, Drutse seems to take no side in *Leaves of Yearning*. The writer focuses on Valea Răzeșilor — a small village lost amid wide fields, near Balti and the Raut. He presents the everyday life of the peasants since early spring (14th of March), when winter frost is not gone yet and the only dry place is on the brick kiln, to late autumn when it is harvest time and the school year begins. Thus, the novel becomes a detailed sketch of 1945, the year of the ultimate defeat of

⁷⁵ The fight for the annihilation of the so-called bourgeoisie

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the Romanian Army's resistance and the instauration of Russian domination in the region. Although, the author seems to focus on the personal tragedies of the characters he also manages to reveal the consequences of the changing life of the nation. So, the novel is not just about war and peace, passion/love for land and girl, or education. It is, as the excerpt below reveals, about the imposed changes that altered the balance of the Moldovan patriarchal village:

The war was ravaging around. There were many haystacks that seemed to be strangled and stacked by feminine hands in the yards of Valea Razeshilor. Many children learned to swear while walking behind the plow. And, uncle Danutza, left his violin in the attic and flailed the rye like a woman. Then, red-starred tanks passed behind the village, stopped to ask the way and moved on. A few days later, the gun canons went down somewhere far in the west, and the village breathed a sigh of relief. Ones left, others came — it seemed something barely changed in the Razeshilor Vale. The only difference was that the hungry ploughs drew furrows across day and night. And, many parents did not know from what corner of the world to expect some news from their sons. Also, people closed their dogs in the entrance hall to prevent them from barking at uncle Efim, the new president of the village soviet, when he went around the village.⁷⁶ (*Leaves of Yearning*, p. 322)

Nevertheless, in *The Spire*, which drifts away from the moment of instauration of Russian domination, the author does not focus so much on the Second World War and the events that brought about the change. Drutse goes beyond the administrative and social changes imposed by the Kremlin and exposes the monstrous character of the homo sovieticus. The novel reveals what Cristina Sandru (2012) described as “not only the major accounts of empire, oppression and occupation, but also a history of personal responsibility and betrayal, of complicity and

⁷⁶ Bintuia pe undeva razboiul, si in multe ograzi din Valea Razeshilor vedeai stoguri gituite, cladite de mina de femeie, si multi copii invatasera sa injure, mergind in urma plugului, si mos Danuta, suindu-si scripca in pod, imblatea stingaci, ca femeile, secara.

Pe urma au trecut pe dupa sat tancuri cu stele rosii — s-au oprit sa intrebe drumul si s-au dus mai departe. In citeva zile s-a stins clocotul tunurilor undeva in asfintit si satul s-a aciuat. Unii s-au dus, altii au venit — pareca ca nici nu se prea schimbasese nimica in Valea Razeshilor. Atita doar ca plugurile flaminde rasturnau brazde zi si noapte, si multi parinti nu stiau din care parte a lumii sa astepte veste de la feciori, si cind iesea in sat badea Efim, oamenii incuiau ciinii prin tinzi sa nu latre la dinsul — acum el era presedintele sovietului satesc. (*Frunze de Dor*, p. 322)

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accommodation, or simply of a shapeless, haunting guilt for something that is beyond retrieval or repair” (p. 51).

On the one hand, it seems that Fanon's argument about the subalterns of the West can also be attributed to the reality described by Drutse. The major characters of *The Spire* (all of them subalterns) breathed what Fanon called the “appeal of Europe” (as qtd. in Boehmer, 1995, p. 115). Nevertheless, given the context of the present dissertation, in this particular novel, Europe is a symbol that acquires a dual meaning. First, it is the embodiment of the metropolis, which in the context of *The Spire* is Moscow. So, in what concerns the antagonists Balta and Turcu, it is viewed as a source of “income, status, and the possibility of sharing in power” (Boehmer, 1995, p. 116). While, for the protagonist it is the epicentre of knowledge. Yet, Europe also appears as an idealised opponent of the USSR. The protagonist's wife, Jeanette, and her teacher, Haret Vasilevici, were looking up to the French ideals of “liberte, fraternite, egalite” in their confrontations with the agents of the metropolis—the so-called intelligentsia.

On the other hand, Valeriu Cristea (2004) would say that Drutse does not openly reprobate the Soviet invasion, he just states with subtlety that one of the protagonist, Horia Holban, was wandering in the Soviet Chisinau along the 28 Iunie⁷⁷ street (p. 36). Last but not the least, the novel is about *The Spire*, the spire of Stefan cel Mare. It is a battle between the protagonist Horia Holban, whom love brings from Bucovina to be a teacher at Capriana, and the director of the school, Nicolai Trofimovici Balta—the perfect embodiment of the homo sovieticus. Although, Balta seems to succeed in his diabolic plan, Horia gets the revelation that it is the time to rebuild, in written form, the heritage of the nation. Thus, the soul of the peasant though somehow subdued would never be silenced or broken.

So, the novel resumes the importance of the church and history in fighting against the communist other. Actually, religion is by far a destructive force in Eastern Europe. On the contrary, according to Tomasz Zarycki (2013), the (Polish Catholic) Church was the “ally of the peripheral (the scholar mentions the Polish anticommunist) camp” (p. 193), which explains the massive closure of religious establishments in the Soviet Republics.

Following this line of arguments, the postcolonial approach is to be applied to the analysis of the above listed novels. Special attention is to be paid to the common themes of the settler colonies that Ashcroft et al. (2002) list in *The Empire Writes Back*. Among them:

⁷⁷ July 28, 1940 – the date of the Soviet invasion of Bessarabia

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... exile, the problem of finding and defining “home”, physical and emotional confrontations with the “new” land and its ancient and established meanings,

... dispossession, cultural fragmentation, colonial and neo-colonial domination, post-colonial corruption and the crisis of identity,

... the theme of the celebration of the struggle towards independence in community and individual,

.... the theme of the dominating influence of a foreign culture on the life of contemporary post-colonial societies,

... the construction and demolition of houses or buildings in post-colonial locations makes allusion to the problematic of the post-colonial identity,

... the theme of the journey of the European interloper through unfamiliar landscape with a native guide. (Ashcroft et al., 2002, pp.26-27)

5.1.1 Exile, the Problem of Finding and Defining “Home”.

Exile is a rather recurrent topic in the novels of Ion Drutse. Most of his protagonists experience it in a way or another. Some are forced to leave their patria due to particular life circumstances (for example, war), others are “asked” to leave it, and some others are lured to new places in search of happiness or simply, in search of a better/different life. Therefore, the analysis that follows focuses on exile as (a short term) banishment or expulsion, expatriation or deportation, and auto-exile. Also, it is important to mention that exile is always considered in relation to the notion of home. And, for most of Drutse’s characters “home” is the place where they are born, pass their childhood, experience their first love, build their nest, raise their children, and die. For others, home is the place where one’s mother is always waiting for him/her to come back. However, there is, apart from the inherited home, an adopted one.

Drutse knew the story of the so-called enemies of the nation that were deported after the instauration of the communist power. Also, during the Soviet domination, he was often a stranger at home, and has been living most of his adult life in auto exile. However, Drutse did

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not focus on describing the life of an exile. He described the emptiness left behind. The reader learns about the life of an exile from indirect details that are scarce and very subtle. Often, these are mere gossips, memories or tokens from the “other” life. Also, the parallel that the narrator establishes between the colonizers in exile and the natives that have been in exile once helps the reader make his/her own deductions.

Moreover, there was the Soviet propaganda that claimed that the USSR was the home of all the sister nations. And, the censorship of the time did not allow much to be written about the hundreds of families that were forced to abandon their home. On the other hand, one does not speak much about someone who is dead. And, only few of the deported managed to return home alive. Thus, Drutse has dedicated his novels to the homeland that he misses so much, and exposes its tragedies. He recreates home in his fiction, and gives a voice to the inhabitants of the periphery.

Following this line of arguments, the analysis that follows focuses on the characters that left a blank page in the book of life of the nation. First, there are those whom war converted into exiles. Of course, many will probably disagree with the assertion that a soldier is an exile. However, what is life if not a moment between birth and death. For many of them bullets whistle, barricades, battlefields, photos and letters from home is all what life is about (for days, weeks, months or years). Some of them regain their homeland, others are never seen again under the blue sky of home, and never again hug their mothers. So, they are exiles, uprooted to fight the other's war. For example, Onache Cărăbuș (Onake Caraboosh), the protagonist of *The Burden of Our Goodness*, and his friends and relatives belong to this category of exiles. Consider, the following excerpt:

Especially anxious were the women, exhausted from years and years of waiting. They were waiting for their sons, parents, husbands. Their waiting was extremely chilly because with the joining of Bessarabia to the Romanian state, Dniester became a border. And, beyond that border remained the men of the steppes mobilized into the czar's army at the beginning of the war.⁷⁸ (*The Burden of Our Goodness*, p. 43)

⁷⁸ Mai ales femeile nu-si aflau locul, fiind istovite de ani si ani de asteptare. Isi asteptau feciorii, isi asteptau parintii, isi asteptau barbatii, si erau pline de infrigurare asteptarile celea ale lor, caci odata cu alipirea Basarabiei la

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Apparently, a mere description of the sorrow of the Moldovan women, that is caused by the tragic destiny of their sons, parents, and husbands, this excerpt reveals a national tragedy. Here, Drutse speaks about the displacement of a great number of Moldovan men as a consequence of the First World War. Every family has someone far away from home. At this stage, the narrator does not depict their life away from homeland. But, he makes it clear that they are not simple soldiers that serve in the army, they are expatriates. Some of them have never returned and remained to rest for ever in the other's soil. Others are wandering, looking for the way back home. And, the few to find it could not enter the country because of the changed geopolitical situation in the region between the Prut and Dniester.

Thus, the narrator provides subtle details about the events that mark the history of Bessarabia. These lines are about the aftermath of the union of Bessarabia and Romania on March 27, 1918. When, Sfatul Tarii⁷⁹ from Chisinau announced the union of the Moldavian Democratic Republic with Romania, it ceased to be a Czarist guberniya⁸⁰. So, the decision enforced by the royal decree signed on April 9, 1918 by the king of Romania, Ferdinand I set the new frontier on the Dniester. Consequently, the narrator makes a subtle allusion to the end of the first period of colonization of Bessarabia, which lasted from 1812 to 1918. In addition, the reading of the novel reveals that there are no rebellions narrated in the case of the post First World War union with Romania. Thus, Drutse's silence coincides with the arguments provided in the previous chapter. The union has been a voluntary act of the locals. However, Russia did not recognise it and impeded the return of the Moldovans to the hearth. For example, the excerpts that follow relate Onake's—the Moldovans—way back home.

He was coming back, the wretch, nobody knows from where. But, when he reached the frontier rising in front of him, he began hiding behind the thickets of the left bank. It was impossible for him not to cross the river as his home, land and people were waiting for him on the other bank. Yet, at the same time it was impossible to cross the river. It was getting warm, the springs of the valley were

statul roman, Nistrul devenise granita, si dincolo de acea granita ramineau barbatii cimpiei mobilizati la inceputul razboiului in armata tarului. (*Povara Bunatatii Noastre*, p. 43)

⁷⁹ Sfatul Tarii- A governing body in the region, similar to the parliament.

⁸⁰ Governorate

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murmuring and moving under the snow waking up the old Dniester. [...] ⁸¹ (*The Burden of Our Goodness*, p. 43)

Apparently, the author says nothing about the protagonist's life away from home. Moreover, Onake seems to be doomed to see his homeland but not touch it. He is the enemy for those protecting the integrity of the now Romanian border. However, the use of the word "wretch" is very meaningful. And, the confirmation of this comes in the following sentence:

[...] In those four years he experienced everything, trenches, injuries, being decorated, and being a prisoner. ⁸² (*The Burden of Our Goodness*, p. 45)

The whereabouts of the expatriate are completely unknown. Neither the family nor the narrator possess any news from the czar's soldier. Consequently, the men that have been risking their lives in the "other's" battles have not even got the consolation of keeping in touch with their family. Moreover, when the "duty" for the Russian czar is completed they are deprived of the right to return home. The land which the expatriate soldier has been fighting for is no longer within the grasp of the Russian Empire. Both natural and political barriers are detaining Onake in a country that is not his anymore. Any other person would probably give up home in such a situation. However, the following example proves that Onake is not that sort of person.

[...] A wise man, given the circumstances, waits about a fortnight for the waters to temper. But, eh! Four years of alienation and home sickness could make anyone loose one's head, and the howling of the dog that once lived in your yard was the cherry on top. ⁸³ (*The Burden of Our Goodness*, p. 44)

⁸¹ Se întorcea, sarmanul, cine stie de pe unde si, pomenindu-se cu granita in fata, se ascundea prin desisuri, pe malul sting. Nu putea sa nu treaca riul, caci dincolo, pe celalalt mal, il asteptau casa, pamintul, neamul, dar nici ca de trecut nu era chip, pentru ca vremea a inceput a bate in cald. Pirauasele de prin vilcele au tot sopotit si au sapat omatul pe dedesubt, pina l-au trezit din somn pe batrinul Nistru. [...] (*Povara Bunatatii Noastre*, p. 43)

⁸² [...] in cei patru ani a trecut prin toate. Si prin transee, si ranit, si decorat, si prizonier a fost. (*Povara Bunatatii Noastre*, p. 45)

⁸³ [...] Un om chibzuit in asemenea imprejurari asteapta o saptamina doua pina se vor fi potolit apele, dar, vai, dupa patru ani de instrainare, dorul de casa e in stare sa-ti intunece mintile, iar urletul ciinelui ce-a trait cindva in ograda ta punea virf la toate. (*Povara Bunatatii Noastre*, p. 44)

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First, it seems that the epithet—Onake the Fool—that the village has given him is a perfect fit. After four years of wandering, the howl of the dog that has left his home just before the war, turns maddening. Eventually, the Moldovan soldier decides to enter the river and reach home. Consequently, the hero gets into an uneven confrontation with the forces of the nature.

Thus, on the one hand, when separated from the whole fabric of the novel, the dog seems an ultimate tool of torture in the hands of destiny. On the other hand, it seems to be a hint suggesting the positive outcome of this folly. The point is that, the name of the dog is Molda. And, in the tragic winter preceding the war, it saves the whole village from the hungry wolves. Consequently, the whole village regards it as a miraculous saviour sent by God. However, all but Onake, whom she chooses as a master, feared her. Thus, the intrigue reaches its peak when both pet and master encounter each other in the wild river. So, will Molda be a saviour once again, or will she get drowned like her legendary ancestor? Despite the man's fears that the mysterious dog would get drowned in the waters of the river like Dragos Voda's Molda, who gave the name to the land Moldova, he is happy to see it. Actually, this time the red haired animal survives and saves Onache who is about to remain under the ice blocks floating on the river. Thus, Molda—which according to Timofei Rosca (2008a) is the oracle meant to watch over the protagonist, and the nation, both in times of crisis or welfare (p. 200)—brings the wandering son of Moldova, Onake Caraboosh, home. However, new impediments keep appearing as, while in the water, Onake—the prototype of the exile—has the feeling that:

The right bank didn't want to accept him. Two shots, but the target was missed. The left bank didn't want to leave him. When, the third shot was about to be made, another soldier that was pointing his gun at him finally put it away and wondered:

— Look! The crazy one is singing!⁸⁴ (*The Burden of Our Goodness*, p. 45)

⁸⁴ Malul drept nu vroia sa-l primeasca. Au tras in el de doua ori, daca nu l-au nimerit. Malul sting nu vroia sa-i dea drumul. In clipa cind urma sa detune cea de-a treia impuscatura, un alt ostas, ce statea alaturi, ochind si el, a pus arma la o parte pentru a se mira:

- Ca sa vezi, nebunul cela mai si cinta! (*Povara Bunatatii Noastre*, p. 45)

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Actually, Onake is an enemy for the border guards from either side of the river. And, it seems that, after being made to leave the village, and fight for the state that has seized his land, the fate of the Bessarabian expatriate is to never reach home. And, when the war finishes and his service is unnecessary, he almost gets killed because he is seen as a potential threat. And, it is a crime to desert from the army too. Apparently, one should die rather than illegally cross the new state border. However, the sentence above shows that the bullets miss the target. Thus, Onake finally reaches the home of his ancestors.

Nevertheless, his sons are not as lucky. They never return home when called to defend their homeland. Thus,

One of the sons managed to send some letters. The other one did not even write a line. There was silence for a long time, a hard time. Then, their fate became known to Caraboosh from a sad song brought by the invalids:

At Crimea, over the sea,

*Ow yearning, ow ...*⁸⁵ (*The Burden of Our Goodness*, p. 145)

So, in the Second World War, unlike the father who, on a similar occasion, despite all the obstacles finds his way home, the sons are gone forever. They are to remain in another's soil for eternity. And, there is nobody shedding tears on their grave, if there is any of course, because both of Onake's sons have died in the war. Similarly, many expatriates never come back. Consequently, there are few left to defend the integrity of the nation. However, what matters most is that the exiles spend the last moments of their life among strangers, surrounded by unfamiliar things. And, the following passage provides an insight into their life away from home. Actually, this is the only passage, in the whole novel, in which Drutse manages to depict, although indirectly, the life of the displaced subaltern. Thus, the lengthy passage that follows provides a vision of the two different lives a (subaltern) soldier lead — the real and the imaginary one.

⁸⁵ Unul din baieti a dovedit sa trimita citeva scrisori, celalalt n-a trimis nici un rind. Au tacut vreme multa, vreme grea, apoi despre soarta lor a aflat Carabus dintr-un cintec trist, adus de invalizi:

La Crimeea, peste mare,

Mai dorule mai, ... (*Povara Bunatatii Noastre*, p. 145)

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Nikolai sat at the back of the garden and smiled, with the hands forgotten on the knees and the head dropped over one shoulder. It was the smile of an alienated being that met another equally alienated and lonely person. He was no longer a soldier. He no longer wore epaulettes. He had no car and no automatic gun. He finally came back to his home and was happy.

He changed everything around. He planted white birches among which his childhood passed instead of the orchard. He built a log house, here at the back of the garden, and filled the steppes with thick fir forests. He kissed his wife and caressed his children. Now, he was sitting for a while because he couldn't believe in the great wonder of the return.

Onake Caraboosh cleaned the perspiration on his forehead as the earth started to reel under his legs. He understood what the war means for Russia only now, in this very moment. He realised the bitter alienation that soldiers experience, the fierce yearning that tortures their souls here, in the steppe which they see for the first time only now. Deep and painful thoughts, a half an hour desertion, a half an hour's encounter with the family at a crossroad, a little imagined light ... well, Onache had been a soldier too. He had looked with wet, absent eyes into the distance too. He also caressed Tincuta somewhere faraway, in the heart of Russia, although, in her whole life, Tincuta never left Ciutura.⁸⁶ (*The Burden of Our Goodness*, p. 158)

⁸⁶ Cu minile uitate pe genunchi, cu capul scapat pe un umar, Nikolai statea in fundul gradinii pe-un manunchi de curpeni si zimbea. Era zimbetul unui om instrainat, ce a intilnit un alt om tot asa de instrainat si singurel. Nu mai era ostas, nu avea nici epoleti, nici masina, nici arma automata. Se intorsea, in sfirsit, la casa lui, si se bucura omul.

A schimbat totul in jur. In locul livezii si-a sadit mesteceni albi, cu care isi petrecuse copilaria. A ridicat o casa de birne aici in fundul gradinii, a umplut cimpiile cu paduri dese de brad. Si-a sarutat nevasta, si-a mingiiat in voie copiii. Acum s-a asezat pe-o clipa, caci nu putea crede in marea minune a intoarcerii sale.

Onache Carabus si-a sters fruntea de sudoare, caci pamintul a prins a i se legana sub picioare. Abia acum, in clipa asta, a inteles ce inseamna razboiul pentru Rusia. Abia acum a inteles ce amar de instrainare poarta soldatii, ce dor cumplit la macina sufletele, aici, in cimpia pe care o vad pentru prima oara. Ginduri adinci si dureroase, o dezertare pe-o jumatate de ceas, o intilnire cu ai tai la o rascruce de drum, un pic de lumina inchipuita — apoi ca a fost si Onache ostas, a privit si el odata cu ochii buimaci si umezi undeva in departare, a mingiiat-o si el pe Tincuta departe, in inima Rusiei, cu toate ca Tincuta in viata ei n-a trecut hotarele Ciuturii. (*Povara Bunatatiei Noastre*, p. 158)

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First, it seems that the narrator sympathises with the Russian soldier(s) and forgets the tragedy of the Moldovans. In this sense, the above presented description results quite puzzling. Ion Simut (2008a) even states that none of the Romanian literary works presents a more favourable picture of the Russian soldier than the chapter “The Luck”, from the first part of the duology (p. 174). One might even think that this is a proof of Drutse’s loyalty to the Soviet power. After all, it might be that the narrator identifies with the protagonist and does sympathise with Nikolai. However, it is most likely that the sympathies are for the simple people and not the power (further analysis of the novel shall prove it).

Second, the narrator’s approach to the stranger reveals his character’s great human qualities. Otherwise, the title of the novel *The Burden of Our Goodness* would make no sense. Despite all the personal tragedies, Onake is still able to feel pity for a stranger that is far away from his own home. Thus, Nikolai is a stranger that has entered the Moldovan’s house but didn’t want to enter his home. He is a stranger that hardly eats anything from what the host offers him and always sleeps in his car. The Russian is a stranger, who despite all the differences, is waiting for Onake to return from the field just like any Moldovan peasant—or the two sons that the Red Army took to death—would do, when left at home. But, he would never admit it, pretending he is waiting for a friend. The man is a stranger that in this short moment of fantasy and recollection has accepted Onake’s company. He is a stranger ever since he has had to leave Russian land for the southern peripheries, the border where the conflict is fiercer. In short, Nikolai is a stranger in Bessarabia. Otherwise, why would the writer transliterate the Russian name *Николай* but preserve what is colloquially named Russian “k” in Moldova. Also, the soldier is always addressed by his full name, no diminutive being employed.

However, there is also another side to the story. What if the narrator’s purpose is not just to express empathy? What if this is the perfect way of displaying what a Moldovan expatriate feels far away from home, without raising the suspicions of the censorship. Thus, the novelist shows by means of Onake and Nikolai that the Moldovans also experience alienation. Children of the plains—they have grown up in mud brick houses surrounded by orchards—that have had to live in log houses (in best case scenarios) among white birches, or in thick fir forests, far away from the family.

So, Onake is not feeling at home in that unreal world, “the earth reeled under his feet”. Just like Nikolai, an outsider in the birch forests, Onake has once crossed hundreds of thousands

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of kilometres in search of the familiar. Likewise, Onake, as he himself admits it, tortured by desperate homesickness, has made this travel in his imagination plenty of times before he finally reaches home. However, Nikolai's ultimate fate is unknown. It is only revealed that as an alien in Ciutura he often travels back to his imaginary homeland. This complex description provides another insight into what home is. Thus, apart from being something material, home is something we carry in our heart. Thus, homeland is more than just a place. It is more than a place in which one grows up and builds a home. Home is a place one never leaves, or would rather never leave. And, when one does leave it, he/she always returns to it, even if it's only in one's reveries.

Nevertheless, not all the expatriates miss home. Some of them chose to go to war and once far away try to build a different home in a new place. For example, Onake's son-in-law, Mircea, is one of those who voluntarily joins the Red Army.

The Bessarabians were going without asking anyone. They went by foot to the East, to Russia. Many of them changed their mind when reaching the Dniester and returned home. Many were made prisoners in the approaching line of the battle-front. Meanwhile, Mircea seemed to have disappeared. One morning, he left with the knapsack on the shoulder, and was gone. Nobody saw or heard anything about him. Nutza didn't know what to do for three years. ... In the spring of 44, when aunt Safta held close to the bosom the first letter from him, Nutza was like a fish out of water. [...] For a week she was writing him every day. She sent seven letters in a row. And, she was beside herself until she got the answer. He answered. [...] (Then the Ciutureans) started to send him letters quite often. Nutza felt there was something wrong. Mircea was answering with great delay. Then, his letters, at first surprised and then joking, became very short — two or three lines together with "Dear wife". So, a rumour started circling about the village: "Mircea has got another woman, another wife, a lover or whatever."⁸⁷
(*The Burden of Our Goodness*, p. 162-164)

⁸⁷ Basarabienii plecau fiecare de capul lui. Se duceau pe jos, tinind un singur drum: spre rasarit, in Rusia. Multi din ei, ajungind la Nistru, se razgindeau, se intorceau acasa, altii, calcati de linia frontului, au cazut prizonieri. Cit despre Mircea, parca ar fi intrat in pamint. S-a dus intr-o dimineata cu traista in spate si dus a fost. Nimeni sa-l fi vazut, sa fi auzit ceva de dinsul.

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The first lines of this excerpt refer to the events of 1941 when the Romanian Army, as already mentioned in the previous chapter, liberated Bessarabia. As it can be seen people are confused. At first, carried by the wave of retreating militaries, they join the Red Army. However, when the latter is beyond the territory of the province, they return home. However, others consciously embrace the life of an expatriate. Unlike Onake's Russian tenant, Nikolai and Onake himself, Mircea is not dreaming with home and beloved wife. He lets the distance alienate him from everything what home is. Apparently, the only connection with homeland is his mother, Safta, a widow whose husband dies in the war; "a mother-figure" which according to Boehmer (1995) "symbolizes the integrity of the past" (p. 225) or, considering Ania Loomba (1998), the nation itself. But there is another woman, a mysterious woman that seems to lure him to (an-) "other" home. Apparently, she is the only one to solace the expatriate in his misery.

Mircea Moraru, a dark-skinned sergeant, with the slowness of a Russian from upon the Volga, searched slowly the photos his comrades took out. He found a good word for everyone. But, he neither took out letters nor boasted with the photo of his wife. His return home was weird. One might think that he was not returning at all, that the regiment was changing its dislocation and he was moving with the army without knowing well where to and for how long.

His forehead was frowned. There were lots of sad faces in the goods train that were fool of demobilized soldiers. After a hard war, the country was still in ruin. Many soldiers lost their houses, and had no place to return to, or anyone to meet them. So, army became their home. War was their job, the common kettle—the everyday bread. Now, after demobilisation, they remained alone again, and their life had no meaning. The lucky ones felt their pain and pitied them in silence trying to speak about home as little as possible. Mircea Moraru was pitied by

Vreme de trei ani si ceva Nuta nu stia ce sa faca. [...] In primavara lui patruzeci si patru, cind matusa Safta a strins la piept prima scrisorica de la Mircea, Nuta se zbatea ca pestele pe uscat. [...] Vreme de-o saptamina ii tot scria zi de zi, a trimis vreo sapte scrisori la rind, si pina n-a venit raspunsul, nu mai stia pe ce lume traieste.

Mircea i-a raspuns. [...] Il (ciuturenii) tot indesau cu scrisorile. Nuta a simtit ca e ceva necurat la mijloc. Mircea raspundea cu multa intirziere. Scrisorile lui, mai intii mirate, apoi glumete, in sfirsit au devenit scurte cum nu se mai poate — doua-trei rinduri cu „draga nevasta” cu tot, si iata ca sa raspindit prin sat o veste nemaipomenita: Mircea o are pe alta. Nevasta, ibovnica, ce i-o fi fiind ea acolo, dar o are. (*Povara Bunatatii Noastre*, pp. 162-164)

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them too, until a sharp-eyed rifleman noticed the corner of a photo peering out of his pocket...⁸⁸ (*The Burden of Our Goodness*, p. 174)

First, it is quite striking that Mircea is no longer described as a boy of the steppes but as a “Russian from upon the Volga”. It seems that the years away from home have alienated him, have converted the Moldovan into the “other”. Apparently, Mircea really has another life, and he does not remember anything about the old one. He has forgotten he has left a young wife—a wife he took without asking the father’s permission—waiting for him back home. He is not reading letters from home. He does not boast with any photo. And, he does not even enjoy the return to the motherland for which he has been fighting for the past years. Moreover, he carries close to the heart a misterius photo. In this context, one inevitably thinks about Boehmer (1995) that spoke about another side of the empire. According to the postcolonial scholar, “the Empire as blank space or mystery offered strategies of silence and sudden metamorphosis, which helped to end a plot, or resolved problems by erasing them” (pp. 28-29). Thus, Mircea seems to have escaped the troublesome and everchanging reality of Moldova by erasing anything related to it. The Moldovan boy has become the perfect war machine whose only concern is the army. Actually, in his absence his abandoned wife receives a medal and special help from the Soviet authorities for the particularly good service of her husband. Consequently, when he returns Nutza:

[...] doesn't recognise him at all! However, who returned was another person. Of course, she liked the sergeant that came back, maybe even more than

⁸⁸ Mircea Moraru, sergent smolit, cu incetineala unui rus de pe Volga, cerceta domol pozele scoase de tovarasi, gasea cite-un cuvint bun sa spuna fiecaruia, dar nici scrisori nu scotea la lumina, nici cu fotografia nevastei nu se lauda. Intoarcerea lui spre casa parea cam ciudata — iti venea a crede ca el nici nu se intoarce. Pur si simplu regimentul isi schimba dislocarea si el se muta impreuna cu armata, fara a sti bine unde anume si pentru cita vreme se vor opri.

Avea fruntea cam posomorita. Erau prin marfarele incarcate cu oaste demobilizata destui tristi. Trecuta printr-un greu razboi, tara mai zacea inca in ruine, multi ostasi isi pierdusera casele, nu mai aveau unde se intoarce, nu mai avea cine-i intimpina. Si ei isi facusera din armata casa. Razboiul era meseria lor, cazanul — masa cea de toate zilele. Acum, demobilizati fiind, iara ramineau singuri, fara capatii. Norocosii le simteau durerea, ii jeleau tacuti, cautind sa aduca cit mai rar vorba de casa. Mircea Moraru incepuse si el a fi jelit de altii, pina cind un bun tintas a zarit un colt de fotografie ce se itea din buzunarul hainei [...] (*Povara Bunatatii Noastre*, p. 174)

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the one she saw off. But, she knew not how to come close to him.⁸⁹ (*The Burden of Our Goodness*, p. 187)

This short excerpt confirms the changes in the personality of the hero. It seems that the four-year exile has marked a considerable alteration in Mircea. The change is so great that even the wife, who has known him ever since he was a child, does not recognise him. It seems that the lad she has seen off to war has not returned home. The person that has come to her house is much to her likeness but they are strangers. He tells her nothing about the life he has been leading for the last years. But, this mystery is finally resolved in the following excerpt:

He saw the face and remained petrified, breathless—the young lady wasn't smiling anymore. Czech girls didn't like to be lied to, they trust your word only once. "What! I really did not tell you I was married?" what's to be done, he had forgotten to tell her the truth when it was the moment, and now it was late. The young lady wanted to be taken home, in that very instant. But, the way to her house was long and hard. Mircea sighed. He sighed so hard that he felt a sharp pain in the back head. After this sigh, he felt as irascible and stunned as he was when he left. He gouged out with the nail the address written by the girl's hand to uproot the dream completely from his soul. He took from the wall a big frame where all of his and his wife's dead relatives lied behind the glass. He made a place among them, and buried the young lady in a white shirt. He put out his cigarette and entered the house.⁹⁰ (*The Burden of Our Goodness*, p. 189)

⁸⁹ [...] nu-l mai cunoaste! [...] S-a intors in sa altul. Nu-i vorba, ii placea si sergentul ce s-a intors. Ii placea poate mai mult decat cel pe care il petrecuse, dar nu stia cum sa se apropie de el. (*Povara Bunatatii Noastre*, p. 187)

⁹⁰ I-a prins chipul si a impietrit, i s-a taiat suflarea, caci domnisoara nu mai zimbea. Fetelor din Cehia nu le placea sa fie inselate, fetele din Cehia te cred numai o singura data pe cuvint.

„Cum, chiar sa nu-ti fi spus ca-s insurat?!”

Ce sa-i faci, s-a intimplat asa ca a uitat sa-i spuna adevarul la vreme, iar acum era tirziu. Domnisoara se cerea dusa acasa numaidecit, in aceeasi clipa, iar drumul pina la casa ei era lung si greu. Mircea a oftat. A oftat adinc, ca l-a sagetat o durere in ceafa. Si, dupa o asemenea oftare, s-a simtit tot asa de suparacios si buimacit cum era atunci cind plecase. Ca sa-si smulga din suflet visul cu radacini cu tot, a scobit cu unghia adresa scrisa de mina fetei. A coborit din perete o rama mare, unde zaceau, ingropate dupa sticla, raposatele rude ale lui si ale nevastei. A facut un loc printre ele, si-a ingropat domnisoara in bluza alba, apoi, strivind in tinda tigara cu calciul, a intrat in casa. (*Povara Bunatatii Noastre*, p. 189)

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As it turns out the dark-skinned sergeant has had (an-)“other” home, or at least has been on the point of having one. Nobody knows how the story would have ended should the exile last a bit longer. And, if the forces of the mother land—under the wise management of Mircea’s father-in-law—wouldn’t have joined in an effort to bring him home, he would have probably chosen exile over home. Moreover, the photo hidden next to Mircea’s heart is not the photo of his wife—Nutza, but, the photo of (an-) “other” girl, a Czech girl. Thus, Mircea is identified with the conqueror. He is the man that tricks women into loving him. Then he abandons one for the other. Consequently, Mircea’s women seem to represent what Hilborn (2011) defined as the violence committed against the nation by an alien force (p. 61). However, Mircea makes an effort to overcome alienation and gives up his expatriate life. To avoid any temptation of estrangement he symbolically buries the “other” girl among other dead relatives, and erases her address.

On the other hand, another category of exile is represented by Nutza’s first love, Nica. Unlike her husband, who has joined the Russian army, Nica has chosen to defend the integrity of the Romanian nation-state even when the war seems to be lost. Therefore, he has become a partisan. A passage relating the kind of life political exiles like Nica faced comes below:

Suddenly, Nica realised that if he eats the whole bread, he will have no strength to go back to the wood. But, he had to return at any cost, because from there he was going to Romania to look for his wife and child. On the other hand, he couldn’t return with them to the village. There were sentinels, concentration camps, tribunals waiting for him in Ciutura.⁹¹ (*The Burden of Our Goodness*, p. 212)

This short excerpt is particularly powerful in terms of describing the fate of a Moldovan exile. Apart from its direct meaning, the word “bread” is used symbolically. It is not the food that

⁹¹ [...] Nica s-a gindit deodata ca, daca maninca pinea toata, nu va mai avea putere sa se intoarca inapoi in padure. Iar de intors trebuia sa se intoarca cu orice pret, pentru ca de acolo sa treaca in Romania, sa-si caute nevasta si copilul. Pe de alta parte, nici cu ei in sat nu se putea intoarce. In Ciutura il asteptau santinela, lagarul, tribunalul. (*Povara Bunatatii Noastre*, p. 212)

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makes Nica's way back to the woods difficult. Bread⁹² is merely an embodiment of homeland because for him it is nothing but the product of the land which he and his ancestors have been fighting for, and have ploughed for centuries. On the other hand, it is well known that during much of the Second World War the woods were the home of many patriots fighting for the liberation of homeland. Nica is one of them, but also he is a peasant from a peasants' family. So, it is no wonder he is afraid that the voice of the land shall prove more powerful than the instinct of self-preservation. However, as this very excerpt shows the odds are by far unfavourable. His destiny is to be an exile forever. It was either concentration camps or be far from the parents' home but with his wife and child. And, as the excerpt below shows, both he and his lifelong companions understand it.

Mircea and Nutza didn't move, somehow seeing him off, waiting for him to turn back, wave to them, but he didn't, and then Mircea thought that what they do, staying and waiting to be waved to, is wrong. Their destiny was much too different. The two of them were to return home, to the hearth, the same evening. Meanwhile, he had many roads ahead. And, who knows what was expecting him on those roads—maybe concentration camps, maybe a bullet, maybe cold and alien people.⁹³ (*The Burden of Our Goodness*, p. 214)

Apparently, the tragedy of the exile is that he is to never find rest. Although, Nica has made his choice in favour of his wife and son, his further life remains unknown even to his parents. It is like if he would have disappeared off the face of the earth. But, unlike Mircea, he has been forced into it. Thus, his former friends might be right. And, though he has chosen to escape the tribunals, and the Soviet sentinels of the village, he is to never find home again. After all, as it has been mentioned above, home is where one has grown up and where one's mother is

⁹² Moreover, in the Moldovan tradition, bread is present in all the rituals related to the key moments of one's life. Bread is the most important gift in baptisms, weddings, burials. Also, the braided bread is the key gift in Christmas, and Easter. And, bread and salt is what Moldovans use to welcome their guests. The folk wisdom associates the bread and salt on the table with the people's welfare.

⁹³ Mircea si Nutza stateau locului, oarecum petrecindu-l, asteptau sa se intoarca, sa le faca cu mina, dar el nu se mai intorcea, si atunci Mircea s-a gindit ca ei nu fac bine stind asa si asteptind sa li se mai faca si cu mina. Soarta lor era prea felurita. Ei doi urmau sa se intoarca in aceeasi sara la casa lor, la vatra lor, iar acela mai avea inca multe drumuri si apoi cine stie ce-l pindea pe drumurile celea — poate lagare, poate un glonte, poate o lume rece si straina. (*Povara Bunatatii Noastre*, p. 214)

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constantly waiting for her son to return. And, now homeland is under Russian control. Moreover, the woman he once loved is married to his war opponent, the sergeant of the Red Army—Mircea. Surprisingly, the latter has done nothing to capture his war opponent. He has just stood there while the Romanian officer is escaping without looking back.

Unfortunately, Nica's is just one of the many other human lives that the Second World War has mutilated. And, the tragedy of the Bessarabians ripped from the hearth of the motherland is also depicted in *Leaves of Yearning*, another novel by Drutse. The title itself comes to suggest the tragic destiny and the feelings that the expatriates experience away from home. And, for many of them the only way to keep patria close is to send letters of yearning home. This is why:

Every morning, whether it's cold, whether it rains, or whether the wind is blowing, two children appear on the bridge from the brink of the village. A little girl of about six, wrapped up awkwardly into an old head-kertchief—it seems she did the wrapping herself—and a slightly older little boy hidden behind the collar of his own coarse-stuff peasant coat.⁹⁴ (*Leaves of Yearning*, p. 310)

These are the opening lines of the first chapter of the novel. And, as the reading continues it becomes known that the young ones come to the bridge daily to wait for the postman whose bag smelling of trenches, gun fire, and iodine is carrying letters from the battlefield. Thus, there is Trofimash, waiting for letters from his elder brother, and his young companion (Carutzashoo Anastasia)—from her dad. They meet aunt Artina there. She is waiting for letters from her husband who has been in hospital, has got cured and sent back into the battle. And, uncle Andrei has joined the party but was not talking to anyone because half a year ago his only son has died in the war.

So far, the story seems very similar to that presented in *The Burden of Our Goodness*. On the one hand, both novels narrate the story of sons, husbands, fathers and brothers carried away by the war. On the other hand, there is the story of the fathers, wives, daughters and brothers

⁹⁴ De-i frig, de ploua, de bate vintul, in fiecare dimineata pe podul de la marginea satului rasar doi copii. O fetita de vreo sase ani, infasurata stingaci intr-o salinca veche — pe semne, se imbrobodise singura — si un baietel ceva mai rasarit, ascuns dupa gulerul propriului sau sumanel. (*Frunze de Dor*, p. 310)

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waiting for news from them, waiting for them to come home. But, this novel is unlike the previous one in which the protagonist's sons have disappeared somewhere in Crimea and the narrator only spoke about the strong pain through symbols and metaphorical language. The pain of the whole family at the loss of the elder son appears as under a microscope in *Leaves of Yearning*. However, before the tragedy becomes known, the narrator presents the great love for home the boy has. His exile does not alienate him from the family. Thus, consider the following excerpts:

Almost a year passed since Toader's clothes were arranged in the big sitting room (casa mare), [...] almost a year since the three of them went to the train station and only two returned.⁹⁵ (*Leaves of Yearning*, p. 314)

After the recruitment, the elder son has become the most expected guest of the family. The boy's absence definitely hurt and all his belongings are kept in the holiest place of a Moldovan house — casa mare⁹⁶. Apparently, life stopped the moment he left. And, Toader is expected to return for the things to take their normal course. Meanwhile, the father has been torturing himself for not giving his son any advice that could keep him safe. Thus, he is paralysed when the postman hands him a telegram, just the way he has been when he has learned about his son's recruitment into the Soviet Army. He is afraid to read it. So, he comes with the bit of news and shares it with the family:

- The telegram is from Toader. I have just received it.

In an instant Domnica got down and in the next one pressed to the chimney with her face next to the glim she read:

"I pass through Balti on the dawn of sixteen if you can Toadere."⁹⁷
(*Leaves of Yearning*, p. 315)

⁹⁵ Era aproape un an de cind au dus straiete lui Toader si le-au asezat in casa cea mare, [...] aproape un an de cind s-au dus ei trei la gara si s-au intors doi. (*Frunze de Dor*, p. 314)

⁹⁶ A big sitting room, usually designated for receiving guests and celebrating important life events

⁹⁷ - Ii de la Toader telegrama. Amu-ia am primit-o. Intr-o clipa Domnica era jos, iar in cealalta, lipita de horn, cu fata linga opait, citea: „Noaptea spre saispnezece trec prin Balti daca puteti Toadere” (*Frunze de Dor*, p. 315)

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Thus, despite the father's fear that the telegram might be an omen of bad news, it brings joy to the family. Consequently, the good news is that the boy is alive. Moreover, the love and memory of home is alive too. The last words of the telegram come as a proof of the son's great love and care for his parents— "if you can". Apparently, even away from home he remembers and cares about all the troubles the poor peasants have. His homesickness makes him want to see them. However, he knows his parents might lack the means to come and see him even for a few hours. Thus, the last three words provoke a storm of feelings in the heart of the poor mother that is yearning for her son. So, the parents afraid that they might not reach Balti in time start their trip in the middle of the night. They are determined to see their son, as it later turns out, for the last time. And the next line, as well as the many others that cannot be included into the body of the dissertation, shows that the whole family is worried. However, the youngest member of the family, Trofimash, is still too naïve to understand what war is about, and his worries are about the wrong issue. When everyone is running busy about the house, and preparing small treats for the expatriate soldier, his trouble is:

- What does brother write, does he come with weapons?⁹⁸ (*Leaves of Yearning*, p. 317)

Although, at first sight it might seem naïve, through the mouth of a child the narrator expresses a painful truth. The life of an expatriate soldier is all about guns. But, also coming home with guns might be interpreted as a hope for the war to have finished. Apparently, like all the children, Trofimash sees war like a game, an adventure in which the participants get different kind of trophies. Thus, all he wants is his brother to be back.

However, as it appears later on in the novel, he also wants to grow up and be a hero like his brother who is defending his homeland. This is why he is asking about guns and caps. Finally, the women of the family give in to his pleads. So, mother gives Trofimash the money to go to the cooperative and buy a cap.

- Look! I give you 30 rubles.⁹⁹ (*Leaves of Yearning*, p. 376)

⁹⁸ - Da cum scrie badita — vine cu arudii cu tot? (*Frunze de Dor*, p. 317)

⁹⁹ - Uite, iti dau treizeci de ruble. (*Frunze de Dor*, p. 376)

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But, the boy's surprise is great when he comes home with the following news:

— Daddy ... I ... lost the rubles ...

The hand rose from the knee, Trofimash bent, moving away his head. Heart beatings followed, one, two, three, but he saw no stars. Finally, he felt the hand on his head caressing his hair.

“He didn't get it...”, Trofimash thought rubbing his cheeks with the sleeve and explained once more:

— I lost the money mother gave me to buy a cap.

— It's ok, my dear. Trofimash looked puzzled at him. The father rose quietly, took him by his hand and took him to the big sitting room. Domnica was crying with her face hidden in the pillows.

— Dad, why is she crying?

But instead of saying anything, uncle Zinel took Toader's green peacock feathered hat from the hanger and put it on his head.

— Now, you can wear it.¹⁰⁰ (*Leaves of Yearning*, pp. 380- 381)

This passage is crowning the picture of the tragedy that has come over the family when the elder son has been taken to war and has never come back to his home because:

— He died, the poor one, died among strangers ...¹⁰¹ (*Leaves of Yearning*, p. 383)

¹⁰⁰ - Tatuta... Eu... am prapadit rublele...

Mina s-a ridicat de pe genunchi, Trofimas s-a aplecat, ferindu-si capul. O bataie de inima, doua, trei, dar stelele nu i se aprind inaintea ochilor. In sfirsit, a simtit mina pe cap, netezindu-i percica.

„N-a inteles...”, s-a gindit Trofimas, stergindu-si obrazii cu mineca. A mai lamurit odata:

- Am pierdut banii... care mi i-a dat mama pentru sleapca.

- Nu-i nimic, dragul tatei.

Trofimas s-a uitat nedumerit la dinsul.

Parintele s-a ridicat incetisor, l-a luat de mina si l-a dus in casa cea mare. Domnica plingea cu fata ascunsa in perne.

- Tata, ce plinge?

In loc de raspuns, badea Zinel a luat din cui palaria cea verde cu pana de paun a lui badita Toader si i-a pus-o in cap.

- Iaca, amu poti s-o porti... (*Frunze de Dor*, pp. 380-381)

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Gheorghe's mother is the one to utter the painful truth. She is the one to bring her son the news of the death of their only friend. However, these lines do not reflect only the pain of family and friends. As Coroban (2008) put it, it is a "tragedy in a miniature" (p. 234) as it reflects the pain of the whole nation that has lost its sons while fighting their master's war. Moreover, even some of the "lucky" ones—that have survived the war—wore the mark of exile for the rest of their life. Such is the case of Ikimash, who managed to survive on the battlefield but had to struggle everyday with the consequences.

He turned out a great sniper when taken to the war. He was decorated several times. Then, he got hospitalized after a bombardment, was demobilized, and came back to Razeshilor Vale—all in just six months!

"Lucky", said those who got to see something in their life.

However, Ikimash's luck was relative. Although, he was always partying, the poor was sad because from the war he came with some horrible disturbances, which made him faint occasionally. Unconscious, he was struggling his convulsions, with foam in his mouth, and then he rose, and wandered sad and stunned through the village for a long time. Then, he took the road to old Danutza's house, because, strangely but that ball of melodies that came out of the old man's violin was the only cure that helped him get well and bring back his good mood.¹⁰² (*Leaves of Yearning*, p. 349)

Apparently, the annexation of Bessarabia to the USSR lead to the slaying of the youth that is the future of a nation. The expatriate soldiers that have participated in the First or Second World War have lost either their life or their physical and/or moral integrity. Thus, the loss of

¹⁰¹ - O cazut, sarmanul, o cazut si el prin straini... (*Frunze de Dor*, p. 383)

¹⁰² Luat la razboi, s-a dovedit a fi un tintas cu mare faima, a fost de citeva ori decorat, a nimerit la spital dupa un bombardament, a fost demobilizat, s-a intors inapoi in Valea Razesilor — si toate aiestea in numai sase luni de zile!

„A avut noroc”, ziceau cei care vazusera si ei lume in viata lor.

Norocul lui Ichimas era insa relativ — desi o ducea din petrecere in petrecere, era trist, sarmanul, caci s-a intors de la razboi cu niste tulburari groaznice, care la un moment dat il faceau sa lesine. Se zbatea la pamint in nestire, scrisnind cu spuma la gura, apoi, cind se ridica de jos, multa vreme umbla prin sat trist, buimac, si in cele din urma pornea spre casuta lui mos Danuta, caci, ciudat lucru, dar ghemul cela de melodii din vioara batrinului era singurul leac in stare sa-l refaca si sa-i readuca buna dispozitie. (*Frunze de Dor*, p. 349)

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those that have returned home seems especially painful. Although, they are granted the great gift of life, there is something that they have lost in the war that they shall never be able to recuperate. It seems, though, that they can only overcome the loss by returning to the hearth of the nation, to its traditions—symbolised in this excerpt by the melodies of old Danutza.

However, the destiny is preparing even greater troubles to the families of the expatriate soldiers. Such is for example the case of Nica's parents, from *The Burden of Our Goodness*.

Unfortunately, Onache's house was not the only sullen house. Haralambie cel Destept's house was also doleful, full of sorrow regardless of the fact that Haralambie's son, Nica, fled to Romania with family and all, and practically had nothing to complain about. However, crestfallen as it was, it couldn't look into people's eyes. As a consequence, both Haralambie cel Destept and the fool of Onache began to be called to the village soviet during the night. It was investigated thoroughly how it could be that two houses— one on the small hill, and the other on the high hill, live with the same mood, while the masters of the houses almost don't speak to each other. And, when summoned, they remained in silence one in a corner and the other in another corner. In a fortnight Haralambie cel Destept was deported and his whole wealth divided among the poor.¹⁰³ (*The Burden of Our Goodness*, p. 149)

Apparently, exiles whom the wars have deprived of home(land) are by far the only victims of the Soviet policy. This excerpt reveals another aspect of the subalterns' changing reality. After taking the youth of Moldova to war, the Kremlin has settled in every part of the occupied territories. Consequently, the new force imposed by the Soviet metropolis has proceeded to the annihilation of the state enemies, as described in the previous chapter. And, if

¹⁰³ Din pacate, casa lui Onache nu era singura casa incrunzata. Casa lui Haralambie cel Destept statea si ea amarita, plina de nechez cu toate ca fiul lui Haralambie, Nica, se refugiase in Romania cu sotie cu tot si, in fond, nu prea avea ce se plinge. Totusi, inraita cum era, nu avea ochi a se uita la lume casa ceea, si iata ca noptile au inceput a fi chemati amindoi la sovietul satesc — Hralambie cel Destept si prostul cela de Onache. Se cerceta in amanunt cum poate fi explicat cazul ca doua case — una de pe dealul cel mic, alta de pe dealul cel mare — traiesc cu aceeasi dispozitie, pe cind stapinii caselor aproape ca nu-si vorbesc unul altuia si, cind sint chemati, stau tacuti unul intr-un ungher, celalalt — in alt ungher.

Peste vreo doua saptamini Haralambie cel Destept a fost ridicat, intreaga avere a fost impartita printre saraci. (*Povara Bunatatii Noastre*, p. 149)

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the new power cannot reach out to those who have fought openly against it they punish the latter's families by deporting them to the bare lands of the empire.

Thus, given the fact that this excerpt refers to the mid 40's, the period immediately after the Second World War, the reasons behind the deportation of a whole family—just one of the many Bessarabian families as has been proven in *History as Collective Memory*... — are quite clear. First, this family, just like Onake, does not welcome the new power that has taken away their son(s). Second, this is the family of a partisan that is fighting against the new regime. And, last but by far the least, this is if not the richest, then one of the richest families of the village, the so called kulaks¹⁰⁴ which were deported to Siberia in Stalin's epoch.

So, going back to Nica's story, it is quite obvious that should he not flee to Romania he would have certainly been punished. And, the deportation of his parents is not the only proof of this outcome. When, the narrator is telling the story of Mircea's return, one of the first things he mentions is that Nica's big, beautiful and solid house, one of the few unaltered ones, is transformed into a school. So, his property is also nationalised by the Soviet authorities.

Similarly, in *The Spire* the narrator exposes the fact that the property of the kulaks is not the only property that is confiscated by the Soviet authorities. The other group of Moldovans affected by the policy of the communist regime is the clergy. Thus, the author provides a proof of this, using a flashback, in the following excerpt:

In 1944, when the priest fled to Romania, the new power made Simionel the master of all the priest's possessions. But, see here stubbornness, he didn't want to take anything. And, even now, he continues to live in the shack in which he lived when he was a servant.¹⁰⁵ (*The Spire*, p. 413)

Indeed, 1944 is the year of the second wave of refugees from Bessarabia and Bucovina. Given the Soviet invasion, the government of Antonescu has elaborated a program of salvation of the best national staff, mainly intellectuals. Thus, the clergy is one of the groups included in

¹⁰⁴ A peasant in Russia wealthy enough to own a farm and hire labour. Emerging after the emancipation of serfs in the 19th century the kulaks resisted Stalin's forced collectivization, but millions were arrested, exiled, or killed.

¹⁰⁵ In patruzeci si patru, cind preotul a fugit in Romania, noua putere l-a facut pe Simionel stapin pe toata averea popii, dar ca sa vezi tu incapatinare — n-a vrut sa ia nimic. Traieste si acum in cocioaba ceea unde traise cind argatea.

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the program. Moreover, known the efforts of the Soviets to eradicate Christianity in the controlled regions, the fate of the priest, if he wouldn't have fled the country, is easy to be imagined. He would have probably been one of the many Moldovans that beginning with 1941 are exiled to Siberia, or arrested, executed and buried in common graves.

Moreover, in *The Spire* the author approaches the case of another type of exile, the auto-exiles. Drutse gives a voice to the wronged ones. He makes it possible for the people to learn the "other" truth about the system that the so-called igualitarian communist regime is promoting. Apparently, education is used to lure the youth away from their families, away from their roots.

This is the case of the young intellectual, Horia, who in the process of his professional formation abandons his mother. The problem of finding and defining a new "home" is the major problem the young specialist faces in the so-called voluntary exile. He is bound to experience physical and emotional confrontations with the "new" land. Thus, when he realizes the magnitude of the disillusionment he thinks about home:

The sweet dozing of spring was probably looking for him in Bucovina, or spying on him along the streets of the village from the north of Moldova, where he was teaching, because this was also a problem: What's its name and where was it, his true homeland?¹⁰⁶ (*The Spire*, p. 369)

Consequently, according to the plot of the novel, the protagonist, Horia Holban, is lured to further places in his rush of professional advancement. First, he leaves home for Chisinau, the capital of MSSR. Then, he dreams about Moscow—the heart of the metropolis, where he wants to study to get his PhD. However, the emotional crisis he goes through, while living in the new place, makes him realize his estrangement. Though, a citizen of a great Union, from the moment he left his mother's home, Horia is not completely at home in any place. Thus, the choice of spring for the setting of immediate time is not accidental. The season of revival also revives the spirit of the protagonist, and intensifies his longing for home(land). Moreover, spring has always

¹⁰⁶ Dulcea motaiala a primaverii l-o fi cautind, pe semne, prin Bucovina, l-o fi pindind pe ulitile satului din nordul Moldovei, unde dascalea copiii, pentru ca mai era si asta o problema: cum se Chema si unde era ea — adevarata lui bastina? (*Clopotnita*, p. 369)

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been the season when the peasants returned to the land. Thus, no wonder Horia doubts where his true homeland is.

Nevertheless, as the young teacher is pondering the dilemma, he realises that for a worker in a collective farm the answer is quite clear. Yet, for a young man with higher education even two months on the hospital bed are not enough to decide in favour of Verejeni or Petreni, two train stations, two destinations, two places that used to be home once.

So, the excerpt above reveals the fact that when Horia chooses to leave his mother's village he gradually breaks away from the roots. He gradually stops being a peasant. And, unlike his ancestors he is to find his own sense of life. Consequently, he creates his own family away from home by marrying a fellow teacher student he has met at the university. But, the unwritten rules of the "new" communist society to which he has been aspiring, make him experience profound emotional confrontations with the "new" world. Subsequently, this leads to his physical and emotional exhaustion and his farther hospitalization. When the return hour comes, he is tortured by doubt, where to go, to the house he has built or to the house of his mother that he has grown up in. The protagonist only encounters the answer due to a mysterious conjecture of events. And, he finally turns up in Capriana, the village where he used to live with his wife and son.

Still, as mentioned above, Horia's initial goal has not been to become a teacher in a village school. In his student years he has been working hard to get a dwelling space in Chisinau. And, everything seems to work out well for him. He has the support of one of his teachers who first helps him find a room in the student hostel, then a job. However, the young historian is so dedicated to his job (the conservation of cultural monuments) that gradually he converts into a threat to the communist authorities. His job is viewed as propaganda for nationalism. Thus, he is exiled from Chisinau. But his tutor, Ilarie Turcu, tries to "help" him and lets the young historian choose the place of his exile, which is revealed in the dialogue below:

— The only thing I can do for you now is to get you an assignment from the ministry to the village you would like to go to. And, this is possible only on condition you tell me now, in this moment, the village you want to go to as a teacher.

— Tomorrow would be late?

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— Late.¹⁰⁷(*The Spire*, p. 450)

Apparently his tutor has enough relations in the ministry to get him the assignment he wants. But, he does not bother to explain to the authorities that Horia has just been doing his job. And, what he really wants is to keep being a researcher, not a bureaucrat—as all the rest in the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments—or a mere teacher.

It was warm, clean and well in the house. On the eve she (the mother-in-law) baked bread, prepared a chicken soup, as only a mother knows to prepare when her children come back frozen and mistreated.¹⁰⁸ (*The Spire*, p. 458)

Finally, the young intellectual couple, two of the best students of the university, are banished from the capital. Of course, mother's house is the best place to be in, given the circumstances. She is always there to protect her children, and give them all her love and care. So, once again the mother-figure appears as an embodiment of the nation that shelters its exiles.

However, she is not the only one trying to comfort her children.

Haret Vasilevici received them the best he could, and kept inviting them to eat, his whole figure, profoundly upset by the banishment of his best pupil from the capital, trying to convince the guests that a true intellectual can lead a good life even here, in the village.¹⁰⁹ (*The Spire*, p. 459)

Thus, the second person that welcomes the exiles is Jeanette's French teacher. Given his love for his best pupil ever, he wants to help both Jeanette and her husband, Horia. As a true intellectual he understood them best than anyone else. Consequently, it is not pure feeling that

¹⁰⁷ - Unicul lucru pe care il pot face acum pentru tine este sa-ti obtin de la minister numirea in satul unde-ai fi vrut tu insuti sa pleci. Si asta cu conditia ca ai sa-mi spui acum, in clipa asta, satul in care aivrea sa pleci ca invatator.

- Miine va fi tirziu?

- Tirziu. (*Clopotnita*, p. 450)

¹⁰⁸ In casa — cald, curat, bine. In ajun copsese pine, a fiert o zama de gaina la para focului, cum stie a face numai mama cind i se intorc, degerati si nedreptatiti, copiii. (*Clopotnita*, p. 458)

¹⁰⁹ Haret Vasilevici i-a primit cum nu se mai poate de bine, si in vreme ce ii tot poftea sa ia ba una, ba alta, toata faptura sa, adinc jignita de izgonirea din capitala a celei mai bune eleve a lui, cauta sa dovedeasca musafirilor ca adevaratul intelectual o poate duce bine si aici in sat. (*Clopotnita*, p. 459)

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guides his actions. The dialogue presented below reveals that he knows what the young couple is passing through from personal experience.

— It's easy for you to talk Haret Vasilevici because you saw nothing beautiful in this world besides Paris and this god-forsaken village. But, what about us, what can we say after living four years in Chisinau?!

— Four years in Chishinau!!!

Upset and indignant to hear such a lie, Haret Vasilevici took them by their hands and sat them back to the table. He noticed, besides the bookcase, a vase with fruit which he has forgotten. And, while the guests were tasting the delicious pears of the French teacher, Haret Vasilevici was looking for something through the old papers which he used to tie up with a string when thinking he no longer needed them. Finally, he took out a yellow paper with several almost faded out lines, typed over a bold signature. The paper said that: "Razresaetsea gr-nu H. V. Oslobanu zaneati ... s otelnim vhom ..."¹¹⁰. The rest was to be guessed.

Jeanette was amazed and could not believe it:

— Did you have a house in Chisinau?!

— Armeneasca str. 45, third door on the right as you enter ...

— And ... did you live there?

— Almost a year. I had an individual room with a kitchen. There was even furniture there, a bed, a table, two chairs, but the truth is they were the property of the Institute.

— Which Institute?

— History, language and literature Institute. That's how it was called back then. I was a junior scientific collaborator, I had a wage, a phone on the desk, prospects, but as you can see ...

Jeanette was bewildered ...

— Were you also asked out of Chisinau?

¹¹⁰ Russian: Citizen H. V. Osloban is allowed to occupy... with a separate entry ...

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— Oh, no, I can't complain about that, I left myself.¹¹¹ (*The Spire*, p. 460)

This passage reflects perfectly why the Kremlin considered the intellectuals a threat to their ideology. The French teacher is one of those intellectuals. And, he has passed his democratic values to his pupil. Professional ascension is not his ultimate goal. Despite all the prospects he had in the capital, the material comfort and career advancement, he has given up his job. As it later turns out, not even the privileged position can make him break his moral principles. Thus, he leaves Chisinau in the moment when the research team, in which he has been a member, is asked to investigate the origins of the “Moldovan language”. The debate intending to prove whether the origins of the national language are Slavic or Latin. So, after seeing this misery he has chosen to be an exile in a village and pass to his pupils the spirit of French, the language of the republic of “liberté, égalité, fraternité”.

On the other hand, another potential intellectual in exile is the headmaster of the village school. Yet, Balta, who in order to maintain his privileged relationship with the new power is ready to do anything, is the complete antagonist of the French teacher. Unlike the latter, who offers his help and comprehension to the young exiles, Balta and his lies lead to Horia's persecution.

¹¹¹ - Matala ti-i usor a zice, Haret Vasilevici, pentru ca mata, in afara de Paris si satul asta prapadit, n-ai vazut nimic frumos pe lume, da ce sa zicem noi, dupa ce-am trait patru ani la Chisinau?!...

- Patru ani la Chisinau!!!

Suparat si indignat ca aude asemenea gogosi, Haret Vasilevici i-a prins de cite-o aripa, i-a bagat inapoi la masa. A descoperit linga dulapul cu carti o vaza cu fructe de care uitase, si in vreme ce musafirii gustau din nemaipomenitele prasade ale invatatorului de franceza, Haret Vasilevici a tot scotocit prin cele hirtzoage vechi pe care obisnuia sa le lege cu cite-o sfoara cind credea ca n-o sa mai aiba nevoie de ele. In cele din urma, a scos o foita galbena cu citeva rinduri dactilografiate, apropae decolorate, zidite pe-o semnatura plina de coraj. Documentul zicea ca: „*Razresaetsea gr-nu H. V. Oslobanu zaneati... s otdelnim vhomom...*”. Restul raminea de ghicit. Jeannette nu-si putea veni in fire de uimita ce era:

- Ai avut mata casa la Chisinau?!

- Strada Armeneasca, patruzeci si cinci, cum intri pe poarta, a treia usa din dreapta...

- Si... ai locuit mata acolo?

- Aproape un an. Aveam o camaruta cu bucatarie, cu intrare separata. Era chiar si mobilata — pat, masa, doua scaune. Mobila, ce-i drept, era a institutului.

- Care institut?

- De istorie, limba si literatura. Asa se chema el pe-atunci. Eram colaborator stiintific inferior, aveam leafa, aveam telefon pe masa, aveam perspective, dar, dupa cum vezi...

Jeannette nu mai putea de uimire...

- Te-au pofsit si pe mata din Chisinau?

- A, nu, pacat sa zic, am plecat singur. (*Clopomita*, p. 460)

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Moreover, when he sees that he cannot destroy Horia, Balta instigates people to destroy the spire—the embodiment of the national resistance of the villagers. Thus, when he sees that Simionel, a poor and mentally unstable orphan, shatters his plans of destroying the spire he beats him badly. But, when the village positions itself in the defence of the weak one the director is on the point of being deported to Siber. And, no connection in Chisinau can help him because Moscow has decided to punish this unseen crime. But, being a person who has earned himself much money, he tries to buy the people in order to avoid the exile.

— I would rather support conciliation ... The poor boy wasn't cleanly dressed and didn't eat anything good in his whole life. When it rains, water is dripping on the walls of his hut, which he has not what to cover with. What a big accomplishment would it be to him to have the director of the school cutting down trees in Siber?¹¹² (*The Spire*, p. 511)

Apparently, money makes people forget that the school director has been a threat to the life of the poor being but also to the backbone of the community's identity. However, what is most important about this fragment is that it provides some information about the life of an exile. It seems that the Moldovan peasants—children of the steppes—that are exiled to Siber are supposed to cut down trees. A job that would have definitively suited Balta who only knows to destroy everything that surrounded him. But, it is not a fit for the Bessarabians that are used to work the land and produce goods.

Consequently, it can be said that Drutse dedicates considerable attention to the issue of exile. However, given the circumstances presented in Chapter III of the dissertation, he can hardly speak openly about the atrocities of the post-war mass deportations that afflicted Moldova. As it has been noticed mainly in *The Burden of Our Goodness* and *The Spire* the territory between the Prut and the Dniester has suffered a lot from relocation, deportation, and exile. Thus, Drutse approaches the theme in a very subtle way and denounces the crimes of the

¹¹² - Eu unul, iaca, mai-mai as fi pentru impacare... Ca amaritul cela de baiet in viata lui n-a purtat o haina mai curatica, n-a mincat o bucatia mai bunisoara. Cind vine o bura de ploaie, curg siroaie pe peretii cocioabei celeia, ca n-are cu ce-o acoperi, si ce mare bucurie pentru dinsul ca directorul scolii o sa taie copaci acolo in Siber? (*Clopomita*, p. 511)

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metropolis. He builds true to life characters, ones with high moral values and others—homo sovieticus, and projects his vision and memories through them.

5.1.2 The Theme of the Journey.

Actually, the examples analysed above, when approaching the theme of exile, also cover the issue of the journey. And, as it has been noticed, there is little reference to the journey of the (Russian) “other” through the territory between the Prut and the Dniester. It results from the fact that this piece of land has never been a destination in itself. In fact, it has always been an object of domination that allowed the “other” express his/her imperial power and expansionist ambitions. Of course, Moscow has never been interested in the territory itself but in its location that allowed farther movement of the Russian troops. Indeed, Bessarabia/the MSSR due to its geographical position—on the shore of the Black Sea—has been what in Russian culture is known as a “window to Europe”.

[...] Two shots, two bullets, two mortal blows, but the vehicle keeps rattling among clods, and they, the driver at the steering wheel and the *letenant*¹¹³ at his side, are dosing as a sign of a long way. Both of them are smoking, they gather the dust from the lips with the sleeve of the jacket and move farther into the vast plain with the army. They seem to have forgotten that not long ago they have been mortally wounded by the bullets. The car has got gasoline, the driver—orders, and the officer—the map, and they move on forgetting the story of the two bullet holes in front of them that are whistling the story of a heavy battle.

The army is having a break. They have been stopped and their backs turned to the death. They have been sent to rest while the war is swarming not far away, in the Carpatians.¹¹⁴ (*The Burden of Our Goodness*, p. 150)

¹¹³ lieutenant in Russian

¹¹⁴ Doua impuscaturi, doua gloante, doua lovituri mortale, iar masina tot salta prin bulgari, si ei picura a drum lung, soferul la volan, *leitennantul* — alaturi. Fumeaza amindoi, culeg colbul de pe buze cu mineca hainei, se tot infunda cu armata in largul cimpiei, de parca ar fi uitat ca inca nu demul au fost rapusi mortal de gloante. Masina are benzina, soferul are ordin, ofiterul are harta si se tot duc inainte, uitind cu totul de cele doua gaurele ce stau in fata lor, fluierind povestea unei lupte grele.

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It follows, then from the excerpt that the Russians need no native guide to move about the plains of Moldova, they have already been there and they have maps. Also, they have little interest in the vast plains, they have only come to have rest because they have been beaten in the Carpatians—Romania. Consequently, their advancement through the territory between the Prut and the Dniester is just a part of the larger itinerary to Berlin. However, the Russian soldiers just like the bourgeois subject or the “seeing man”, in the postcolonial experience, “look out and possess” (Pratt, 2009, p. 9).

The army was coming to rest. The sorrowful houses of the steppe were waiting for guests for a long time. And, hardly the cars turned off the main road, hardly the gossip that they stopped—each choosing a particular yard—began to circle around, that the peasants began fighting. The villages started to divide the guests. Every village fancied it knows Russian well. There was a chair prepared in every house. And, every heel of bread was readily divided into two. People from all the valleys were waiting along the road of Paminteni day and night. They were counting the vehicles, scratching their head and shuffling from leg to leg denoting the lack of patience, because they received orders to return not without guests.

And, oh Lord, what a happiness a Russian in a faded *gymnastiorka*¹¹⁵ and *pilotca*¹¹⁶ thrown forward over one eyebrow was then! He was waited for and welcomed in every house, because he was handy and good at everything. He could easily solve any problems with the head of the village. He could be the leader of an army and was able to explain to everyone's understanding where the land was swarming today and where it was going to burn tomorrow.¹¹⁷ (*The Burden of Our Goodness*, p. 151)

Armata intra in repaos. Au fost opriti, au fost intorsi cu spatele la moarte, au fost trimisi sa rasufle putin, iar razboiul geme nu departe, in Carpati. [...] (*Povara Bunatatii noastre*, p. 150)

¹¹⁵ Russian military shirt-tunic

¹¹⁶ Russian for a foldable military cap (side cap)

¹¹⁷ Armata venea la odihna. Intristatele case ale cimpiei demult asteptau musafiri, si de abia au dovedit primele masini s-o cirneasca din drum, abia s-a raspindit zvonul cum ca s-au oprit, alegindu-si fiecare cite o ograda, ca taranii cimpiei au si pornit o mare imbrinceala. Satele au prins a imparti musafirii ele inde ele. Fiecare sat isi inchipuia ca stie bine ruseste, in fieca casa se gaseau scaune cu speteaza, fiecare calcii de pine putea fi impartit in

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In short, the Russians feel that they are the masters of this piece of land. Wherever they go they feel at home. They take for granted the fact that the natives welcome them. After all, this is the way things work in the contact zones which according to Pratt (2008) are “social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination—such as colonialism and slavery” (p. 7). And, as the previous chapter has shown, often the Moldovans have been treated as slaves that are supposed to provide Russia with the necessary goods. Thus, the autochthonous have to be obedient and prudent in their interaction with the agents of the metropolis. Otherwise, they would be exiled or thrown into prison.

Consequently, the space of encounter or the third space is where, according to Upstone (2009), power relationships are considered and identity negotiated (p. 2). For example, Mircea—a native that has served first in the Romanian Army and then in the Russian one, ends up as the “other” to his closest people. He loses the notion of “home”.

Mircea Moraru, a dark-skinned sergeant, with the slowness of a Russian from upon the Volga, searched slowly the photos his comrades took out. He found a good word for everyone. But, he neither took out letters nor boasted with the photo of his wife. His return home was weird. One might think that he was not returning at all, that the regiment was changing its dislocation and he was moving with the army without knowing well where to and for how long.¹¹⁸ (*The Burden of Our Goodness*, p. 174)

doua. Oamenii de prin toate vaile stateau zi si noapte pe marginea drumului Pamintenilor. Numarau masinile, isi scarpinau cefe, miscau din picioare a nerabdare, caci li se poruncise fara musafiri sa nu se intoarca.

Si, Doamne, ce bucurie era pe atunci un rus in *ghimnastiorka* albita de soare, cu *pilotka* repezita pe-o sprinceana! Era asteptat si rugat sa intre in fiecare casa, caci era indeminatic si se pricepea la toate. Putea dezlega usor orice neintelegere cu stapinirea satului. Putea fi conducator de oaste si talmacea pe intelesul tuturor unde fierbea pamintul azi si unde o sa arda mine.

¹¹⁸ Mircea Moraru, sergent smolit, cu incetineala unui rus de pe Volga, cerceta domol pozele scoase de tovarasi, gasea cite-un cuvint bun sa spuna fiecaruia, dar nici scrisori nu scotea la lumina, nici cu fotografia nevastei nu se lauda. Intoarcerea lui spre casa pare cam ciudata — iti venea a crede ca el nici nu se intoarce. Pur si simplu regimentul isi schimba dislocarea si el se muta impreuna cu armata, fara a sti bine unde anume si pentru cita vreme se vor opri. (*Povara Bunatatii Noastre*, p. 174)

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He has become something else in this in-between spaces. The journey has offered him the possibility to engage with “heterogenous” and “in-between places” that have challenged his idea of space as a stable construction. Thus, the national belonging seems to have been altered by the international perspective on space. And, even when he returns to his childhood village he is so anxious to emulate the “other” that he develops features characteristic of the master. By extension, Mircea is an embodiment of the transformation of the Moldovan society, and of its hybridity.

On the other hand, Mircea's father-in-law is an exponent of a different relationship with home—as a fixed location. On the two occasions that he has been forced to leave home, he has returned to his wife and children. First, he crosses illegally the border to reach home:

He was coming back, the wretch, nobody knows from where. But, when he reached the frontier rising in front of him, he began hiding behind the thickets of the left bank. It was impossible for him not to cross the river as his home, land and people were waiting for him on the other bank. Yet, at the same time it was impossible to cross the river. It was getting warm, the springs of the valley were murmuring and moving under the snow waking up the old Dniester. [...] A wise man, given the circumstances, waits about a fortnight for the waters to temper. But, eh! Four years of alienation and home sickness could make anyone loose one's head, and the howling of the dog that once lived in your yard was the cherry on top. [...] The right bank didn't want to accept him. Two shots, but the target was missed. The left bank didn't want to leave him. When, the third shot was about to be made, another soldier that was pointing his gun at him finally put it away and wondered:

— Look! The crazy one is singing!¹¹⁹ (*The Burden of Our Goodness*, pp. 43-45)

¹¹⁹ Se întorcea, sarmanul, cine stie de pe unde si, pomenindu-se cu granita in fata, se ascundea prin desisuri, pe malul sting. Nu putea sa nu treaca riul, caci dincolo, pe celalalt mal, il asteptau casa, pamintul, neamul, dar nici ca de trecut nu era chip, pentru ca vremea a inceput a bate in cald. Pirauasele de prin vilcele au tot sopotit si au sapat omatul pe dedesubt, pina l-au trezit din somn pe batrinul Nistru. [...] Un om chibzuit in asemenea imprejurari asteapta o saptamina doua pina se vor fi potolit apele, dar, vai, dupa patru ani de instrainare, dorul de casa e in stare sa-ti intunece mintile, iar urletul ciinelui ce-a trait cindva in ograda ta punea virf la toate. [...] Malul drept nu vroia sa-l primeasca. Au tras in el de doua ori, daca nu l-au nimerit. Malul sting nu vroia sa-i dea drumul. In clipa cind

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Then, he crosses a bridge under the supervision of Romanian and Russian border guards.

In a month's time Bessarabia was freed by the Red Army. Romanian authorities were compelled to free all the Bessarabians from the army. And, here stands Onake Caraboosh on the bridge between Iasi and Ungheni, with a Romanian border guard behind, and a Soviet one in front of him.¹²⁰ (*The Burden of Our Goodness*, p. 140)

Both travels are quite symbolical. On the one hand, Onake returns from Russia. And, as the narrator tells he has to swim across the frozen river. Apparently, there is nothing that keeps Bessarabia connected to the greater Russian Empire. Thus, the river is both a natural border and an abyss that divides two different worlds. On the other hand, the protagonist returns from Romania. And, he crosses the bridge—a symbol of the union of the two nations. Then, as the narration continues, the hero has to walk home because:

The trains were not circling—the railway turned to be too narrow for the Soviet locomotives, and for several days, while they were broadening it, no train passed.¹²¹ (*The Burden of Our Goodness*, p. 140)

So, no border and no obstacle can prevent Onake from reaching home. He is not the nomad that can feel at home in heterogeneous locations.

However, the broadening of the railway is a direct allusion to the transformation of the territory between the Prut and the Dniester into a third space. After all, according to Upstone (2009) “movement is (...) a necessary feature of the coloniser's practice of conquering territory: it is by its very nature a transferral of bodies and resources from one space to the other” (p.58).

urma sa detune cea de-a treia impuscatura, un alt ostas, ce statea alaturi, ochind si el, a pus arma la o parte pentru a se mira:

- Ca sa vezi, nebunul cela mai si cinta! (*Povara Bunatatii Noastre*, pp. 43-45)

¹²⁰ Cam peste o luna Basarabia a fost eliberata de Armata Rosie. Autoritatile romane erau obligate sa elibereze toti basarabienii din armata, si iata-l pe Onache Carabus pe podul dintre Iasi si Ungheni. Are in spate un granicer roman, in fata — un granicer sovietic. (*Povara Bunatatii Noastre*, p. 140)

¹²¹ Trenurile nu umblau — calea ferata s-a dovedit a fi prea ingusta pentru locomotivele sovietice, si citeva zile la rind, cit o largeau, n-a circulat nici un tren. (*Povara Bunatatii Noastre*, p. 140)

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Thus, the continuous movement of Russian troops on the Moldovan land forces the natives to adapt to the changing reality.

Consequently, the natives, that are not flexible enough to adapt to the master's ways, feel and are displaced—as a consequence of the enrolment into the Soviet Army, deportations, or work at Russian factories. This is the case of Gheorghe, who embarks on a journey when his world starts to crumble.

He was returning happy late in the evening. He had a greenish paper in the inside pocket of the jacket which said that this *doprizivnic*¹²² has to be present with certain things in the recruiter (military) station next day. The small paper was hidden somewhere in a notebook, but he could feel it with all his being, the same can only feel a poor man who finally got 100 rubbles, he always feels the money, even if it's left in the house and he's outside. [...] Only then, hugging somebody else's love, Gheorghe felt how lonely he is.

Once in the carriage, he stuck to a window and was contemplating the horizon, looking for two hills among which one could hardly see the leafless orchards. Homeland, where he walked under the rain and wind, and where everything that he loved most in this life remained, was vanishing in the distance.¹²³ (*Leaves of Yearning*, pp. 451, 454)

Apparently, for the young man, a representative of the (Moldovan) lost generation, the journey represents the possibility to escape the limits of a national space in which things are falling apart. However, no matter where the Moldovans go, they shall always long for home. Consider,

¹²² Youth of recruitable age, in Russian

¹²³ Tirziu, spre chindii, se intorcea fericit. Ducea in buzunarul dinauntru al hainei o hirite verzuie, in care se spunea ca *doprizivnic-ul* cutare trebuie sa se prezinte a doua zi la comisariatul militar, avind cu sine cutare si cutare lucruri. Era ascunsa hirtiuta undeva intr-un carnetel, dar o simtea cu toata faptura lui, — asa un om sarac, capatind, in sfirsit, o suta de ruble, o simte totdeauna, chiar daca el ii afara, iar banii i-a lasat in casa. [...] Si de abia atunci, stringing un dor strain la pieptul lui, a simtit Gheorghe cit de singur a ramas.

In vagon s-a lipit de-o fereastră si cauta in zare doua dealuri de printre care abia se desluseau livezile desfrunzite. Plutea incet in urma bastina unde l-au udat ploile, unde l-au uscat vinturile si unde ramasese tot ce-a avut mai scump in viata. (*Frunze de Dor*, p. 454)

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They were going uphill and downhill. The road was sometimes good and sometimes bad, sometimes smooth and sometimes cracked because of the drought. A dry and cold wind was blowing, picking up the dust, making it smoke behind the carts, bending to the ground the sunflower plants that were growing along the road, making the latter kneel to the deserted and bare road. And, the men, true to their Moldovan nature, already started secretly to be homesick when they hardly left the village. And every time the weather ¹²⁴ would be about to change, our roots will keep ailing ... ¹²⁵ (*Leaves of Yearning*, p. 386)

Hence, it seems that neither village/city, nor nation, nor journey provides comfort to those alienated souls that resist the alteration of the national identity. Indeed, the journey seems to only reinforce the connection with home. And, in agreement with Upstone (2009), the “absence of a locality” highlights “the need for postcolonial identity to also be rooted in a tangible space” (p. 115).

Nevertheless, Drutse's inclination for the use of metaphors, also suggests that the road or the travel described above is the “other” life that peasants are embarking on. One cannot leave unnoticed the fact that it's being described as something cold and deserted. Indeed, it is somehow representative of the void into which the conservative peasants are falling given the fact that their relationship with the land is being altered. Also, the changing “weather” is an allusion to the changing times, the new epoch in the history of the nation. And, the way of using the personal pronoun “our” suggests that the author identifies with the heroes and does not welcome it. He highlights the idea that the new times/new life style are/is in some kind of discontinuity with the past of the nation. Thus, it affects those who are not willing to give up their national ideals.

Consider, Nica:

¹²⁴ Vremea — in Romanian meaning both weather and time

¹²⁵ Drumul urca, drumul coboara, drum frumos, drum slutit, drum intreg, drum crapat de seceta. Sulfa un vint sec si rece, matura colbul, facindu-l sa fumege in urma carutelor, indoia pina la pamint firele de rasarita crescute pe marginea drumului, facindu-le sa se incline in fata unui drum pustiu, dezgolit, si cum sint ei, moldovenii, n-au apucat bine sa iasa din sat, ca oamenilor a si inceput, in taina, sa li se faca dor de casa. Asa e de cite ori va fi sa se schimbe vremea, de atitea ori ne tot vor durea radacinile ... (*Frunze de Dor*, p. 386)

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Suddenly, Nica realised that if he eats the whole bread, he will have no strength to go back to the wood. But, he had to return at any cost, because from there he was going to Romania to look for his wife and child. On the other hand, he couldn't return with them to the village. There were sentinels, concentration camps, tribunals waiting for him in Ciutura.¹²⁶ (*The Burden of Our Goodness*, p. 212)

In conclusion, the action of movement is, as Upstone (2009) claims, “a metaphor for the entire colonial practice” (p.58). Imperial expansionism involves displacement and creation of contact zones. Thus, hybridity is often accompanied by alienation and resistance to change. And, those who identify home with family and land are the ones who suffer most because as it is revealed in the next sub-chapter they are often deprived of both.

5.1.3 Soviet Domination, a Form of Colonial Domination: Denationalization through Dispossession.

At this point special attention is given to the issue of Soviet domination—a form of colonial domination exerted by Moscow on the territory between the Prut and the Dniester. Actually, the Sovietization of the former Russian governorate—administrative organisation after the first forcible annexation (1812)—later Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic—after the invasion of the Red Army (1941)—lead to the dispossession and denationalization of the native (mainly) Moldovan population. It's also to be mentioned that in the mentioned periods of time the region experienced all kinds of domination: military, economic, cultural/language and scientific (technological advance).

At first glance, one might agree with Max Weber (2010) in that “domination (authority) implies a minimum of voluntary compliance, that is, an interest in obedience” (p. 204). And,

¹²⁶ [...] Nica s-a gindit deodata ca, daca maninca pinea toata, nu va mai avea putere sa se intoarca inapoi in padure. Iar de intors trebuia sa se intoarca cu orice pret, pentru ca de acolo sa treaca in Romania, sa-si caute nevasta si copilul. Pe de alta parte, nici cu ei in sat nu se putea intoarce. In Ciutura il asteptau santinela, lagarul, tribunalul. (*Povara Bunatatii Noastre*, p. 212)

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Ewa Thompson (2008) argues that, Russians agree with Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn according to whom “non-Russian lands became Russian possessions willingly” (p. 416).

However, in the case of Moldova a certain degree of apparent compliance has been the key to the nation's survival. Thus, Moldova has become a *contact zone*, which according to Pratt (2008), is a “space of imperial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other, and establish ongoing relations usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality and intractable conflict” (pp. 7-8). Consequently, in the case of a militarily inferior nation that had been under military and political domination for over a century, some degree of compliance has become an indispensable feature of the people. Yet, as mentioned in Chapter IV, apart from physical force and constant repressions, economic domination and administrative/geopolitical reorganization is what brought post-Soviet Moldova to its knees.

After all, just like in the case of the Europeans' domination in the so-called Third World, there are a number of factors that have favoured the instauration of the new heterogenous power. In both cases policies and directives have been implemented through a central administrative organization or secretariat, with officers responsible for different departments such as Agriculture, Trade, Transport, Health, Education, Police, Prison, and so on. And, Drutse's novels provide some proofs of the above presented assumptions.

Thus, several subtle allusions to the Soviet domination are encountered in *The Spire*, and the other novels, that are being analysed bellow.

They went into the small and quiet 28 Iunie Street and kept going uphill from Lenin Street to Livezilor Street, and then back from Livezilor Street to Lenin Street, until Horia was completely dizzy.¹²⁷ (*The Spire*, p. 448)

After all, for the Moldovan reader, this quite short clause is full of meaning. Drutse manages to speak about the degree of foreign domination without making any overt statement. What he does is describe a sequence from the characters' everyday reality. But, when reading between the lines, the author's attitude towards the new power becomes quite obvious. Actually,

¹²⁷ Au iesit pe micuta si tihnita stradela 28 Iunie si au tot urcat-o de la strada Lenin pina la cea a Livezilor, apoi de la Livezilor inapoi la strada Lenin, incit Horia ametise cu totul. (*Clopotnita*, p. 448)

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it is no accident that the protagonist, whose professional goal is to retrieve the history of the natives, learns about his exile from the person he used to trust while walking along these streets.

First, the small and quiet street 28 Iunie seems to be an allusion to the ultimatum imposed by the Soviet Union. According to this ultimatum Romania was to withdraw its administration and army from the territory between the Dniester and the Prut, as well as from the Northern Bucovina. Also, it is particularly curious that Drutse uses the epithets *small* and *quiet* to describe the street. Why is it not the name of a main street, or an avenue? If the entrance of the Soviet troops into Bessarabian land was an act of defence of the natives, then the author should have named the main street 28 Iunie. But, the fact that Drutse doesn't do it suggests that this date is a painful and shameful rather than a glorious moment. Likewise, the Second World War, presented by the Soviet ideology as the Great War for the defence of the Motherland, is in fact, in agreement with Ewa Thompson (2008, p.413), an offensive war. The military actions of the USSR were directed at the establishment of total control over the Central and Eastern Europe, as a result of the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact.

Second, the date—28 June, does not lack importance or otherwise it would not be mentioned along with the other street name—Lenin Street. Indeed, those who have ever visited the Soviet Union know that there have been a lot of establishments, villages, towns, cities, squares or streets named (or renamed) Lenin, in honour of the revolution leader. Similarly, in the postcolonial world, Boehmer (1995) claims that explorers and colonisers in as far as Australia or India would also borrow the names used at home to label the realities of the new world that surrounded them, even though most frequently the “clon” had nothing to do with the object of reference. According to Boehmer (1995) this phenomenon is a strategy of displacement used to project “the intransigence or the discomfort of the coloniser onto the native” (p. 95). Thus, military, administrative and political domination are being referred to in the analysed excerpt. Similarly, the piece presented below sheds some more light on the issue.

The army was coming to rest. The sorrowful houses of the steppe were waiting for guests for a long time. And, hardly the cars turned off the main road, hardly the gossip that they stopped—each chosing a particular yard—began to circle around, that the peasants began fighting. The villages started to divide the guests. Every village fancied it knows Russian well. There was a chair prepared in

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every house. And, every heel of bread was readily divided into two. People from all the valleys were waiting along the road of Paminteni day and night. They were counting the vehicles, scratching one's head and shuffling from leg to leg denoting the lack of patience, because they received orders to return not without guests.

And, oh Lord, what a happiness a Russian in a faded *gymnastiorka*¹²⁸ and *pilotca*¹²⁹ thrown forward over one eyebrow was then! He was waited for and welcomed in every house, because he was handy and good at everything. He could easily solve any problems with the head of the village. He could be the leader of an army and was able to explain to everyone's understanding where the land was swarming today and where it was going to burn tomorrow.¹³⁰ (*The Burden of Our Goodness*, p. 151)

Apparently, the given excerpt is quite confusing at first reading. One is likely to think that the indigenous people are happy with the invasion of the Red Army. Yet, that is only partly true. Actually, in accordance with the information presented in Chapter IV, the fact is that the Romanian army and administration have been forced to withdraw to Romania before the Soviet Army would enter Bessarabia. So, the unprotected peasants have had no way of resisting the occupying army. And, they "welcome" the soldiers that might defend them in a time when war is plaguing every inch of Europe.

Moreover, according to the second paragraph, the villagers are having problems with the newly imposed administration that is loyal to the Soviets. Thus, the military superiority of the later provided Stalin absolute control over this territory without even having made a shot.

¹²⁸ Russian military shirt-tunic

¹²⁹ Russian for a foldable military cap (side cap)

¹³⁰ Armata venea la odihna. Intristatele case ale cimpiei demult asteptau musafiri, si de abia au dovedit primele masini s-o cirneasca din drum, abia s-a raspindit zvonul cum ca s-au oprit, alegindu-si fiecare cite o ograda, ca taranii cimpiei au si pornit o mare imbrinceala. Satele au prins a impartii musafirii ele inde ele. Fiecare sat isi inchipua ca stie bine ruseste, in fieca casa se gaseau scaune cu speteaza, fiecare calcii de pine putea fi impartit in doua. Oamenii de prin toate vaile stateau zi si noapte pe marginea drumului Pamintenilor. Numarau masinile, isi scarpinau cefele, miscau din picioare a nerabdare, caci li se poruncise fara musafiri sa nu se intoarca.

Si, Doamne, ce bucurie era pe atunci un rus in *ghimnastiorka* albita de soare, cu *pilotka* repezita pe-o sprinceana! Era asteptat si rugat sa intre in fieca casa, caci era indeminatic si se pricepea la toate. Putea dezlega usor orice neintelegere cu stapinirea satului. Putea fi conducator de oaste si talmacea pe intelesul tuturor unde fierbea pamintul azi si unde o sa arda mine.

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Consequently, once control is seized people start to feel threatened and consider pertinent to show their “loyalty” to the Power. So, they need a *handy and good at everything* Russian soldier that would solve any eventual problems with the head of the village.

In addition, besides military invasion and administrative domination Drutse makes allusion to the language domination too. When he says that every village fancied it knows Russian what the narrator actually means is that, despite the former about a hundred years' hegemony, the Moldovans speak no or little Russian. However, the only way to avoid any trouble with the new power is to talk Russian—the language of the colonizer. Another way to suggest that besides political and administrative domination, the Soviets have also imposed their language is the use of the borrowings from Russian—*gymnastiorka* and *pilotca*. Apart from transliterating the Russian words, Drutse preserves the so-called Russian “c”—k. Thus, after about a century's resistance to the master's language, the peasants seem to have lost any hope to freedom from the Slavic domination and see themselves forced to give in. Besides, the stories about how the world is burning behind the Russian Army are quite convincing.

Poor Ciutura Just when life was dearest, luck turned its back. [...] The most castaway little villages — some gatherings of houses which barely could be called a village — already had their army. But, Ciutura had no army, no vehicles, no red little stars, no garrulous harmonica, and no quick and spicy Russian talk. [...] Poor Ciutura, was hopeless. The whole village was going out in a mob and spent days waiting along the old road.

However, Onake Caraboosh, didn't go to meet the soldiers. He was not going because he had no time for that. He barely had time to take his breath. As he woke up in the morning, he put the ladder to the attic, and as he climbed, the ladder was creaking. Once in the attic, he searched in the darkness for some leftovers of sunflower seeds forgotten from the past years. He gathered them together with dust and filled his pockets. When down, he came in front of the house, leant against the wall so that the whole village would see him. He stood and ate sunflower seeds. It was his only concern. He threw a seed into the mouth, moved it around, spit the shells by presing his teeth together and then chose another seed to throw into the mouth. He was waiting for the car with two militia

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men to come after him. The car would stop at the gate, and according to his suppositions, one of them would say:

“Poehali, papasa...”¹³¹

The arrival of the car was to put an end to all the troubles. And, he hardly cared about what followed after that. Anyway, he could be satisfied with the years he's already lived. He has been an honoured man his whole life. He brought joy to people to the same extent as the people brought him joy. Of course, if one would start examining thoroughly his life, one could find out that this Onake Caraboosh, in his whole lifetime, hardly saw anything good. However, who cared about what he managed to do in his life and what he didn't?!

The sunflower seeds were quite dry, half of them were bitter, and one wanted to spit them out the moment these touched the tongue. For three days he has been eating them, and he grew sick with them. The tip of his lip swallowed, but, he could not manage without them. His two big and heavy arms were hanging along his body, they needed use. And, the eating of the sunflower seed is something requiring some skill, if it is to be done properly.¹³² (*The Burden of Our Goodness*, pp. 151-153)

¹³¹ Russian, meaning: let's go old man

¹³² Biata Ciutura... Tocmai atunci cind ii era lumea mai draga, s-a dovedit a nu avea noroc. [...]

Cele mai oropsite satisoare — niste adunaturi de casute pe care nici nu le-ai fi putut numi sat — isi aveau de acum armata lor, iar Ciutura n-avea nici armata, nici masini, nici stelute rosii, nici armonica guraliva, nici vorba ruseasca, iute si piparata. [...] Biata Ciutura, deznadajduita, iesea cu gloata, cu tot satul iesea si statea zile intregi la marginea vechiului drum.

Onache Carabus, ce-i drept, nu s-a dus sa intimpine ostasii. Nu se ducea, caci n-avea vreme. Nici o clipa sa rasufle n-avea. Cum se scula de dimineata, punea scara la gura podului. Urca, scirtiind fusceii. Acolo, in pod, cauta pe bijbiite niste ramasite de rasarita uitata din anii trecuti. O aduna cu tot cu colb, isi umplea buzunarele. Coborind inapoi, venea in fata casei, se rezema de-un perete, asa ca sa-l vada tot satul. Statea si minca rasarita. Era singura lui grija. Arunca cite-o saminta in gura, facea cu ea ce facea, scuipa cojile, cercind a stringe din masele, iar alegea o semincioara pentru a o arunca sub cerul gurii. Astepta cind va veni dupa el masina cu doi militieni. Masina avea sa se opreasca la poarta si, dupa socoteala lui, unul din ei avea sa spuna:

„Poehali, papasa...”.

Venirea masinii avea sa puna capat tuturor necazurilor. Putin ii pasa ce-o sa fie pe urma. La o adicatelea, se putea multumi si cu anii pe care i-a trait. A fost om cinstit in viata lui, a bucurat lumea in masura in care lumea il bucura pe el. Fireste, daca ai sta sa depeni anii fir cu fir, ai putea descoperi ca acest Onache Carabus, trairind o viata de om, mai n-a vazut nimic bun, dar cui ii pasa de cele ce-a dovedit, de cele ce n-a dovedit el?!

Semintele de rasarita erau cam seci, o jumatate erau amare, si cum nimereau pe limba, se cereau scuipate numaidecit. Vreme de trei zile, tot rontaindu-le, i s-a cam facut scirba de ele, i s-a umflat virful limbii, dar nici fara ele nu putea. Avea doua brate mari si grele ce spinzurau in lungul trupului; se cerea sa le gaseasca un rost, iar mincatul rasaritei, oricum, e un lucru pe care trebuie sa-l stii cum sa-l faci, daca vrei sa-l faci bine. (*Povara Bunatatii Noastre*, pp. 151-153)

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This piece is a reflection of the way some aspects of life change with the entrance of the Soviet Army. The narrator's ironical mention of the villagers' bad luck is nothing but an allusion to the anxiety caused by the altering reality. As it turns up, there is more to it than mere military domination. In the enumeration *no army, no vehicles, no red little stars, no garrulous harmonica, and no quick and spicy Russian talk* transition is made from the description of military domination to the cultural and linguistic one.

However, Ciutura seems to be one of the last outposts, the spot that is not yet "conquered". And, when the Russian Army enters Bessarabia, just like every time there was an eminent danger, people hurry along the old road to Paminteni that used to lead them to a monastery in the form of a castle. Yet, this time the village administration is dictating new rules and the only possible solution seems to be to welcome the occupants. Otherwise, people should expect possible troubles with the Soviet authorities. Accordingly, the man that has no Russian soldier *good at solving any problems with the head of the village* has to be ready to be interrogated and probably sent to death or exile.

Nevertheless, there is a person that stands out on the background of the collective character—Ciutura, a village apparently longing for the protection provided by the occupants. Despite the imminent danger of exile, Onake does nothing to get the protection of the army. While the men of the village go to "welcome" the army he rises above the common people—an action suggested by his climbing of the ladder. A great spirit of resistance is put into one single character who under the veil of idleness hides his antipathy towards the new authorities that have robbed him of his two sons. It's also curious that what he entertains himself with are *sunflower seeds forgotten from the past years* together with dust. It seems that the protagonist feeds himself on the past, things that are gone and only memory keeps them alive. Thus, he comes to embody the guardian of the national values, the rebel. And, it seems too much of a coincidence that, both here and in the novel *The White Church*, the only plant that is associated with survival after military conflagrations (between the Osman and Russian Empire in *The White Church*, and of the Russians and the Romanians in *The Burden of Our Goodness*) is the sunflower. So, Drutse employs this symbol to suggest the nation's survival and its ability to resurrect like a phoenix

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because the sunflower is the plant that is always looking at the sun—an action that is associated in Romanian literature with freedom.

Still, strong people have their fears. Although, Onake accepts death as a possible outcome of him taking a stand, it was not an easy thing to face the judgement of the whole village. Of course, Onake knew that:

The army didn't come into one's yard without previously asking the ruling authorities. And, the rulers of Ciutura would have taken care to make all the cars avoid Caraboosh's house, in order to prevent their contamination with its sadness. One morning, when Onake climbed to the attic and was feeling the clay floor for sunflower seeds, he heard a rumble of cars that was expanding along the streets of the village. Caraboosh drew his head between the shoulders as if preparing to receive a blow. Yet, quickly with a speed that he believed he was not capable of, he went down and back to his place in front of the house. He was waiting, without knowing himself what he is waiting for: maybe for the car that was going to carry him away, or for a soldier dropping by to protect his house from the people's looks and gossips ... [...] Ciutura was like a beehive. It went to shelter very late, almost at dawn, but Onache didn't sleep that night. His house seemed to be the only one in the whole village in which there was no military cloak hanging in a hook, no gun darkening in the corners, and there were no oil spots on the grass from the yard. And, what was worse than anything, he had no flower seeds left in the attic.

*"Papasa!"*¹³³ ¹³⁴ (*The Burden of Our Goodness*, p. 153-154)

¹³³ Russian, meaning: old man

¹³⁴ Armata nu intra in ograda de capul ei — se intreaba mai intii stapinirea, iar stapinirea Ciuturii ar fi avut grija ca toate masinele sa ocoleasca casa lui Carabus cit mai pe departe, sa nu se molipseasca de tristetea ei.

Intr-o dimineata, cind Onache iata ca urcase in pod si tot pipaia tavanul uns cu lut, cautind rasarita, s-a pomenit cu un vuiet de masini, ce venea clocotind pe ulitele satului. Carabus si-a tras capul intre umeri, de parca se facea a primi lovitura. Iute, cu o repeziciune de care nu se credea in stare, s-a dat jos, a venit in fata casei la locul lui. Astepta fara a sti el insusi ce asteapta: poate o masina care avea sa-l duca, poate un ostas ce avea sa poposeasca la dinsul si sa-i apere casa de ochii si de gura lumii ... [...] Ciutura vuia ca un roi de albine. S-a aciuat tocmai hat tirziu, spre ziua, iar Onache n-a mai atipit in noaptea ceea. Casuta lui era, pare-se, singura in tot satul ce nu tinea in cui mantale ostaseseti, prin unghere nu negrea nici o arma, troscotul din ograda nu fusese stropit cu benzina. Si culmea la toate — se sfirsise rasarita din pod.

- *Papasa!* (*Povara Bunatatii Noastre*, pp. 153-154)

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The first line of the excerpt divulges the collaboration existing between the new local administration and the Soviet Army/Power. And, it's no surprise, because all along history the colonialist empires have imposed their control using the advantage provided by the superior military power. After all, just like in the case of the British army in the (thirteen) colonies, the households of the Moldovan village are to house the Soviet soldiers.

However, some households are not considered appropriate for the task. Specifically, the new village head considers Onake's home to be one of them. This circumstances, inevitably make one think about the reason of such an animosity. On the one hand, it is certainly not a matter of wealth as in the case of Haralambie cel Destept that is considered below. Also, it is not a consequence of the fact that in the Second World War Onake was a recruit in the Romanian army. It has already been mentioned earlier that according to the Soviet ultimatum delivered to Romania on June 26, 1940, all the Bessarabians recruited in the Romanian army were to return to their homes. Consequently, Onake has not fought against the Red Army. And, both of Onake's sons that fought against the Soviet Army have died.

On the other hand, it could be related to the fact that Onake has always been different from the rest of the village. When everybody abandons home in search of a "protector", Onake stands in front of his house as a warrior, and his attic seems to be his tower. Also, he is the one who has chosen to build his house on the high hill, which seems to be an allusion to his moral superiority. Moreover, as the narrator claims, stingy arrows are sent by Onake towards the village from that hill. And, as one can see in the second part of the excerpt presented above, Onake is far from having a friendly relationship with the village and its leaders. Thus, everyday he is expecting for a more or less favourable outcome of this tense situation. Ultimately, he is expecting a resolution, as the narrator says: "*He was waiting, without knowing himself what he is waiting for: maybe for the car that was going to carry him away, or for a soldier dropping by to protect his house from the people's looks and gossips*".

Although, Onake passes sleepless nights he does not go to search for the "other's" protection; neither does his wife make him do it, as in the case of the other villagers. In this context, Simut's (2008) allegation that Drutse idealizes the Russian soldier (pp. 174-175) seems groundless. Actually, further reading reveals that the Russian soldier has never got to feel at

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home in Onake's house. And, it is somehow a reflection of the protagonist's own alienation when in Russia during the First World War.

Moreover, in the very tense moment when the Russian comes to his gate, addressing him in Russian, the narrator tells there are no sunflower seeds left. And, it seems that there is no more spiritual reserve left to help the old man resist the invaders. He seems to be forced to give in to the pressure of the village. Apparently, the new Power, that has come to "liberate" the "oppressed" peasants, does not like Onake's sullen house. Yet, it's evident that the motif of the house is just a tool used by Drutse to describe the general mood of its inhabitants, which are not particularly happy with the new political situation in their microuniverse. So, despite all the threats, there are still heroes that fight against foreign domination.

However, some of these heroes have had a huge price to pay for their ideals. And, as already mentioned above, Nica is one of those heroes.

Unfortunately, Onake's house was not the only sullen house. Haralambie cel Destept's house was also doleful, full of sorrow regardless of the fact that Haralambie's son, Nica, fled to Romania with family and all, and practically had nothing to complain about. However, crestfallen as it was, it couldn't look into people's eyes. As a consequence, both Haralambie cel Destept and the fool of Onache began to be called to the village soviet during the night. It was investigated thoroughly how it could be that two houses— one on the small hill, and the other on the high hill, live with the same mood, while the masters of the houses almost don't speak to each other. And, when summoned, they remained in silence one in a corner and the other in another corner. In a fortnight Haralambie cel Destept was deported and his whole wealth divided among the poor.¹³⁵ (*The Burden of Our Goodness*, p. 149)

¹³⁵ Din pacate, casa lui Onache nu era singura casa incrunzata. Casa lui Haralambie ce Destept statea si ea amarita, plina de nechez cu toate ca fiul lui Haralambie, Nica, se refugiase in Romania cu sotie cu tot si, in fond, nu prea avea ce se plinge. Totusi, inraita cum era, nu avea ochi a se uita la lume casa ceea, si iata ca noptile au inceput a fi chemati amindoi la sovietul satesc — Hralambie cel Destept si prostul cela de Onache. Se cerceta in amanuntime cum poate fi explicat cazul ca doua case — una de pe dealul cel mic, alta de pe dealul cel mare — traiesc cu aceeasi dispozitie, pe cind stapinii caselor aproape ca nu-si vorbesc unul altuia si, cind sint chemati, stau tacuti unul intr-un ungher, celalalt — in alt ungher.

Peste vreo doua saptamini Haralambie cel Destept a fost ridicat, intreaga avere a fost impartita printre saraci. (*Povara Bunatatii Noastre*, p. 149)

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This excerpt reveals that the protagonist's house is not the only doleful house. However, the reasons behind the sorrow of the other household are different from Onake's. Haralambie's only son is alive. However, this is where the problem lies. Nica, unlike many others has disregarded the Soviet ultimatum and has not come home to serve in the Red Army. He has decided to stay in the Romanian Army and fight for the liberation of Bessarabia. Consequently, his actions and his property, just like the property of his fathers, couldn't leave the new local authorities indifferent. Thus, at night, Onake and Haralambie, friends in the years of early youth and enemies in their adulthood, are brought to the seat of the local administration and interrogated. As a result, the communist authorities that "fight" against the bourgeois confiscate both Nica and his parents' property—an allusion to the dispossession of the Moldovan kulaks and the landed gentry in the years immediately following the invasion.

However, to avoid the censorship of the centre Drutse avoids to make any direct reference to the gentry. Despite the fact that, the changing political situation affected them too. The only reference related to the landowners and their possessions appears when the narrator tells the story of a very old path from the village to the Paminteni railway station, which formerly was a monastery in the form of a castle. And, every time there was an eminent danger people hurried along this road to Paminteni in search of shelter, and, this is where the villagers are when the Russian Army enters Bessarabia. Thus, when in a moment of trouble, the daughter of the protagonist takes this path, the narrator subtly tells the history of the road. Apparently, this strip of land had once been taken from the villagers by a boyar whose estate was so large that it swallowed the road completely. But, after the war the estate has become property of the kolkhoz. So, despite the threat of the censorship, Drutse speaks about dispossession and the new economic policy imposed by the metropolis.

Further, the writer exposes the truth about the economic policy of the metropolis by presenting the opinion of a soldier in the Red Army. However, Drutse is conscious that an open critique of the newly introduced kolkhoz is dangerous. Also, it is not typical of the Bessarabians because the long history of oppression made them quite submissive and cautious when it comes to expressing their personal opinion of the master(s). So, Onake asks Nikolai about the collective farms, and, the latter answers:

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Things are bad in our collective farms, now... [...] No car, no soldier, no cloak hanging in the nail, no machine gun under the bench. "He must have been arrested for talking badly about the kolkhoz. Lord save him from being shot for that."¹³⁶ (*The Burden of Our Goodness*, p. 159)

These lines reveal that apart from military domination it is terror what makes the poor peasants comply with the Russian domination. Also, the Russians have not come as friends, they have come wearing guns. And, the people who have dared to oppose the Kremlin or express freely their opinion are to expect punishment. Consequently, Drutse provides details that reaffirm Ewa Thompson's (2008) argument that "inside the USSR, the rule of terror and mass arrests were common by the late 1920s" (p. 413). So, during Stalin, the territorial expansion of the Soviet Union inevitably implied a reimposition of Moscow's policies and the Russian language in all the subaltern republics.

Actually, this excerpt contradicts Keith Hitchins's (2008) statement that the creation of the collective farms only served to bring harmony among the peasants and responded to the collective spirit of the village (p. 106). And, the previous chapter reveals what are the true motives that made the Moldovans give up their lands in favour of the kolkhoz. In fact, people like Onake could not be happy with the imposition of kolkhozes. Moreover, the fact that Onake asks Nikolai about the kolkhoz proves that it is an association alien to the traditional Moldavian society. The truth is that Onake comes from a family of peasants. They have survived, generation after generation, due to the land. And, depriving such a person of one's land means to deprive him/her of one's identity. Thus, the best proof of denationalization through dispossession is the following excerpt:

Land is the essence of the Ciutorean's¹³⁷ existence, and it's like he doesn't even exist on earth without land. He can make everything if he has land. He can make friends to share a glass of wine or friends for a lifetime. The heavy and fleshy soil is constantly dozing on the Ciutorean's shoulders, and wakes up

¹³⁶ E rau acuma la noi in colhoz...
[...] Nici masina, nici ostas, nici manta in cui, nici automat sub laita. „L-o fi arestat, ca a vorbit de rau colhozul. Sa nu-l impuste cumva, Doamne fereste.” (*Povara Bunatatii Noastre*, pp. 159-160)

¹³⁷ An inhabitant of the village Ciutura

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instantly when time comes for the man to protect ones' belongings and honour. Land is the source of his humorous expressions, of his break up and making up with the world; it's what alleviates his sorrows and makes him dream about the luck of the tomorrow.

Land is the holiest of the laws of a Ciutorean, and when it comes to land, he doesn't want to hear about any other laws. Land can be lost, can be stolen in the light of the day; for it one can lie with the hand on the bible. From autumn to spring the villagers from Ciutura are in search of land. They look for it in pubs, courts, churches, fairs. ¹³⁸ (*The Burden of Our Goodness*, p. 85)

So, what is the villager to do now that the meaning of his whole existence is being shattered? Even, if Hitchins were right, and the kolkhoz has brought harmony to the village, the changes imposed by the Kremlin should not be considered welcome since they deprived the peasant of the meaning of his/her life, of the dreams about tomorrow. Besides, the villagers' only relation to land is that of "trudozile¹³⁹" now. People no longer have the freedom to work the land in accordance with the centuries' long traditions. Hence, the agronomists are to decide what is to be planted on the land of the kolkhoz. Consequently, the maize that so many times saved the Caraboosh from starvation is no longer planted. Thus, people are dispossessed of their historical knowledge and independence.

Moreover, Drutse brings to life some characters that have gone crazy when no longer able to work their land. Consider, Veta from the drama *Doina*, or Gheorghe from *Leaves of Yearning* that has become a wanderer when the two things he most loved — the land and the girl — are lost. So, dispossession has lead to a deep identity crisis. Finally, imperial domination has reached such a degree that:

¹³⁸ Pamintul e felul de-a fi al ciutoreanului, si fara pamint el ca si cum nu ar fi pe lume. Din pamint ciutoreanul isi poate drege orice. Poate face prieteni pentru un pahar de vin si prieteni pentru o viata intrega. Brazdele grele si miezoase picura vesnic pe umerii ciutoreanului, trezindu-se indata cind omul trebuie sa-si apere averea si cinstea. Din pamint ciutoreanul poate face vorbe cu haz, pamintul il supara si il impaca cu lumea intrega, pamintul ii leagana necazurile si il face a visa la norocul zilei de mine.

Pamintul e cea mai sfinta lege a ciutoreanului, si, cind vine vorba de pamint, el nu mai vrea sa stie alta lege. Pamintul poate fi pierdut, poate fi furat ziua-n amiaza mare; pentru pamint poti minti cu mina pe cruce. Din toamna si pina in primavara ciuturenii umbla si cauta pamint. Il cauta pe la crisma, pe la judecati, pe la biserici, pe la iarmaroace. (*Povara Bunatatii Noastre*, p. 85)

¹³⁹ A hybrid word used as unit of measurement of the amount of work done by an employee in the Soviet Union, *trudo* meaning "labour" in Russian, and *zile* menaing "days" in Romanian

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Ciutura disappeared, vanished among the army that made a halt in the valley. Ciutura gave the soldiers an equal share of everything it had. [...] Half of the village was wearing military clothes, the old ones made a reserve of tobacco for years to come, while the freckled cheeks of the young ones denoted that they had also had a shot with the gun.¹⁴⁰ (*The Burden of Our Goodness*, p. 156-157)

This sequence somehow reminds the conquest of the Americas when the Europeans came to the new land, so different, so superior. The natives were so naïve and so unexperienced as to what the newcomers were bringing into their lives that they bought in. Thus, after taking an equal share of everything the people have the Russians pay it back with such trivial things as tobacco or a shot with the gun. The fact is that an invading army has nothing else to offer.

Although, the children are seduced by the Russian “generosity” the older generation seems to remember the first stage of Russian domination. Thus, the narrator anticipates the Russians’ act of gratitude by revealing what their coming actually implied:

Children want to learn what a brave man should do in case he wanted a decoration too. But, the land is shaking under the tanks, the burning road is moving its ribs in an attempt to avoid them, while the young wide open eyes are absorbing the magnificent image of an army freshly out of the battlefield.

Old men stand with lips tightened and pressed together, with hands cold and pressed to the haunches, trying to remember quickly where to each road leads. Thus, if asked, they would be able to give a short military like answer. But the army keeps passing by. Thousand tons of iron screech and frown, the wind whistles through the holey car windows, and the dust was floating around over the road, going neither up nor down.¹⁴¹ (*The Burden of Our Goodness*, p. 150-151)

¹⁴⁰ Ciutura a disparut, s-a topit printre oastea poposita in vale. Ciutura a facut soldatilor parte dreapta din toate cite le avea. [...] O jumatate de sat umbla in haine militare, batrinii si-au facut rezerva de mahorca pentru ani de zile, iar obrajorii pistruaiati ai micilor ciuturenii povesteau tuturor ca au tras si ei cu pusca. (*Povara Bunatatii Noastre*, pp. 156-157)

¹⁴¹ ... Copiii vor sa afle ce trebuie sa faca un om de treaba care ar fi vrut si el o decoratie, iar pamintul tremura sub tancuri, drumul infierbintat isi tot muta coastele, ferindu-se, si ochii proaspeti, larg deschisi, lasa sa patrunda in sufletul copiilor mareata priveliste a unei armate abia scoase din lupta.

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This fragment reveals the true reason behind the army's stationing in the village — it has recently gone out of battle. Consequently, courtesy apart, the Russian continues to be the occupant. And, the occupation army is like a millstone around the neck. Apparently, the land, preserves the memory of the past domination unaltered and makes visible the pain of the subdued nation. Land is being personified to reinforce the general attitude of the older generation. It operates as a collective memory of all the previous invasions and is trying in vain to avoid occupation now by trying to move away from under the tons of iron. Moreover, unlike the children, the older men are quite alarmed by the presence of the army, as revealed by the *lips tightened and pressed together, with hands cold and pressed to the haunches*. They see beyond the shiny decorations because they know how these are gained. They've already been on a battlefield and know that there is nothing marvellous about war. Moreover, when the war machine — represented by the tons of iron — is stationed on your land the century's long order and harmony is broken.

Similarly, military domination is described in *Leaves of Yearning*:

Then, red-starred tanks passed behind the village, stopped to ask the way and moved on. A few days later, the gun canons went down somewhere far in the west, and the village breathed a sigh of relief. Ones left, others came—it seemed something barely changed in the Razeshilor Vale. The only difference was that the hungry ploughs drew furrows across day and night. And, many parents did not know from what corner of the world to expect some news from their sons. Also, people closed their dogs in the entrance hall to prevent them from barking at uncle Efim, the new president of the village soviet, when he went around the village¹⁴² (*Leaves of Yearning*, p. 322)

Batrinii stau cu buzele strinse, cu mini reci, lipite de solduri, cearca la repezeala a-si aminti care drum incotro poate duce pentru ca, de-or fi intrebati, sa raspunda scurt, militareste. Iar armata tot trece si trece pe linga ei. Mii de tone de fier scrisnesc si se incrunta, fluiera vintul prin ferestrele gaurite, si colbul sta chiftind deasupra drumului—nici mai sus nu poate urca, nici mai jos nu izbuteste sa coboare. (*Povara Bunatatii Noastre*, pp. 150-151)

¹⁴² Pe urma au trecut pe dupa sat tancuri cu stele rosii — s-au oprit sa intrebe drumul si s-au dus mai departe. In citeva zile s-a stins ciocotul tunurilor undeva in asfintit si satul s-a aciuat. Unii s-au dus, altii au venit — pareca ca nici nu se prea schimbasese nimica in Valea Razesilor. Atita doar ca plugurile flaminde rasturnau brazde zi si noapte, si multi parinti nu stiau din care parte a lumii sa astepte veste de la feciori, si cind iesea in sat badea Efim,

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Basically, the narrator suggests that to the Moldovans the passing tanks are more than anything a reminder of the retreat of the Romanian army and the invasion of the Red one. Yet, the departure of the Russian army is a relief both for people and land. For the first, it means that war is closing to its end. For the latter, it implies that the men of the village would finally come back home and the man-land communion would be re-established. However, after *some left and others came* things are not as simple as it might seem. Although, *something barely changed*, families are still waiting for their sons, fathers, husbands and brothers to come back from God knows where. Also, the new power has brought about changes in the local administration. And, the change is far from being a favourable one, because from the last sentence one can easily get that people are somehow afraid of the new authority. The power is far from being friendly with the local population and is inclined to supervise the villagers. Thus, for their own good, people try not to anger their master(s).

Also, military and political terror and domination is accompanied by economic exploitation. Consider, the following passages:

It dawned, but then the sun hid in the clouds again. A cart left the village, and half way through it turned to the (train) station. Then, two more followed and both turned to the (train) station too.¹⁴³ (*Leaves of Yearning*, p. 355)

Just after some minutes, uncle Mihalache answered touching the tip of the tongue with a finger and looking through the slips of *postavka*¹⁴⁴ ...¹⁴⁵ (*Leaves of Yearning*, p. 369)

oamenii incuiau ciinii prin tinzi sa nu latre la dinsul — acum el era presedintele sovietului satesc. (*Frunze de Dor*, p. 322)

¹⁴³ Se luminase, dar pe urma soarele a dat iar in nouri, din sat a iesit o caruta, dar la jumatate de drum a cirnit-o spre gara; pe urma au mai iesit doua, dar si acelea au cirnit-o. (*Frunze de Dor*, p. 355)

¹⁴⁴ Delivery in English, referring to the food/ agriproducts delivery to Moscow during and after Second World War.

¹⁴⁵ Abia peste citeva minute badea Mihalache, atingind c-un deget virful limbii si rasfoind chitantele de *postavka*, a raspuns: [...] (*Frunze de Dor*, p. 369)

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Once a week the village was obliged to send a certain number of carts for community work, the so called *corvoada*¹⁴⁶.¹⁴⁷ (*Leaves of Yearning*, p. 384)

Of course, this apparently innocent inferences reveal the “burden of our goodness”. Apparently, the Bessarabians are made to pay a considerable part of the war losses of the Soviet Union. Actually, it seems that the Bessarabian Romanians are being punished for their decision to join Romania and the latter’s attempt to save them from Russian domination. In fact, Moscow is trying to recuperate the economic benefits that have been wasted in the years when Bessarabia has been free from Russia, by means of community work and *postavka*. Indeed, these fragments refer to several economic obligations of the population towards the state. One of this duties is the community work, the so-called *corvoada*. And, the other—*postavka*, that imposed people to contribute with a specific part of their annual crops. Thus, Drutse leaves no doubts as to the nature of the master-subaltern relationship when saying that the village is obliged to send its people to work. Similarly, women are made to pay their share. When Rusanda enters the Village Soviet to ask about Gheorghe’s trip she sees herself included in a mysterious list. But, frightened by the fact of being included into a list she runs to aunt Frasina, Gheorghe’s mother to help her:

Holy mother, the fellow is completely crazy, in a twinkling of the eye you’re in his *spiscă*¹⁴⁸!” [...] ... counted from the payslips how much bread they carried to the state, and how much was left to be carried.¹⁴⁹ (*Leaves of Yearning*, p. 390)

As it later appears in the novel, Rusanda has been added to the list of candidates to work as teachers. She is probably going to replace one of the many teachers that have flown to Romania or have been deported to Siberia.

Actually, as both history and the plot of *The Burden of Our Goodness* attest, these contributions that were part of Stalin’s policy, as Casu (2010) claims, have lead to the disastrous

¹⁴⁶ Unpaid labour which peasants were forced to offer to landlords or the state.

¹⁴⁷ Cam o data in saptamina satul era obligat sa trimita un anumit numar de carute pentru munca de folos obstesc, asa-zisa corvoada. (*Frunze de Dor*, p. 384)

¹⁴⁸ List from Russian

¹⁴⁹ Maica sfinta, aista chiar ca e nebun cu totul! Una-doua si te vira in *spisca*... [...] si-i socotea pe chitante cita pine au dus la stat, cit le-a mai ramas sa dea. (*Frunze de Dor*, p. 390)

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famine of 1946-1947 (p. 43-44). While people were starving the crops were getting rotten in wagons at the train stations. Moreover, according to Corbu (2008a), the way the author puts it makes it crystal-clear that the natural catastrophe is used to destroy the subaltern nation. The authorities not only do nothing to help the starving population but impose the *postavka* which the dying peasants are obliged to carry to the rayon centre.

Apparently, all these measures and actions (or better say non-action) are part of the plan of the metropolis—the forcible collectivization and the creation of the kolkhoz. Thus, Corbu (2008a) highlights the moment in which the protagonist of *The Burden of Our Goodness* is complaining to his son-in-law, who has become a tractor-driver and some kind of village activist, that “the kolkhoz was created, our lands, our plows and our heath were taken away” (p. 93). In short, besides military and administrative domination the new regime has also introduced some regulations that are characteristic of the Soviet economic hegemony.

Actually, the degree of economic integration is reflected by the following line:

— Look! I give you 30 rubbles.¹⁵⁰(*Leaves of Yearning*, p. 376)

In short, even the money that is in use in the annexed territory is Russian money, just like in 1877 when together with the Russian troops the Russian money invaded the Romanian principalities. Actually, according to Focsa (2005), the Romanian national currency — leu, was a symbol of the independence and of the national — Dacian and Roman — identity of the Romanians. So, it is no surprise that the new masters of Bessarabia brought their own money to the region. And, Trofimash's (peasant) mother gave him the rubbles to go to the cooperative and buy himself a cap. Thus, the economic regulations and the monetary unit that the new regime brought to Soviet Moldavia and the rest of the Soviet republics lead to an even greater dependence on the metropolis. To summarize, consider K. Nkrumah's statement that fits perfectly the case of Moldova:

the essence of [neo-]colonialism is that the State which is subject to it is, in theory, independent and has all the outward trappings of international

¹⁵⁰ - Uite, iti dau treizeci de ruble. (*Frunze de Dor*, p. 376)

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sovereignty. In reality, its economic system and thus its political policy, is directed from outside. (qtd. in Pratt, 2008, p. 226)

On the other hand, *The Spire* proves that the judicial power is also controlled by the Kremlin. Hence, to get the case of Simionel solved properly the villagers have to go to Moscow.

When the documents were ready, two of the elders of Capriana returned to the village, together with Simionel. The other three took the plane to Moscow, to see the country general prosecutor. [...] Unexpectedly, two colonels from the Ministry of Internal Affairs from Moscow arrived. They started the investigation immediately. Balta called Chishinau from the post office in the neighbouring village. He reported the situation and as a result of the communication a long and alarming silence followed. Chishinau didn't know anything about the arrival of the high inspection. Moscow decided to intervene in the Capriana case directly, in order to avoid any local influence.¹⁵¹ (*The Spire*, p. 509)

First, this excerpt proves the subaltern position of the Moldovan national organs. Also, it is an example of what Bhabha called "the system of promotion based on personal merit" according to which the bureaucrats in MSSR chose who deserves their participation and who does not. Yet, it also sheds some light on the (corrupted) nature of justice the latter carries in the republic. It seems that, the eradication of the national symbols (the spire) and the rebels (Simionel, who dared to disobey the orders of the school director) is more important to the local authorities than justice and the welfare of the citizens.

Consider, the way local authorities persecuted Drutse and the latter's auto-exile to Moscow. It seems, that, after the former union with Romania, the newly instaured regime has to "work hard" to prove its loyalty to Moscow. Of course, this lead to excesses. In the same way, the local authorites have caused a considerable number of casualties as a consequence of the

¹⁵¹ Cum documentele au fost gata, doi dintre batrinii Caprianei s-au intors in sat, impreuna cu Simionel, iar altii trei au urcat in avion si au plecat la Moscova, la procurorul general al tarii. [...] Pe neasteptate au sosit doi colonei de la Ministerul de Interne din Moscova, si cum au intrat in Capriana, imediat au si inceput cercetarile. De la posta din satul vecin Balta a telefonat la Chisinau, comunicind faptul, in urma carei comunicari in receptor s-a lasat o mutenie lunga, ingrijoratoare, dat fiind ca Chisinaul nu stia nici cu spatele de sosirea inaltei inspectii. Moscova hotarise sa intervina in cazul Capriana direct, pentru a evita orice influenta locala. (*Clopotnita*, p. 509)

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1946-1947 famine, casualties that outnumbered those of Ukraine or Russia itself. Another example is the issue with the road to Paminteni, presented in the novel *The Burden of Our Goodness*, which has been solved only when the villagers reached the seat of the czar.

Similarly, the Soviet/Russian culture is dominating the social life of the subaltern republics. Drutse's works abound in examples of cultural domination, and of confrontations of old and new. Actually, the "new" is generally seen as something alien to the essence of the peasants who live according to the same set of norms as their fathers and great grandfathers have done. Consider, the example presented below:

Old Danutza's old, slimy and scuzzy violin played night and day making the dance go on and on. But, to everyone's distress old Danutza was not a master of his songs. It seemed that he had been a student just once in his life, just one day. And, during his whole life, he played the folk songs the way he heard them that day. When it came to playing, he picked it up where he left it last time, and played it to the end, to start it anew when done. Old Danutza found it unconceivable to drop a song from that plait or to replace it with another.

Finally, all well and good, and even with all his flaws, the old man was almost always ready to play the violin. But, the trouble was that people from different places came to the club in the evenings. That evening, there were boys and girls from the village, from the neighbourhood, from the rayon, mariners who were on leave, war invalids, partisans who god knows how turned up at the club from the Razeshilor Vale. Of course, everyone came with certain moods, having some favourite songs. While the village youth mostly liked old Danutza's songs, the guests expected, and even requested other songs to be played too. But ... gah ... the old violinist couldn't learn new songs, couldn't add them to the old plait of songs inherited from the ancestors. And, often in the heat of the dance he found himself being scolded and booed.¹⁵² (*Leaves of Yearning*, p. 348)

¹⁵² Dintr-o vioara veche, slinoasa si jerpelita, mos Danuta stia a scoate petreceri care tineau zile si nopti la rind, dar necazul cel mare al tuturor era ca mos Danuta nici pe departe nu putea sa fie stapin pe cintecele sale. Parea ca el a fost elev o singura data in viata, o singura zi si, asa cum a prins el atunci in ziua ceea cu urechea melodiile populare, asa si le-a purtat o viata intreaga. Cind venea vorba de cintat, el lua firul de unde-l lasase data trecuta si tot

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Apparently, a novel that at first sight seems to be about youth, passion and love, unexpectedly, approaches the theme of the confrontation between the old and the new. The value of the old is suggested by the fact that the only musician available is an old man. And, young boys and girls could not go out without having some music to dance to. However, the attitude of the narrator towards this character is what most matters about this excerpt because it is to provide an insight into where Drutse's loyalties lie in relation to the new regime. Thus, the position of the heterogenous culture is to be proven.

First, it is important to mention that to depict the old, the author goes farther than just employ the very epithet. As an illustration, age/tradition is symbolised by the musician, the (appearance of his) violin and the nature of the songs he plays. In addition, the narrator says that the old musician is not a master of his songs, which frankly seems impossible after so many years of playing the same thing over and over again.

However, what the narrator appears to suggest is that Danutza respects too much the traditions inherited from our ancestors and does not want to and cannot alter them. The old man is a mere keeper of folklore, not an artist who would change something that has been conserved for centuries. Thus, Danutza is like a shaman playing the music of his ancestors to the young people who have gathered around him and dance without stopping as if there is no war, and no fatigue after a whole week of work in the field. Yet, the narrator is objective about the old man's abilities and, just like the latter's fellow villagers, accepts his flaw. In contrast, the guests are not so indulgent. Although, mere outsiders, they ask for more and impose their taste in matters of music. Their actions contradict the old saying "when in Rome do as Romans do". So, the excerpt is a subtle allusion to the master subaltern relationship. It seems that the village Drutse describes is a place of encounter of various opposing forces—a contact zone. Apart from invading a space,

cinta pina la capat, pentru ca pe urma s-o ia de la inceput. A scoate din impletitura ceea de melodii un cintec sau a incerca sa puie altul in locul lui era un lucru de neconceput pentru mos Danuta.

In sfirsit, toate bune si frumoase; chiar cu metehnele sale, batrinul era gata mai intotdeauna sa puna mina pe arcus, dar vorba e ca serile se aduna la club lume de pe lume. Veneau baieti si fete din sat, veneau din partea locului, de pe la raion, veneau marinari fiind in concediu, invalizi de razboi, partizani, cine stie prin ce miracol ajunsi in sara aceea la clubul din Valea Razesilor. Fireste, fiecare venea cu dispozitia sa, fiecare avea melodiile sale preferate, si daca tinerimii din sat ii era mai totdeauna pe plac ceea ce purta cu sine mos Danuta, musafirii asteptau, ba chiar mai mult, cereau sa fie cintate si alte melodii. Aici insa, vai, batrinul viorist nu putea prinde melodii noi, nu le putea pune in colacul de melodii stiute din mosi- stramosi, pe care le purta cu dinsul, si deseori se pomenea in culmea petrecerii ocarit si huiduit. (*Frunze de dor*, p. 348)

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the masters brought about a disruption of the centuries' long established order. Consequently, they shall always be the "other".

Moreover, Drutse's villages are in opposition to the cities that are a result of the constant sedimentation of diverse movements and nations. The rural population identifies the newcomers as outsiders and intruders that come to destroy the existing order. Accordingly, the first in experiencing the disapproval of the outsiders are the keepers of the old. Thus, sensing the threat, one reacts. Yet, it is quite curious that although war is somewhere far, all the actors of war: natives of the place (boys and girls from the village) and outsiders, both civilian (from the neighbourhood, from the rayon) and military (mariners who were on leave, war invalids, and partisans) are at the club. Consequently, as to maintain one's old way of being in a third space is difficult, if not impossible, the old keeper of the local folklore (in this case old Danutza) tries to escape domination. And, he chooses to stay faithful to his values by isolating himself from the outer influence. And, this is what the next excerpt is about.

In the end, he said he would not go anymore to the club to play the violin, because he was afraid. Thus, in the afternoons, he did what he did, but suddenly one could see the lock on the door and old Danutza vanished. [...] Girls feared those silent nights as they feared devil; Rusanda prayed god to protect her from going out for her first time in such a night. But, it seems that one cannot escape one's fate, because exactly this misfortune expected her at the club. Old Danutza didn't want to come and sing no matter what one said. About noon time he had the idea of having seen some vehicles full of soldiers, and fancied that they came to party at the club. He was saying that he didn't want to become a laughing stock at this old age.¹⁵³ (*Leaves of Yearning*, pp. 349-350)

¹⁵³ Pina la urma a zis ca nu se mai duce la club sa cinte, caci mai era si fricos acel viorist al satului, si cam pe la amiaza, o chitea el cum o chitea si numai ce vedeai lacata la usa, iar mos Danutza - ia-l de unde nu-i. [...] Fetele se temeau ca de necuratul de acele seri mute; Rusanda se ruga in sinea ei - ferit-a sfintul sa ajunga sa fie scoasa in lume tocmai intr-o sara de aceea! Dar, pe semne, de ce ti-e scris nu scapi, caci tocmai nenorocul cela ii astepta la club. Mos Danuta nu vroia sa vina sa cinte nici in ruptul capului. Pe la amiaza i se nazarisera niste masini cu soldati si, inchipuindu-si ca soldatimea ceea a venit anume pentru a petrece la club, zicea ca nu vrea sa se faca de ris la batrinete. (*Frunze de Dor*, p. 349 - 350)

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Apparently, this fragment is a replica of a phrase from a book on Spanish revolution, which said that to withstand means to win. And, the old man resists the new and preserves the national. He is endowed with stubbornness and dignity which helped him be the carrier of tradition he is. Although, he could have given up and succumbed to the will of the dominating majority, his pride does not let him do it. Thus, Drutse converts him into a symbol of the moral consciousness of the nation in a time of foreign (cultural) domination. In addition, his songs (especially when first out with the loved one) are like an omen of good luck to the youth. For example, later in the novel it appears that Rusanda, which has been chosen by the new regime to become a teacher, lost her first love. Of course, it is no mere coincidence that the old man has not been there to perform his ritual at the club when she has first come with the boy she loved. Thus, Drutse hints at the intrusion of the "other" that is to break the balance of the rural universe and bring about hybridity.

Yet, the old man has a weakness, an orphan that has returned from the master's war suffering some severe disorders and the only thing which could alleviate his sorrow is old Danutza's playing.

Finally, Ikimash, begged by everybody, went and brought him. After several lively ancient folk songs, old Danutza was asked by the soldiers to play "Katiusha", the famous "Katiusha", which was perfect for dance for its lilt. But, the old man said he didn't know it well, and faint-hearted by nature, he started to gather up the violin. Desperate Ikimash, the honour of the village being at stake, started teaching him the song on the spot. He took the old man into a corner and started to sing the melody himself.

However, the poor fellow, though a good sniper in the war, didn't know Russian, and had neither voice nor memory, so he mixed up the lines in the worst possible way. There was no fog over the river, no orchards in bloom, no Katiusha. The guests were about to start a fight. The youth of the neighbourhood knew well that Ikimash, with all his will, couldn't sing and were chuckling at it, until a girl's laughter, as clear as a bell, filled the club room.

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“Cito-o-o-o?”¹⁵⁴

Ikimash didn't expect such a disloyalty. So, he started to look for the impertinent girl that couldn't keep from laughing. But, while he was looking for her, because of his illness, his cheek darkened, his look abashed, everything foreseeing his fainting.

He wanted to find her no matter what. But, when he thought that here she is, Gheorghe Doinaru, whom he couldn't bear to see, appeared in front of him every time. Finally, when he was about to fight with him, he cried: “*Smert nemetkim okkupantam!*”¹⁵⁵ and collapsed.¹⁵⁶ (*Leaves of Yearning*, p. 351)

Probably the most curious detail about this excerpt is how the soldiers are presuming that everyone should know the famous Russian song *Katiusa*. It seems to reaffirm what Boehmer (1995) defined as “aesthetic display” or “an eye-catching assemblage of hero cults, exhibitionism, and rituals of self-glorification”, which explains the public interest for stories, verse, songs and games that “embodied the imperial dreams” (p. 32). Thus, when the old man says that he does not know the song well enough and refuses to play it, they are about to start a fight. Then, Ikimas, who just like Simionel from *The Spire* seems to have a dual personality, tries to mediate between the old man and the soldiers—a proof of Russian domination in the region. The poor lad knows what the consequences of angering a Russian could be. Unfortunately, the task seems to go beyond his potential. Although, a great soldier in the Red Army, he has not

¹⁵⁴ What in Russian

¹⁵⁵ Death to the German conquerors! In Russian

¹⁵⁶ In cele din urma, rugat de toata lumea, s-a dus si l-a adus Ichimas. Dupa citeva batute din vremuri de demult, mos Danuta a fost rugat de militari sa cinte “Katiusa”, renumita “Katiusa”, care, fiind si saltareata, era cum nu se mai poate buna de joc, dar batrinul a zis ca n-o stie pina la capat si, fricos din fire, a pornit sa-si stringa vioara. Ichimas, disperat — era pusa in joc onoarea satului — s-a apucat sa-l invete acolo pe loc cintecul; stringindu-l pe batrin intr-un ungher, a inceput a-i canta de unul singur.

Sarmanul baiat — o fi fost el bun tintas la razboi, dar nici ruseste, nici voce, nici memorie, ca incurca versurile in modul cel mai barbar. Unde ti-i ceata pe riu, unde ti-s livezile date in floare, unde ti-i Katiusa?! Musafirii erau porniti pe mare cearta. Baietii din partea locului, stiind prea bine ca bietul Ichimas vrea el, dar nu poate canta, rideau pe infundate, pina ce un clopotel de fata a explodat, umplind sala clubului de riset.

- Cito-o-o-o?

La o asemenea tradare Ichimas nu se astepta. A pornit s-o caute pe neobrazata care nu si-a putut tine risul intr-insa, dar, fire bolnava, in timp ce o cauta, obrazul I se facea pamintiu, ochii tulburi si toate prevesteau apropierea lesinului.

Tinea s-o gaseasca cu orice pret, dar cind i se parea ca, uite, pune mina pe dinsa, de fiecare data ii rasarea Gheorghe Doinaru in fata, pe care nu avea ochi sa-l vada. In cele din urma, repezindu-se cu pumnii la dinsul, a strigat: “*Smert nemetkim okkupantam!*” — si s-a prabusit la podea. (*Frunze de dor*, p. 351)

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managed to master Russian. This language is alien to him, and to most of the Moldovans. Consequently, this fact together with the lack of ear for music does nothing else but provoke another crisis. So, the fears of the old man come true, and the outsiders manage to disrupt the established order. They are about to provoke a confrontation in the else peaceful village.

However, to better understand the disruptive character of the interference of the people coming from outside one shall have a look at the next excerpt:

After a long and fair spring day, a day when one ploughed, sowed, planted and grafted, nobody was tired, and the club moaned with people. There was something strange, something mysterious about the clubs in those years as war was closing to its end. The fact that there is a battle somewhere and death for a fair cause, and that the ones that fight and die are related by blood to this village, to these people, was spreading everywhere some kind of chilling haste. Every fellow saw himself a soldier, and every girl saw herself a widow. Thus, everyone was looking for the one predestined to be his or hers. And, everyone longed to taste what life reserved them before it was too late. So, they gathered in the evenings at the club, in order to find each other and to bid farewell to each other.¹⁵⁷ (*Leaves of Yearning*, p. 350)

There is an obvious change in the atmosphere depicted by Drutse in the few excerpts presented above. The change concerns all the aspects of the Moldovan's life. The last example however highlights the general feeling that dominates the country, the feeling that the isolated and peaceful existence of the village and of the nation is coming to an end. A series of external factors and actors are interfering with the patriarchal order of the village. Moreover, Moscow seems to have a surprising ability and interest in replacing the old with the new, and culture—in all its forms—is not an exception. Consider, the example presented below:

¹⁵⁷ Dupa o lunga si frumoasa zi de primavara, zi in care s-a arat, s-a semanat, s-a sadit, s-a hultuit, osteneala totusi n-a doborit pe nimeni, caci clubul gemea de lume. Aveau ceva ciudat, ceva misterios cluburile in anii ceia de la sfirsitul razboiului. Faptul ca undeva se lupta si se moare pentru o cauza dreapta, si ca lupta si mor oameni legati prin singe de acest sat, de aceasta lume, semana pretutindenii un fel de graba amestecata cu infrigurare. Si fiecare baietan se vedea de acum ostas, si fiecine fetita se vedea de-acum vadana, si, cit nu era tirziu, fiecare incerca sa-l gaseasca pe cel ce era sortit sa fie al lui, si, cit nu era tirziu, fiecare vroia sa guste din ceea ce i se cuvenea. Si, pentru a se gasi unul pe altul, pentru a se desparti unul de altul, se adunau serile la club. (*Frunze de Dor*, p. 350)

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Let's sing, friends!¹⁵⁸ (*Leaves of Yearning*, p. 360)

These are the words of the village club instructor, Nikolaeva Ekaterina Andreevna that has been sent from the rayon as a reaction to the village youth's "problems". It seems that the guests from the rayon that have attended the party at which Katiusa has not been played, have made the problem known to the communist authorities. Consequently, the latter decides to "help" the natives and sends them a club instructor, an instructor who gives instructions in Russian to Moldovans.

There is some doubt about the nationality of the instructor given the new regime's policy that required everyone's name to be spelled in a Russian manner. However, the writer normally transliterates Russian words and only keeps the "k" when referring to Russian people/language. Consider, the name of the Russian soldier Nikolai. Moreover, in *The White Church*, a historical novel that refers to an earlier epoch, the writer spells the name of Ecaterina using "c" not "k" as in the case of the club instructor. Hence, both her words and her name sway the balance in favour of the argument that she is a Russian who has come to teach Moldovan youth what to do in their leisure time. For instance, she is teaching them sing, and play draughts. Thus, the author makes an allusion to the values promoted by Ekaterina. And, the usage of Russian as well as the way of spelling the name of the instructor suggest that these are the "other's" values, values heterogenous to the natives' culture.

— Lying?! Me lying?! Comrade Nikolaeva, be my witness ...¹⁵⁹
(*Leaves of Yearning*, p. 363)

The fact that the club instructor is being addressed as comrade confirms the idea that she is a messenger of the new regime, probably a communist too. And, from the quotation bellow results that she does her job well because instead of hearing the folk songs of old Danutza, in the middle of the night, the heroine of the novel suddenly hears the boys singing a particularly

¹⁵⁸ "Spoiomte, druzia !" (In Russian) (*Frunze de Dor*, p. 360)

¹⁵⁹ - Spun minciuni? Eu spun minciuni? Tovarasa Nikolaeva, fii martora... (*Frunze de dor*, p. 363)

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beautiful and rare song: “*Tiomnaia noci, Tolko puli svisteat po stepi* ¹⁶⁰ ...”. In other words, the boys sing songs instead of just dancing to someones music. Definitely, this is an effective way to make the subaltern learn Russian. Thus, apart from breaking the continuity of the old tradition, the new regime manages to impose new cultural values, Russian values.

Actually, the domination of Russian is more evident in the example presented bellow. In fact, in such a short sentence, which is a sample of speech of a young man, there are two Russian words employed.

Predsedatele calls you to selsovet.¹⁶¹ (*Leaves of Yearning*, p. 410)

Although, there are perfect equivalents of these words in Romanian people use the Russian words in relation to the insitutions imposed by the Soviets. This denotes that both the *selsovet*—village Soviet/council, and *predsedatel*—head/chairman represent a reality that is not proper to the Moldovan village. Both notions originate from Russian just like the objects of reference, and describe an alien unit of local public administration. Consequently, the strategy of borrowing words from Russian leads to the situation in which the mother tongue of the natives turns into a hybrid. And, people, as seen in the next examples, no longer make a difference between using Romanian or Russian words.

[...] it's not a big job to stop a passer-by and and say a few words in Russian or Moldavian¹⁶² (*The Spire*, p. 367)

On the door of the restaurant “Moldova” one could read (in Russian) “Closed. Special Service”. There was a queue of about twenty persons at the entrance to the café “Dnestr” (Russian for Dniester), [...] to the door of the café called “Molocinaia” (Russian for dairy shop) was stuck a white notebook paper which announced “hygiene hour” [...], “Zolotoi poceatoc” (Russian for golden

¹⁶⁰ Dark is the night, only bullets whistle over the steppe, ... (*Frunze de dor*, p. 394)

¹⁶¹ Te cheama, zic, *predsedatele*. La *selsovet*. (*Frunze de dor*, p. 410)

¹⁶² [...] mare lucru sa opresti un trecator si sa rostesti doua vorbe fie in ruseste, fie in moldoveneste (Clopotnita, p. 367)

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ear of corn or corncob) - a restaurant serving traditional meal mostly made of corn
[...] ¹⁶³ (*The Spire*, pp. 387-388)

On the other hand, there is the older generation that is more conservative, and stick to using a pure mother tongue, not a hybrid:

— No, I didn't buy it ... one sewed it just like ... a present, said the woman, and looked at Gheorghe, trying to guess in his face if she used the proper word, she was not using new words fearing to mispronounce them.¹⁶⁴ (*Leaves of Yearning*, p. 418)

The new words that the author refers to are the borrowings from Russian that have invaded the natives just like the Russian Army has. Then, the authorities have manipulated the educational institutions to initiate a more complex process of Russification. For instance, the Russified proper names, as already mentioned above, have began to be used in the speech of anyone related to the local educational establishments, be it a teacher (Rusanda) or a pupil (Lena).

He's eating?! Hide the bread, boy. If Rusanda Mihailovna sees us we'll be in trouble.¹⁶⁵ (*Leaves of Yearning*, p. 435)

Dominte Lena Mihailovna, answered the little girl clearly¹⁶⁶ (*Leaves of Yearning*, p. 398)

¹⁶³ Pe usa restaurantului "Moldova" se putea citi: "Zakrito. Spetobslujivanie". La intrarea in cafeneau "Dnestr" se topea la soare o coada de vreo 20 de oameni [...], cafenea zisa "Molocinaia" [...] dar pe usa alba o foaie de caiet care anunta "Igienizare" [...] "Zolotoi Poceatoc" – o cafenea cu bucate nationale gatite mai ales din papusoi [...] (*Clopotnita*, pp. 387-388)

¹⁶⁴ - Ei, l-am cumparat ... Ni l-a cusut asa ... Cadou, a adaugat matusa si s-a uitat lung la Gheorghe, incercind s-a ghiceasca dupa fata lui daca a nimerit cuvintul ista – cuvinte noi ea nu folosea, temindu-se ca nu le va rosti corect. (p. 418, Frunze de dor, Scrieri I)

¹⁶⁵ - Maninca?! Ascunde, frate, pinea. Ne vede Rusanda Mihailovna si am patit-o!

¹⁶⁶ - Dominte Lena Mihailovna, i-a raspuns raspicat fetita [...] (p. 398, Frunze de dor, Scrieri I)

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This last line is part of a dialogue between Gheorghe and a young pupil. When she asks for some flowers from Gheorghe, he is curious about who she is. However, her answer leaves him just as ignorant about her identity as before. In other words, the (elder) villagers are not familiar with the new protocols.

— Ahh, it's possible and indeed quite probable ... What need brought you to me, mister, eh ... comrade teacher, now it seems teachers are addressed with comrade too ...

— Uncle Mihalache, I need your daughter Rusanda.

— My daughter? Well, you've just talked to her [...]

— Well, my story is the following, continued the teacher sitting on the stool and looking up at the father and daughter. We want to make your Rusanda a teacher.

Autumn came, but the schools in the Bessarabian villages remained closed because there was no one to teach the kids ...

Uncle Mihalache got it immediately.

— A teacher, he asked [...]

— And whom else from the village have you chosen? [...] And what am I to do now? (Asked the girl)

— Go for a few months to Soroca, to a (teaching) course.¹⁶⁷ (*Leaves of Yearning*, p. 414)

¹⁶⁷ - A! Se prea poate, se prea poate ... Si ce nevoie te-a adus pe la mine, domnu, e-e-e ... tovarase invatator, ca amu si la invatatori, pare-mi-se, tot tovarasi le zic ...

- Mie, bade Mihalache, imi trebuie fiica matale Rusanda.

- Fiica mea? Apoi uite-o, ca chiar acum ai vorbit cu dinsa. [...]

- Apoi iata care mi-i povestea, a reluat invatatorul, asezindu-se pe scaunel si uitindu-se in sus cind la tata, cind la fiica. Vrem s-o facem pe Rusanda matale invatatoare.

Venise toamna, iar prin satele Basarabiei scolile ramineau inchise, caci n-avea cine dascali copiii ...

Badea Mihalache a prins indata firul.

- Invatatoare, zici mata?[...]

- Da pe cine ati mai ales din sat? [...]

- Si amu ce sa fac?

- Sa te duci pe citeva luni la Soroca. La cursuri. [...] (*Frunze de Dor*, p. 414)

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This excerpt reveals the reason and the way a simple peasant girl has turned into a teacher, a thing that seems to have never happened before. Although, there seems to be no positive or negative side to the event, there are some aspects that are worth the reader's attention.

On the one hand, the line of action of the new regime is analysed. And, what follows is that with the arrival of communism the village teacher becomes *comrade* instead of *Mr.* Also, Drutse dares to speak about the exile of the teachers and the "production" of Soviet-friendly "cadres" in no time. Thus, the youth that is fresh out of normal and middle schools is trained to work as mediators between Moldovans and the Russian authorities. Consequently, Russian domination is exerted by means of the educated subaltern, which implies a radical change in the pre-established (social) order of the village/country.

On the other hand, the new regime seems to have empowered women. Apparently, the communists bring about progress, give them the opportunity to choose education instead of working the land. However, whom would the Soviet authorities choose to do the job for them if most of the men have gone to war, and many of them have never returned? In addition, the men that are in the village either have not got enough schooling in the Romanian school or have been recruited to serve in the Soviet Army. So, communism is not only about giving equal opportunities to men and women, it is mostly about promoting the state ideology.

Moreover, Mihail Dolgan (2008b) reveals in his essay Drutse's confession about Rusanda being a vivid example of the "discreditation of the values" (p. 154). Apparently, she represents the tool that the new regime has employed to build the homo sovieticus. The Kremlin knows that the subaltern is not completely subdued if his internal world stays intact. Consequently, what better way to destroy this world but alienate the individual from everything that one holds dear—land, family, friend, beloved person, and neighbours.

Consider, the following excerpt that is a confirmation of how strange the change is to the village people. Also, it questions what the real concern of the new regime is. Thus, despite the Leninist theses, the enlightenment of the masses is not only about the class warfare. Both (Soviet) education and scientific atheism have managed to alienate the peasant from his/her land. Consequently, the further transfer of the land from the individual ownership of the peasant into the ownership of the Soviet state is facilitated.

I never thought that my daughter-in-law would be a teacher.

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— You'll see how well we shall get along in this house, I'm old, I'll wake up in the morning to prepare the breakfast for both of you, one will be going to the school, the other to the field; and next year you'd go to Soroca too, because you're not less educated than her, the land we shall give to the collective farm ...¹⁶⁸ (*Leaves of Yearning*, pp.418-419)

In short, in the Soviet era the purpose of education just like that of culture has been maimed. Nonetheless, one must admit that the domination of Moscow has generated a relatively more egalitarian Moldovan society. However, the statement of the protagonist from *The Spire—If the price of advancement is giving up all the sacred things we have, then God help us...*—is like a ghost/consciousness of the past. So, an allusion to the collapse of the dominated society is made.

Further, the following passage reveals the consequence of the protagonist's inability to accept the changes. Although, both his mother and the girl he loves believe in the possibility of the couple to be together, despite the unexpected change, Gheorghe does not see it coming. Actually, this young boy understands that he is being *robbed* by the new regime. The new social and economic order imposed by the rulers is taking away from him what he most loved – the land and the girl. So, just like many postcolonial characters, Drutse's hero tries to run away from the world that is no longer the way it used to be. And, instead of conforming to his mother's advice he chooses to escape by enrolling into the army.

He was returning happy late in the evening. He had a greenish paper in the inside pocket of the jacket which said that this *doprizivnic*¹⁶⁹ has to be present with certain things in the recruiter (military) station next day. The small paper was hidden somewhere in a notebook, but he could feel it with all his being, the same

¹⁶⁸ [...] da iaca nu mi-o trecut niciodata prin cap ca oi avea nora invatatoare.
- Si sa vezi ce bine ne-om aseza in casa asta – eu is batrina, ma scol dimineata si fac mincare, va hranesc pe amindoi – unul la scoala, altul la deal; da la anul te-i duce si tu la Soroca, pentru ca n-ai mai putina carte decit dinsa – pamintul l-om da cind s-a face colhoz ... (*Frunze de Dor*, pp. 418- 419)

¹⁶⁹ Youth of recruitable age, in Russian

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can only feel a poor man who finally got 100 rubbles, he always feels the money, even if it's left in the house and he's outside.¹⁷⁰ (*Leaves of Yearning*, p. 451)

Apparently, the lad, who from a very young age has worked hard to build a house and a home his father did not manage to give him, suddenly has become extremely poor. Deprived of the traditional values he is only left one choice—to leave his unfinished house and enlist into the master's army. However, the solution he has chosen does not bring him joy. In fact, briefly after having taken the decision, the young man's bliss has started to fade away:

Only then, hugging somebody else's love, Gheorghe felt how lonely he is.

Once in the carriage, he stuck to a window and was contemplating the horizon, looking for two hills among which one could hardly see the leafless orchards. Homeland, where he walked under the rain and wind, and where everything that he loved most in this life remained, was vanishing in the distance.¹⁷¹ (*Leaves of Yearning*, p. 454)

Thus, Drutse wrote this closing paragraph to suggest that things fall apart in the mioritic space between the Prut and the Dniester. Indeed, Soviet domination, just like the British one, technical progress apart brought about material and spiritual disposession. And, Drutse's protagonists understand that there is no future when the pillars of the nation are collapsing. For example, Horia agrees with the quote of Andre Malraux, who "said once that since machines appeared man decreased in value, and the more shall advance technology more will decrease the price of man"¹⁷² (*The Spire*, p. 501). And, the homo sovieticus is nothing but a screw in the Soviet machine.

¹⁷⁰ Tirziu, spre chindii, se intorcea fericit. Ducea in buzunarul dinauntru al hainei o hirite verzuie, in care se spunea ca *doprizivnic-ul* cutare trebuie sa se prezinte a doua zi la comisariatul militar, avind cu sine cutare si cutare lucruri. Era ascunsa hirtiuta undeva intr-un carnetel, dar o simtea cu toata faptura lui, — asa un om sarac, capatind, in sfirsit, o suta de ruble, o simte totdeauna, chiar daca el ii afara, iar banii i-a lasat in casa. (*Frunze de Dor*, p. 451)

¹⁷¹ Si de abia atunci, stringing un dor strain la pieptul lui, a simtit Gheorghe cit de singur a ramas.

In vagon s-a lipit de-o fereastra si cauta in zare doua dealuri de printre care abia se desluseau livezile desfrunzite. Plutea incet in urma bastina unde l-au udat ploile, unde l-au uscat vinturile si unde ramasese tot ce-a avut mai scump in viata. (*Frunze de Dor*, p. 454)

¹⁷² A spus Andre Malraux undeva ca, decum au aparut masinile, omul s-a ieftenit, si cu cit progresa tehnica, cu atit scade pretul omului (*Clopotnita*, p. 501)

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In conclusion, all the elements of outer domination (administrative, military, judicial, social, economic and cultural) lead to dispossession and denationalization. But, probably one of the most visible aspects of domination is the usage of Russian language. Actually, the imposition of Russian has led to the hybridization of the mother tongue. Also, the hegemony of Russia (the heir of the Russian Empire and the main constituent of the Soviet Union) has left deep marks on the identity of the Moldovans. It generated a phenomenon which affected the cultural aspect of life and led to cultural fragmentation, which shall be approached in the next section. So, the new power Sovietised both humans and institutions/organizations, and introduced new ones—selipo, selisovet, etc., that at their turn controlled and imposed a new life style. And, the new life style implied a shift in the natives' cultural values.

5.1.4 Cultural Fragmentation. Post-colonial Corruption and the Crisis of Identity.

The coloniser tries to instil in the territory of the colonised culture his conviction of the superiority of his own identity and/or of his own ideology. The colonised, when confronted with this point of view, experience a conflict between the imported values and the values of the culture or ideology which they regard as their own. (Korek, 2009)

In other words, the expansionist ambition of the Kremlin goes beyond the desire to dominate and exploit the conquered territory. After all, the examples of domination analysed above betray an ambition to manipulate and mutilate the subaltern identity. Thus, even if at some point the Soviet Union has been following Lenin's cultural model of the cultural mosaic, Stalin has promoted the policy of homo sovieticus. Thus, there is no place to national identities within the USSR. And, all the citizens have to believe in nothing but their (totalitarian) leader in Moscow.

The main tools for Russification and building the new identity—homo sovieticus—is terror, a tactic inhibiting reaction among the dominated nations, and the corruption of the (intellectual) elites. For example, according to Corbu (2008), the female character from *Doina—Veta*, is afraid of everything: she is afraid of deportations; she is afraid that famine could come

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back; she is afraid war could break out again; she is afraid of poverty; she is afraid the children would have nothing to wear on holidays. And, as a member of the chorus of the church, she is afraid of everything because she has experienced the darker side of communism. Her system of values is clashing with the pseudo values of her husband that has turned into a servant of the new regime. As a homo sovieticus he could not be related to religion in any way. So, to climb on the career ladder, he beats his wife to make her give up the church that he is sent to close (p. 92).

On the other hand, Onake Caraboosh, the protagonist of *The Burden of Our Goodness*, also lives a great part of his life in terror. But, it seems that he finds the strength to face it and not break. Thus, when Bessarabia is no longer part of the Russian Empire after the war of 1914-1918, despite the threat of being shot by his former army fellows, he abandons his hideout and crosses the border swimming through the frozen river in order to reach home. Then, when the Red Army invades Moldova and demands the Romanian government to send the soldiers of the region back, he has to pass over a bridge at the two ends of which stay armed soldiers of the respective belligerent parts.

However, the moments of most intense terror coincide with the inauguration of the Soviet administration in the region. First, it is when Onake unlike the majority does not go to look for and bring a Russian soldier into his house as a guest. Finally, when a vehicle stops at his gate, he is waiting nervously to be called to interrogation or to be exiled to Siberia. Nonetheless, the soldier that comes addressing him as *papasa*¹⁷³ has come to stay and Onake is exempt. Then, Nikolai's disappearance, shortly after expressing his discontent with the kolkhoz, makes the old man think about the repression methods of the new regime.

Another vivid example is when Onache and his worst enemy, once his best friend, Haralambie are being interrogated because their houses "have a sad appearance". Apparently, the authorities consider that everyone should shine with joy at the instauration of the new regime. However, Caraboosh, whose two sons have died serving in the Red Army, is freed. Yet, his old fellow, whose son has been serving in the Romanian army and has been fighting for the liberation of Moldova, is punished with exile to Siberia and no one has ever heard about him again.

¹⁷³ Russian for old man.

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Thus, terror is what has made most of the Moldovans submissive. Old and young, men and women, (once) rich and poor are afraid of the new authorities. And, the terror of the Gulag is only comparable with that of the Holocaust. Consider, the following excerpt:

I came back to tell you that nothing of the drivel told in class was true. There was no tonsillitis, no bakery, no having one's hair done, no boots – that idiot doesn't even have boots, and wears some old string shoes. The truth is that fear is what kept us from having run to the top of the hill that night.

What do you mean by fear? Were you afraid of the rain, the night, the fire?

We were afraid of the headmaster. ¹⁷⁴ (*The Spire*, p. 543)

Nevertheless, further reading of the text reveals that, despite all the threats, this young girl is the only one who has understood what her teacher has taught her about history:

(...) history should not mean only broken pieces and clay pots that the scholars encountered at the periphery of Orhei! History does not focus only on sacred images and spires erected on the top of the hills, no matter their age or majesty. The flight of the space-crafts, the rain from the night of the 10th to 11th of April, the mess from our school, is history too. If you want to know, even the fact that you left with the others and then came back, even the jacket with pockets in which you came to school today to tell me about our great unrest shall become a witness of history. ¹⁷⁵ (*The Spire*, p. 546)

¹⁷⁴ - M-am intors sa va spun ca nu a fost nimic din toate nascocirile insirate in clasa. Care gilci, care copturi, care par facut, care ciubote, ca prostul acela nici macar sa fi avut ciubote – imbla in niste vechituri cu sireturi. Adevarul este ca frica nu ne-a lasat in noaptea ceea sa ne repezim in virful dealului.

- Cum, adica, frica? V-ati temut de ploaie, de noapte, de foc?

- Ne-am temut de director. (*Clopotnita*, p. 543)

¹⁷⁵ ... istoria n-o fi insemnind numai cioburi si vase de lut scoase de savanti la marginea Orheiului! Istoria nu se concentreaza doar in icoane si clopotnite ridicate in virfuri de deal, oricit de vechi si oricit de marete ar fi ele. Istorie se cheama si zborul navelor spatiale, si ploaia din zece spre unsprezece aprilie, si daravera din scoala noastra. Daca vrei sa stii, pina si faptul ca ai plecat impreuna cu toti, dart te-ai mai intors o data, pina si vesta asta cu buzunarase in care ai venit azi la scoala sa-mi povestesti despre marea noastra framintare, pina si ea va ajunge un martor al istoriei! (*Clopotnita*, p. 546)

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So, just like Onake the protagonist of *The Spire* is fighting against the corrupt representatives of the communist regime. And, his student is no more afraid of the school director, a corrupt servant of the Soviets. Thus, her action of resistance helps the teacher find himself, encounter his true vocation, and this way solve the identity crisis he is going through. Yet, he is aware that he shall fight the “other” alone. As the next example shows, fear has built a wall between the students and the teacher. Likewise, terror has made his wife forget the ideals of the French revolution. Thus, his family and pupils are mere strangers to him now. The inability to fight the destructive forces of the state machine drive the offsprings of the same nation apart. The ones from the steppe have given up the fight while the one from the mountain is determined to strike back.

There they were, happy with the reunion, but more alien than ever—the teacher and his pupils. He wondered how he had managed to stay in this village for four years; how he had managed to work in this school, breathing the same air and sharing from the fruit of his spirit with those that were so alien to him. They weren't even his relatives, or fellow villagers. Moreover, they weren't even a vine from the same race. By mere accident they spoke the same language, lived on the same piece of land, studied the same history, but leaving these apart—they were as different as the sky and the land ... ¹⁷⁶ (*The Spire*, p.541)

In other words, Horia no longer recognises the people that surround him. He used to think the Moldovans and the Romanians are one nation. Yet, the homo sovieticus is a being that has nothing to do with the nation once inhabiting the region between the Prut and the Dniester. Thus, the metropolis has managed to create a new race, a race of servile people.

Similarly, Onake and his son-in-law, Mircea, inhabitants of the same village, are as alien as the teacher and his pupils. When the young man marries his daughter, the old man who has lost his two sons in the war hopes that this boy, whom he (in a way) has raised since he was a

¹⁷⁶ Stateau, bucurindu-se ca s-au revazut, dar erau straini ca niciodata – dascalul si elevii lui. Se mira cum de-a putut raminea el patru ani in satul ista, cum de-a putut lucra in scoala asta, respirind acelasi aer si impartasind rodul sufletului sau celor care ii erau atit de straini. Nici rude, nici consateni, nici vita din vita aceluiasi neam. Intimplator vorbeau o limba, traiau pe acelasi pamint, studiau aceeasi istorie, dar incolo – ca de la cer pina la pamint... (*Clopotnita*, p. 541)

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child, shall become a worthy heir of the Caraboosh family. However, under the influence of the newly instituted regime the distance between the two has been growing.

First, Onake and his daughter have lost the peasant Mircea to the Red Army. Mircea the soldier is so happy with his military service that is about to abandon his wife for the “other” life. Then, he returns to the hearth of the ancestors and begins working, together with his wife, the land his father-in-law has given him. However, collectivisation deprives him of the essence of his life, of the most precious a peasant has—his land. This together with the famine, makes him concede to working as a tractor driver as this implied some extra bread for the starving family. Consequently, the indirect contact with land, a contact by means of an iron machine—a result of the mechanisation of agriculture imposed by the new regime, but mostly the training he has received to become a tractor driver, has marked the shift in the value system of the character. Moreover, according to Simut (2008a) this has awakened in him the poison specific to his family, a poison that is valued and searched by the new authorities because being a bad person made one a “true communist, an iron man disposed to do the job” (p. 175).

Subsequently, family and land are no longer a priority. Now, what matters most is the labour days, which is how record of the work done is kept in the kolkhoz. But, Onake, goes to the field where his son-in-law is working at the plea of his daughter. There, in the only place where Mircea could be found, he talks him into leaving this self-consuming job. And, this way he rescues the lost son.

Yet, the seed of communism has been thrown. And, soon Mircea starts going to the meetings of the village Soviet and becomes an activist. This marks an even greater break with the tradition and with the patriarchal and conservative world of his wife and father-in-law. Accordingly, he turns into a stranger to his wife for the third time—the first one is when he has returned from war carrying the photo of an- “other” girl in the pocket of his jacket; the second—when he has got so much absorbed by the work on the tractor that his wife and children could only see him in the field and he looked so bad that she thought he would die; third — when he gets lured by power and spends all the nights at the leaders’ meetings. The cherry on the top of the cake is that on the birth of his youngest son he organises a huge party, and invites all the leaders in order to show off. But, he does not invite the grandfather of his son. The man that so many times has been there to help him, the man that his wife wanted to see most in that moment has no seat at the celebration table.

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Thus, it can be concluded that the Soviet regime is very wise at using the whip-sweet tactics. First, it starves the people and helps them get rid of the “unproductive” land. Then, it makes them work this very land as if they were slaves. Peasants are put to work for the common welfare and receive nothing but the hardly sufficient every day bread. However, it offers more valuable recompenses to the most active citizens. The communist leaders grant them the “honour” to show off as “friends” of the new authorities. Moreover, they facilitate their advancement in the social standing and provide a better financial situation. They only ask one thing—be what the party wants one to be and do what it tells you. So, one has to forget about the family if it is opposing or merely resisting the new regime and the values it brings.

It follows then, that the arguments presented above confirm the complex nature of Russian/Soviet domination in the region of the Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic (MSSR). The Soviet model is being largely imposed in the cultural and social life of the republic. Consequently, this leads to the appearance of a category of citizens that for personal benefit, be it material (in most of the cases) or professional, *make themselves useful to the authorities*.

For example, the school director from *The Spire*, is just one of the archetypes of the loyal servant of the Soviet authorities. The following excerpt reflects the true nature of Balta, the school director.

[...] Nicolai Trofimovici Balta, the director of the school from Capriana village was a skunk of a man who didn't stop hunting you down once he was after you. [...] Quiet, stubborn, made of an old aggressiveness, [...] hale and hearty, *with a catastrophic blank in what concerns his professional formation* [emphasis added], a fact which made him be chary of words, slow, and even lazy in some way, Nicolai Trofimovici turned fire and fury when it came to his (personal) interests. [...] He was a good worker, one rarely to be encountered. He worked in all the schools from the north of Moldova, and was considered one of the best directors. He was teaching Moldovan literature but his true passion was construction. The schoolyard was full of heaps of sand, wood chips, slaked lime, stones and cement.

Nobody knew when, how and where he got everything, how much he paid for everything and where was the money taken from. [...] Work was being done

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mostly outside the school, in the yard. And, so time flies, years pass, the bureau keeps the records, and the work goes on... It seems that Nicolai Trofimovici's passion for building was highly valued at the rayon forums, and always there was a need to transform another 8 years' school into a general one, with the same decision, on the same paper, Balta would be appointed director of the very school. [...] He had a blue Volga¹⁷⁷, big and heavy like a tank. [...] Rumours circulated in villages and in rayons that comrade Balta, every time he built or rebuilt a school didn't forget his personal interests either. About a week after the works on the school were over so were the works on the house the director was building for himself. [...] He lived in the new house for a year or two [...] and once he got a new assignment, he sold the house for a pretty amount of money and there, in the village where he was named director, he initiated simultaneously with the school renovation the building of a new house.

[...] some of the most beautiful parties were held in their house. The table was laid for builders, for relatives, for superiors. The superiors especially liked to party in Nicolai Trofimovici's house as they knew that at any hour of day or night, when they would stop the car at his gate, before they would get out of car, before they would come in, bottles of cognac, glasses and snacks would appear on the director's table as if by miracle. ¹⁷⁸ (*The Spire*, pp. 471-473)

¹⁷⁷ Volga (Russian: Волга) is an automobile brand that originated in the Soviet Union to replace the venerated GAZ Pobeda in 1956. Modern in design, it became a symbol of higher status in the Soviet nomenklatura.

¹⁷⁸ [...] Nicolai Trofimovici Balta, directorul scolii din Capriana. Era o lifta de om care, odata ce-ti ieseai in cale, nu mai dadea napoi. [...] Domol, incapatinat, plamadit dintr-o agresivitate seculara, [...] voinic si sanatos, cu lacune catastrofale in pregatirea sa profesionala, ceea ce il facea sa fie zgircit la vorba, incetinel, chiar lenes intr-un anumit fel, Nicolai Trofimovici devenea numai foc si para atunci cind erau atinse interesele sale. [...] Era un muncitor cum rar se intimpla. A lucrat prin toate scolile din nordul Moldovei, era considerat drept unul dintre cei mai buni directori. Preda literatura moldoveneasca, dar adevarata lui patima erau constructiile, ograda scolii era numai mobile de nisip, surcele, var, piatra, ciment.

Nimeni nu stia cind, cum, de unde se luau toate celea, cit s-a platit pentru ele si de unde s-au gasit bani pentru a le plati. [...] Se lucra nu atat in scoala, cit pe afara, in ograda, si tot asa – anii se duc, vremea trece, biroul tine evidenta, treaba merge ... Pe semne, aceasta patima a lui Nicolai Trofimovici pentru constructii era mult apreciata de forurile raionale, si cum se ajunge la necesitatea de-a se mai transforma una din scolile de opt ani in scoala medie, in aceeasi hotarire, pe aceeasi foaie, Balta era numit directorul acelei scolii. [...]

Avea o „Volga” albastra, mare si grea cit un tanc. [...]

Se vorbea prin sate, si prin raioane se vorbea ca tovarasul Balta, construind ori reconstruind cite-o scoala, nu-si uita si propriile interese. Cam la vreo saptamina dupa terminarea scolii, sfirseau si lucrarile in casa ce si-o facea directorul. [...] Locuia in casa noua un an –doi [...] si cum primea o numire noua, vindea casa pentru o suma rotunjoara si acolo, in satul unde era numit ca director, pornea odata cu reconstructia scolii o casa noua.

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Ultimately, this excerpt makes it rather clear which are the virtues promoted by the new regime. Of course, loyalty to the natives and their culture is not one them. Indeed, his classes of Moldovan literature are far from promoting the national ideals given his professional formation and his business on the construction site. Moreover, according to Tomasz Zarycki (2013), “works of architecture are the most important symbols of what the sovereigns want to tell their subordinates” (p. 212). Thus, the new regime needs “builders” like Balta who builds small temples dedicated to the sovereigns and houses for himself out of “nothing”. Especially, given the fact that the leaders enjoy to party in this houses.

In this aspect, Balta (*The Spire*) is even more dangerous than Mircea (*The Burden of Our Goodness*). He is not only searching for personal benefit; he is evil with the natives. His terror is mainly directed towards the defenceless pupils—the future of the nation. Unlike Mircea who works his way to the top by being a good soldier and a good professional, Balta has a very poor professional formation but is a “master” of corruption. In order to secure himself a comfortable life he is ready to please anyone who belongs to the decision-making power. Nevertheless, he does not stop here and attacks anyone in order to protect the regime and himself. Of course, people like Horia who have a well-defined set of moral values and respect the past are a threat to the “order”—the word chaos fits this person better because his very surname means mess in Romanian—he tries to impose. Subsequently, Balta starts a fight against the history teacher and the whole village just because he senses that there is some class conflict ripening among the descendants of the soldiers of a great Moldovan ruler. As a result, the unconditioned support of the ones at the top make him self-confident and violent.

Balta hung on by the skin of his teeth to the idea of a political action (rebellion) and pleaded the village of Capriana to go on the accused bench.¹⁷⁹ (*The Spire*, p. 507)

[...] si in casa lor se faceau petreceri dintre cele mai frumoase. Se pregateau mese pentru zidari, pentru rude, pentru sefi. Mai ales sefilor le placea sa petreaca in casa lui Nicolai Trofimovici, stiind bine ca la fiecare ora de zi sau de noapte, cind vor opri masina la poarta lui, pina sa coboare din masina, pina sa intre, pe masa directorului, ca prin minune, vor aparea sticle cu coniac, pahare si zacusca. (pp. 471-473, Clopotnita, Scrieri III)

¹⁷⁹ Balta tineea mortis la idea unei actiuni politice si cerea sa fie pusa pe banca acuzatilor Capriana ca atare. (*Clopotnita*, p. 507)

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Consider, the fact that this excerpt is related to the consequences of Balta's decision to close down the spire. Actually, he orders planks to be nailed into the flesh of the spire, in an attempt to enforce the authority of the communist regime—that is protecting his own authority—and expects the villagers to do nothing. Nonetheless, when by some unknown mean the spire “gets rid of the planks” he, a stranger in the village, accuses the whole village of subversion. Apparently, the Soviet man is also haunted by an anxiety, that according to Boehmer (1995), is so common to empires—the “fear that all that had been gained could be as easily lost” (p. 33). Then, it is no surprise that his rage grows wilder when he discovers that the person to take down the boards, is the very person he has paid to nail them the previous day. And, without any fear of God or law he beats the poor creature, Simionel, to death. It is a pure miracle that the orphan survives. So, Balta is the so-called intellectual that manipulates people and facts without any remorse.

As an illustration of corruption in the sphere of education and science is chosen for analysis the next excerpt:

Among the dignitaries that participated at an event was also mentioned Professor Ilarie Turcu. [...] The title of Professor was followed by another—Corresponding Member of the Academy of Sciences. Horia thought there is some misunderstanding—Turcu didn't even defend his doctoral thesis, and about fifty doctors were in a queue waiting to join the academy, waiting to be chosen. So, how could a PhD student get there where so many doctors were at pains to get and didn't succeed? [...] If the price of advancement is giving up all the sacred things we have, then God help us ... ¹⁸⁰ (*The Spire*, p. 534)

This excerpt speaks clearer than any explanation would. It seems that it doesn't matter how smart one is if he/she has the right friends. And, Horia's last statement is like an omen of the disaster corruption is casting upon the Moldovan society. The once harmonious society is torn

¹⁸⁰ Printre demnitarii pomeniti ca au participat la o oarecare solemnitate a dat si de profesorul Ilarie Turcul. [...] dupa titlul de profesor mai urma unul – de membru – corespondent al Academiei de Stiinte. Horia s-a gindit ca e o confuzie la mijloc – Turcul inca nici nu-si sustinuse doctoratul, iar la Academie stateau la rind vreo cincizeci de doctori, asteptind sa fie alesi, si cum poate sa ajunga un candidat acolo unde atitia doctori de atita amar de vreme se caznesc si nu pot ajunge? [...] Daca pretul avansarilor este renuntarea la tot ce avem mai sfint, atunci, fereasca-ne Domnul ... (*Clopotnita*, p. 534)

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to pieces by greed and personal interests. Thus, charity acts are only done to get immediate or future benefits as seen from the next example:

Turcu asked old Ginju, the manager of all the institutions located in that building, to get an old divan for the inspector's office. Old Ginju swore there was nothing like that but, after receiving the 10 rubbles meant to help him sweeten his life with a glass of wine, he brought a beauty of a divan for the president's office and a rather nice sofa for the inspector's office. ¹⁸¹ (*The Spire*, p. 444)

Unfortunately, this example does not only expose corruption, it also shows what the product of the new policies promoted by the Soviet authorities is. First, it seems that one would only do his job if he got some instant gratification (the 10 rubbles). But, what is particularly shameful is the use given to the money. Apparently, the Power has encountered a new tactic to turn its people into submissive beings not capable of thinking reasonably. Indeed, according to the communists, religion was the opium of the people, so they eradicated it. Yet, they have found something to replace it—alcohol. And, another detail which is particularly interesting about this excerpt is the lack of the so much praised equality. After all, the manager “brought a beauty of a divan for the president's office and a rather nice sofa for the inspector's office”. So, communism only gives equal opportunities to those who “know” how to “earn” them.

Moreover, the deceptiveness of the communist ideology is revealed in the next paragraph:

The Society for the Protection of Historical and Cultural Monuments exists mostly on paper. There was not even a list, a catalogue of the most important monuments from the republic, which were to be protected by the above mentioned society ... ¹⁸² (*The Spire*, p. 444)

¹⁸¹ Turcul l-a rugat pe mos Ginjul, gospodarul tuturor institutiilor situate in acel local, sa faca rost de o vechitura de divan pentru cabinetul inspectorului. Mos Ginjul s-a jurat ca nici pomeneala de asa ceva, dar in urma celor 10 ruble primite, ca sa-si mai indulceasca si el viata cu un pahar de vin, a adus un divan de toata frumusetea pentru cabinetul presedintelui si o canapea destul de bunicica pentru camera inspectorului. (*Clopotnita*, p. 444)

¹⁸² Societatea de ocrotire a monumentelor de istorie si cultura exista mai mult pe hirtie. Nici macar o lista, un catalog al monumentelor mai importante din republica, pe care susnumita institutie urma sa le ocroteasca ... (*Clopotnita*, p. 444)

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Apparently, this is how things have been frequently done in the USSR—on paper. This is something that Horia cannot comprehend. Consequently, he starts working on it right away. Indeed, the history of his people is his passion and he cares about the perpetuation of the nation through time. As a result, Horia manages to make a collection of objects of historical value and a map of the historical monuments from the republic in a short time. And, despite the fact that his job is not valued by his superiors, as the dialogue below shows, the young man does not stop and presents sound arguments to support his activity as an inspector.

The next day he called Horia and told him to take off the map from the wall.

— Why take it down, Ilarie Simeonovici?

— One thing is to protect but other thing is to make propaganda, he said.

— And you want to say that working on this map, I ...

— It's dangerous, he said.

— And how can one do something without knowing well what is one doing, without having a map?!

— I agree, but the map has to be in the desk drawer. What's in the desk drawer is work, what's on the wall – propaganda. In this comrade Baltatu is right.

— But, Ilarie Simeonovici, there cannot be a school without a book and a roll, an agricultural institute without a soil map, a library without the pictures of Eminescu and Pushkin. The essence cannot be hidden in the drawer of a desk, we will turn into some ghosts if we'll keep hiding the essence of our being ...¹⁸³ (*The Spire*, p. 446)

¹⁸³ A doua zi insa l-a chemat pe Horia si i-a zis sa coboare harta de pe perete.

- De ce s-o cobor, Ilarie Simeonovici?
- A ocroti e una, a zis, iar a face propaganda e alta.
- Si vreti sa spuneti ca eu, muncind la harta asta [...]
- E periculos, a zis.
- Dar cum te poti ocupa cu ceva fara a cunoaste bine cu ce te ocupi, fara a avea o harta?!
- Natural, dar harta trebuie tinuta in masa. Ceea ce e in masa este serviciu, ceea ce e pe perete — propaganda. Aici tovarasul Baltatu are dreptate.
- Dar nu poate, Ilarie Simeonovici, sa existe o scoala fara manual si catalog, un institut agricol fara harta solului, o biblioteca fara portretele lui Eminescu si Puskin. Esentele nu pot fi ascunse in sertarul mesei,

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Hence, the question is what kind of propaganda the (pseudo) scholar is talking about. If the new regime is as legitimate as it claims, why trouble so much to erase the people's memory; why destroy any proof of the unity of the nation divided by a river — the Moldovans living on the two sides of the Prut River; why convert them into some ghosts. Apparently, the reason is that the ghosts cannot cause troubles unlike people like Horia. Thus, his way of dedicating himself completely to the job bothers the secretary of the Society, Baltatu. The last one is the embodiment of the Moldovan lost identity, a true specimen of homo sovieticus. And, according to the narrator, he takes the colour of the things poured into him. As the president hardly dropses by, his activity while in office resumes to solving cryptograms while the inspector is on business trips. So, the superiors are paid for preserving the appearance and for doing nothing. Thus, Horia's righteousness and dedication to the job, even after they warn him, generates the following reaction:

— What is the reason of your quarrel?

Horia smiled — was it really worth the pain to tire one's legs for such a stupid question?

— He asked me to stay in a queue and buy him something for the car.

— And, why didn't you want to make him the favour?

Horia, without stopping, looked bewildered at him.

— My religion doesn't let me do that.

— And, what does your religion say?

— It says that whenever one wants something he must stay in the queue.

— What an idiot, Lord, what an idiot!!

After passing several corners in silence he continued:

— Look at me, a cristian just like you, I didn't refuse to help my superiors, because believe me, they were like parents to me. Once, I remember to have been picking the feathers off some chickens in the

vom ajunge pina la urma niste fantome daca ne vom tot ascunde ceea ce constituie esenta noastra ...
(*Clopotnita*, p. 446)

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professor's kitchen because there was going to be a big party at his place [...]

— Great deal to be waiting in a queue for half an hour! What shall I do now? Somebody split on us to the police saying that the workers of the society stay over the night at the office to sleep without having the passport in order. There is a possibility that an inspection is to be carried out tonight.

The face of the university worker screwed up with true despair, with fear similar to death. Horia smiled sadly and bitterly. He realised in a moment of enlightenment that this Ilarie Turcul was't even a scholar, wasn't the kind-hearted person, and wasn't the peasant from the lineage of peasants that he used to think he was. ¹⁸⁴ (*The Spire*, p. 449)

To put it bluntly, the police do not investigate why people who receive a wage to do a job never appear at the office or practice their hobby during working hours. But, it investigates the case of a poor student/inspector—almost always away in field trips—who sleeps on a couch in the office because he is given no room in the university hostel. Also, the police do not investigate the way these pieces of furniture have got there.

¹⁸⁴ - Pentru ce v-ati sfadit voi?

Horia a zimit — facea oare, pentru o intrebare atat de stupida, sa-si trudeasca picioarele atita timp ?

- Ma rugase sa stau la coada, sa-i cumpar ceva pentru automobil.

- Si de ce n-ai vrut sa-i faci un serviciu?

Horia, din mers, s-a uitat mirat la el.

- Nu-mi permite religia.

- Si ce spune religia ta?

- Zice ca fiecare trebuie sa stea la rind atunci cind are nevoie de ceva.

Turcul si-a dat cu palma peste frunte :

- Ce idiot, Dumnezeule, ce idiot!!

Dupa citeva culturi de tacere a continuat:

- Eu, iata, crestin ortodox ca si tine, nu m-am dat in laturi cind trebuia sa ajut sefilor mei, caci imi erau, crede-ma, ca niste parinti, iar intr-un rind, tin minte, am penit chiar si niste gaini la bucataria profesorului atunci cind se punea acolo la cale o mare petrecere [...]

- Auzi tu, n-a vrut sa stea o jumatate de ora la coada! S-acum eu ce ma fac? Cineva ne-a turnat la militie ca lucratorii societatii ramin peste noapte sa doarma prin birouri, fara sa aiba pasaportul in regula. Asta noapte e chiar posibil un control.

O frica sora cu moartea, o adevarata disperare crispase chipul bietului cadru universitar. Horia zimbi trist si amar. Intr-o clipa de lumina si-a dat seama ca nici om de stiinta, nici om de omenie, nici taran din neamul taranilor, cum il crezuse la inceput, nu era acest Ilarie Turcul. (*Clopotnita*, p. 449)

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In addition, the only really working employee of the society is supposed to solve the personal problems of his superiors. Of course, his religion—principles, prevent him from becoming a loyal servant of the homo sovieticus. And, two apparently similar persons that share the same religion get to fight in different camps—the one that uses corruption to ascend on the career ladder and the other that loses everything because of his loyalty to the essence of the national idea. Horia claims that people should deserve and make an effort to get what they want. However, the only effort comrade Baltatu does is to punish the young specialist by splitting on him to the police. And, the professor, who so often uses Horia's inspirational ideas for his articles, does nothing to prevent the cruel revenge. Thus, when the young man realises that his teacher is not the person he has thought, he feels alienated.

However, Soviet domination does not corrupt only the intellectuals. The whole nation is confused about what is good and what is bad. On the one hand people are punished for their ideals/virtues, and on the other hand they are promoted for their flaws. Hard working peasants are robbed of their property and exiled. Consequently, the Moldovans experience a deep identity crisis that is vividly described in the following passage:

During the four years of revolutionary actions interrupted only by war operations, the Plains of Soroca, with its villages, lands, cattle, and wealth passed to one side and then to the other innumerable times. They burned estates, cut down forests and carried the wood home. Then frightened by their own deeds, left their homes, and started wandering about the world looking for a better destiny. But, when they didn't find it, they returned to their roots, to their homeland. They were Christians in holidays, pagans in times of robbery and sharing, and martyrs when time came to pass through great sufferings. They suffered from famine and cold, need and poverty, epidemics of typhus and cholera, so that they hardly managed to carry their deads to the grave. [...] ¹⁸⁵ (*The Burden of Our Goodness*, p.42)

¹⁸⁵ In cei patru ani de fierberi revolutionare, intrerupte de operatii de razboi, Cimpia Sorociei a trecut de nenumarate ori cu satele, paminturile, vitele, averile sale cind de partea unora, cind de partea altora. Se dadea foc la mosii, se taiau paduri si se carau pe la case, apoi, frica facindu-se-le de cele savirsite, lasau si casa si masa, pornind prin lume, in cautarea unui destin mai norocos, dar negasindu-l, se intorceau inapoi la radacina si obirsie. Erau crestini in zile de praznic, pagini- pe vremea jafurilor si impartelilor, aduceau a martiri cind le venea rindul sa treaca

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In short, the people of the invaded territory are affected by the lawlessness of the geopolitical alterations. Anarchy makes them behave the same way the conquerors do. Consequently, they suffer from a personality split. The teachings of the bible and of their ancestors clash with the reality of the Soviet invasion. Further, are presented more examples of alienation and cultural fragmentation.

He was about to join the army, just like the boyfriend of the girl from Taula, and uncle Mihalake, to have a problem less, would find in the village a *nacealnic*¹⁸⁶ for Rusanda.¹⁸⁷ (*Leaves of Yearning*, p. 389)

Apparently, people no longer value honour and industry. Consequently, the protagonist thinks that uncle Mihalake would rather have his only daughter married to a person of high standing than a hard working peasant. However, given the reality described in the previous chapter, it could also be that Mihalake might want to save his family—a well-to-do one—from deportation. And, a *nacealnic*, just like a Russian soldier, could solve this problem. So, people give up milenial principles when the security and integrity of their family is threatened.

Similarly,

Gheorghe had his doubts. He was a peasant born under the (zodiacal) sign of peasantry, and dreamed to marry a peasant girl, but a teacher?! How does a teacher serve him at home? And, how can one lead a married life with a teacher, one with the plough and the other with the pencil?! And, how do you tell her if you don't like the broth she prepared?!¹⁸⁸ (*Leaves of Yearning*, p. 421)

prin cumplite suferinte. Au indurate foamete si frig, nevoie si saracie, au trecut prin epidemii de tifos si holera, ca abia dovedeau sa-si duca mortii la groapa. (*Povara Bunatatii Noastre*, p. 42)

¹⁸⁶ In Russian has several meanings: director, head, boss, principal, chief, governor, commander, superior, etc.

¹⁸⁷ Ca si baiatul taulencii, el avea sa plece curind in armata, apoi badea Mihalache, ca sa scape de-o grija, i-a gasi Rusandei un *nacealnic* in sat. (*Frunze de Dor*, p. 389)

¹⁸⁸ Gheorghe statea pe ginduri. Era taran nascut in zodia taranilor si visa sa ia in casatorie o fiica de taran, dar invatatoare? Pentru ce-i trebuie lui invatatoare la casa? Si cum poti face casnicie cu ea — tu cu plugul, ea cu creionul? Si daca face un bors care nu-ti place, cum ii spui? (*Frunze de Dor*, p. 421)

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It seems that even love, the oldest of feelings, is threatened by the new social order. After all, the creation of the homo sovieticus has led to the alienation of the individual. Hence, the shift in values leads to a shift in ideals and goals. Consequently, those who once have shared common dreams and concerns doubted they could be together now. Admittedly, change scares people. And, they are not ready for it. It's not that feelings have suddenly disappeared, it's that the new is darker than one could dare to explore, and one does not know whom or what he is to fight. Specially, when the "other" has loyal servants among the natives. Desperation increases as the change is affecting both the object of the local authority's interest—Rusanda—and everything that surrounds it—in this case her family.

Uncle Mihalache, used to make witty remarks at the address of the heads of the village soviet (council), but when his daughter became a teacher, he went on praising those at the helm of the village.¹⁸⁹ (*Leaves of Yearning*, p. 429)

Within the ancient craft of this race, craft related to ploughing, appeared an offshoot determined to earn its living using the brain, the reason. And, the two parents seemed ready to overcome any obstacle to help their offspring on this holy way. After thousands years of darkness, the depths of this earth were reaching light. And, do small things, which might have occurred between a girl and a boy, matter anything in this great, century long fight?¹⁹⁰ (*Leaves of Yearning*, p. 431)

Although it is true that, the positive aspect of some of the changes that the new regime introduces cannot be denied one must look beyond appearances. The truth is that the peasants dislike the new village authorities that are loyal servants of the Kremlin. But, the future of the

¹⁸⁹ Badea Mihalache, avind obiceiul de-a scapa cite-o intepatura la adresa sefilor din sovietul satesc, cum s-a pomenit ca are fiica invatatoare, lauda de dimineata pina sara cirmuirea satului. (*Frunze de Dor*, p. 429)

¹⁹⁰ In stravechea meserie a acestui neam, meserie legata de coarnele plugului, a rasarit o saminta hotarita sa-si cistige pinea cu mintea, cu cugetul, si cei doi parinti pareau gata sa infrunte totul, pentru a ajuta odrasla lor pe aceasta cale sfinta. Dupa mii de ani de intunecime, strafundurile acestui pamint razbateau spre lumina si ce insemnate aveau in lupta aceasta mare, seculara, cele citeva nimicuri care poate ca si avusesera loc intre o fata si un baiat?! (*Frunze de Dor*, p. 431)

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children makes them be more obedient and flexible. Thus, the strategy of the Soviets provides a rather viable way of controlling the masses. However, the family members are the only ones who really enjoy the hypothetical better job that promises a bright future to their child. It seems that friends and loved one are too scared to see the good thing about this change. So, the change has dramatic consequences and provokes a severe feeling of alienation even in Rusanda—the person chosen to instruct the new generation of homo sovieticus. Suddenly, she becomes the “other” for her people.

When she went out, the passers-by slowed the pace in front of their gate, as if they wanted to see what's there so special about this young girl to be named a teacher. When she entered the house, aunt Catinca immediately gave her a stool, so that she would not get tired standing. So, she wandered the whole day, looking for that very place where she'd no longer be a stranger for anyone. But, she couldn't find it, and when you cannot find your place, you can't find yourself, and when you can't find yourself, nothing can make you happy anymore ...¹⁹¹ (*Leaves of Yearning*, p. 430)

One last thing to be done this autumn day was—the way home. She found hard the morning way from home to school.... Every villager that she passed by, stared at her as if they didn't recognise her anymore. When she went downhill by Irofte's well, she met Domnica, which was wearing an old blouse and a sickle on the shoulder, the latter was going to the field. She said nothing, but it seemed that both the sickle and the blouse with patches on the shoulders were reproving and were telling her: Look, we are the way we are, but we have things to do and we go to the field today...¹⁹² (*Leaves of Yearning*, p. 437)

¹⁹¹ Si daca iesea afara, trecatorii isi conteneau pasii drept poarta lor, parca vrind s-o vada ce o fi avind asa grozav fetita asta, de-au pus-o invatatoare, si daca intra in casa, lelea Catinca indata ii pune un scaunel, ca sa nu osteneasca stind in picioare. Si a umblat ea toata ziua, cautindu-si locul cela unde n-ar mai fi fost pentru nimenea straina. Dar nu-l gasea, si cind nu-ti gasesti locul, nu te poti gasi pe tine insuti, iar cind nu te mai poti regasi pe tine, nimic nu te mai poate bucura ... (*Frunze de Dor*, p. 430)

¹⁹² Un lucru ii mai raminea ca sa duca la bun sfirsit in ziua ceea de toamna — drumul spre casa. Drumul de dimineata, de acasa pina la scoala, ggreu l-a mai facut ... Fiecare consatean ce i se intimpla in cale se uita lung la dinsu, de parca nu o mai cunostea. Cind cobora pe linga fentina lui Irofte, a intilnit-o pe Domnica – intr-o bluzita veche, cu secera in spate, se ducea la deal. Nu i-a spus nimic, dar ii parea ca si secera, si bluzita cea cirpita pe la

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Little can be added to what the author has so clearly expressed in the above presented excerpts. On the one hand, the fact is that there is no place where a prophet is less appreciated than at home. Unlike the club instructor that is sent from the rayon, Rusanda enjoys little popularity among her fellow the villagers. Apparently, they cannot show the same, though cold, sign of respect to someone who grew up among them. It seems that the girl that does not ask to be transformed into a teacher, and actually has been really scared the day she has been added to the list in the Village Soviet, now has to face everyone alone. And, despite her parents' support she feels a stranger even at home. So, good or bad, change has generated a gap between the different actors of society, and it seems they are not prepared for it.

Another example of the value shift is the following:

- Gheorghe ..., asked aunt Frasina astonished, leading her hand to the left cheek as if she had a toothache, you hadn't join the *komsomol*¹⁹³, have you?
- No. Why are you asking?
- Why didn't you cross yourself after taking the meal?
- I forgot.
- You'll anger God, Gheorghe! Cross yourself at least now.
- I'll do it tonight.¹⁹⁴ (*Leaves of Yearning*, pp. 344-345)

Although, in most cases of colonisation an imposition of Christianity is the norm, the situation is different in the case of the Soviet Republics. Orthodox religion is incompatible with the cult of personality promoted by Stalin. Consequently, a *new religion*—atheism, is being imposed. Thus, the example presented above reveals a clear gap between two generations. The old mother is a faithful follower of the bible teachings and acts as a keeper of the Christian

umeri o dojeneau si-i spuneau: iaca, asa cum ne vezi, da noi avem de lucru si ne ducem azi la deal ... (*Frunze de Dor*, p. 437)

¹⁹³ Komsomol- an organization for communist youth in the Soviet Union.

¹⁹⁴ - Gheorghe ... Matusa Frasina era atit de mirata, incit si-a prins obrazul drept cu palma, de parca o dureau dintii. Nu cumva te-ai inscris la comsomol?

- Nu. Da ce ma intrebi?

- De ce nu ti-ai facut cruce dupa masa?

- Am uitat.

- Ai sa-l superi, Gheorghe, pe Dumnezeu! Ia si-ti fa macar amu cruce.

- Ei, imi fac desara. (*Frunze de Dor*, pp. 344-345)

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tradition. She opposes the new organisation that among other principles promotes atheism¹⁹⁵. However, despite all her warnings, her son seems to be affected by the new. He disregards his mother's plea and consequently loses the connection with the patriarchal values. This seems to turn into the protagonist's flaw which is so typical of tragic heroes. The writer uses the mother's lamentation as a clue to make an allusion to the tragedy that awaits the protagonist towards the end of the novel, somehow foreshadowing the crisis of personality that he is to pass through. So, when he gives up the sacred he loses both the girl and the land he loves more than life.

However, the reading of Drutse reveals that cultural fragmentation does not occur only at the spiritual level. Indeed, religion apart, there is a great shift in what concerns the social interaction of the natives. It seems that, despite the communist propaganda of class equality and the cult of the worker, the emerging intellectual class is feeling somehow superior.

However, Jeannette was not at ease in this iron tent full of sweat, full of heavy, rude and spicy words; her delicate spirit could not resist a meeting with the people from the bosom of which she sprang.¹⁹⁶ (*The Spire*, pp. 398-399)

The phrase "iron tent" which the author employs to refer to the train is quite appealing. First, the use of the epithet "iron" which is rather frequently employed by the writer in the novels is quite confusing. Although, it seems to allude to the technical advancement brought along by the Soviets there is more to it. Actually, Drutse uses the word "iron" to show how its different forms have made the characters in a way or another unhappy. Indeed, the novelist describes progress as something cold and impersonal.

Moreover, the word "tent", in its Romanian form "satra", usually refers to the gypsy tents. And, then comes the description of the people travelling in this iron tent. The concurrence of details creates a complex picture in the reader's mind. On the one hand, there is a young lady which given the changes in the 19th c educational system finds herself alien among her people. On the other hand, this very people, which for centuries had been known as a people of peasants

¹⁹⁵ As a child I learned that people occupying a public office were completely alien to anything related to religion. Thus, to baptize me my god-parents, one a teacher and the other a nurse, acceded to a church that was on the territory of the neighbouring republic so that nobody could witness their presence in a religious ritual.

¹⁹⁶ Jeannette insa nu se simtea bine in aceasta satra de fier plina de sudoare, de vorbe grele, crude, piparate; firea ei delicate nu rezista la o intalnire cu poporul din sinul caruia iesise. (*Clopotita*, pp. 398-399)

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working and defending their land, is subtly compared with gypsies. Therefore, the question is whether the author tries to express the idea that the masses are losing their vision of home as a patriarchal location. After all, the itinerant gypsies seem to be ignorant of their origins and do not belong in any particular place.

Nevertheless, one thing is sure, both the future teacher of French, the young intellectual Jeannette and the peasants, “the people from the bosom of which she sprang” are going home. It is a holiday, the day of the patron saint of the Capriana village, and according to the tradition of the place a festival is to be held. So, the roots are making everyone return to the hearth. Moreover, “as the train was moving away from Chisinau and closer to her homeland, the glitter of the city was fading away, making her be what she used to be, a simple girl from Capriana...”¹⁹⁷

Ultimately, to close the analysis of the issue of cultural fragmentation consider the following example:

Now, their arrival to the sheepfold was in a way a mission of peace. They came to put an end to a conflict of which everyone was tired. When taking one's leave the boy said his grandfather that “dad told you to drop by”, tears appeared on the old man's face. Horia sat on the motorbike with a pure and light heart, grateful to the boy who, on a sincere and humane mission, chose him as a witness to the reconciliation of the family. ¹⁹⁸ (*The Spire*, p. 423)

This excerpt comes to express the author's and the nation's hope into a bright future for the natives. As a politician Drutse has struggled for the revival of the national identity and for the conservation of its history and language. As a writer he seems to project a message of unity and harmony between the old and new generations. Thus, it seems that a hybrid identity is the only way to (re-) establish harmony in the mioritic space. It seems that despite all technological

¹⁹⁷ Cu cit trenul se departa de Chisinau si se apropia de bastina ei, cu atit spoiala oraseneasca se desprindea frunza cu frunza, lasind-o sa fie ceea ce fusese din capul locului – o simpla fata din Capriana ... (*Clopotnita*, p. 399)

¹⁹⁸ Acum sosirea lor la stina era intr-un anumit fel o solie de pace, ei venind sa puna capat unei invrajbiri de care se saturasera cu totii. La despartire, cind baiatul i-a zis bunelului ca “tata a mai spus sa treceti pe la noi”, batrinul pur si simplu a lacrimat. Horia a urcat pe motocicletă cu inima senina, curata, raminindu-i pentru totdeauna recunoscator baiatului care, pornind la drum cu o misiune curate si omeneasca, l-a ales pe dinsul pentru a fi martorul impacarii neamului lor. (*Clopotnita*, p. 423)

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advances one should not forget one's origins and the grandson riding a motorbike still needs his grandfather to teach him the virtues of his ancestors.

5.1.5 The Construction and Demolition of Houses or Buildings in Post-Colonial Locations—an Allusion to the Problematic of the Post-Colonial Identity.

My home is my castle.

From immemorial times, houses are built to provide shelter to the owners. However, there are moments in the history of a people when houses can no longer comply with their primary function. There are times when houses stop being homes because their owners no longer have the liberty of exerting their (private) property rights. There are times when houses are taken away, be it by something or by somebody. There are times when construction and demolition of houses or buildings does not concern the subaltern anymore. There are times when the master decides when, where and what to build. Therefore, in post-colonial locations the construction and demolition of houses often makes allusion to the problematic of the post-colonial identity. And, everythime a new power imposes its hegemony, people's lives are bound to change.

Drutse's novels abound in examples of houses that cease to serve their inhabitants. For example, during the Russo-Turkish War (1768-74)—narrated in the novel *The White Church*—the Moldovan houses are abandoned in favour of the woods which protect the natives from the sword of the invaders—Turkish masters and Russian “liberators”. Similarly, the hero of the *Leaves of Yearning*, which narrates the last year of the Second World War in Moldova, abandons his incomplete home when the Soviet power imposes its hegemony in the village.

However, there is always a chance that, as long as the house keeps standing, one will come back. And, this is what the characters from *The White Church* do. When winter comes and the armistice is agreed upon, the peasants return to their abandoned houses, repair and convert them into homes again. But, as so often happens in zones of military conflict, some of them only return home to be killed inside the burning houses. After all, both the Turks and the Russians often used the scorched earth policy. And, in the case of *The White Church* the tactic is used to punish a whole village for letting Russian soldiers—not only the Turks whose vassal Moldova

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was at the time—warm up at their hearth. On the other hand, as the excerpt presented below indicates, the protagonist of *The Burden of Our Goodness* has only come home to find the ashes of the village.

Now, it burned down, my good man. Tonight, right now it burned down...¹⁹⁹ (*The Burden of Our Goodness*, p. 56)

Drutse does not provide any information concerning the cause of the fire. And, the text, that is a work of fiction, lacks the details required for a historically accurate conclusion. However, the event is rather symbolical because it coincides with the retreat of the Russian army and the change of the geopolitical situation of the once Russian governorate—Bessarabia. Actually, Onake has to cross the border illegally to get home from a country that is no longer his. And, as already mentioned, often when strategic positions were lost, Russia employed the tactic of slash and burn to prevent the enemy's advance.

However, as the excerpt below reveals, the former soldier in the czar's army is not scared by the fire, he has had plenty of it in Russia. Neither is he feeling lost, as most of his fellows, when the village that is no longer part of the Russian Empire burns down. Onake knows that home exists beyond politics and czars. Homeland cannot be taken away as long as one knows where and what it is. And, the successor of the legendary Molda, who is told to have led to the settlement of the Moldovan people in the region, shows Onake his way home.

Onake stopped [...], Wait a bit, what's the trouble? Had Ciutura burned down? Let it burn, didn't he see fire in Russia? [...] Ciutura burned down, no doubt, but is the sky that covered the village still there? Is the hearth of the village, which used to be where the two hills joined, still there? And, is it so difficult to tuck up one's sleeves and build the village anew if you have a beautiful sky and two hills?!²⁰⁰ (*The Burden of Our Goodness*, p. 57)

¹⁹⁹ D-apoi ca o ars, mai om bun. Noaptea asta, iaca chiar acum o ars ... (*Povara Bunatatii Noastre*, p. 56)

²⁰⁰ Onache s-a oprit [...] Stai, bade, ca ce adica s-a intimplat? A ars Ciutura? Sa tot arda mult si bine, n-a vazut el pojaruri in Russia? [...] O fi ars Ciutura, nu-i vorba, dar cerul de deasupra satului a ramas? Vatra satului, acolo, la incheietura celor doua dealuri sta pe loc? Si daca ai un cer frumos si doua dealuri impreunate, e greu sa-ti sufleci minecile si sa dregi un sat de iznoava?! (*Povara Bunatatii Noastre*, p. 57)

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Thus, this example reveals the parallel between the destruction of houses and the alteration of the post-colonial identity. Yet, it is not the case of the protagonist who in crucial moments, as the novel shows, remembers and reminds his people what are their national values. For example, in this excerpt, the hero makes some questions that go beyond the tragedy of the material loss and the physical dislocation. Onake does not fall prey to general despair because he is aware of the fact that his home is the land his ancestors left him. Moreover, after years of wandering on Russian soil and defending the land of the czar, he has not forgotten where and how his home used to be. And, he wants to rebuild it on the same spot, just the way it was.

Consequently, Onake becomes a leader and a keeper of tradition. Actually, he evokes the ancestral values which had always kept the patriarchal community united. And, when Bessarabia returns to the historical patria (Romania), his actions renew the connection between the past and present. Thus, his fellow villagers do not experience an identity crisis, a frequent issue in post-colonial locations. So, as long as one preserves the ability to rebuild one's home, no one can take it away. Similarly, as long as one sticks to the land of his ancestors he shall always find the way home. And, while he stands on the same ground his fathers have had, he shall never doubt who he is, where he comes from and where to he is going.

The next example reaffirms the statements made above and gives a further insight into the issue of the building of houses.

Since time immemorial, Ciutureans built their own houses [...] Besides, the Ciutorean doesn't make his house according to the customs and traditions of the other regions—the Ciutorean snatches it out of the depth of his own being, breathing his own breath into it, passing his own joys to it [...] In '44 a little house appeared in Ciutura with such a great sorrow that passers-by stopped on their way to gaze at the great sorrow of the three little windows.²⁰¹ (*The Burden of Our Goodness*, p. 148)

²⁰¹ Ciuturenii de cind lumea, isi fac singuri case [...] De altfel, ciutoreanul nici nu-si face casa cum se obisnuieste prin alte parti – ciutoreanul o smulge din mezul firii sale, dindu-i suflare din suflarea lui, bucurie din bucuriile lui. [...] In '44 a aparut o casuta in Ciutura cu o durere atat de mare, incit se opreau trecatorii din drumul lor si urmareau cruciti marele necez al celor trei ferestruici. (*Povara Bunatatii Noastre*, p. 148)

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After all, the waves of invaders that have ravaged the country have not stopped the Moldovans—represented by the Ciutureans—from building their homes their own way. No matter who the masters are the natives manage to hold onto the heritage their fathers left them. They preserve their national identity regardless of the norms the hegemonic power imposes. Similarly, the protagonist of the “The Lonely Shepherd”, ignores the requirements of the communist regime that has pulled down his house while he was in exile, and rebuilds his house the way the old one used to be. Thus, the houses appear as true reflections of the identity of the Moldovans. And, as the narrator would say at some moment in the story, one could learn more about the peasant from his house than from the man himself.

And, in agreement with the narrator, the Ciutureans' houses do live the life of the master. Therefore, the answer to Ion Simut's (2008) question—Where does so much sorrow come from, in a freed country on such a sunny day? (p. 174)—is quite obvious. The death of Onake's two sons leaves the old man heartsick, with no strength to live on. Consequently, his house reflects the tragedy. So, there is little to celebrate about the triumph of the Russian imperialism.

However, if a great loss only makes a house sad, then the destruction of a nation acquires the following proportions:

The villages of the plain, those valleys not so long ago full of white houses, old roads, wells, and gardens, now doze exhausted under the sun. Devastation like a storm ravaged them and made it painful to look at the houses. There were no fences, no gates, and no peasants. A deep and heavy silence had been slumbering over the villages for weeks. There were few people left, and the remaining ones roamed about crestfallen, withered, and dispirited. Many of them seemed to have returned from the next world, but they didn't look happy about it, neither had they the intention to change what they managed to see there on what they see here. And they wandered absentminded. The pigweed grew on the porches; the walls of the houses were peeling off. People didn't care. ²⁰² (*The Burden of Our Goodness*, p. 220)

²⁰² Satele cimpiei, acele vai pline mai nu demult cu case albe, cu drumuri vechi, cu fintini si gradini, acum, sleite de puteri, picurau la soare. Furtuna pustiirii a trecut peste ele si casele au ajuns de plinsul lumii – nici tu garduri, nici tu portite, nici tu gospodari, nici tu gospodine. O liniste adinca si grea dospeste cu saptaminilie peste sate. Si oameni au ramas putini, iar cei ce au ramas umbla abatuti, vesteziti, saraci la suflet. Multi dsintre ei pareau

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The first impression one gets from the reading of this excerpt is that of complete desolation and of a desert land. It's to be mentioned that this description refers to two crucial events that have been described in the previous chapter—the moment of the reinstatement of Russian domination in the region after the Second World War and the artificially engineered famine. Indeed, the shift in the atmosphere is dramatic. On the one hand, in the examples that refer to the moment when Bessarabia has joined Romania, analysed above, the protagonist is full of optimism and joy. His coming home from Russia (just like Bessarabia's return to the hearth of the nation—Romania) brings life to the valley. And, as the story goes on, it results that once taken the decision to rebuild the village, eleven young couples had their first children nine months later. On the other hand, death is what the narrator describes in the lines following the above presented excerpt. The death of the protagonist's both sons—the perpetuators of the family line—and later the death of their mother does nothing else but reinforce the deep atmosphere of melancholy. Actually, the three deaths are (indirectly) conditioned by the policy of the Soviet Union.

Yet, what matters most about this excerpt is that it foreshadows the identity problem which is about to burst. The first step is made and the will of the peasants is broken after two years of torture. When death becomes more attractive than life one's guard goes down. And, it is then when the past can be erased and a new story written. Consequently, the story of the peasant and his home (-land) becomes part of the imperialist discourse.

However, attention is to be shifted to the year 1945, when the future of Bessarabia is still uncertain, and see how the story used to be and how it changed. The following excerpt from *Leaves of Yearning* represents a quite vivid picture of how life used to be. And, it is totally different from what has been presented above.

He worked, night and day, when it was fine and rainy, during summer and winter, because his dream was to have a household equal to that of the others. His dream was to stop seeing the villagers slowing down when passing by their house,

intorsi de pe lumea cealalta, dar nu se bucurau deloc si nici ca ar fi vrut sa schimbe ceea ce apucasera sa vada pe cealalta lume cu ceea ce vedeau aici. Si ei umblau cu gindurile cine stie pe unde. Crestea loboda pe prispe, se cojeau peretii caselor. Oamenilor nu le pasa. (*Povara Bunatatii Noastre*, p. 220)

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blind of the left eye, as they hadn't managed to put the two windows on the left side of the door in due time. Actually, his parents' house was his greatest pain, his greatest sorrow. Only one of the three rooms was furnished. The other two, that were waiting for the flooring and workers, served as a warehouse for the corn ... As the field promised Gheorghe floorboards, money for the workers, wine for the guests, he became its slave. ... ²⁰³ (*Leaves of Yearning*, p. 332)

First, unlike the Ciutureans that have survived the famine, Gheorghe does care about his house. Actually, he puts his life on the altar of the building which for his father's death has been left incomplete. In fact, Gheorghe Doinaru's house is incomplete because when the house is being built the father leaves his mother for another woman. Then, he returns but dies before the house is complete. And, the fact that he dies when his son is a small boy makes allusion to the void he has left behind. Thus, Gheorghe has to learn everything from strangers, do everything without anyone's help, and find a way of filling the void. Indeed, the fellow's only way to self-affirmation, in a society in which there is no one but his mother to support him, lays through completing what his father has not managed to do.

However, as the following excerpt shows it's by far an easy task in a time of war. And, it turns even more difficult, if not impossible, in a time when centuries' long order is going to be turned upside down.

The truth is that, there was no girl to be seen along the road, but if he said she would come it means he knows something. And, as a householder carried by some strong passion, he was thinking: "I should put the windows to the house".

But, he was not thinking what could happen if he didn't manage to do that in time, because he was again looking thoroughly at the road leading to the village resting on the hoe handle. "I'll talk to her. I'll explain how and why I passed by

²⁰³ Muncea cit trei — muncea zi si noapte, muncea pe vreme buna sip e ploaie, muncea vara si iarna, fiindca visa si el sa aiba o gospodarie in rind cu lumea, visa sa nu mai vada cum isi contenesc satenii pasul, trecind pe langa casa lor oarba de ochiul sting — n-au dovedit la vreme sa puie cele doua ferestre din stinga usii. De altfel casa parinteasca era cea mai mare durere, cel mai mare necaz al lui Gheorghe. Din cele trei odai, gatita era numai una — celelalte doua, in asteptarea scindurilor si mesterilor, serveau drept magazine pentru pine. [...] Cimpul ii fagaduisse scinduri pentru podele, parale pentru mesteri, vin pentru masa musafirilor, si Gheorghe a devenit un rob al pamintului. (*Frunze de dor*, p. 332)

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the other time without stopping... Rusanda, this is how things are. If you want, we can be friends. As for me ...”

And he explained to the girl what does war and what does peace mean, he kept explaining until he rose his eyes and saw Rusanda weeding a few hectares downhill.²⁰⁴ (*Leaves of Yearning*, p. 406)

Apparently, the working of the land can bring him both material and spiritual fulfilment. It is what can help him complete his house and create a home with the beloved person. Yet, the war interposes and troubles him. And, his undone house makes him go through a profound interior conflict which intensifies when news comes from the battlefield that his only friend is killed. Thus, another death and the destruction brought about by the war shatters the basis of his peaceful existence/identity. Actually, it makes him feel lost and alienated even from the one that he has seen as a promise of *home*.

However, as the resolution of novel reveals, peace does not make his dreams any closer to become reality. Gheorghe is sensing the change as the old social order is being altered. In deed, he turns to be one of the few men that keeps working the land while most of the ones he knew have been fighting and have died trying to defend it. And, when there's no one or few left to take a stand against the new masters, ruin is irreversible. Thus, the peace that the Soviets deliver does not bring the peasant and his loved one closer. Actually, his beloved is pulled out of what is his world and is made a teacher. So, the aftermath of the Second World War turns to be even more devastating for the little that has survived on the territory between the Prut and the Dniester. And, just like his windowless house, Gheorghe feels incomplete.

Similarly, the following example from *The Spire* provides a confirmation of what is has been said above:

²⁰⁴ Ce-i drept, in tot lungul drumului, nu se vedea nici o fata, dar daca spune el ca vine, inseamna ca stie el ce stie. Ca un gospodar furat de o patima mare, isi spunea in gind:

„A trebui totusi sa pun ferestre la casa”.

Dar ce avea sa se intimple de nu dovedea sa le puie, nu se gindea, fiindca era din nou rezemat in coada sapei, cercetind cu de- amanuntul drumul pina in sat.

„Vorbesc cu dinsa. Ii spun cum si pentru ce am trecut atunci pe linga dinsa si nu m-am oprit ... Rusanda, uite asa si asa. Daca vrei, hai sa prietenim. Eu unul ...”

Si el i-a spus fetei ce inseamna pace si ce inseamna razboi, i-a spus si i-a tot spus pina cind a ridicat ochii si s-a pomenit ca Rusanda praseste cu citeva hectare mai la vale. (*Frunze de dor*, p. 406)

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Unfortunately, nothing is eternal on the earth. When he was in his third year of study, in some weeks, his mother died. Then, the same year, the work on the reconstruction of the station was initiated. The beeches were cut down because they couldn't cover the building with scaffold boards. But, then the plan of a fundamental reconstruction was abandoned. The mere painting of the bricks, with a green which no matter the effort didn't want to be green, pleased them enough. And, now that the beeches and the bricks burned in ovens were gone, it was rare that the station preserved the name Petreni because it looked as a completely different station.²⁰⁵ (*The Spire*, p. 372)

The protagonist of *The Spire*, just like Gheorghe from *Leaves of Yearning*, only has his mother to guide him. But, when he leaves home to study in Chisinau his mother dies. Consequently, there is no one left to wait for him at home. Moreover, it seems that there is no way of going back. And, even if the hero decides to go back he will not find his way because his village has been invaded and transformed. The transformation is suggested by the alteration of the first thing one sees of a village—the train station. So, the death of the mother—the figure representing the integrity of the past—marks the end of the world in which he has grown up.

Actually, the station just like a mother waits for her sons to return home, to their origins. Consequently, the authorities decide to rebuild it. But, as it turns out, instead of rebuilding and creating something new, they defile it and make it unrecognisable, they deprive it of its identity. Moreover, later Drutse builds an opposition between two train stations: the one from the village of Horia's childhood and youth and the other from the adulthood. This contrast comes to embody the opposition between the old and the new. And, it also highlights the degradation of the traditional values in the Soviet time. Consequently, the old and abandoned station has nothing in common with the big freshly whitewashed station of Verejeni. Thus, the young generation, embodied by the history student, is being deprived of its past and is given a white paper to write

²⁰⁵ Din pacate, nimic vesnic pe aceasta lume. Cind era in anul trei, i-a murit in citeva saptamini maica, apoi tot in anul acela au inceput a reconstrui gara. Au taiat fagii, pentru ca nu puteau imbraca cladirea in schele, dar pe urma s-a renuntat la planul unei reconstructii capitale, multumindu-se doar cu vopsirea caramizii intr-un verde ce nu vroia sa fie verde cu nici un pret. Fara fagi si fara caramizile arse in cuptoare, era de mirare ca gara se mai chema Petreni, parind o cu totul alta gara. (*Clopotnita*, p. 372)

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a new history on. In conclusion, the loss of home and past leads to the alienation of the individual.

However, the authorities are not satisfied with only erasing the memory of the parents' home.

— Ei ti, dlinii, a nu otoidi!²⁰⁶

While his thoughts carried him away, Horia suddenly saw himself shoved by two workers lit up and furious to have to waste their good spirit with some things of little importance. They were struggling to rock the marble cross of one of the Bessarabian governors a few steps away. Other four workers, a bit farther from the spot, were watching from a distance how would the heave of the two enthusiasts finish. The cross shook slightly, it seemed to be already pulled down when it stopped moving. Thinking about the festival of the patron saint of Capriana, Horia lost track of what was going on around him. In the meantime, the cross started to sway anew.

— Vi cito, s uma sosli?²⁰⁷ Horia howled all of a sudden. Then guessing from their look that they should know some other language too, added, "It's the grave of one of the most ..."

— It's your relative?

— What relative?

"Then forget about him," said the older worker. "The tombs are being eliminated according to an order, and orders as you know are exi..., exe..."²⁰⁸

(*The Spire*, pp. 416-417)

²⁰⁶ Hey you, the long one, move away! In Russian

²⁰⁷ Hey you, have you gone crazy? In Russian

²⁰⁸ - Ei ti, dlinii, a nu otoidi!

Furat de ale sale, Horia se pomeneste deodata imbrincit. La citiva pasi doi muncitori, chercheliti si furiosi ca-si cheltuiesc buna lor dispozitie cu niste lucruri de nimica, se cazneau sa urneasca din loc crucea din marmura de pe mormintul unuia din guvernatorii Basarabiei. Ceva mai in fund patru muncitori urmareau de la distanta sa vada cu ce vor sfirsi opintelele celor doi entuziasti. Crucea se clatina incet, pare gata doborita, dar iata ca nu se mai clatina deloc. Cu gindul la hramul din Capriana, Horia perdu-se cu totul firul celor ce se petreceau in jur. Intre timp crucea iara a prins a se clatina.

- Vi, cito, s uma sosli? s-a pomenit deodata Horia urlind, apoi, ghicindu-i dupa catatura c-o mai fi stiind ei si alta limba, a adaugat: E mormintul unuia din cei mai ...

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The selection presented above is important because it reveals what is the next point in the agenda of the imperialist centre—the annihilation of everything that makes up the nation's collective memory. Consequently, now that home has become an ambiguous place, the marble cross from the cemetery and the nearby walnut tree, which have so often served as a haven to the now-exiled couple, become the target. Thus, they are sacrificed for the sake of a new road. Apparently, the walnut represents the perpetuation of the nation through time. Similarly, the marble cross stands for continuity and sacredness of the past. And, the new road seems to stand for the new direction that the Kremlin has set for the *sister* republics. In short, the Soviet power is only able to bring progress by destroying the things that the subalterns cherished most. Hence, after being deprived of the memory of home, Horia, becomes a stranger in the capital of the Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic. So, he is denied the comfort of having a shelter in the rapidly changing society while the last resting place of his ancestors is being destroyed.

Yet, a detail that stands out from the excerpt is that only two out of the six workers sent to pull the cross down dared to do it. It's also curious that the action of profanation is carried out by drunk workers who consider it a trivial task that ruins their good mood. After all, they have not expected to encounter so much resistance. Thus, Drutse's use of symbols—the marble cross which rocks but does not crash, as well as the wall nut tree, which is known to be a hard wood—is also quite important for the dissertation and is considered further in a separate subchapter. So, no person in full mental capacity and with any common sense would concede to profane a tomb, be it the tomb of a simple person or that of a great governor.

However, the extract proves that home and memory are not the only identity pillars that are being undermined. Language is a target too. Actually, the people sent to destroy the cross are speaking Russian. Moreover, when the protagonist addresses them in Romanian, they are not able to participate in the dialogue. Thus, Drutse exposes the degree of alienation of the natives and the consequences of their metamorphosis into homo sovieticus.

Consider, the following examples that highlight the degree of the destructive force of the new power:

- Ti-o fi fiind cumva ruda?
- Care ruda?!
- Atunci da-l incolo, a zis muncitorul mai in virsta. Mormintele se desfiinteaza conform ordinului, iar ordinul, dupa cum se stie, se exi... se exe... (*Clopotnita*, pp. 416-417)

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Horia Mironovici, asked Maria, why have they started to pull it down...²⁰⁹
(*The Spire*, p. 495)

Probably it's being prepared for burial, thought Horia to himself. People are put into coffins when they die, while the spires are covered with planks just the way they stand, erect ...²¹⁰ (*The Spire*, p. 500)

Thus, the centre's actions are directed at erasing the very memory of the nation. And, often, the undermining of the collective memory is carried out by the subaltern himself. For example, in *The Spire* some drunkards and a mentally ill boy complete the task. Hence, the creation of the servile homo sovieticus implies to break the spiritual spine of the community, or, otherwise, the indigenous people is brought to its knees but the soul is not bound. Consequently, the subalterns are deprived of the things they cherish most. And, the spire, which is the embodiment of both the spiritual and the historical identity of the nation, is annihilated. And, even if people have anything to object, nobody asks them. Decisions are taken by the Soviet leaders not by the dominated people. Thus, the Soviets take away the nation's identity by taking away the people's beliefs and by converting them into slaves of terror.

However, as the next excerpt reveals, rebellion is igniting in people's consciousness. And, Maria, one of the twenty-four pupils that are about to graduate from school and enter the adult world, is an exponent of the subversive identity that exists in the third space. She is the only one who understands the message of her teacher, who says that:

When a big injustice is being done and something holy is being destroyed, it's necessary for someone to stand up and cry for help.²¹¹ (*The Spire*, p. 505)

²⁰⁹ - Horia Mironovici, da d' ce s-au apucat ei sa darime ... (*Clopotnita*, p. 495)

²¹⁰ O fi pregatit-o pentru inmormintare, si-a zis Horia. Oamenii, dupa ce mor, sint pusi in sicrie, iar clopotnitele sint imbricate in scinduri asa de-a-n picioarele cum stau ... (*Clopotnita*, p. 500)

²¹¹ Atunci cind se face o mare nedreptate si se distruge ceva sfint, e nevoie ca macar unul singur sa se ridice si sa strige: ajutor! (*Clopotnita*, p. 505)

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Indeed, a nation cannot survive if it complies obediently with the norms imposed by the master. And, Horia's inner voice tells him something is to be done. To him the memory of a nation is something holy. After all, the spire is a reminder of a great struggle for independence.

According to the legend, the holy establishment has been built by one of the greatest kings of Moldova after he had defeated the Turks. Thus, the spire represents the victory of a nation in a defensive war. And, the fact that the best soldiers are put to make their service in the spire shows that its main goal is to stop the invaders (Turks, Tatars, Russians) from profaning the land and its people. So, Horia has to react.

However, his wife talks him into letting it go and return home. Here is where the opposition between the two train stations mentioned above stands out. On the one hand, the protagonist's mother is not there anymore to support him in the fight for the integrity of the past. On the other hand, his wife is there. But, she is white (just like the whitewashed station) with fear because she has already witnessed an act of annihilation carried out by the new authorities. Not so long ago, it was the priest's house that was completely destroyed:

A few years ago, when the centre of the village was rebuilt, the priest's house as well as everything around it was pulled down and a "Luminita"²¹² was built instead; but Simionel's only room spoiled the beautiful view. They wanted to buy it and built him a new house in another place. But, he didn't want to move from there.²¹³ (*The Spire*, p. 413)

One of the things that most matters about this passage is the subtle allusion to the subject that completes the actions. Drutse uses, in the Romanian text, a verb in the third person plural which is very similar to the opposition "he" "we" encountered in the *Declaration of Independence* by Thomas Jefferson. And, it looks like an accusation of "them", the authorities that are behind these events—the demolition of the priest's house, the building of the book shop and the attempt to displace the poor orphan.

²¹² The generic name for bookshops in the country

²¹³ Acum citiva ani, cind au refacut centrul satului, au stricat si casa popii, si tot ce-a mai ramas; au facut "Luminita", dar strica toata frumusetea camara ceea a lui Simionel. Au vrut s-o cumpere, au vrut sa-i faca casa noua in alta parte, dar iaca nu vrea sa se mute de acolo si pace. (*Clopotnita*, p. 413)

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Actually, as religion is the spine of the spiritual perpetuation of the national identity it is one of the primary targets of the Soviet power. Thus, the demolition of the priest's house is nothing else but an act of domination designed to diminish the people's power of resistance. After all, it is easier to mould the identity of a people when there is no trace left of the moral framework that used to characterise it. Consequently, the Soviet regime does not only destroy the old. It imposes (ideologized) education to "enlight" the people, to make them beneficial to the regime. Therefore, they build a library instead of the priest's house in the centre of the village. However, Drutse makes of Simionel, a poor fool, the barricade that stops the advancement of destructive machine of the Soviet power.

Similarly, the transformation of the natives into homo sovieticus is carried out in schools, because one has to be educated to "understand" the ideological literature. And, who can be better for this task than the servile subaltern:

[...] He was a good worker, one rarely to be encountered. He worked in all the schools from the north of Moldova, and was considered one of the best directors. He was teaching Moldovan literature but his true passion was construction. The school yard was full of heaps of sand, wood chips, lime, stones and cement. [...] It seems that Nicolai Trofimovici's passion for building was highly valued at the rayon forums. And, always there was a need to transform another 8 years' school into a general one, with the same decision, on the same paper, Balta would be appointed director of the very school.²¹⁴ (*The Spire*, p. 471)

In other words, the school director's true vocation is building and not teaching. Indeed, Balta has built and rebuilt many schools, and not any schools but schools in the north of Moldova. This is the part most densely populated with native Moldovans as a result of the previous policies of colonization, mostly directed at bringing foreign population to the south of the former Russian governorate. Thus, either there is no need to "(re-)educate" the inhabitants of

²¹⁴ Era un muncitor cum rar se intimpla. A lucrat prin toate scolile din nordul Moldovei, era considerat drept unul dintre cei mai buni directori. Preda literatura moldoveneasca, dar adevarata lui patima erau constructiile, ograda scolii era numai movile de nisip, surcele, var, piatra, ciment.[...]Pe semne, aceasta patima a lui Nicolai Trofimovici pentru constructii era mult apreciata de forurile raionale, si cum se ajunge la necesitatea de-a se mai transforma una din scolile de opt ani in scoala medie, in aceeasi hotarire, pe aceeasi foaie, Balta era numit directorul acelei scoli. (*Clopotnita*, pp. 471)

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the south or there is no need to rebuild schools there. Or, the school director is so valuable to the authorities that the new power prefers to have him close to the capital. Moreover, he is not just any kind of teacher, he is teaching Moldovan literature which is particularly important in the context of Boehmer's (1995) study. The scholar claims that in some way British literature was "a medium of representation—an instrument of power", and "a means of inculcating a sense of imperial loyalty in the colonized" (p. 51). Consequently, literature, and the Moldovan one is not an exception, allows some degree of manipulation of "symbolism" and "real distinctions in the world" which permit the metropolis to depict the Romanians as the Moldovans' Other. So, one could even say that Balta is a builder of a new order/society.

However, Balta's considerable gap in what concerns Moldovan (Romanian) literature arises the question about which special qualities have made him so valuable to the communist authorities. How comes that a person who hates students becomes a builder of schools, which is where the new generations are being educated, where identities are being forged? And, the following lines provide a clear speaking answer:

Wonderful, it's just that being born to ruin he chose the job of a builder, and for a lifetime he was working in building, being busy in fact with destroying every living thing getting into his way [...] and the poor Spire was already on the way of the righteous ones [...] ²¹⁵ (*The Spire*, p. 501)

The truth is that Horia, the keeper of the nation's history, has discovered the true identity of the director, the identity of a destroyer. And, his confrontation with the headmaster culminates with the burning of the spire. However, it must be said that Balta is both a destroyer and a builder. He is the slayer of the national identity. But, the builder that the new regime requires. He is there to fulfil the orders of the superiors without questioning them. So, he is perfectly fit for the kind of job the new power is carrying out in the *sister* republics. He is perfect for building new schools and engineering new generations of homo sovieticus.

Yet, often, the director needs helpers to do his job. And, he seems to easily find some:

²¹⁵ Fantastic, dar, nascut pentru a ruina, el si-a ales meseria de zidar, si o viata de om munceste la constructii, ocupat, in fond, cu distrugerea a tot ce i se nimereste viu in cale [...], si biata Clopotnita a si pornit pe calea celor drepti [...]" (*Clopotnita*, p. 501)

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“Well”, said Horia to himself, “the director of the school works because he was born under the zodiac sign of the destroyer [...] five rubles an hour and it’s all over, no more freedom, no more sky. He doesn’t need anything, neither wings nor health. He would sell his mother and father ...”²¹⁶ (*The Spire*, p.500)

In short, when it comes to the destruction of the spire the headmaster chooses someone whom the village pities too much as to be able to punish. So, the director gives Simionel five rubles to put nails into the flesh of the spire, and the people say nothing. But, just like in the case of the marble cross, the author employs a person with questionable mental capacity to commit the act of profanation of the religious and historical monument. If in the case of the marble cross, the people appointed to fulfil the task are two drunk workers that can hardly form a phrase in Romanian, then in the case of the spire the person to do it suffers some mental disorder. Thus, although during the day the poor orphan is nailing the spire, further reading of the text reveals that at nights, Simionel, the priest’s former servant, takes off all the planks. So, once again, he becomes an obstacle in the advancement of destructive machine of the Soviet authorities. Also, the poor orphan is the perfect example of a person’s “moral ambivalence” which the postcolonialists, Boehmer (1995) and Walder (1998, p. 17), identified as the ever present agents of resistance and co-operation against/with the colonial power (p. 91).

However, further interpretation of the role of this minor character opens the possibility to identify him with a physical representation of the moral disease that is infecting the Moldovan society. Also, he might stand for the identity crisis through which the protagonist of the novel, Horia, passes while pondering whether to keep fighting for the integrity of the past or retreat.

In conclusion, as reading goes from one novel to the other, one detail stands out. The general condition of houses is deploring when the setting refers to the first years of the post-Second World War Moldova. These are either incomplete or need urgent renovation. And, when new regimes are established, the houses are not just different from what they used to be, or are meant to be, houses/ buildings are being destroyed. This is probably the best proof of the

²¹⁶ [...] ma rog, isi zicea Horia, directorul scolii munceste pentru ca s-a nascut in zodia Ruinatorului [...] “Sinsi” ruble pe ora si – gata, s-a zis cu volnicia, s-a zis cu cerul. Nu-i mai trebuie nici aripi nici sanatate. Ti-l vind pe mama si pe tata ... (*Clopotnita*, p. 500)

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devastating effect the Soviet power has had over the Moldovan society. Thus, the identity issue is as actual in the case of the Moldova described by Drutse as it is in the case of the other postcolonial locations.

5.1.6 The Theme of the Celebration of the Struggle towards Independence in Community and Individual.

First, the fact of approaching the issue of the struggle towards independence in novels written in the Soviet era is by itself an act of celebration. In a time when literature is mostly a tool of the Soviet propaganda, this is both an act of outer confrontation with the norms of the Soviet power and of publicly honouring and praising the national heroes. Yet, the author, just like the protagonists of the novels under analysis, often has to fight his battles unaccompanied. Thus, Drutse that best identifies with Horia—the history teacher proves that a true patriot does not shrink under the pressure of the authorities and by means of the personal example emancipates the whole community.

Second, there are several aspects to be considered when speaking about the struggle towards independence. After all, independence encompasses a large spectrum of liberties and the fight occurs at various levels. Also, as the struggle takes the shape of a physical confrontation or/and an ideological fight both internal and external conflicts are considered below. Consequently, the analysis of the selections from Drutse's novels reveals both military and ideological opposition. Naturally, the second sometimes develops at the level of internal conflicts that often take the shape of the personal spiritual/identity crisis of the characters which is to be considered farther in a separate subchapter.

Consequently, the selected excerpts have a dual function. On the one hand, they are hypothetical first/second-hand historical records of the confrontations between natives and conquerors. On the other hand, they are fragments of fiction that inspire and are themselves a way of resisting foreign domination. Thus, the selections presented below stand out within the subject line.

Consider, the example from the duology that narrates the evolution of Bessarabia from a Russian governorate to a Romanian province and then a Soviet Socialist Republic:

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There were few hunting guns in the village, and the few that existed got confiscated by the high officials when the great peasant unrests began.²¹⁷ (*The Burden of Our Goodness*, p. 9)

Apparently, this line is a direct reference to the conflict between the subalterns and the master(s). The narrator makes this seemingly innocent comment when talking about the invasion of the village by a pack of wolves—a symbol of danger and aggression to be discussed below. Also, it reveals that the poor peasants are deprived of any means of self-defense be it from the wolves or any other invaders.

However, what most matters is that it is a direct allusion to the movement of national liberation of the Romanians from Bessarabia that broke up simultaneously with the 1905 revolution in Russia. In other words, the Bessarabians are not willing to comply with the imperial rule. However, the unrest, just like most of them, has been put down and the people's weapons confiscated. Thus, the natives fail to fight off the imperialist army and to shake off the burden of foreign domination.

However, the First World War has weakened Russia and has provided Bessarabia the opportunity to join Romania.

... during the four years of war poor Bessarabia seems to have experienced all sorts of things. It entered the war as one of the western governorates of the Czarist Empire. Then, swallowed by rebellions it declared itself a republic. And, after ten weeks as an independent state that was not internationally recognised, it came out of the war as the eastern territory of the Romanian kingdom.²¹⁸ (*The Burden of our Goodness*, p. 42)

But, the Second World War has come and the peaceful peasants are preparing to fight:

²¹⁷ Arme de vânătoare sătești nu prea aveau, iar cele ce mai erau fuseseră confiscate de ureadnici, cînd începuseră marile framîntări țărănești. (*Povara bunătății noastre*, p. 9)

²¹⁸ ... în cei patru ani de război mult încercată Basarabia trecuse, pare-se prin toate. A intrat în război ca una din guberniile de apus ale Imperiului țarist, apoi, cuprinsă de revolte sociale, a ajuns a se fi proclamat republică, și s-a menținut ca stat independent vreo zece săptămîni, dar, nerecunoscută fiind pe plan internațional, acum ieșea din război ca ținutul de răsărit al regatului român. (*Povara bunătății noastre*, p. 42)

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For hundreds of years, from father to son, the Moldovans rise their children with only one rule: to be *cuminti*²¹⁹! But, Lord, what does it mean to be *cuminte*?! It depends when, how, where. One cannot be always *cuminte*. If you have your own house, if you have your own land, if you have your own people, and if everything you have is being destroyed, can you still be *cuminte*? ²²⁰(*The Burden of Our Goodness*, p. 134)

This excerpt comes from the context in which the first stirrings of the war began to be noticed in Moldova. Consequently, the protagonist buys himself a new fork — often used as weapon, an action that makes him dream about his father teaching him to be obedient. However, the protagonist is tired to follow the teachings of his father. Now, that he is in the hearth of his people he doubts that it is right to be obedient.

However, this selection is not only a consideration of the protagonist. Drutse himself speaks to his reader and teaches him that there are things in this life that one has to defend. People must not leave the “others” destroy their homeland and their nation. And, when it comes to the defence of one’s home even a fork can become a weapon, even a peasant can become a soldier. And, this is what the next lines are about. Consider:

What an injustice! They are wearing berets, they know how to keep military step, and handle the gun in an unseen way! But, mother-Patria recruits under its flag a man that doesn’t even know to sing from the beginning to the end the call of Europe, doesn’t distinguish left from right, and doesn’t stick his chest out. Yet, look! He has received the order of concentration (into the army). The two fellows scratched their heads with reading the order [...] ²²¹ (*The Burden of Our Goodness*, p. 137)

²¹⁹ Obedient, dutiful, good, quiet, serious, reasonable, sensible, wise, clever, foreseeing, prudent or behaving oneself.

²²⁰ De sute de ani, neam de neamul lor, moldovenii isi cresc copiii cu o singura pravila: sa fie cuminti! Dar, Dumnezeuule, ce inseamna sa tot fii cuminte?! Depinde cind, cum, unde. Totdeauna nu poti fi cuminte. Daca ai casa ta, daca ai pamintul tau, daca ai neamul tau, si daca tot ce ai se duce de ripa, mai poti fi cuminte?! (*Povara Bunatatii Noastre*, p. 134)

²²¹ Ca sa vezi ce nedreptate poate fi pe lume! Ei poarta basti, stiu a tine cadenta, fac o minuire de arma care nu se mai afla! Iar Patria-muma cheama sub drapel un om care nici nu stie a cinta pina la capat chemarea Europei,

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So, the peasant Onake becomes a soldier in the Romanian army. On the one hand, this excerpt proves that the boys are burning with desire to defend their homeland and do not understand that they are too young to go to war. On the other hand, it reveals the wisdom of the Romanian colonels that choose people who know both what war and home is to join the army. However, considering both the previous chapter and the following excerpt, wisdom and political negotiations are not enough to save Bessarabia from the invasion of the Red Army. After all, this piece of land is a bridge between two powers—Romania and Russia, and two worlds—Europe and Asia. And, as it follows:

In a month's time Bessarabia was freed by the Red Army. Romanian authorities were compelled to free all the Bessarabians from the army. And, here stands Onake Caraboosh on the bridge between Iasi and Ungheni, with a Romanian border guard behind, and a Soviet one in front of him.²²² (*The Burden of Our Goodness*, p. 140)

Although, when considering this excerpt out of the general context it looks like the Russians free Bessarabia, one thing is certain—the Bessarabians have not asked the Russians to free them. In fact, Onake prepared to defend his land even before Romania has recruited him. Moreover, the position of Onake reminds an exchange of hostages rather than a liberation. And, as the history chapter reveals it is the price Romania has had to pay to avoid the progress of the Red Army. Also, after reaching home, Onake does not enroll into the Soviet Army as his son-in-law, Mircea, does. Thus, the moral is that if one cannot fight for his people he will not fight for his master either.

Nonetheless, the battle for the independence of this piece of land is not over. And, the open confrontation of two belligerent powers is substituted by a partisan war for the liberation of homeland. This is what Soviet soldiers found when they came home.

incurca stingul cu dreptul, nu mai poate scoate pieptul afara. Promise, uite, ordin de concentrare. Cei doi baietani, scarpinindu-si cefele a mare mirare, buchiseau ordinul, [...]. (*Povara Bunatatii Noastre*, p. 137)

²²² Cam peste o luna Basarabia a fost eliberata de Armata Rosie. Autoritatile romane erau obligate sa elibereze toti basarabenii din armata, si iata-l pe Onache Carabus pe podul dintre Iasi si Ungheni. Are in spate un granicer roman, in fata — un granicer sovietic. (*Povara Bunatatii Noastre*, p. 140)

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Mircea returned when the agitation reached its peak. The bands were expected to come out of the woods any of the arriving nights. Militaries stood in the (village) soviets at night. There were soldiers at the entrance and the exit of the village. Everything reached a point that people were not even allowed to walk around during the night or turn on the light.

However, the night the husband returned the candle burned in Nutza's house and nobody said nothing. Well, she had guests. The villagers even did their best to prevent their big agitation from reaching the guest from the first day and they told jokes. Yet, there was no peace in the whole plain and there couldn't be any in Mircea's house.

So, he started to wake up at night too. At first, he could not understand what is it that is waking him up. But, then he got it. What was waking him up was the fact that Nutza was awake, and cold.

— Why aren't you sleeping?

— ...have you heard it too?

— Hear what?

— Shots. ²²³

In other words, the war is over. But, the unrest continues in the plains. And, Drutse uses both description and dialogue to celebrate the collective fight for independence without provoking the severe reaction of the communist censorship. Actually, when the narrator mentions the bands hidden in the woods he refers to the natives that have found shelter from the

²²³ Mircea s-a intors tocmai cind fierberea ajunsese la culme. Se astepta din noapte in noapte sa coboare bandele de prin paduri. Prin soviete noptile stateau militari, la intrarea si iesirea din sate – soldati, si totul ajunsese pina intr-atita incit oamenilor nici nu li se prea dadea voie sa umble noaptea, nu era voie sa aprinda lumina.

In casa Nutei, ce-i drept, a ars lampa in noaptea cind i s-a intors barbatul si nimeni nu i-a zis o vorba, ma rog, are musafiri. Ba mai mult decit atita. Satenii au cautat ca marea lor ingrijorare sa nu razbata la oaspete chiar din prima zi, si-l mai luau cu gluma inainte, dar pace nu era in toata cimpia si nu putea fi ea nici in casa lui Mircea.

A prins a se trezi si el noaptea. La inceput nu se putea dumeri ce l-o fi trezit, dar mai apoi a inteles cum vine. Veghea alaturi, infrigurata, Nuta – asta il si trezea.

- Ce nu dormi, bre?!
- ... ai auzit si tu?
- Ce s-aud?
- Puscaturi. (p. 200, Povara bunatatii noastre, Scrieri II)

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communist repressions in the heart of the nature. However, they are there to prepare a counterattack and to struggle for their independence. Moreover, Cristea (2004) claims that the partisans enjoyed the support of the villagers (p. 37). Actually, the sympathy of the villagers for the partisans is also reflected in the encounter of the former friends. Thus, one night takes place *cina cea de taina*²²⁴ between Nutza and her first love, Nica, and her husband, Mircea, representatives of the two belligerent forces. The tension of the moment is very much like in Miorita²²⁵. But, the old solidarity of the villagers overcomes the suspicion and the fear to be discovered by the Soviet authorities, and the two soldiers join forces to work the land. Then, they supper together with bread, cheese and onion, seated on the soil.

— What would the Martial Court say? Anyhow, you are a Romanian officer helping a sergeant of the Red Army to load sunflower ...

— Well I'm taking off the jacket and thus, with it, I leave the Martial Court over there next to the field way. ²²⁶ (*The Burden of Our Goodness*, p. 208)

Indeed, in the depth of their soul the people of the village only care about the motherland. It is the free peasant's blood that is running through their veins. Thus, they do not care who the master is. What really matters, is the calling of their ancestors' land. Therefore, the two former "enemies" overcome fear, disobey the orders of the commanders and make their own choice. Similarly, when talking about history Horia says:

Who knows, maybe there was a day in which that old and rusty axe, which lies thrown behind the hen coop, didn't go to bite from the wood of the forest, but

²²⁴ meaning both "the secret supper", and "the last supper" in Romanian

²²⁵ Popular Romanian ballad Miorita, in which the Moldovan shepherd is killed by the other two for having a better cattle.

²²⁶ - Da Curtea martiala ce-a zice? Orisicum, un ofiter roman ajutind un sergent din Armata Rosie la incarcat rasarita ...

- Nu, ca eu dezbrac haina si pun Curtea martiala, impreuna cu vestonul, acolo linga hat. (*Povara bunatatii noastre*, p. 208)

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risen by a peasant's arm demanded bread and justice for the many and oppressed
...²²⁷ (*The Spire*, p. 480)

Apparently, the excerpt under analysis is an allusion to the above mentioned rebellion. It speaks about the days when the natives have decided to fight against the Russian master. Consequently, the peasants have convert into warriors who united to fight off the oppressors. Thus, the teacher wants his pupils to be aware of the glorious past and learn from their ancestors how to overcome the fear of the master's persecutions.

Moreover, this excerpt possesses some overtones of an ideological confrontation with the power. After all, this is an event that the imperialist discourse generally pictures as a rebellion and treason, not as a struggle for justice and freedom. Moreover, these words come from an exile accused of nationalist propaganda. And, as a teacher who really cares about his pupils, Horia, does not just teach them the history of nations. He shows them that history is something that surrounds them, something that they should be proud of, and that they should take a stand. He teaches them that:

[...] the man is endowed with the gift of memory and of consciousness, thus my question is whether it's his duty to know his history, the history of his people. ²²⁸ (*The Spire*, p.481)

Consequently, Horia's determination to perpetuate the past of his nation is both a way of celebrating the struggle for independence of the ancestors and a way of rising the public consciousness in what concerns the national ideal. After all, the history teacher is right when he says that:

Human life, my dear, cannot be perceived as something isolated, separated, something that only belongs to you. Human life is like a ring in an

²²⁷ Cine stie poate toporul cela vechi si ruginit, ce zace aruncat undeva dupa costereata, in anii tineretii sale a avut o zi cind nu s-o mai dus sa muste din lemnul padurii, ci, ridicat de-un brat de taran, a cerut pine si dreptate pentru cei multi si oropsiti... (*Clopomita*, p. 480)

²²⁸ [...] omul, are darul memoriei, darul constiintei, si, prin urmare, cum credeti voi? E dator el oare sa cunoasca istroria sa, istoria neamului sau? (*Clopomita*, p. 481)

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uninterrupted chain, which is formed of similar rings. And, the rings in a chain, as everybody knows are not made to play with one at a time wondering about its beauty. If the chain doesn't break, then the rings making it up are good. If it breaks, the quality of the remaining rings has no importance. [...] And today, when you read Eminescu's poems, don't you hear the hidden voice of the poet, his pain and his melancholy? Don't you feel how the old man chuckles gently, noiselessly, in his sleeve, when you read the memories of Creanga? And, what about our chroniclers, what about the moan that comes out of Neculce's chest when he suddenly stops from retelling to tell: oh, poor Moldova, you have got to endure a lot ...²²⁹ (*The Spire*, p.482)

Thus, the protagonist of *The Spire* acts as a keeper of the nation's history and consciousness just like Onake. Both are often alone in the face of destiny/the conqueror. Yet, Onake only helps those who want to be saved and teaches them how to find the way back to the origins. But, Horia goes farther than that. Unlike the protagonist of *The Burden of Our Goodness*, he is an active agent of national renaissance. The young man celebrates the national ideals both as an inspector of the Society for the Protection of Historical and Cultural Monuments and as a history teacher. Horia brings history to life and makes an army of prophets from his pupils. He awakens their, and their fathers' civic consciousness and pride for their glorious past. He teaches them that united we stand and divided we fall. To the twentyfour (twelve and twelve) pupils he is like Jesus. He seems to be a profet and a saviour ready to sacrifice so that the Moldovans would live with pride, but, not exist in terror. Horia makes use of all the resources he has to rise his pupils' national awareness. He even speaks about the legacy the great Romanian/Moldovan historians and poets left them. Also, he goes back to the nation's folklore, and tells the young boys and girls the following legend:

²²⁹ - Viata umana, dragii mei, nu poate fi conceputa ca ceva izolat, separat, ceva ce iti apartine numai tie. Viata omului este un inel intr-un lant nesfirsit, format din inele asemanatoare, iar inelele in lant, dupa cum stie toata lumea, nu se fac pentru a ne juca cu fiecare in parte, zicind: ia mai ce mai inel frumos. Daca tine lantul, inseamna ca si inelele sint bune. Daca se rupe, nu mai conteaza calitatea inelelor ramase intregi. [...] Parca azi, citind versurile lui Eminescu, voi n-auziti soapta tainuita a poetului, durerea si tristetea lui? Citind amintirile lui Creanga, nu simtiti cum ride batrinul, domol, tacut, pe sub mustata? Dar cronicarii nostri, dar acel geamat iesit din pieptul batrinului Neculce, cind se opreste el deodata din povestit pentru a zice: oh, sarmana Moldova, ca prin multe ti-a mai fost dat a trece ... (*Clopotnita*, p. 482)

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[...] Daniil the Hermit [...] should have been praying for many years [...] until one cold and rainy night the sovereign of the country noticed the light. He was returning from a battle; he was coming back after the defeat from Valea Alba. The king, beaten by the pagans, having no army left, and his leg injured, was just looking for a shelter to take breath [...] The monk opened the door but didn't leave him come in [...] he said that the beaten warrior can only find rest on the same battlefield where his army was defeated. The sovereign accepted stately and dignified the monk's opprobrium. He turned his head and made the trumpeters give the signal of the call up, and with the remnants gathered from the woods went back and won. [...] Many years later, [...] he found [...] the bones laying strewn over the threshold. His eyes filled with tears and then our great sovereign said: "How come that my people fall dead and have not even a burial place here on the hearth of their country?!" [...] So, he ordered to erect a spire on the spot, to bring a big monastery bell, and valiant soldiers to be appointed to have their service around the bell. They were to toll the bell twice a day, at dawn and at twilight, so that the silence would be broken with the ringing of the bell. [...] Now dear children, although so many years passed, have a look at the old people of the village. They are people who have little education, and have few knowledge of the history of the nation but they cherish some almost holy feelings for this Spire. [...] The same day the twenty-four pupils filled the village with what they heard at school. The village from one end to the other cheered up, and although it kept raining, and the flu passed from house to house, the people started to brighten up. Dignity and principles started to gain in value. [...] and the roots of a whole village came back to life somewhere in the depth [...] ²³⁰ (*The Spire*, pp. 483-486)

²³⁰ [...] Daniil Sihastru [...] Multi ani s-o fi rugat [...] pina ce intr-o noapte rece si ploioasa i-a zarit lumina domnitorul tarii. Venea de la razboi, se intorcea dupa infringerea suferita la Valea Alba. Biruit de pagini, ramas fara oaste, ranit la picior, domnitorul tocmai cauta un adapost sa-si odihneasca oasele [...]. Calugarul a deschis, dar nu l-a lasat sa intre [...] i-a zis, (ca) odihna ostanului biruit zace pe acelasi cimp de bataie unde a fost infrinta oastea lui. [...] Domnitorul a primit mindru si demn ocară calugarului, si-a intors capul, a pus trimbitasii sa sune chemarea sub steag. Cu ramasitele adunate de prin paduri, s-a intors inapoi si a biruit. [...] Peste multi ani, [...] a gasit [...] un prosop de oseminte asternute peste prag. I s-au umplut ochii de lacrimi si a zis atunci marele nostrum domnitor: „Cum, sa cada oamenii mei si sa nu aiba nici macar loc pentru morminte aici in vatra tarii lor?!”. [...] A poruncit atunci sa fie ridicata, pe acel loc, o clopotnita. Sa se aduca un clopot mare de manastire, sa fie numiti osteni viteji, ce vor face slujba pe linga acel clopot si de doua ori pe zi, in zori si in amurg, sa se sparga linistea acelor pustiri cu dangatul lui. [...] Acum, dragi copii, cu toate ca au trecut ani si ani, uitati-va bine la batrinii satului. Oameni care nu

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Thus, the speech of the history teacher makes the people of the village understand that in times of trouble their ancestors did not hide in their houses. And, people understand that sometimes one has to do more than just resist in order to win, people have to unite and strike back. They must stick to their land just like the sapling that is described below:

Frail as you see it, but this sapling sprouted here among stones and growing with what God gave it when replanted into good land sticks to the land in a way that no other tree would ever do!²³¹ (*The Spire*, p. 499)

However, it seems that they should choose an appropriate moment. This short allegory alludes to the hardships the natives living under the Soviet hegemony encounter. And, Horia's father-in-law comes to the hill, with the excuse of searching for some saplings, in the moment when a vital confrontation is about to occur. He is there at the plea of his daughter who has asked him to temper the spirits of the youth. He knows that an open confrontation is what the enemy is looking for because it would be the perfect excuse for the annihilation of the enemy of the people/state. The allegory of the sapling is a lesson taught to the history teacher who is about to defy the authority's (Balta) decision just like he has done in Chisinau before the exile. The old man explains that nothing lasts forever. Thus, at the right time, the nation enclosed between the two rivers would revive with a force no one has ever suspected it has. And, Horia is one of those people who should wait for the right moment to fight the Russian hegemony, at least this is the message of the next excerpt:

At night, nobody knows who, ripped off the planks that covered the Spire and threw them away all over the hill!²³² (*The Spire*, p. 505)

prea stiu carte si putine cunosc din istoria neamului nutresc sentimente aproape sfinte fata de aceasta Clopotnita. [...] In aceiasi zi cei douazeci si patru de elevi au umplut satul cu cele auzite la scoala. Un fel de inviore a cuprins satul dintr-un capat in altul, si chit ca ploile nu conteneau, iar gripa tot umbra de la casa la casa, lumea a prins a se insenina. Demnitata si principiile au inceput a creste in pret. [...] si radacinile unui sat intreg au prins viata in adincuri [...](*Clopotnita*, pp. 483-486)

²³¹ - Uite, asa prapadit cum il vezi, daca puietul ista, rasarit aici printre pietre si crescut cu ce-a dat Dumnezeu, cind il rasadesti la loc bun, asa se tine de pamint cum alt copac in veci n-o sa se tina! (*Clopotnita*, p. 499)

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On the one hand, it seems that with housebreakers one must fight using the burglar's strategy—at night, when the oppressor is off guard. However, what matters most is that the spire becomes the embodiment of the spirit of resistance of the nation, the outpost set to protect the natives. And, in a time of (religious) oppression, the spire is something more than a mere token of spiritual resistance. Thus, when history is put to the service of the communist party the spire becomes the monument that reminds the villagers who they are. When the sacred together with the human is traded for the sake of personal material benefits, it stands on the hill as a watching tower, like an all-seeing eye.

On the other hand, the location of the the spire on a hill, just like the location of some of Drutse's characters in similar sites, is another allegory. Thus, Drutse alludes to the item/character's moral superiority over the rest. But, the fact that the crucified spire is being freed at night, when the watching eye of the new regime does not see, also connects it to one of the fundamental myths of the Romanian literature—the Mesterul Manole myth. Consequently, though indirectly, it suggests the continuity of the Romanian people.

However, the person who disobeys the decision of the authorities is a criminal in the eye of the loyal subaltern. Thus, Nicolai Trofimovici, the school director, considers he has the right to punish the offender without any trial. Yet, the people take a stand against the servant of the power. And, as it follows:

They sent for a cart, placed him on a heap of straw just as he was all bleeding, and carried him through the village so that everybody should see him. By noon the village started to fret and fume and the old Capriana has broken out. That morning Nicolai Trofimovici was occupied with his *Volga*, and suddenly while he bustled about he found himself in a camp of rebellious enemies.²³³ (*The Spire*, p. 508)

²³² Noaptea nu se stie cine a smuls scindurile de pe Clopotnita si le-a aruncat cit ti-i dealul cela de mare! (*Clopotnita*, p. 505)

²³³ Au trimis dupa caruta, l-au asezat pe-un manunchi de paie, asa insingerat cum era, l-au dus de-a lungul satului sa-l vada toata lumea. Pe la amiaza a prins a fierbe, iesindu-si din albie, stravechea Capriana. In dimineata ceea Nicolai Trofimovici se poraia cu "Volga" lui si, tot poraindu-se la un moment dat s-a pomenit intr-o tabara de dusmani razvratiti. (*Clopotnita*, p. 508)

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Thus, people's consciousness is awakened and they unite to fight Balta—the homo sovieticus. Drutse describes this confrontation as a fight between the poor peasants (cart) and the rich headmaster (Volga). However, it also seems to be a confrontation between the local and the alien—the Volga produced in Russia, generally for Russian party officials. Moreover, it can also be interpreted as the confrontation of the old/traditional and the new/industrial/imperial.

In conclusion, the Moldovans—a nation whom history has taught to be *cuminte* get to question whether it is the right thing to do. The protagonists of Drutse's novels carry a powerful message to the readers. They teach us that there are times and circumstances when one can no longer "behave oneself" and has to strike back. And, it does not matter that the balance of forces is unequal or that there is no one there to support the natives in their struggle for independence. After all, as Eminescu claimed in his historical poems, in one's homeland every twig and every river gives one its forces, and better die fighting than live with the fear of death.

5.2 Motifs and Symbols: A Subversive Strategy to Elude the Censorship of the Metropolis.

As already mentioned earlier (in Chapter II, 2.3), one aspect of the analysis of the selected novels concerns the interpretation of the symbols and motifs employed to subvert the dominant narrative. Actually, these contribute to the complex representation of the various aspects of colonial oppression. Indeed, the tapestry of motifs employed by Drutse is quite amazing as it includes motifs standing for all the aspects of human life—social, cultural, historical and spiritual. According to Dolgan (2008), there is a distinctive symbiosis between his symbols and the rural universe that Drutse recreates in his novels (p.169). Also, Drutse's great merit consists in the way he employs universal symbols to create his own myths, myths that flow naturally through the characters' actions and speech.

Therefore, this section focuses on both biblical and literary symbols that Drutse uses to describe the mioritic universe, a universe that falls apart as a consequence of the Soviet domination. Thus, the black butterflies, the sunflower, the spire, (Dolgan, 2008, p. 169) which are so typical of the peasant's universe, appear as if in opposition to the symbols that feature the intruder—the Volga-s or the wolves. Indeed, the web of symbols which gravitate around central motifs such as, for example, land, help us better understand the changes that occur in the

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Sovietised Moldovan society. So, various symbols and motifs identified in the analysed novels are interpreted below.

First, the motif of *land* is often identified as a leitmotif in Drutse's novels. It seems that both the Moldovan and the postcolonial writer(s), as Boehmer (1995) shows, find the land as one of the sources of authenticity for the intellectual subaltern. The degree of attachment to the land of one's ancestors is what determines the degree of resistance to the imposed social and cultural values. Also, there is a perception of the land as a mother or an "abused and adored female body" (Boehmer 1995, p. 122) in both postcolonial and post-communist/ Soviet literature. In addition, the analogy land-mother, so often sensed in Drutse's works, is also referred to by Sanchez-Pardo (1995) who identifies the land with the source of native oral history that goes back to the creation moment (p.64). Thus, the community related to a particular piece of land is seen as something that has existed before, during and after the colonial experience.

Land is one of the crucial motifs that appear both in Drutse's essays (for example, *Paminatul, Apa si Virgulile*) and fiction. It is one of the motifs that best reflect the shift that happens during the colonial period as well as the realities that remain after it. Thus, the Moldovan writer depicts the land as something more than just some square meters on the surface of Earth. For Drutse's peasant, land is the source of happiness and sorrow, wealth and poverty, pride and humiliation, sustenance and ruin, success and failure, well-being and misery. To sum up, it is—in Gusev's (2008) words—a citadel, a symbol of strength (p. 128), but also a weakness. Thus, Drutse's lyrical use of the symbol of land comes to resemble the postcolonial vision of land as an embodiment of the "values of the past" (Boehmer, 1995, p.122) or as people's "cultural values and world view" (Sanchez-Pardo, 1995, p. 64). The following excerpt from *The Burden of Our Goodness* is a brilliant proof of this affirmation:

The land is the object of the Ciutorean's²³⁴ existence, and without the land it's as if he doesn't even exist on earth. If he has land, he can do everything. He can make friends for a lifetime or simply hang out with them. The rich and heavy soil is constantly dozing on the Ciutorean's shoulders, and wakes up instantly when time comes to protect one's belongings and honour. Land is the source of his humorous expressions, of his break up and making up with the world; it's

²³⁴ An inhabitant of the village Ciutura

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what alleviates his sorrows and makes him dream of the possible fortunes of tomorrow.

The land is the holiest of the laws of a Ciutorean, and when it comes to land, he doesn't want to hear about any other laws. Land can be lost, can be stolen in the light of the day; for it, one can (for)swear with the hand on the bible. From spring to autumn the villagers from Ciutura are in search of land. They look for it in inns, courts, churches, fairs.²³⁵ (*The Burden of Our Goodness*, p. 85)

Similarly, Gheorghe from *Leaves of Yearning*, who according to Corbu (2008) is very much like the protagonist of the Romanian canon novel *Ion* by Liviu Rebreanu, dreams of the land (p.91). Just like Ion, Drutse's young man has to choose between two of his strongest and relentless passions: love for the land and love for a peasant's daughter. The difference is that in Drutse's novel the protagonist is deprived both of the land he has inherited from his parents and of the beloved girl when the new socialist order is established. Thus, the land that is to help him complete the building of his mother's home and become a well-to-do peasant, just like the beloved peasant girl, which the authorities turn into a teacher, are lost. This double dispossession, material and spiritual, functions as a detonator of the protagonist's personal tragedy. When what he values most is gone, his life loses its meaning. So, all Gheorghe can do is run: run from the unfinished home; run from the unfulfilled love dream; run from the land that is not his anymore. But, he cannot run from his yearning, just like his mother, who shall always wait for her son's return.

Consequently, the image of the ever waiting mother alludes to one's patria or homeland. Indeed, *the land* is, above all, the home of the peasant, and when he has no land he is doomed to wander like Gheorghe, or Nica from *The Burden of our Goodness*. In fact, *the land* marks the destiny of many characters in the duology.

²³⁵ Pamintul e felul de-a fi al ciutoreanului, si fara pamint el ca si cum nu ar fi pe lume. Din pamint ciutureauul isi poate drege orice. Poate face prieteni pentru un pahar de vin si prieteni pentru o viata intreaga. Brazdele grele si miezoase picura vesnic pe umerii ciutoreanului, trezindu-se indata cind omul trebuie sa-si apere averea si cinstea. Din pamint ciutoreanul poate face vorbe cu haz, pamintul il supara si-l impaca cu lumea intreaga, pamintul ii leagana necazurile si il face a visa la norocul zilei de mine.

Pamintul e cea mai sfinta lege a ciutoreanului, si, cind vine vorba de pamint, el nu mai vrea sa stie alta lege. Pamintul poate fi pierdut, poate fi furat ziua-n amiaza mare; pentru pamint poti minti cu mina pe cruce. Din toamna si pina in primavara ciuturenii umbla si cauta pamint. Il cauta pe la crisma, pe la judecati, pe la biserici, pe la iarmaroace. (*Povara Bunatatii Nnoastre*, p. 85)

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Consider, Onake who after long wanderings hears the call of Molda which seems to drive him crazy and lures him into the frozen river that separates him from homeland. But, when with Molda's help he reaches the other bank, and shivering with cold he is hiding from the minutemen in a garbage hole, he gets scared by the foolishness of his action. Nevertheless, on a second thought, he realises that setting foot on his land is worth it, and says:

Finally, Life on Earth is nothing but a wasteland if the soul doesn't have a plot of *land* of its own, sprinkled with one's sweat, with the blood of his ancestors and left as an inheritance, so that we, when we would have lived our time, would leave it as an inheritance to our descendants.²³⁶ (*The Burden of our Goodness*, p. 46)

Thus, as one can see from this excerpt, the land means home. However, it's more than just (a) home; it's the element that preserves the connection between generations and thus the continuity of the nation; it's the essence of a peasant's soul; it's his identity. Therefore, when Onake reaches home, the happiness of the meeting is only briefly shadowed by the fact that the village has been burned down. He stays calm and says that the land on which the village has been built, is still there, and the same sky still covers the two hills between which the village used to be. And, on his initiative, the village gets rebuilt on the old hearth, on the same land that has served as a home for many generations of Ciutureans. So, regardless the geopolitical changes and catastrophes the small community shall never cease to exist.

Nevertheless, *the land* has also been a source of sorrow for the young Onake, as it has ruined a life-long friendship and has hurt his pride. The protagonist is deeply hurt when his best friend Haralambie builds his house on the small hill, which is considered the best piece of land in the village, without telling him. Consequently, his pride pushes him into building his house on the high hill, an action that brings about the mocking remarks of the village. However, despite all the conflicts between Onake and the village, he is proud of the land his ancestors have left him. Thus, when he is approaching the threshold, he says:

²³⁶ La urma urmei, globul pamintesc nu e decit o pustietate daca sufletul nu are un petic al lui, stropit cu sudoare, cu single strabunilor si lasat mostenire noua, pentru ca si noi, dupa ce ne-om fi trait veacul, sa-l trecem mostenire urmasilor nostri. (*Povara Bunatatii Noastre*, p. 46)

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My boy, there was once a beautiful and worthy village in this neighbourhood. Now, there is nothing left of it, but I shall take and leave you on the spot it used to be, because I think that if there is to appear anything worthy, it shall spring on that very plot of land.²³⁷ (*The Burden of Our Goodness*, p. 364)

Onake addresses these words to the last of the (imaginary) musicians that have been accompanying him during his life. This character is the last one from the imaginary music band that has been there to celebrate the happy moments or to help Onake face the hardships of life without bending. He is weak just like Onake's hope. However, the old man's last will is for the young musician to watch on the village that has been his homeland. After all, this plot of land that the protagonist loves so much, is the cradle of his daughter's youngest son. It follows then, that land is like a phoenix—capable to revive from its own ashes.

Furthermore, following the first level of narration, the destiny of Onake's daughter is also marked by *the land*. It appears that the land is the blessing and the curse of both Nutza and Nica—Onake's former friend's only son. The land issues between the fathers serve to the birth of the youths' love, which paradoxically coincides with the time when Moldova is part of Romania. However, Haralambie's hunger for more *land* and Onake's little *land*, change their love dream into a nightmare. Yet, when the war takes away both of Nutza's loves, *land*—during the sunflower harvest time—is the witness of their reencounter after years of wandering.

However, for Nica it is nothing but a chance to work the field one more time, maybe the last one. It is a farewell, a final reencounter with both his love and what most closely represents home—his beloved's land. It seems that the war makes the breach between the former lovers even greater. Nevertheless, before Nica abandons the land he has been fighting for—a high price he has to pay to preserve his life—he decides to help both his love and ideological rival (Simut, 2008, p. 174). This reencounter ends up in some kind of *last supper* at which Nica, Nutza and Mircea share the little rye bread, cheese and onion that Nutza has brought—everything, as the narrator highlights, a product of the land the three of them have just worked.

²³⁷ Stiușem eu, mai baiete, un sat frumos si vrednic pe aici prin partile iestea. Amu nici pomeneala de dinsul, dar am sa te duc s-am sa te las pe locul cela, pentru ca, cred eu, daca va mai rasari cindva ceva acatarii, tot pe locul acela o sa rasara. (*Povara Bunatatii Noastre*, p. 364)

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So, the *land* is what reconciles the old friends that, after serving on different sides of the barricades, see each other in harvest time on the very piece of land that, just like Nutza, is a mediator. Though, the author designs the confrontation scene as an act of collaboration between the opponents, Simut (2008) claims that there is more to it (p. 174). It seems that the land which at first has thrown Nutza into Nica's arms, later takes her back to Mircea (once Nica has chosen to marry a girl with more land). And, as a wife of an officer in the Red Army, she benefits from certain aids and protection from the Soviet government which allows her to work the land even when the rest of the village is afraid to do so. On the other hand, a different choice would have probably made her share the destiny of exile of Nica and his whole family. Although his son and wife escape to Romania, Nica's parents have to pay for his attempt to fight the Soviet occupation. Indeed, the price is more than a peasant could probably bear, the confiscation of all the property, of all the lands and exile to Siberia. Similarly, Moldova, after a long struggle, is thrown into the sphere of control of Moscow which pretends to be the benefactor and the protector of the small republic. But, Nutza, just like her mother, never leaves her village and works the land even when the men are gone. Finally, as a true daughter of her father, Nutza makes the line of the family perpetuate and stays loyal to the land and to everything it represents. Thus, the following definition sums up some of the crucial meanings of *land*.

It is the holy land of our ancestors, of our parents and of our children, and I don't know what other name one could give to that matrix of the nation, that sweet thrill of the heart that shrinks whenever you are face to face with it. This is a ploughed land, a ploughed and sown one, with green leaves between the black clods, and vapours scarfs hovering discreetly over the valleys. Peace, blue and millennial, is falling from above; and our old woods approach from the distance like a spring. This ancestral hearth is so pure, so beautiful that when the time would come, you would give your life for it just to be able to be born again, live again a long man's life, and be faithful to it. (*The Spire*, p. 408)²³⁸

²³⁸ Pamint sfint al strabunilor, pamint al parintilor, pamint al copiilor nostri, si un stiu cum ar mai putea fi ea numita, acea matca a neamului, acel fior dulce al inimii ce te zguduie de fiecare data cind ramii fata in fata cu el. Pamint arat, arat si semanat, frunze verzi printre bulgari negri, basmale de aburi plutind pe nesimtite peste vai. Iar de sus tot cerne o pace albastra, milenara, iar din departare tot vin, izvorind, batrinii nostri codri. Si e atit de curata, atit

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As a conclusion, it can be said that *land* is a very important motif in Drutse's creation, more so because the writer has lived in the times when the Moldovans were dispossessed of their (only) treasure. Thus, the arguments that have been brought so far reaffirm the importance of land for the struggle of survival of an oppressed people.

Consequently, the issue of dispossession and denationalization leads directly to a motif often connected to that of the land (in all the above-mentioned implications): *Yearning*, typical of Romanian literature. Considering the clues, the narrator provides in the novel—the surname of Rusanda's beloved (Doinaru, a derivative of the word *doina*²³⁹) and the story of his mother's life hint at the couple's ultimate breakup. Thus, both protagonists of the *Leaves of Yearning* are doomed to suffer from a ceaseless *yearning*.

It seems that the detonator of the tragedy is the heroine's *yearning* for knowledge, world and self-awareness. Apparently, Rusanda, whom critics like Lidia Grosu (2008) view as an offspring from the old line of peasants that has got the chance to change her future (p. 210) due to her education, is nothing but a prototype of the homo sovieticus. Moreover, as the writer himself would admit lately, she is a vivid example of the "discreditation of the values" (Dolgan, 2008, p. 161). The new authorities force her into leaving behind everything that her life had been before — family, friends, and first love. They make it clear that the education she has is not enough. However, they shall teach her how to be a teacher on condition she goes where they tell her straightaway. Thus, Rusanda has to give up her freedom if she wants to embrace the future which the new authorities prepared for her. Likewise, her father has to refrain from expressing bitter criticism of the Soviet authorities as these did not tolerate the freedom of expression.

Consequently, Rusanda is being consumed by a dolorous longing for an unaccomplished love, a lost friendship, and an estranged home. Moreover, she becomes an alien in her own community—the villagers do not recognise her and wonder at her new outfit; her friend feels awkward in her presence and ends up treating her as a stranger; her beloved feels her drifting away into a world he is not yet allowed into by the new regime; her parents exclude her from the activities they used to do together. Moreover, she is being isolated from the rest of the world by

de frumoasa aceasta vatra stramoseasca, incit la un moment dat iti vine sa-ti dai viata pentru ea, apoi sa te mai nasti odata, sa mai traiesti o viata lunga de om, raminindu-i credincios. (*Clopotnita*, p. 408)

²³⁹ a typical Romanian folk poem/song that usually expresses deep feelings of yearning, sadness, loneliness, love, rebellion, longing for the origins/home/kinsmen and land.

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her own mother who puts black blankets on her windows allegedly to protect her from the light. So, alienation, as a result of sovietisation, is unavoidable in a world that exists according to some pre-established ancestral order.

Moreover, the changes that affect the heroine have a great impact on the unadaptable Gheorghe Doinaru. The latter abhors change because change has once deprived him of his father. But, despite his struggle to clean his name by completing the ideals which his father failed to complete — to build a perfect house and family, he loses his love too. And, the motif of the incomplete *houses (buildings)*, which has already been considered in section 5.1, alludes to the collapse of the patriarchal value system and the identity crisis of the subaltern. Thus, the hero that is alienated from his land, as a consequence of collectivization, cannot complete the building of his house, cannot make a home. So, his hands can no longer work his father's land, and he is doomed to yearn and wander the vast areas of the Union.

In this context, it is important to mention that both Melnic (2008, p. 242) and the historian Keith Hitchins (2008) agree that the white church (from *The White Church*) is the symbol of the human and spiritual values of the Moldovan peasant just like the *spire* (from *The Spire*). His argument seems grounded in the fact that at the opening of the novel (even) the priest (just like the rest of the village) has abandoned the small village church and in the small intervals of peace the villagers do not want to participate in the young girl's effort to rebuild the church. However, with a great sacrifice on her part and help from the mountain boy the church is rebuilt. Thus, Ecaterina's insistence to make it white (the colour of purity) suggests that the national values perpetuate.

Similarly, national values perpetuate thanks to Horia's decision to sacrifice his personal life and career for the sake of the historical *spire* from Capriana. *Sacrifice* is a rather common motif in Romanian literature; actually, some of the ballads that form the foundation of our literature are built on the motif of sacrifice²⁴⁰. Actually, the spire is built around Christian symbols such as: the monk Daniil Sihastru and Stefan cel Mare²⁴¹ who sacrifice for their ideals.

²⁴⁰ In *Miorita* the Moldovan shepherd learns from his enchanted ewe that the Transilvanian and Vrancean (somehow standing for the Muntenians) fellow shepherds want to kill him because everything he had was greater, bigger and more; but he does nothing to avoid the tragedy, which somehow reminds the scarification of Jesus. Then in *Mesterul Manole* to be able to fight the evil forces the great master Manole is to sacrifice his wife, and later puts end to his own life, which means that great achievements often require great sacrifices.

²⁴¹ According to the legend the light in the shack situated on the top of the hill lures the beaten and frightened king, who came to look for shelter. However, as Ghilas (2004) puts it, the hermit stopped in the threshold,

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Indeed, Gheorghe Mazilu (2008) argues that religion, which in Drutse's novels also appears as one of the manifestations of traditions, is, in its pure form, the only thing that has the power to destroy in us servility which undermined so much our integrity as a nation (p. 117).

Thus, Drutse interweaves Christian tradition with oral tradition by making reference to the 15th century legend that evokes the glorious past, when after each victory Stefan cel Mare erected a religious edifice. Accordingly, Drutse approaches the issue of national identity, a topic that was more like a taboo in the Brezhnev era, more so when it concerned the Christian-orthodox identity. Thus, besides sacred values the church/the *spire*, just like the Polish church that mobilized the fight against the occupational regimes, comes to symbolize the unity and the conscience of the nation. Likewise, when the case of the *spire* and Simionel is analysed, or when "Toiagul Pastoriei" has been considered, the sacrifice of the "one" for the sake of "the many" is seen as the key to the perpetuation of the nation.

Thus, the example presented below reveals that the *church/spire* also comes to symbolise the sacred union between man and woman, a union that makes possible the survival of the nation—a union that, unfortunately as mentioned earlier, fails to occur in the case of Gheorghe Doinaru and Rusanda.

Horia was walking away, up the road, slowly, stoutly, masterly, while Jeannette stood still and bid him farewell. When the boy reached the top of the hill, he stopped and looked back for the first time. As a sign of farewell Jeannette was waving the scarf, and he answered by lifting his hat. The village would have learned everything if it saw these signs. However, Capriana was sleeping after the last night's great celebration, and only the tired old Spire was dozing off on the other hill. It's not an easy task: to find two soulmates in this tormented ocean; to

and although he opened the door he didn't leave the king cross the threshold, the barrier between the sacred and the profane. He looked down at Steven the Great and dared him to fight the Ottomans. The light stands for the spirituality of the recluse who prayed for his people day and night. His faith made him superior to the king, who through these actions came to realise his duty towards his people, religion, and truth. Therefore, later on returning to the place where once had been erected the shack, he built a spire with a bell brought from a monastery, and made his soldiers toll the bell twice a day. The function of the bell had always been to advert the coming danger, to announce something but more than anything to remind to the people their religious duty (p. 397-398).

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bring them together; to tie them for a lifetime—you end up exhausted even if you are a Spire.²⁴² (*The Spire*, p. 430)

Indeed, as already mentioned in the second chapter of this dissertation, Drutse's symbols build elements of magic realism. Thus, the spire is also an allusion to the creation myth of the Romanian literature *Mesterul Manole*, in which the setting of the spire was the confrontation site between the creationist and evil forces. Accordingly, in the folk poem *Manastirea Argesului* (the protagonist of which is *Mesterul Manole*) everything that was built during the day was turned into ruin at night, and sacrifice was needed to finally build the majestic monastery. Apparently, the building of the homo sovieticus needed a sacrifice too, and, the spire has been chosen as the victim. However, there is some kind of ambivalence in *The Spire*. On the one hand, Semionel seems to have sold himself to the evil and during the day, at the order of the school director, nailed the boards to the spire walls. On the other hand, at night he nailed them down, in an attempt to undo his wrongs. Finally, the dual personality of Simionel only provoked a fiercer response from the servant of the communist regime, and the sick boy got beaten to death while the old spire was burned down. Nevertheless, according to the narrator, memory is not just a wooden monastery. So, the protagonist Horia Holban is entrusted with the mission of rebuilding the history of the spire by telling the story of the spire chronicle which the villagers protected very carefully from the authorities and from the school director—the man without memory, the homo sovieticus. Thus, Horia, the exiled history teacher, is to record the voices of the unheard which according to Esther Sanchez-Pardo Gonzalez (1995) reproduce a more accurate reality than the one from the top of a hierarchical society (p. 61).

There is, however, a detail about the church that outstands along Drutse's entire creation—the *hill*. It is noteworthy to mention that the symbol of the *hill* is present in all the works of the Moldovan writer. Apparently it is employed to suggest the moral superiority of the protagonists (who are/live on the hill) as is the case of: Onake, the protagonist of *The Burden of*

²⁴² Horia ridica drumul incet, voinic, gospodareste, iar Jeannette statea nemiscata locului, petrecindu-l. Sus in virful dealului baiatul s-a oprit si pentru prima oara s-a uitat in urma. Jeannette ii facea semn cu basmaua, el i-a raspuns ridicind palaria sus, si satul ar fi inteles totul de-ar fi zarit aceste semen. Capriana insa dormea dupa marea petrecere din noaptea trecuta, si numai batrina Clopotnita picura ostenita pe celalt deal. A gasi in aceasta mare zbuciumata doua suflete inrudite, a le apropia, a le lega pentru o viata, nu e lucru usor – pina la urma te prinde osteneala, chiar tu Clopotnita fiind ... (*Clopotnita*, p. 430)

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Our Goodness, the lonely shepherd from “Toiagul Pastoriei”, the church from, both *The Spire* and *The White Church*.

On the other hand, a symbol similar to that of Moses Washington's portfolio is the old leather *chronicle* of Capriana village. A real hunt has been declared for it. Historians are dreaming about finding it; communist authorities promise huge recompenses to anyone who knows anything about its location; and only the villagers build a true conspiracy to keep secret the location of the old book. It seems that both the chronicle and the portfolio are some kind of “repository of history” (as qtd. in Sanchez, 1995, p. 39) that empowers those who control it. However, Drutse's signifier is both a text and a myth. The history teacher's young wife, Jeannette, is the only person who confesses having seen the old chronicle. Also, by the end of the novel Simionel promises to bring it to Horia. However, neither she nor the “keepers” have ever read it and it has never come to be present as something tangible in the text. Nevertheless, it is perceived as something holy by the oppressed, and as a threat by those in power. Thus, it provides a mean to resist Sovietisation.

Another motif is the *sunflower*. When both Mircea and Nica appear towards the end of the war, Nutza—one of the few peasants who dares to be in the field—tries to gather the sunflower from the land her father has given her. Also, Onake eats sunflower seeds when nervously waiting for the resolution of the new authorities. And, the sunflower is the lonely plant that grows in the crack of the threshold of the abandoned house in *The White Church* and is there to meet the masters of the home when back from the woods. Also, Tincuta, Onake's wife, is compared to a sunflower, and as it is known when Onake is gone to war she is the one to take care of their home. Moreover, the narrator says that “the whole village warmed itself at the warmth of her soul” ²⁴³ (*The Burden of Our Goodness*, p. 25). Thus, the spectrum of meanings enclosed in this motif is quite wide.

Indeed, the *sunflower* stands for both active and passive resistance of the natives. On the one hand, Nutza—Onake's only surviving child—collects the sunflower that is the product of her father's land. So, she disregards the recommendations of the communist authorities that in those moments of confrontation between the new power and the local insurgents find working the land a dangerous enterprise. Likewise, her father keeps eating dusty sunflower seeds while everybody is rushing to bring a Russian soldier into the house. Also, it is a reminder of the peasant's true

²⁴³ ... se incalzea un sat intreg linga sufletul ei... (*Povara Bunatatii Noastre*, p. 25)

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essence. So, when the time of sowing and/or gathering comes, even if war makes one abandon the land he/she has to return to his/her homeland. Consider, Mircea, Nica or Onake, who have left to fight on foreign lands, or the villagers from *The White Church*, who found refuge from the Turks and the Russians in the woods.

Besides, it stands for the continuity of the nation. It appears like a promise that despite oppression and destruction, the nation, weak as it may seem, will manage to break through the ruins and direct the face to the sun, and breathe in the air of liberty. After all, according to the narrator from *The White Church*, it is the flower that always turns its face to the sun. Also, in *The Burden of Our Goodness*, the sunflower comes to symbolize strength, the hope to be free, the abundance/welfare of the previous years, and the ever alive memories. Yet, Russian domination takes everything away. Thus, in *The White Church*, the narrator wonders where shall the poor plant find sun when it is winter, a season when nature is dead—no more hope. And, in *The Burden of Our Goodness*, the flower seeds finish just before the Russian soldier approaches Onake's house.

The equivalent of the sunflower seeds, in *Leaves of Yearning*, are the *peas* that Rusanda plants with the intention of being closer to Gheorghe, and to perpetuate the family line by marrying him. She disconsiders her father's warning—that if she plants the peas in the open field the children will steal it, and that if she plants it so early, when it is still cold, nothing shall come out of it. Indeed, children or school became an obstacle impossible to overcome. Ultimately, Rusanda and Gheorghe have drifted apart.

Similarly, *Corn* is another symbol of continuity (life) and resistance of the nation. When all the corn is taken to the train station the people of the village start to die from (the artificially provoked) famine. However, when the survivors recover they (are made to) forget about it as of a bad record of poverty and famine. Nevertheless, Onake keeps planting corn the way he has been advised by his old relative whose only legacy was a handful of corn. This relative, or the nun as the family used to call her, according to Cristea (2008, p. 110) is the protector of the Caraboosh all along their/her existence. She saves Onake's family by bringing them sacks of a special kind of corn²⁴⁴ on several occasion. As she tells Onake:

²⁴⁴ The Romanian word "hangan" refers to a variety of mountain corn, with big corn cob and gold-reddish seeds.

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... this corn is our fate, and one must acknowledge the value and honour his fate. Wealth comes and goes, while poverty is what keeps us in this world, and accompanies us through all the pains, through all the centuries ... ²⁴⁵ (*The Burden of Our Goodness*, p. 53)

Thus, ever since, the protagonist plants it. He grows corn even on the small piece of land around his house which is the only bit that has not been ceded to the collective farm. Moreover, he takes a handful of *corn* in his last symbolic visit to his daughter, to whom her new-born son seems to be a fair copy of the old man. He uses it to accompany the good wishes from the Christmas carol that she longed so much to hear. He reminds her that be it not for the corn, none of them would have survived and the new-born would have never come to this world. In addition, he says that there are people who still remember the taste of the corn mush, and often come to borrow some maize flour from him. Moreover, when the cattle are starving in winter they ask for some dry corn plants to feed them. Similarly, the lonely shepherd from "Toiagul Pastoriei" seems to have gathered all his life force from the same corn mush.

Wheat is an analogue of *corn*. Thus, Haret Vasilevici claims that:

... wheat is the image of the country, the supreme formula of the people's diligence and devotion. The wheat is present in prayers, in songs, and in all the traditions and customs ranging from birth to commemoration of the dead. ²⁴⁶ (*The Spire*, p. 489)

Furthermore, continuity is symbolized by the *hat* of the deceased young man, Toader, from *Leaves of Yearning*. At the soldier's death the hat is not thrown away. Actually, it is passed down to the younger son who since that moment becomes the one to fulfil the mission of the deceased brother—to perpetuate the family line.

²⁴⁵ ... papusoiful e soarta noastra, iar soarta trebuie s-o stii s-o pretuiesti, s-o cinstesti. Bogatiile vin si se duc, iar saracia ne tine pe lume, si ne tot poarta din durere in durere, din veac in veac ... (*Povara Bunatatii Noastre*, p. 53)

²⁴⁶ ...griul este chipul tarii, formula suprema a harnicieii si devotamentului poporului. Griul este pomenit in rugaciuni, griul este cintat, griul trece prin toate datinile si obiceiurile de la nastere si pina la pomenirea mortilor. (*Clopomita*, p. 489)

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Also, continuity and resistance is symbolized by the protagonist of *The Burden of Our Goodness*, who is symbolically called Caraboosh. The narrator only relieves him from his “duty” when he gets to have an heir symbolically born on the Christmas Eve— “the holiday of the return to the old hearth of miracles”, the holiday that transforms the miserable life of the peasants into a fairy-tale. Then, the protagonist stops hearing the music that accompanied him during his whole life and dies symbolically, in front of the *hearth* of his home. However, even in his death he comes to embody strength and resistance, as he never falls, he continues to be seated on the small chair only his head dropped on his chest as if he was asleep. Thus, Onake resembles the *marble cross* and the *walnut tree* that the servants of the Soviet authorities struggle to eliminate. And, just like the symbol of the deceased governor’s *cross* or the *tree* the old man resists the destructive force of the new power even after his death.

In addition, just like the cave of Morrison’s Milkman, the *hearth* is a “site of memory”, as Benito Sanchez claims, the *hearth* is a symbol of the old man’s return to the origins. The proof of this statement resides in the fact that just before he passes away he sees the mythical red-haired dog, Molda, in the hearth. As he tries to take the dog out of the symbolic fireplace, he sees *black butterflies*—traditional images of death in the Moldovan literature (Gusev, 2008, p. 129)—covering her until she is no longer visible to him, and then he knows death is inevitable.

However, for Drutse, just like for Benito (1995) death is by far an end (p. 37). Moreover, as long as memory is alive in our hearts there is no place for death in our lives. There will always be somebody to continue where we leave off. And, Onake has a grand-child born on Christmas Eve. Moreover, the beginning and the end of the novel reaffirm the cyclic circle of life. There are beautiful, white and pure snowflakes like butterflies covering the plain when Molda appears in Onake’s life, just like when his grand-son is born. Yet, black butterflies mark Molda’s/Onake’s disappearance (Dolgan, 2008, p. 217).

The purity and holiness that accompanies the native’s quest is only shadowed by the tokens of the intruders, which are mostly associated to iron. These are the *train* (that appears in the three analysed novels), the *tractor* that symbolize the industrialization brought about by the new regime, and the *Volga-s* that almost kill Horia and which Onake carefully avoids. Indeed, the train (station) takes away the people and the products of the land. So, Mircea is lost for his people when he first comes into contact with the iron brought by the Soviets (the tractor). Thus,

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this “civilizing mission” seems to be seen as a devastating force that breaks into the still and calm life of the village just to destroy the patriarchal order.

Domnica stopped a few steps way, pale and with the eyes wide open. Scridon started to unbutton his coat—if there is something wrong, he will give his life to undo it.

The train advanced breathing hardly, like a burning and fierce monster ready to slaughter and bury anything that would be in its way. ²⁴⁷ (*Leaves of Yearning*, p. 453)

Similarly, the pieces of the draughts that the Russian instructor brings to the village club are *red* and *white*. These colours are particularly symbolic in the context of the Russian aggression as red stands for the Russian army. Also, red and white were the two forces that fought during the Bolshevik revolution. And, the train described above is taking the protagonist to the Red Army.

However, the confrontation of the natives with the imperialist power is also symbolized by the confrontation of the descendant of the *dog* from the legend of Dragos Voda, Molda, with the wolves — an allusion to Russia’s expansionist appetite. Also, according to Alexandrescu and Gavrilă (2000) Drutse uses the symbol of *Molda* to allude to the myth of the dog of the land (pp. 495-497). Thus, the writer (re)creates his own myth in which the dog does not die but saves the Plains of Soroca. In addition, even when the dog is not physically present, there is an echo—o-o-o-lda-a-a-a!!!—that hovers over the plains every time there is some kind of danger. Accordingly, the mythological animal becomes the saviour that rescues whole villages from the attacks of the fierce invaders. And, the pet also brings Onake home when his service in the Red Army is over. So, it is a symbol of the moral virtues and of the continuity of the Moldovan nation.

Another symbolic animal that Drutse employs is the *crow*. It appears as an omen of some misfortune. For example, just before the news about Toader’s death his brother loses the money

²⁴⁷ Domnica s-a oprit la citiva pasi, palida, cu ochii larg deschisi, iar Scridon a inceput sa-si descheie haina -daca aici ii vorba de vreo nedreptate, el isi pune viata la bataie.

Venea trenul suflind din greu, o namila fierbinte si fioroasa, gata sa taie si sa ingroape tot ce i se va nimeri in cale. (*Frunze de Dor*, p. 453)

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given to him to buy a hat while trying to take a nut from a crow. Also, a crow is mentioned when the story of the lovers from the Taul forest is told. And, later in the night, the boy thinks about Rusanda as if she were the girl from the wood and wonders if a grave like this is waiting for them too. Consequently, one sees in the excerpt presented above that Gheorge is carried away by a train and his girlfriend is not there to see him off.

The *road(s)* that lead to and from Ciutura, according to Moraru Anatol (2010), just like the theme of travel, symbolize both the entrance into the microcosm of the Moldovan village and out into the macrocosm of Russia. Symbolically, the old *road*—the connection with the outside world, is destroyed and taken from the peasants whenever a new Power is established. Yet, the people never give it up. They ask the Russian Czar to give it back to them. And, even when the kolkhoz swallows it, people keep strolling along the worked fields whenever they need to go to Paminteni (train station). Moraru (2010) highlights that this is the reason why the narrator so often mentions the path to the station from Paminteni. It seems that the path connects the village with the world from outside the community (pp. 37-38).

And, as the narrator tells the world was demanding *poppies*, Europe was paying a high price for them (in all the meanings). However, what one senses from this statement is that Europe is devastated. The red poppies symbolise the tragedy of Onake, the death of his two sons when the Second World War comes. Indeed, all his life Onake has avoided them. Even when his wife has finally planted some seeds in the garden the land took his side and not even one plant has come out. But, during his absence the poppies have invaded the yard. Apparently, the new power has divided the lands of a (Romanian) landowner among the villagers and has given them the harvest of that land. Onake is unhappy about this. It seems that he has sensed that the burning fire that the small seeds hide inside is going to bring a great sorrow to the house and when his sons die the whole yard turns red with poppies. During the war, while Onake thinks that his sons are still alive, the poor father has been trying to get rid of the poppies but when he has learned about his sons' death he has given up the task.

Nonetheless, considering Drutse's use of metaphors it could also be said that the poppies symbolise the red army that invaded the homeland, because as Onake said:

They followed when he was away from home and invaded his yard. God knows, he never liked them and Onake Caraboosh never dreamed of harvesting

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poppies. He did not plough the land for them, he did not sow them, and he did not come to reap them. But, the poppies have come on their own. [...] They have taken hold of everything — the forecourt, the porch, the house, the table.²⁴⁸ (*The Burden of Our Goodness*, p. 141)

It is known that Onake deserted the Red Army when the First World War was over. Also, unlike his fellow villagers he did not go to search for a Russian soldier to host in order to avoid troubles with the new authorities. Yet, a Russian soldier came, parked the car in Onake's yard, and ate from Onake's food. And, ultimately, Onake lost his lands to the kolkhoz.

However, Onake's very surname is symbolic. Indeed, Caraboosh from Ciutura, near Balti, as one should have already guessed from the above presented analysis of themes and symbols, is the perfect embodiment of the nation's resistance and continuity/revival. And, although the character is to be thoroughly analysed later, it has to be said that Caraboosh—in Romanian *Carabus*—is the name of an insect whose forewings are typically modified into hard wing cases, which cover and protect the hindwings and abdomen. Actually, the *beetle* (the English for carabus) is one of the most outstanding symbols in Egyptian mythology. Its meaning evolved from the representation of the physical force of the body to the rebirth of the soul. Accordingly, it represented virility, strength and courage. In addition, as a messenger of the sun, it also represented light, truth and regeneration. Likewise, given its connection to the Sun, it represented the sacred side of the human nature that was hidden under the hard wing cases—the human body. Thus, Onake Caraboosh is a symbol of the perpetuation of the national identity.

Moreover, Drutse knows how to potentiate this last symbol, he creates a strong connection between Onake and the dog, Molda, as well as with the village Ciutura—that is also a symbol. Indeed, as further analysis shall point out that the name of the village Ciutura came from the stump of an old oak that was used as a bucket, and was considered to have special properties because:

²⁴⁸ L-au pindit cind el un era acasa, si au dat buzna in ograda lui. Vede Dumnezeu, nu i-au placut si nu a visat Onache Carabus sa stringa o roada de maci. N-a arat pamintul pentru ei, nu i-a semanat, n-a venit sa-i secere. Dar macii au venit singuri. [...] Au ocupat totul—si batatura, si prispa, si casa, si masa. (*Povara Bunatatii Noastre*, p. 141)

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People returned from all over to quench their thirst and to wonder at it. What a miracle it was, this oak, which after years and years of staying in the dampness turned black like coal and strong like iron. But, there was something more about it because no matter how tired and no matter the distance that you were coming from, the water from that iron bucket made you get better, made you a little statelier and sharper.²⁴⁹ (*The Burden of Our Goodness*, p. 19)

So, as the novel reveals, the village between the two hills, is just like the oak bucket. In fact, in different religions/mythologies the oak symbolizes strength, protection, durability and the connection between the earth and the sky. Thus, even after the great fire, the village survives and life—symbolized by the water of the well—is never out of it. Actually, the village grows stronger after the catastrophe. Under Onake's leadership some young couples go to the wood and nine months later eleven children are born in the village, which, according to the narrator, is a thing never seen before. Thus, the village, just like the stones from its border, seem to be a symbolic allusion to the Romanian saying—River stones remain, while water flows away. And, according to Alexandrescu and Gavrilă (2000), this means that those who have strong faith, firmness of the land, patience, hard work and kindness/goodness can overcome all the hardships (p. 495-497).

Likewise, the surname Turcul, which is translated as “the Turk”, symbolizes Ilarie's conceited and treacherous nature. Also, Balta, that is translated as “mess” is the surname of a person that hates anything that is related to tradition and history. Consequently, wherever he goes he leaves a mess behind. Moreover, he defiles the sacred values of the people among which he lives. On the other hand, Horia—the name of the hero of the revolt against the Austrian empire, who being betrayed is latter killed—symbolizes dignity and determination to oversee the watershed of values and time.

Also, the *shadow* is another powerful motif in the novel. According to Ghilas (2004), it is reinforced by the symbol of the *cellar* that appeals to Horia whenever he is deep in reflections. It

²⁴⁹ [...] se întorceau oamenii cine stie de pe unde sa-si potoleasca setea si sa se mai mire o data. Ia mai minune, ca stejarul ista, dupa ce-a tot stat la umezeala un nesfirsit amar de vreme, se face negru cum ii carbunele si tare ca fierul. S-o mai fi fost acolo ceva la mijloc, caci pina si apa din ciutura ceea de fier te pune, iaca, pe picioare, te face oleaca mai mindru, oleaca mai istet, oricit de ostenit, oricit de departe ai fi venit. (*Povara Bunatatii Noastre*, p. 19)

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stands for the consciousness of the self or, considering the analytic psychology of Jung, it represents the collective subconscious (p. 400).

Accordingly, Drutse knows how to give a symbolic value to such common things like stones near the village (the hearth of the community), the road and the bridge (the connection/isolation from the rest of the world), the wood (the regenerative force of nature²⁵⁰), the land, the apple²⁵¹ because these represent best the peasants, the Moldovans. Indeed, in agreement with Mihail Dolgan (2008), the Moldovan suffers from the burden of his/her own goodness, and the burden of dispossession and denationalization (pp. 217, 224). Also, the Moldovans resemble the natives of the American continent who welcomed the European pilgrims which later brought them death and displacement.

In conclusion, the analysis of symbols and motifs above reveals that the works that make the focus of the given dissertation expose some considerable tension between the natives and the imposed communist authorities, and their servile helpers. And, as Bhabha (1994) claims:

It is from such tensions—both psychic and political—that a strategy of subversion emerges. ... It is a form of power that is exercised at the very limits of identity and authority, in the mocking spirit of mask and image; it is the lesson taught by the veiled Algerian woman in the course of revolution as she crossed the Manichean lines to claim her liberty (p. 62).

Thus, the Moldovan intellectual or peasant, aware of the possible consequences of confronting the *power*, learnt to veil their nationalist ideals. For example, Onake instead of defying the Soviet authorities, eats patiently sunflower seeds. Likewise, Haret Vasilevici argues that *wheat* is not just a religious symbol, which the communists banned, but the image of Moldova—one of the most important granaries of the Union, as the fourth chapter reveals. And, as it appears latter in the analysis of the characters, the most important national symbols—the chronicle—are simply hidden from the “other”. So, the natives often elaborated complex conspiracies to avoid political oppressions and to preserve and promote national identity. They

²⁵⁰ After all, eleven children are born in the village when after the fire several couples go to the wood.

²⁵¹ The biblical symbol of the forbidden fruit. In the spire Balta (homo sovieticus) offers Horia some pickled apple and as a consequence the latter becomes a pariah among the teachers.

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are invisible like Simionel and like the Algerian woman which Bhabha (1994) refers to in the following lines:

as even now you look
but never see me...
Only my eyes will remain to haunt,
and to turn your dreams
to chaos (as qtd. in Bhabha, 1994, p. 56).

Likewise, Drutse is the migrant writer that could only create freely outside his homeland, because in the metropolis he is invisible. The cloak of invisibility allowed Drutse create valuable works that contrast with the mediocre propaganda literature which peripheral writers at home were expected to create. Indeed, the symbols and the myths he builds are only perceptible to the oppressed. Thus, he manages to subvert the dominant discourse without being sacrificed by the communist censorship.

5.3 Drutse's Characters—a Reflection of the Identity Crisis.

Last but not the least, following the postcolonial approach, this dissertation reaches the point of careful consideration of the world of characters that people Drutse's novels. Consequently, a point to take into consideration, before proceeding to the task, is that the Socialist realist writers often portrayed the inhabitants of the region between the Prut and the Dniester as "a stand-alone Soviet Moldovan national identity" (Negura, 2009). Also, a general trend was, on the one hand, to eulogise the Soviet construct and the life style it brought to the region, on the other hand, to reject anything that could prove any connection with Romania. And, the Moldovans were often portrayed fighting the "yoke of the bourgeoisie and the landed gentry" (Negura, 2009).

However, Drutse's novels present a different reality. Actually, Drutse's first reader(s), for example, the oppressed intellectual or the dispossessed peasant, often identified himself with one or another character of the writer's creation. After all, according to Boehmer (1995), a character is often endowed, by its creator, with the quality of representing a whole section of the history of

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the dominated nation (p. 191). So, to understand the proportions of the Soviet domination, as well as the conflict between the moral values inherited from the ancestors²⁵² and the pseudo values promoted by the colonial regime both major and minor characters are to be considered.

Also, it has to be said that both the analysed themes and symbols reveal that Drutse focuses mainly on the changing reality of the conquered space, thus, on the colonised. And, regardless of the fact that his novels are set in the context of the two World Wars, the setting of place is generally limited to the enclosed space of the Moldovan village. In fact, Ciutura, Razeshilor Vale, or Capriana are the only locations that Drutse describes from a historical, geographical and sociological²⁵³ point of view. Thus, the author's little attention to the colonizer(s) and the metropolis proves Drutse's abrogation of the imperial values, ideology and norms.

Nevertheless, the writer does not present the natives in isolation from the rest of the world. On the contrary, Drutse often contrasts the natives with the "other", the "stranger". Actually, he often identifies the natives with the Moldovan peasant. Apparently, in agreement with Hitchins (2008), the latter is the key element in the history creation process; the one who carries the burden of the society and preserves its unity by keeping alive its ancestral values and faith, and, by passing them down to the future generations (p. 104). Thus, the peasant often appears in opposition with the heterogeneous elements—the Sovietised and alienated natives or the "other" form outside the national space.

For example, the boys and girls from the Razeshilor Vale are presented in opposition to those "from the neighbourhood, from the rayon, mariners on leave, war invalids, partisans" who have turned up at the village club. The "otherness" of these elements is suggested by the fact that "the village youth mostly liked old Danutza's songs" but "the guests expected, and even requested other songs to be played too" (*Leaves of Yearning*, p. 348). And, the episode in which Ikimash collapses when he fails to sing the famous Russian song *Katiusha* is a confirmation. Also, the narrator presents the club instructor, Comrade Nikolaeva, as the "other" because she teaches the local youth Russian songs. Likewise, the servile president of the village soviet — Efim (*Leaves of Yearning*, p. 322)—or the Komsomol members, who are forbidden to observe the Christian tradition, are somehow alien to the traditional Moldovan village too. Consider the

²⁵² The Romanians and the Moldovans share the same group of ancestors.

²⁵³ The village community is generally presented as a homogenous group of natives (mainly Moldovans).

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example bellow which reflects how strange it is for a native to leave the table without having thanked God for the meal.

— Gheorghe ..., asked aunt Frasina astonished, leading her hand to the left cheek as if she had a toothache, you haven't joined the *Komsomol*²⁵⁴, have you?

— No. Why are you asking?

— Why didn't you cross yourself after taking the meal?

— I forgot.

— You'll anger God, Gheorghe! Cross yourself at least now.

— I'll do it tonight.²⁵⁵ (*Leaves of Yearning*, pp. 344-345)

Similarly, the Russian soldier and the high officials are viewed as intruders. On the one hand, when returning home from the Russian Army, Onake is being shot when trying to cross the border illegally. Consequently, while wearing a Russian military coat, and within Russian territory he is seen as the "other". Also, the Russian soldier, Nikolai, is a stranger that has entered the Moldovan's house but didn't want to enter his home. He is a stranger that hardly eats anything from what the host has to give him, always sleeps in his car, and leaves without saying goodbye. On the other hand, Onake, avoids the new authorities symbolised by the two Volga-s in front of his son-in-law's house (*The Burden of Our Goodness*, p. 338), a symbol that also appears in *The Spire*²⁵⁶. There are also guests that sing Russian and Ukrainian songs in the house, which he avoids as well because he is not comfortable in the presence of the foreigners. Moreover, Mircea, his daughter's husband is viewed as an alien himself ever since his service in the Russian Army. So, often some natives become the "other" by transforming into homo sovieticus.

²⁵⁴ Komsomol — an organization for communist youth in the Soviet Union.

²⁵⁵ - Gheorge ... Matusa Frasina era atit de mirata, incit si-a prins obrazul drept cu palma, de parca o dureau dintii. Nu cumva te-ai inscris la comsomol?

- Nu. Da ce ma intrebi?

- De ce nu ti-ai facut cruce dupa masa?

- Am uitat.

- Ai sa-l superi, Gheorghe, pe Dumnezeu! Ia si-ti fa macar amu cruce.

- Ei, imi fac desara. (*Frunze de Dor*, pp. 344-345)

²⁵⁶ At the beginning of the novel, the protagonist miraculously escapes from under the wheels of two Volga-s while crossing a street in Chisinau.

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Moreover, in *The Spire*, for example, the limit between the native “other” and the “other” from outside Moldova is quite blurred. Of course, there are the representatives of the executive from Moscow that come to Capriana:

Unexpectedly, two colonels from the Ministry of Internal Affairs from Moscow arrived. They started the investigation immediately. Balta called Chishinau from the post office in the neighbouring village. He reported the situation and as a result of the communication a long and alarming silence followed. Chishinau didn't know anything about the arrival of the high inspection. Moscow decided to intervene in the Capriana case directly, in order to avoid any local influence.²⁵⁷ (*The Spire*, p. 509)

Yet, the colonels seem to represent the justice while the true enemies of the (local) people are the homo sovieticus living in Moldova. Consider, Balta, Baltatu, Turcul or the drunk workers that pull down the cross from the grave of an eminent Bessarabian governor.

Also, the opposition between the native and the “other” is often presented as a contrast between the village (as a place close to nature) and the town (the embodiment of civilization). Apparently, Drutse's heroes cannot live in the city, at least not for a long time; they always end up in the village, the city seems to scare and torture them. After all, they seem to be more at home in the village. Consider, Horia, from Drutse's *The Spire*, who is forced to go back to the village as a consequence of his confrontation with the homo sovieticus. Then, when he returns to the capital he observes that it is being transformed:

If it was the same gentle and beautiful spring what came to Chisinau, then Livezilor Street was completely different. [...]—there was nothing left of the

²⁵⁷ Pe neasteptate au sosit doi colonei de la Ministerul de Interne din Moscova, si cum au intrat in Capriana, imediat au si inceput cercetarile. De la posta din satul vecin Balta a telefonat la Chisinau, comunicind faptul, in urma carei comunicari in receptor s-a lasat o mutenie lunga, ingrijoratoare, dat fiind ca Chisinaul nu stia nici cu spatele de sosirea inaltei inspectii. Moscova hotarise sa intervina in cazul Capriana direct, pentru a evita orice influenta locala. (*Clopomita*, p. 509)

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former quiet and peace. There was din and rasp of metal, trolleybuses, and all kinds of cars [...] ²⁵⁸ (*The Spire*, p. 366)

Consequently, the struggle for national identity preservation has been triggered by the public awareness of the presence of the “other”. Moreover, the values promoted by the latter lead to a national identity crisis. Therefore, in what comes further, the analysis is designed to consider the characteristics of the collective and individual identities existing within the communities presented in the three novels. Both collective and individual characters need to be analysed because the first reveals the outer conflicts while the second provides an insight into the inner identity crisis of the subaltern. Also, the collective exerts some sort of pressure on the individual and makes him give in or struggle, and the individual mobilizes the society to stand up and fight for the national ideals. So, the analysis, of both active and passive characters, shall reveal some details about the nature of the identity crisis that (some of) Drutse’s characters pass through as a result of the geopolitical and social-ethical changes that marked the country in the 20th century. And, it shall also provide some examples of the way the subaltern identity is altered or transformed into a homo sovieticus.

5.3.1 Collective Characters.

Indeed, the impact of Soviet domination has been experienced by the whole Moldovan society—peasant and intellectual, rich and poor, man and woman. Actually, the identity crisis at a community level has often been connected with a deep shift in values, beliefs and behaviours. And, the village, an (collective) important character in Drutse’s novels, is a perfect embodiment of this shift. Thus, Ciutura or Capriana with its (sub)communities, is the collective character that best reflects the confrontation between old and new, resistance and subservience. Therefore, the small community is to be analysed from a diachronic point of view, in relation to its past, present, and future. Also, the elements making up the community at a certain point of narration (exposition, conflict, climax, development/limitation of the action, and/or denouement) are to be

²⁵⁸ Daca primavara sosita la Chisinau era aceeaasi vesnic blinda si frumoasa primavara, strada Livezilor era de acum cu totul alta. [...] — nimic din tihna si pacea de odinioara. Vuiet si scrisnet de metal, troleibuze, masini de tot felul [...] (*Clopotnita*, p. 366)

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considered. So, the shift in the attitude of the community towards the protagonist and/or the intruder is to be highlighted.

Indeed, Ciutura, Capriana, or Razeshilor Vale are often guided by their own philosophy, which often contradicts both that of the protagonist and/or the antagonist. And, it often switches sides, leaving the heroes fight their own war alone. Therefore, one must approve Cristea's (2008) list highlighting Ciutura's slyness, moodiness, idle talk (p. 109) and also accentuate the latter's selective memory. Indeed, the village seems to forget how it has once loved Onake, the one who made it revive from ashes after the war, in the same way it forgot his wife—Tincuta (and many other villagers), who died as a consequence of the artificial famine engineered by the Soviet regime.

Nevertheless, one must agree with Melnic's (2008) statement—that the village is a keeper of the millennial traditions (p. 241)—because it always remembers its ultimate way to the safe haven. Thus, Ciutura remembers that in times of trouble the only way to salvation is the short path to the town of Paminteni. The latter used to be a fortress monastery and to keep this path the villagers struggled with anyone who tried to take it away—be it Romanian/Russian boyar or communist authority. Also, when the famine was a thing of the past and the Ciutureans had plenty of food they often borrowed maize from Onake. Similarly, Capriana remembered the legend of the founder of the village—Stephen the Great²⁵⁹—who protected the land from invaders. So, until the present day, it protected the chronicles of the king's warriors from any intruder wanting to take them away. So, Drutse's collective character is a community that exists apart from the individual and fights its own battle.

Moreover, Valeriu Cristea (2008) states that the true protagonist of the novel *The Burden of Our Goodness*, for example, is Ciutura. Actually, Cristea considers it a site of resistance of the nation (p. 108). Indeed, in the text it often acquires the features of a complex, true to life character, a character with flaws and virtues. After all, Ciutura is a community that has existed long before the novel's protagonist, it has been there when Onake left to fight the czar's war, and it shall be there even after Onake's death.

²⁵⁹ <http://global.britannica.com/biography/Stephen-prince-of-Moldavia>

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Consider, as already mentioned in 5.2, the name of the village Ciutura, which derived from the stump of an old oak near a well. No doubt, the village goes back to the time when Onake was not even born yet:

From immemorial times, there was a well with a shadoof in the narrow valley where the high hill and the small hill converged. And, this well had a bucket made of a stump of an oak. Yet, while the well was nothing special, the bucket was something special. People returned from all over the place to quench their thirst and to wonder at it. What a miracle it was, this oak, which after years and years of staying in the dampness turned black like coal and strong like iron. But, there was something more about it because no matter how tired and no matter the distance that you were coming from, the water from that iron bucket made you get better, made you a little statelier and sharper. Gradually, the narrow valley from the junction of the two hills got the name of the Vale of Ciutura²⁶⁰. And, when people settled in the valley, and built their houses, the village was named Ciutura too. Now, it has become quite a large village, but between you and me, it is like the curate's egg.²⁶¹ (*The Burden of Our Goodness*, p. 20)

Thus, Ciutura is going to exist even after Onake's passing away. Moreover, many of the events Onake has lived through happened because of Ciutura. After all, Ciutura is what has made him cross the border at the risk of losing his life. Also, Ciutura is the place which has brought Onake up. And, this is how Onake evokes it:

My boy, there was once a beautiful and worthy village in this neighbourhood. Now, there is nothing left of it, but I shall take and leave you on

²⁶⁰ Meaning Bucket in Romanian.

²⁶¹ In vilcica de la incheietura dealului cel mare cu dealul cel mic era, de cind lumea, o fintina cu cumpana si avea fintina ceea o ciutura facuta dintr-o buturuga de stejar. Si apoi fintina ca fintina, dar ciutura era ce era, caci se intorceau oamenii cine stie de pe unde sa-si potoleasca setea si sa se mai mire o data. Ia mai minune, ca stejarul ista, dupa ce-a tot stat la umezeala un nesfirsit amar de vreme, se face negru cum ii carbunele si tare ca fierul. S-o mai fi fost acolo ceva la mijloc, caci pina si apa din ciutura ceea de fier te pune, iaca, pe picioare, te face oleaca mai mindru, oleaca mai istet, oricit de ostenit, oricit de departe ai fi venit. Incetul cu incetul, vilcica de la incheietura celor doua dealuri a inceput a se numi Valea Ciuturii, iar cum au prins a se aseza oameni in valea ceea de-si faceau case, i s-a zis si satului Ciutura, ajungind acum un sat destul de maricel, dar, intre noi fie vorba, nu era el nici prea-prea, nici foarte-foarte. (*Povara Bunatatii Noastre*, p. 20)

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the spot it used to be, because I think that if there is to appear anything worthy, it shall spring on that very plot of land.²⁶² (*The Burden of Our Goodness*, p. 364)

So, the legend behind the origin of Ciutura alludes to the continuity of the Bessarabian Romanians in the region because both the *water* and *ciutura* from the previous excerpt allude to life. Likewise, the new-born grandson, who according to Nutza is a fair copy of the old man, is a new offshoot of the old oak from the Vale of Ciutura that represents a brighter future.

Therefore, Ciutura's peasants—inspired in real life characters among which the writer has been living during his childhood and youth—seem to have surprised the Romanian critic Cristea (2008). They have proved that from all the peoples that were being assimilated in the Soviet Union, the Georgians were not the only ones who have known how to resist and preserve their national identity (Cristea, 2008, p. 108). And, as it is often the case in both civil or liberation wars, to resist means to succeed. Thus, the natives of the region from between the Prut and the Dniester have proved to be as strong as iron on various occasions. And, they kept existing just like the oak, that although deprived of its natural beauty did not rot for the dampness but grew stronger and brought life to the valley.

All this makes of Ciutura quite a complex and unique character. And, to better describe it, the artist presents Ciutura in ordinary life situations: ploughing, sowing, and harvest time, as well as, the Sunday hora²⁶³, evening sitting of village women and fairs. To better observe this fact, an analysis of Ciutura's evolution through time follows below.

First, the reader meets the 1913 Ciutura that is a subaltern of the Russian czar. It appears as a religious community of peaceful peasants who believe in the miracle of Christmas and cross themselves when in danger. Apart from working the land, they rear some livestock. But, their everyday bread is the *mamalguta*²⁶⁴. Also, Ciutura is in a continuous confrontation with the boy it once dearly loved—Onake. His quarrelsomeness and free spirit have angered the village and have made Ciutura shift its sympathies to his best friend—Haralambie. Yet, when the mysterious dog, which saves the people of the plains from their tragic destiny, chooses Onake's house things

²⁶² Stiușem eu, mai baiete, un sat frumos și vrednic pe aici prin partile iestea. Amu nici pomeneala de dînsul, dar am să te duc s-am să te las pe locul acela, pentru că, cred eu, dacă va mai rasari cîndva ceva acatarii, tot pe locul acela o să rasara. (*Povara Bunatatiei Noastre*, p. 364)

²⁶³ A small festival organized each Sunday for the peasants to dance and celebrate the seventh day of the week.

²⁶⁴ Boiled maize, somehow similar to the Italian polenta.

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change dramatically. The whole village, and Haralambie among them, goes to pay tribute to the one who has had the courage to host such a fierce beast at his house. After all, he made that the village's old and new merits become the centre of the plain's attention.

Ciutura was considered an old village of *razeshi*²⁶⁵ with special merits in the history of the whole valley. However, besides the Ciutureans nobody wanted to know anything about these merits. This hurt a lot poor Ciutura. Thus, in the moments of unrest or contemplation, the village from the junction of the two hills dreamed of its merits being recognised all over. But, years, centuries have passed, and Ciutura instead of coming to the surface, was getting lost among the many and unknown villages.

However, the hour has come. The old merits, the old virtues have been recognised all of a sudden, put into flesh and bone. After all, regardless of his way of being, Onake is a Ciutorean of an ancient race. He is a Ciutorean both in the way of talking and in the way of walking. Moreover, the Caraboosh family, if that interests you, descends from far away and long ago.... Then, words followed—sweet, beautiful and stupefying like a glass of good wine. And, the Ciutureans, stout-hearted and with the head up, started to go to christening feasts, parish festivals, and fairs. They went to celebrate, to help their relatives, to buy or to sell, but more than anything they went to boast a bit, because, otherwise, even the grass stops from growing if one doesn't praise it from time to time.²⁶⁶ (*The Burden of Our Goodness*, p. 37-38)

²⁶⁵ From the Romanian *razesi*, in the feudal system were free peasants/people and small landowners, that paid no taxes and only owed military support to the king. In Moldova, mainly in the frontier regions, they formed a considerable part of the rural population.

²⁶⁶ Ciutura se considera un sat vechi, de razezi, cu merite deosebite in istoria intregii cimpiei, dar, vai, meritele celea, in afara de ciutureni, nimeni nu mai vroia sa stie de dinsele. Asta o durea cumplit pe biata Ciutura. In clipele de framintare, de reculegere, satul de la incheietura celor doua dealuri se visa sa ajunga odata si odata cu meritele recunoscute peste tot, dar treceau anii, treceau veacurile, iar Ciutura, in loc de-a iesi la suprafata, se ducea tot mai la fund printre cele sate multe si necunoscute.

Dar iata ca i-a sosit si ei ceasul. Stravechile merite, stravechile virtuti au fost deodata confirmate, intruchipate in carne si oase, pentru ca Onache acela, oricum ar fi el, dar e ciutorean de vita veche, ciutorean si la vorba, si la umblet, si apoi neamul Carabusilor, de amu daca vreti sa stiti, se trage — hei-hei — tocmai de unde, hei-hei — tocmai de cind... Si apoi sa vezi vorba dulce, frumoasa si ametitoare ca un pahar de vin bun. Cu pieptul descheiat, cu fruntea sus, au pornit Ciuturenii pe la cumatrii, pe la hramuri, pe la iarmaroace. Se duceau sa mai petreaca, sa-si sporeasca neamurile, sa cumpere ori sa vinda, dar principalul era ca se duceau sa se mai laude si ei un

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So, the narrator suggests that Ciutura is both old and proud. It punishes its sons, when they think they are smarter, by ignoring them, but, it is also fair and admits their merits. And, when the moment comes it knows how to make people recognise its superiority. Moreover, the fact that Molda— he mysterious saviour of the plains—chose an inhabitant of this village as a master, speaks about the continuity of the race of the Romanian free peasants. Thus, Ciutura sends envoys to all the neighbouring villages to spread the news.

Yet, the joy of Ciutura is short-lived because the First World War breaks out. Consequently, the village suffers a tremendous transformation:

During the four years of revolutionary actions interrupted only by war operations, the Plains of Soroca, with its villages, lands, cattle, and wealth passed to one side and then to the other, innumerable times. They burned estates, cut down forests and carried the wood home. Then, frightened by their own deeds, they left their homes, and started wandering about the world looking for a better destiny. But, when they didn't find it, they returned to their roots, to their homeland. They were Christians in holidays, pagans in times of robbery and sharing, and martyrs when time came to pass through great sufferings. They suffered from famine and cold, need and poverty, epidemics of typhus and cholera, so that they hardly managed to carry their dead to the grave. [...] ²⁶⁷ (*The Burden of Our Goodness*, p.42)

Moreover, before Onake manages to return from war, Ciutura is turned to ashes and gets to look like a “poor orphan”. Yet, the village finds the force to tell his wife that he is coming. In fact, during the war, despite all the past troubles, this village has been Onake's heart. And, with

pic, pentru ca, alminteri, nici iarba, daca n-o lauzi din cind in cind, nu mai creste. (*Povara Bunatatii Noastre*, pp. 37-38)

²⁶⁷ In cei patru ani de fierberi revolutionare, intrerupte de operatii de razboi, Cimpia Sorociei a trecut de nenumarate ori cu satele, paminturile, vitele, averile sale cind de partea unora, cind de partea altora. Se dadea foc la mosii, se taiau paduri si se carau pe la case, apoi, frica facindu-se-le de cele savirsite, lasau si casa si masa, pornind prin lume, in cautarea unui destin mai norocos, dar negasindu-l, se intorceau inapoi la radacina si obirsie. Erau crestini in zile de praznic, pagini- pe vremea jafurilor si impartelilor, aduceau a martiri cind le venea rindul sa treaca prin cumplite suferinte. Au indurate foamete si frig, nevoie si saracie, au trecut prin epidemii de tifos si holera, ca abia dovedeau sa-si duca mortii la groapa. (*Povara Bunatatii Noastre*, p. 42)

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Onake's return, hope and life returned to the village. Thus, the village has returned to its routine: to quarrels and reconciliations, to feasts and hay making, to taking out the sacred image and praying for rain, to baptizing the new-born babies, to weddings, and to burials.

However, what is more important, the village returned to its old trade—working the land. Actually, through hardworking heroes like Haralambie, the reader learns that hard work is an imperative virtue for survival. Also, it is a way of gaining a better social (and economic) position within the community. This is the reason why he works from dawn to dusk wishing to build a strong and rich household. Likewise, the blacksmith, the Hungarian and the rest of the village are very busy. Especially, after Onake's return the blacksmith is busy even in winter because he has to make nails to hang the new-borns' crib. Women/wives that were taken to the wood also became hardworking and good because their lives had a new meaning now. So, they sang old songs while rocking the babies and the men cleaned industriously the hearth of the house from ash, built others, hurried through the neighbouring villages, got some seeds, worked in the field, and overcame the hardships that came over them when their houses burned down.

Besides, Haralambie plants the seed of a brighter future. The arrival of a teacher from Bucureshti made Ciutura realise that it is not so silly, and that with a little education it could behold a better life. Nevertheless, ten of the eleven pupils have chosen to tie their future to the trades of their parents because, as the narrator of *The Burden of Our Goodness* states:

The land is the object of the Ciuturean's²⁶⁸ existence, and without the land it's as if he doesn't even exist on earth. If he has land, he can do everything. He can make friends for a lifetime or simply share a glass of wine with them. The rich and heavy soil is constantly dozing on the Ciuturean's shoulders, and wakes up instantly when time comes for the man to protect ones' belongings and honour. Land is the source of his humorous expressions, of his break up and making up with the world; it's what alleviates his sorrows and makes him dream of possible fortunes of tomorrow.

The land is the holiest of the laws of a Ciuturean, and when it comes to land, he doesn't want to hear about any other laws. Land can be lost, can be stolen in the light of the day; for it one can (for)swear with the hand on the bible. From

²⁶⁸ An inhabitant of the village Ciutura

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autumn to spring the villagers from Ciutura are in search of land. They look for it in pubs, courts, churches, fairs.²⁶⁹ (*The Burden of Our Goodness*, p. 85)

So, land is the most precious possession of Ciutura and its every day bread. Children imagine no other life than the life their parents and their fathers' parents have led. Consequently, they listen to the call of the land rather than that of education. Also, following the law of the land, Ciutura is getting ready for the spring. Men, lie idle, saving the energy for the field work. Women hurry about the village gathering seeds for their little gardens. Yet, once again, the war breaks the peace and the millennial order that Ciutura follows. Once again the imperialist ambitions of Russia lead to the invasion of the plains by the Red Army. But, this time it brought more than (military) domination, it brought communism to Ciutura. This is powerfully expressed in *The Burden of Our Goodness*:

Widows who had been their whole life avoiding any nag that they came across, now climbed into the cart, kinked the reins awkwardly and rode purposelessly. They were out for a drive. The daughters of the well-to-do peasants composed themselves because their dowry was gone. Now they only had their personal charms to attract a boy. Thus, boys who would be asked out of their house a couple of days ago were now followed by them. Children were wandering about licking their lips—they have learned, to their great surprise, that there are countries where the sweets are sold by weight and not by units. If you wanted one hundred grams—here you are, if you wanted two hundred grams—good appetite! The women of Ciutura hurried to Nuielushi, where a shop was opened recently.²⁷⁰ (*The Burden of Our Goodness*, p. 143)

²⁶⁹ Pamintul e felul de-a fi al ciutoreanului, si fara pamint el ca si cum nu ar fi pe lume. Din pamint ciutoreanul isi poate drege orice. Poate face prieteni pentru un pahar de vin si prieteni pentru o viata intreaga. Brazdele grele si miezoase picura vesnic pe umerii ciutoreanului, trezindu-se indata cind omul trebuie sa-si apere averea si cinstea. Din pamint ciutoreanul poate face vorbe cu haz, pamintul il supara si il impaca cu lumea intreaga, pamintul ii leagana necazurile si il face a visa la norocul zilei de mine.

Pamintul e cea mai sfinta lege a ciutoreanului, si, cind vine vorba de pamint, el nu mai vrea sa stie alta lege. Pamintul poate fi pierdut, poate fi furat ziua-n amiaza mare; pentru pamint poti minti cu mina pe cruce. Din toamna si pina in primavara ciuturenii umbla si cauta pamint. Il cauta pe la crisma, pe la judecati, pe la biserici, pe la iarmaroace. (*Povara Bunatatii Noastre*, p. 85)

²⁷⁰ Vadanele, ce-au tot ocolit o viata intreaga orice gloaba nimerita in cale, se urcau dimineata in caruta, suceau stingaci haturile si porneau asa fara nici o treaba. Se plimbau. S-au cam pototlit fetele taranilor mai avuti —

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The Soviets, who brought death to hundreds of men of the plains, empower the women of Bessarabia now. Likewise, to make all girls equal the property of the richer peasants is nationalised. After all, somebody has to compensate for the losses Russia has endured during the two decades that Bessarabia was out of the Russian empire. But, children and women—most of the men being away at the war—enjoyed the new life. So, Ciutura seems to be lured by the *improvements* the Soviets have brought about.

Consequently, Onake's stoic opposition to the new does nothing but wake up the old conflict between Caraboosh and Ciutura. This time the village has begun to envy his daughter who because of the excellent service of her husband receives help from the new authorities. Therefore, Ciutura devises a conspiracy to prevent her husband from ever coming back. Thus, according to Onake, "the poison, the sleaziness of two hundred houses" (p. 166) arouse against him again. But, once again, Ciutura lost the battle. The wise Onake, as a good Christian, does not search vengeance instead he offers the children of Ciutura what they most yearned — the fruit of his orchard. So, Ciutura's consciousness was appealed to once again. And, ashamed of the unpaid debt it put an end to its intrigues and made Onake's son-in-law return home.

However, Onake is Ciutura's least problem. The promises of a better life together with the jubilation about the *innovations* brought about by the Soviets and the ultimate return of its sons is ephemeral. Because hardly a year passed after the war before the village experienced another tragedy:

The villages of the plain, those valleys not so long ago full of white houses, old roads, wells, and gardens, now doze exhausted under the sun. Devastation like a storm ravaged them and made it painful to look at the houses. There were no fences, no gates, and no peasants. A deep and heavy silence had been slumbering over the villages for weeks. There were few people left, and the remaining ones roamed about crestfallen, withered, and dispirited. Many of them

s-a dus zestrea, acum poti pune mina pe un baiat numai cu cele ce ai, si ele incepeau a urmari flacaii pe care cu doua zile in urma i-ar fi dat din casa afara. Copiii umblau lingindu-si buzele — au aflat, spre marea lor mirare, ca sint pe lume tari unde bomboanele nu se vind la numar, ci la cintar. Vrei o suta de grame — ma rog, care vrea doua sute — sa fie sanatos! Ciuturile se repezeau in Nuielusi, unde s-a deschis magazin ceva mai devreme ... (*Povara Bunatatii Noastre*, p. 143)

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seemed to have returned from the next world, but they didn't look happy about it, neither had they any intention to change what they managed to see there on what they see here. And they wandered absentminded. The pigweed grew on the porches; the walls of the houses were peeling off. People didn't care.²⁷¹ (*The Burden of Our Goodness*, p. 220)

Apparently, the Soviets have brought the whip-sweet tactics to a new level. Thus, the many sweets in the shops are replaced by empty shop shelves and pantries. Then, in the 50's the kolkhozes are created and Ciutura is made to forget its canons. Yet, despite all his conflicts with the village, Onake is proud of the land his ancestors have left him. And, when he is approaching the threshold, he says:

My boy, there was once a beautiful and worthy village in this neighbourhood. Now, there is nothing left of it, but I shall take and leave you on the spot where it used to be, because I think that if there is to appear anything worthy, it shall spring on that very plot of land.²⁷² (*The Burden of Our Goodness*, p. 364)

So, Soviet domination has transformed Ciutura. And, there was (almost) nothing (but Onake) left of the old values, beliefs, and behaviours. Nonetheless, hope never dies and the confrontation between old and new, resistance and subservience shall continue. Therefore, Onake believes that the small community's future is going to be different from its present. He believes that the old merits and values of the community shall never die. Otherwise, the village people would not come to him to ask for corn, and he would not pass to his daughter the teaching

²⁷¹ Satele cimpiei, acele vai pline mai nu demult cu case albe, cu drumuri vechi, cu fintini si gradini, acum, sleite de puteri, picurau la soare. Furtuna pustiirii a trecut peste ele si casele au ajuns de plinsul lumii – nici tu garduri, nici tu portite, nici tu gospodari, nici tu gospodine. O liniste adinca si grea dospeste cu saptaminile peste sate. Si oameni au ramas putini, iar cei ce au ramas umbla abatuti, vesteziti, saraci la suflet. Multi dsintre ei pareau intorsi de pe lumea cealalta, dar nu se bucurau deloc si nici ca ar fi vrut sa schimbe ceea ce apucasera sa vada pe cealalta lume cu ceea ce vedeau aici. Si ei umblau cu gindurile cine stie pe unde. Crestea loboda pe prispe, se cojeau peretii caselor. Oamenilor nu le pasa. (*Povara Bunatatii Noastre*, p. 220)

²⁷² Stiusem eu, mai baiete, un sat frumos si vrednic pe aici prin partile iestea. Amu nici pomeneala de dinsul, dar am sa te duc s-am sa te las pe locul cela, pentru ca, cred eu, daca va mai rasari cindva ceva acatarii, tot pe locul acela o sa rasara. (*Povara Bunatatii Noastre*, p. 364)

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his nun-relative once taught him. Thus, as long as the seed of memory exists the (autochthonous) community shall exist. And, despite its peaceful existence it shall not fade into oblivion.

Likewise, Capriana sticks to its heroic past. And, everybody in and beyond the village knows that:

Capriana, now that we are talking about it, is one of the oldest villages appearing even in very old chronicles. [...] During hundreds of years, the king's soldiers were on the watch on the top of this hill. There is no doubt that Capriana was founded by the sextons that settled in the neighbourhood and built houses on this hill edge when their service was over. [...] The people that have little education and know little about the history of the nation nourish almost sacred feelings for this Spire. First thing, every villager looks up to the top of the hill to see how the spire is.²⁷³ (*The Spire*, p. 483, 485-486)

Hence, unlike Ciutura, Capriana is a real settlement in Moldova. Actually, there is a village Ciutura, but it is located in Romania, and it has nothing to do with the one Drutse placed in the Plains of Soroca. But, just like the fictional Ciutura, Capriana has got its legend. According to the legend, both the village and the spire were founded by the great Moldovan prince, Stefan cel Mare²⁷⁴. Consequently, the villagers were proud of their Spire, or the writer wouldn't have employed capitalization in writing about it. Also, the instinctive respect for the soldiers that had been watching over the peace and safety of the place made the villagers be especially protective both toward the Spire and the chronicle that used to be inside. Thus,

Some are hiding the chronicle while others are working with the spade.

Everything is done peaceably, silently, thriftily as if they would all be children of

²⁷³ ... Capriana, fiindca a venit vorba, e unul dintre cele mai vechi sate, pomenite inca de cronicari... [...] Sute de ani la rind ostentii lui voda au tot facut de straja aici in virful dealului. Nu incape indoiala ca si Capriana a fost intemeiata de clopotarii care, dupa ce-si sfirseau slujba, se capatuiiau pe-aici, facindu-si case pe coasta asta de deal. [...] Oamenii care nu prea stiu carte si putine cunosc din istoria neamului nutresc sentimente aproape sfinte fata de aceasta Clopotnita. Fiecare satean, cum se scoala dimineata, cauta sus in virful dealului sa vada ce mai face clopotnita. (*Clopotnita*, pp. 483, 485-486)

²⁷⁴ Stephen the Great or Stephen III of Moldavia.

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the same mother, doing the same thing ever since the world began.²⁷⁵ (*The Spire*, p. 499)

It should be said that these lines describe the moment when the school director was putting planks on the flesh of the spire. And, the one with the spade was the protagonist's father-in-law, who came to save his daughter's husband and teach him a lesson—everything has its time and place. Also, even in the worst moments of Soviet domination, Horia's lesson about Capriana's past made "the roots of the whole village, somewhere in the depth, turn to life" (*The Spire*, p. 486). So, just like the oak bucket indirectly suggests the continuity of the nation, the legend about the spire and the village alludes to the unity and continuity of the Moldovan people from both sides of the river Prut. However, it also alludes to the courage, honour and hard work of its (first) settlers. After all, when the Bucovinean came to the village he realised how singular this village was:

Contrary to Chisinau, this seemed to be a completely different world. There was no one complaining of not having a corner of his own; no one hurrying; no one patrolling during the night with the purpose of checking if the passport regime was being respected. [...] Well, the village had its weakness for keeping track of, for understanding, and for commenting upon everything. So, you had to yield to it, if you wanted to be on good terms with the people.²⁷⁶ (*The Spire*, p. 458)

So, the village stood up to the (Soviet) offenders, just like its first inhabitant once stood up to the Tartars, and sheltered the defeated king. Moreover, as the first lines suggest, the village stood up to the Soviet lifestyle in general. The people seem to follow century's long course of life as if they were isolated from the rest of the world/country. Nonetheless, the village

²⁷⁵ Unii tin ascuns hronicul, altii muncesc cu hirletul; toate se fac pasnic, pe tacute, gospodareste, de parca ar fi toti copiii unei mame, facind acelasi lucru de cind e lumea. (*Clopotnita*, p. 499)

²⁷⁶ Spre deosebire de Chisinau, aici pare ca totul alta lume. Nimeni nu se plingea ca nu are un coltisor al lui, nimeni nu se grabeste, nimeni nu umbla noaptea pentru a controla respectarea regimului de pasapoarte. [...] Satul, ma rog, cu slabiciunile lui de-a le urmari, de-a le intelege, de-a le comenta pe toate, si trebuie sa mai lasi si de la tine, daca vrei sa te intelegi bine cu lumea. (*Clopotnita*, p. 458)

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had its flaw—it was highly observant of the life of its fellows. So, it wants to know how and why the young couple was exiled from Chisinau.

However, when instead of following a friendly piece of advice, Horia goes to the village school and meets the headmaster, a new torment is provoked in the village:

— You stupid! What have you done? You have brought a hornet's nest about your years! You either take one side or you rub shoulders with the others in Capriana. It is impossible to run with the hare and hold with the hound, because in this case, both camps make peace to swallow you. Then, the war starts anew!²⁷⁷ (*The Spire*, p. 467)

Apparently, the school is a “Capriana” in a miniature. It is the place where the village youth are formed to enter the adult life. Also, it is the place of an open confrontation between the representative of the Soviet authorities — the school director, and the village intellectuals. The contrast between the two is also suggested by the description of the way each of them meets Horia. On the one hand, there is Haret Vasilevici who invites Horia and his wife to dinner and serves them with wine, *sarmale*²⁷⁸, which he prepared according to his grandmother's recipe, and some delicious pears. On the other hand, there is Nicolai Trofimovici Balta, who was secretly drinking in his school office and when Horia unexpectedly came in he offered “Ocotirea monumentelor”²⁷⁹ (*The Spire*, p. 465) some cognac and a pickled apple—the forbidden fruit. So, if one wants to be welcomed by the village (intellectuals) one could not make friends with the headmaster—the homo sovieticus.

Consequently, talking to and drinking with the school director before meeting the teachers is interpreted as becoming the latter's ally. Nonetheless, Horia's love for history and respect for the heroic past of the village makes him the teachers' friend and the director's fiercest enemy. Ultimately, the war that the young historian got into led to the sacrifice of the village spire. But, Capriana stayed loyal to itself and without making a big fuss united to punish Balta.

²⁷⁷ — Ce-ati facut, mai prostilor, v-ati aprins paie in cap! In Capriana ori tii cu unii, ori faci cirdasie cu ceilalti, dar sa incerci a te pune bine si cu unii, si cu altii este cu neputinta, pentru ca atunci ambele tabere fac pace, ca sa te pape, dupa care razboiul porneste din nou! (*Clopotnita*, p. 467)

²⁷⁸ Traditional moldovan dish, also known as forcemeat roll in cabbage leaves.

²⁷⁹ “The Defence of the Monuments.”

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Thus, the village's silent rebellion drove Balta crazy and, finally, he demanded the whole Capriana to be accused of "political actions". He claimed that this is a case of class struggle. And, when the headmaster beats the orphan Simionel to death²⁸⁰, as a consequence of a series of wise decisions of the elders of the village, they got Moscow involved in the issue. So, they almost managed to have Balta exiled to Siberia, if it were not for their goodness and mercy.

In conclusion, the village, except for Razeshilor Vale which had no well-defined collective identity, appears as a single body. Moreover, it also attests to the famous saying by Lucian Blaga who claimed that eternity was born in the village (again the universe of Razeshilor Vale seems to be falling apart). Also, it represents the continuity and survival of the natives in times of (Soviet) oppression. And, it never leaves unpunished the indecent behaviour of its inhabitants, both natives and intruders. Likewise, it often stands up in the defence of its sons, except for Razeshilor Vale which did not find a way to fight back yet. So, its son(s) are defenceless and doomed to suffer from alienation, as the section below shall reveal.

5.3.2 Individual Characters. Individual and Collective (Cultural) Identities.

You assist an evil system most effectively by obeying its orders and decrees. An evil system never deserves such allegiance. Allegiance to it means partaking of the evil. A good person will resist an evil system with his or her whole soul. (Mahatma Gandhi)

In what follows the analysis shall focus both on the "good", and not so "good" characters that people Drutse's universe. The fact is that each of these characters embody a life story, the life story of an individual under Soviet domination. Thus, just like the collective characters described above the individual characters express the attitude of the people towards the new regime. For example, in *Leaves of Yearning*, where Soviet domination is being established, there is no well-defined collective character. Nonetheless, the novel relates the story of how the Soviet power has been sneaking into the peaceful Moldovan landscape. So, a close look at the different

²⁸⁰ The headmaster was outraged by the fact that the boy, that he paid to nail the planks into the flesh of the spire, took them out at night. Moreover, at the end of the novel it turned out that the mentally ill orphan, who refused to accept a better house from the Soviet authorities but accepted the headmaster's money, was the only person that knew exactly where the old chronicle was.

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characters who live in the village of Razeshilor Vale shall provide the details concerning the variations of the individual's character in the Soviet Moldova.

Actually, the reader gets a glimpse of the individuals inhabiting the village from the first lines of the novel:

Every morning, whether it's cold, whether it rains, or whether the wind is blowing, two children appear on the bridge stretching on the brink of the village. A little girl of about six, wrapped up awkwardly into an old head-kerchief—it seems she did the wrapping herself—and a slightly older little boy hidden behind the collar of his own coarse-stuff peasant coat.²⁸¹ (*Leaves of Yearning*, p. 310)

Then, as if it were a play, more characters join Carutzashu Anastasia and Trofimash on the stage. Uncle Andrei is one of them. He lost his only son in the war, and, although he doesn't greet anyone and doesn't answer to the greetings of the others, he keeps coming to the bridge and looking at the others as they receive letters from the battlefield.

However, there are more people in the small village, and they are all affected by the aggression of the USSR. Thus, Zinel Cojocarū—Trofimash and Toader's father—, is another father who lost his son. Also, there is Ikimash who is suffering from something that resembles epileptic attacks. And, there is old Danutza, whose violin music provides the (only) miraculous cure for the boy's post-war disease.

As for Ikimash, the fact is that six months before, he used to be a layabout and a big slab-sided fellow, and the village wondered whether anything would come out of him. As an orphan brought up by some of his aunts that were taking turns at rearing him, he turned out a roughneck. A day hardly passed without him getting into some fight with somebody, and even when he was forced by circumstances to get along peacefully with the others, suddenly he would stop talking, pick up a stone, throw it, and out of nowhere there would come a martin plummeting into the water. In the war, he becomes a famous sniper and is decorated several times. However, after a

²⁸¹ De-i frig, de ploua, de bate vintul, in fiecare dimineata pe podul de la marginea satului rasar doi copii. O fetita de vreo sase ani, infasurata stingaci intr-o salinca veche — pe semne, se imbrobodise singura — si un baietel ceva mai rasarit, ascuns dupa gulerul propriului sau sumanel. (*Frunze de Dor*, p. 310)

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bombardment he is hospitalized, invalidated out, and sent back to the Razeshilor Vale, and all this in only six months.

“Lucky”, said those who got to see something in their life.

However, Ikimash's luck was relative. Although, he was always partying, the poor lad was sad because from the war he came with some horrible disorder, which made him faint occasionally. Unconscious, he would struggle against his convulsions, with foam in his mouth, and then he rose, and wandered sad and stunned through the village for a long time. Then, he took the road to old Danutza's house because, strangely, but that knot of melodies that came out of the old man's violin was the only cure that helped him get well and bring back his good mood.²⁸² (*Leaves of Yearning*, p. 349)

Nonetheless, what is most remarkable about Ikimash is the way the decorations have made him sympathize with the Russians. For example, when the soldiers that appear at the village feast ask the old violinist to play the famous Russian *Katiusha* the ex-soldier imagines he can sing it, but as it turns out he knew no Russian. Consequently, this character is an example of the double consciousness, of an unsolved conflict between the personal and cultural identity of a young native in a contact zone. On the one hand, he welcomes the alien who recognized his merits. On the other hand, he is the only one to get on well with old Danutza who avoided the intruders by all possible means. And, when the old man, whose songs are Ikimash's only cure, is forced by the latter to sing the “other's” song he fails. So, Ikimash ends up having another epileptic attack. Therefore, it can be deduced that the imposition of foreign values leads both to the physical and spiritual crisis of the hero.

Moreover, the figure of Simionel and/or Ikimash resembles that of a fool and is rather symbolic because of its representation of the double consciousness of the subaltern's personality. Indeed, even if the price is physical or moral suffering, one side of the character is faithful to the

²⁸² „A avut noroc”, ziceau cei care vazusera si ei lume in viata lor.

Norocul lui Ichimas era insa relativ — desi o ducea din petrecere in petrecere, era trist, sarmanul, caci s-a intors de la razboi cu niste tulburari groaznice, care la un moment dat il faceau sa lesine. Se zbatea la pamint in nestire, scrisnind cu spuma la gura, apoi, cind se ridica de jos, multa vreme umbla prin sat trist, buimac, si in cele din urma pornea spre casuta lui mos Danuta, caci, ciudat lucru, dar ghemul cela de melodii din vioara batrinului era singurul leac in stare sa-l refaca si sa-i readuca buna dispozitie. (*Frunze de Dor*, p. 349)

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old and the other strives to support the new, and vice versa. Consequently, it resembles the subaltern society which by means of accepting the new attempts to evade the troubles of today and ends up living in the past.

Actually, there is a striking feature about the characters who are most affected by the changing reality: they are either orphans (Ikimash and Simionel) or fatherless (Gheorghe and Horia). So, they are less flexible in their vision of the (new) world. They are at a loss and do not know how to act when the old, traditional world collides with the new, Soviet one. Moreover, whenever there is a mother figure, the character proves a particular degree of attachment to the old, to the traditional and resistance to the imposed Soviet order. Whereas, if there is no mother, the orphan seems to be quite confused as to the values he should follow. Thus, it has to be mentioned that the *identity crisis* of the *individual* is some kind of struggle in trying to articulate one's own sense of understanding of the shift that happens during the colonial period.

Therefore, in what follows special attention will be paid to some of the outstanding individual characters. Consider, Gheorghe whose inflexible nature leads to his tragic destiny, a destiny foreshadowed by many hints. For example, there is a couple from Taul wood who committed suicide in order to make their love eternal, like Romeo and Juliette. All because the girl's father decides to give her in marriage to a high (Soviet) official. This legend instills fear into Gheorghe and, in fact, is an anticipation of the tragic end of his love story. Then, there is the boy's surname²⁸³ and the story of Gheorghe's parents, who failed to build a long-lasting family. Also, there is Gheorghe's house, which his father failed to complete, and his disrespect for some religious rituals²⁸⁴ that his ancestors have always respected.

Yet, the first pages of the novel anticipated no torment. The narrator only says that:

Gheorghe hardly remembered his father. He could not even climb by himself onto the latter's lap when he lost him. Maybe he said "dad" a few times in his life, or maybe he didn't. He learned to make his own toys. He only ate grapes with bread, so that the feeling of satiety would last longer. And, he never thawed the window with the lips from fear that he might break it, and he didn't have a

²⁸³ Doinaru — which in Romanian means "one that is yearning". And, according to the novel the Doinarus were considered to never settle down.

²⁸⁴ For example, never work on Sunday or to cross oneself before/after a meal.

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father to replace it. Maybe he learned too early why their wheat ripened later than that of the other people; why his uncle Petrea dropped by every Saturday to lubricate the cart; and why when they were singing Christmas carols people gave him two cracknels while to the other boys they only gave one.

Aunt Frasina realized that she had a young man at home much earlier than she had expected it. Gheorghe hardly got into the third grade when he began to hang the plow to the cart—he could neither lift nor bring it down—and went to plough the land. Likewise, from year to year he got used to search for the place where the rain was dripping into the attic while the rest of the children were searching for Red Prince apples in the others' orchards; to cut straw for the horses while the children of his age wandered about the roads of the village fiddling around. And, he was a clever boy—he hardly touched the books when he returned from school, however, he graduated from the seventh form among the first ones.²⁸⁵ (*Leaves of Yearning*, pp. 331-332)

So, from a very early age Gheorghe understands the way things work out for a fatherless child. Indeed, he has to learn everything from strangers, do everything without anyone's guidance, and find a way of filling the void. Therefore, he is determined to get rid of the stigma left by his father. He has all the necessary qualities for that—clever, hardworking, young. Thus, he becomes a successful farmer and an educated young man.

He worked, night and day, when it was fine and rainy, during summer and winter, because his dream was to have a household equal to that of the others. His

²⁸⁵ Gheorghe de abia il tinea minte pe tatal sau. Inca nici nu i se putea sui singur pe genunchi cind a ramas fara dinsul. Poate a zis de citeva ori „tata” in viata lui, poate nici n-a zis. Si s-a invatat singur sa-si faca jucarii, minca poama numai cu pine, ca sa tie mai mult de sat si niciodata nu dezgheta fereastra cu buzele, de frica sa n-o strice, ca n-avea tata care s-o puie la loc. Poate prea devreme a inteles de ce griul lor se coace mai tirziu decit la ceilalti oameni, de ce vine in fiecare simbata mosu-sau Petrea sa le unga caruta, si de ce cind se duceau cu colinda, oamenii ii dadeau cite doi covrigi, pe cind celorlalti baieti le dadeau numai cite unul.

Matusa Frasina s-a pomenit ca are flacau in casa cu mult inainte decit se astepta. De abia a trecut in clasa a treia, ca Gheorghe de acum anina plugul in urma carutei — nu-l putea suci, nici cobori — si se ducea la arat.

Si tot asa, din an in an, s-a deprins sa caute pe unde razbate ploaia in pod, pe cind ceilalti copii cautau mere domnesti prin gradini straine, sa taie sisca la cai, pe cind cei de sama lui colindau drumurile satului, taind frunze la cini. Si era baiat dezghetat — te miri daca mai lua vreodata cartile in mina dupa ce se intorcea de la scoala, si totusi, a mintuit sapte clase printre primii. (*Frunze de Dor*, pp. 331-332)

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dream was to stop seeing the villagers slowing down when passing by their house, which was blind of the left eye, as they hadn't managed to put the two windows on the left side of the door in due time. Actually, his parents' house was his greatest pain, his greatest sorrow. Only one of the three rooms was furnished. The other two, which were still waiting for the flooring and workers, served as a warehouse for the corn ... As the field promised Gheorghe floorboards, money for the workers, wine for the guests, he became its slave. ...²⁸⁶ (*Leaves of Yearning*, p. 332)

However, when the Soviet regime is established and all the lands are confiscated he ends up running away. He gives up the idea of marrying a girl whom the Soviet regime has estranged from the land and prefers to be a soldier in the Soviet army rather than a teacher like her. So, his vision of the future is completely ruined. And, when he abandons his homeland, he realizes his alienation:

Only then, hugging somebody else's love, Gheorghe felt how lonely he was.

Once in the carriage, he stuck to a window and was contemplating the horizon, looking for two hills among which one could hardly see the leafless orchards. His homeland, where he walked under the rain and wind, and where everything that he loved most in this life remained, was vanishing in the distance.²⁸⁷ (*Leaves of Yearning*, p. 454)

²⁸⁶ Muncea cit trei — muncea zi si noapte, muncea pe vreme buna sip e ploaie, muncea vara si iarna, fiindca visa si el sa aiba o gospodarie in rind cu lumea, visa sa nu mai vada cum isi contenesc satenii pasul, trecind pe linga casa lor oarba de ochiul sting — n-au dovedit la vreme sa puie cele doua ferestre din stinga usii. De altfel casa parinteasca era cea mai mare durere, cel mai mare necaz al lui Gheorghe. Din cele trei odai, gatita era numai una — celelalte doua, in asteptarea scindurilor si mesterilor, serveau drept magazine pentru pine. [...] Cimpul ii fagaduieste scinduri pentru podele, parale pentru mesteri, vin pentru masa musafirilor, si Gheorghe a devenit un rob al pamintului. (*Frunze de dor*, p. 332)

²⁸⁷ Si de abia atunci, stringing un dor strain la pieptul lui, a simtit Gheorghe cit de singur a ramas.

In vagon s-a lipit de-o fereastră si cauta in zare doua dealuri de printre care abia se desluseau livezile desfrunzite. Plutea incet in urma bastina unde l-au udat ploile, unde l-au uscat vinturile si unde ramasese tot ce-a avut mai scump in viata. (*Frunze de Dor*, p. 454)

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So, the travel brings him neither consolation nor happiness. It only alienates him further from everything that home used to be. And, his mother who was abandoned by her husband is now abandoned by her son too.

Another outstanding character is Onake—the protagonist of the duology *The Burden of Our Goodness*, who has lived through two World Wars and three different forms of government. As a young man, he seemed to be the apple of the village's eye. Ciutura brought him up and was proud of this. However, he proves to have an individual identity. Consequently, although the village loves the boy, it laughs at the young Onake. His quarrelsomeness and idleness often makes his young wife quite unhappy. First, when he chooses the lonely and poorly fertile high hill as a place for the house. Then, when he decides to build a small gate without having finished the house, and with a completely empty yard. However, he does not care about the jokes of the village, and does as he pleases. Thus, he ends up making a wonderful gate which brings to his house the first and most important guest—the red haired dog that saved the valley from the wolves. Although, the visit of the wild dog frightens the hosts at first, Onake finds the courage and wisdom to tame the animal by giving it a piece of *mamaliguta*. So, the fun-making Onake suddenly becomes the pride of the village and even Haralambie-the-Clever comes to pay him a visit. Hence,

The old merits, the old virtues have been recognised all of a sudden, they finally materialize. After all, regardless of his way of being, Onake is a Ciutorean of an ancient race. He is a Ciutorean both in the way of talking and in the way of walking. Moreover, the Caraboosh family, if that interests you, descends from far away and long ago.... Then, words followed—sweet, beautiful and stupefying like a glass of good wine. And, the Ciutureans, stout-hearted and with the head up, started to go to christening feasts, parish festivals, and fairs. They went to celebrate, to help their relatives, to buy or to sell, but more than anything they went to boast a bit, because, otherwise, even the grass stops from growing if one doesn't praise it from time to time.²⁸⁸ (*The Burden of Our Goodness*, p. 37-38)

²⁸⁸ Stravechile merite, stravechile virtuti au fost deodata confirmate, intruchipate in carne si oase, pentru ca Onache acela, oricum ar fi el, dar e ciutorean de vita veche, ciutorean si la vorba, si la umblet, si apoi neamul Carabusilor, de amu daca vreti sa stiti, se trage — hei-hei — tocmai de unde, hei-hei — tocmai de cind... Si apoi sa vezi vorba dulce, frumoasa si ametitoare ca un pahar de vin bun. Cu pieptul descheiat, cu fruntea sus, au pornit

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It seems that the village finally becomes proud of its young “hero” and alludes to his collective identity. Also, Ciutura admits that the household of the Caraboosh draws its origins from the *razeshi*²⁸⁹ from the Dniester. And, this moment marks a change in the life of Onake. The once idle boy, who wanted to hear no advice from his fellow villagers, is paying now attention to what the peasants from the other villages advise him. Thus, he builds a beautiful household—just the way Tincuta had dreamed of—with a long braided fence and oak gate, with windows and doors to the house, with trees and bushes, and some sheep around the house.

Onake has turned into a good master for his dog too. Actually, the dog leaves the house just when Onake is about to be taken to war. But, when Onake is trapped on the other side of the Dniester the loyal Molda helps him cross the frozen river. And, one can see that the man loved the dog because he does not want it to risk its life and get drowned in the river just like its ancestor:

— Didn't I tell you to sit quietly where you are and wait?!²⁹⁰ (*The Burden of Our Goodness*, p. 45)

Nonetheless, Onake returns a different person from the war. He is no longer the lad that was making innocent jokes about the home village, he is cursing heavily at everything he values most as he is tired of the war, and he is shivering both with cold and fear in a garbage hole because:

The right bank didn't want to accept him. Two shots, but the target was missed. The left bank didn't want to leave him.²⁹¹ (*The Burden of Our Goodness*, p. 45)

Ciuturenii pe la cumatrii, pe la hramuri, pe la iarmaroace. Se duceau sa mai petreaca, sa-si sporeasca neamurile, sa cumpere ori sa vinda, dar principalul era ca se duceau sa se mai laude si ei un pic, pentru ca, alminteri, nici iarba, daca n-o lauzi din cind in cind, nu mai creste. (*Povara Bunatatii Noastre*, pp. 37-38)

²⁸⁹ From the Romanian *razesi*, in the feudal system were free peasants/people and small landowners, that paid no taxes and only owed military support to the king. In Moldova, mainly in the frontier regions, they formed a considerable part of the rural population.

²⁹⁰ — Dar nu ti-am zis eu sa sezi frumusel locului, sa m-astepti?! (*Povara Bunatatii Noastre*, p. 45)

²⁹¹ Malul drept nu vroia sa-l primeasca. Au tras in el de doua ori, daca nu l-au nimerit. Malul sting nu vroia sa-i dea drumul. (*Povara Bunatatii Noastre*, p. 45)

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But, when Molda approaches him and licks him, he suddenly rues and says:

Lord! Weird thoughts torment one when one is prey of despair. The return to the hearth has a price, and no matter how high the price it has to be paid. After all, those who don't return risk to be trapped between two banks, between two fires. Finally, life on Earth is nothing but a wasteland if the soul doesn't have a plot of *land* of its own, sprinkled with one's sweat, with the blood of his ancestors and left as an inheritance, so that we, when we would have lived our time, would leave it as an inheritance to our descendants.²⁹² (*The Burden of Our Goodness*, p. 46)

Thus, the brave demobilised soldier finally reaches home and even the ashes of the burned down village fail to impress him. Actually, Onake's return and his charismatic personality makes the villagers recover from the tragedy and rebuild their village.

Another feature of Onake is that he hates the injustice. He always fights in defence of the distressed and allows no one to offend him or his lot. And, if the lawyers and the judges cannot solve rightfully the issue of his strip of land he wisely decided to focus on arranging his daughter's future. However, things take an unexpected turn and his enemy's own son ends up defending Onake's interests.

Nica came in with the left eye black and blue and with a certificate that concluded that the case had been won by the morello planter.²⁹³ (*The Burden of Our Goodness*, p. 95)

²⁹² Doamne, ce ginduri iti mai vin cind te fura deznadejdea! Intoarcerea la vatra trebuie platita, oricit ar fi costat, pentru ca cei ce nu se intorc risca sa ramina pentru totdeauna intre doua maluri, intre doua focuri. La urma urmei, globule pamintesc nu e decit o pustietate daca sufletul nu are un petic de pamint al lui, stropit cu sudoarea, cu singele srabunilor si lasat mostenire noua, pentru ca si noi, dupa ce ne-om fi trait veacul, sa-l trecem mostenire urmasilor nostri. (*Povara Bunatatii Noastre*, p.46)

²⁹³ Nica a intrat cu o vinataie sub ochiul sting si o copie de certificate din care reiese ca procesul a fost cistigat de Visinari. (*Povara Bunatatii Noastre*, p. 95)

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However, when the “other” is about to invade the land of his ancestors, Onake prepares to fight, and even goes to war as a soldier in the Romanian army.

For hundreds of years, from father to son, the Moldovans rise their children with only one rule: to be *cuminti*²⁹⁴! But, Lord, what does it mean to be *cuminte*?! It depends when, how, where. One cannot be always *cuminte*. If you have your own house, if you have your own land, if you have your own people, and if everything you have is being destroyed, can you still be *cuminte*? ²⁹⁵(*The Burden of Our Goodness*, p. 134)

What an injustice! They are wearing berets, they know how to keep military step, and handle the gun flawlessly! But, mother-Patria recruits under its flag a man that doesn't even know to sing from the beginning to the end the call of Europe, doesn't distinguish left from right, and doesn't stick his chest out. Yet, look! He has received the order of recruitment (into the army). The two fellows scratched their heads while reading the order [...] ²⁹⁶ (*The Burden of Our Goodness*, p. 137)

Consequently, the old man goes to war to defend the land of his ancestors and his heirs. Likewise, Onake struggles to defend his child from Ciutura's attacks. Onake stoically fights “the poison, the sleaziness of two hundred houses” that has aroused against him again. And, once again he wins the battle. The wise Onake, as a good Christian, does not search vengeance. Instead, he offers the children of Ciutura what they most yearn for—the fruit of his orchard. Thus, Ciutura's consciousness is appealed to once again. And, ashamed of the unpaid debt, it puts an end to its intrigues and makes Onake's son-in-law return home.

²⁹⁴ Obedient, dutiful, good, quiet, serious, reasonable, sensible, wise, clever, foreseeing, prudent or behaving oneself.

²⁹⁵ De sute de ani, neam de neamul lor, moldovenii isi cresc copiii cu o singura pravila: sa fie cuminti! Dar, Dumnezeuule, ce inseamna sa tot fii cuminte?! Depinde cind, cum, unde. Totdeauna nu poti fi cuminte. Daca ai casa ta, daca ai pamintul tau, daca ai neamul tau, si daca tot ce ai se duce de ripa, mai poti fi cuminte?! (*Povara Bunatatii Noastre*, p. 134)

²⁹⁶ Ca sa vezi ce nedreptate poate fi pe lume! Ei poarta basti, stiu a tine cadenta, fac o minuire de arma care nu se mai afla! Iar Patria-muma cheama sub drapel un om care nici nu stie a cinta pina la capat chemarea Europei, incurca stingul cu dreptul, nu mai poate scoate pieptul afara. Promise, uite, ordin de concentrare. Cei doi baietani, scarpinindu-si cefele a mare mirare, buchiseau ordinul, [...]. (*Povara Bunatatii Noastre*, p. 137)

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So, Drutse uses simple gestures to describe his hero. When he returns to the village after the First World War, in a tragic moment, when the village is consumed by fire and the people are left without shelter, Onake is pictured as a wanderer that returned home after four years of war. He is someone who greets the people gathered on the stones with a riddle, telling them that he knows of a nest with a single egg, and that the village can be rebuilt. Then, when Besarabia has been (re)seized, he is, symbolically, on the bridge over the Prut, between a Romanian and Russian border guard. This proves that the essence of his life is to fight for the continuity of the nation, to conserve this micro-universe, the songs and carols of his ancestors, and pass them down to the next generation(s). Indeed, Onake fights until the last breath for his land, for his family, and for the identity of his nation. Even in his last visit to his daughter, he shares part of the millennial wisdom with her. He tells Nutza what his relative, the nun, told him about the corn. And, in the end, what he last sees is the mysterious and mythological Molda, which has accompanied him in the hardest moments of his life.

Likewise, the protagonist of *The Spire* appears as a preserver of the national history. According to Hitchins (2008) the village school teacher, Horia Holban, worships history and thus becomes a keeper of both history and the ancestral moral codex. The scholar claims that in a time when historiography focused on the selective and subjective creation of the past rather than its objective recreation, the historian (embodied by the protagonist of *The Spire*) plays a crucial role in the conservation of the national identity. He can no longer be a detached researcher, when everything that our ancestors had fought for is being burned on the altar of communism. Hitchins (2008) also considers that, due to Drutse's vast knowledge of history, the characters of his novels (especially his peasants and the villages that they live in) are very truthful (p. 103).

The story of Horia Holban begins when the ambitious university professor Ilarie Turcul discovers him in a small village school while on a propaganda tour intended to recruit students for the history department. The professor's attention is drawn by the surname of the boy which made Turcul think he is a relative of a famous Romanian poet. Although the Bucovinian refutes the supposition, the young researcher invites him to the State University from Chisinau.

Despite all the troubles Chisinau seems to promise him a brilliant career as a researcher, and helps him find true love and a new family given the fact that when in his second year of studies his mother (his only living parent) dies. However, as a result of his inability to "serve"

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the (personal) interests of the superiors, "Chisinau didn't welcome him, his wife or child..."²⁹⁷ (*The Spire*, p. 433). Yet, the boy is described by the narrator as "hard working, dexterous, and creative" (*The Spire*, p. 444) and as a rare specimen for the Soviet times.

Horia belongs to that odd class of idealists that believe that the world is always waiting for good deeds from them.²⁹⁸ (*The Spire*, p. 444)

Thus, one of the main products of his research is the creation of a detailed map of the historical sites of Moldova. However, his investigations do not please his superior(s)—the young university lecturer Ilarie Simionovici Turcul. So,

The next day he called Horia and told him to take off the map from the wall.

— Why take it down, Ilarie Simeonovici?

— One thing is to protect but another thing is to make propaganda, he said.

— And you want to say that working on this map, I ...

— It's dangerous, he said.

— And how can one do something without knowing well what is one doing, without having a map?!

— I agree, but the map has to be in the desk drawer. What's in the desk drawer is work, what's on the wall... is propaganda. In this comrade Baltatu is right.

— But, Ilarie Simeonovici, there cannot be a school without a book and a roll, an agricultural institute without a soil map, a library without the pictures of Eminescu and Pushkin. The essence cannot be hidden in the drawer of a desk, we will turn into some ghosts if we'll keep hiding the essence of our being ...²⁹⁹ (*The Spire*, p. 446)

²⁹⁷ Chisinaul nu l-a primit nici pe el, nici pe sotie, nici pe copilul lor... (*Clopotita*, p. 433)

²⁹⁸ Horia apartinea acelei ciudate tagme de idealisti care cred ca lumea e vesnic in asteptarea faptelor bune din partea lor. (*Clopotita*, p. 444)

²⁹⁹ A doua zi insa l-a chemat pe Horia si i-a zis sa coboare harta de pe perete.

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This dialogue reveals the nature of Horia's ideals and values. In addition, it exposes the limitations of the freedom of the individual and the protagonist's courage in standing up for the national identity of his people. Also, the reference to Eminescu—the most famous and influential (romantic) Romanian poet and Pushkin—the greatest (romantic) Russian poet—alludes to the hybrid nature of the Moldovan cultural identity. Indeed, Horia is much like these canonical writers—a romantic idealist that believes that his work can make a better place of the world.

Nonetheless, the excerpt also reveals Horia's inability to adapt to the ways and (the pseudo) values of the (Sovietised) scientific community. Although he is just a student, and his superiors show no interest in the proper functioning of the newly created Society for the Protection of Historical and Cultural Monuments, in a very short time he manages to work out a method of keeping track of all the important historical and cultural sites of the country. Ultimately, he comes out with a map, a map that Turcul would have wished to be his, a map that he is advised to hide. However, according to the narrator:

The poor fellow was naïve. And, that naivety prevented him from understanding that often finding a common ground with the superiors is much more important than doing one's job in the assigned position.³⁰⁰ (*The Spire*, p. 445)

So, Horia is the misfit village prodigy that with his brilliant ideas provokes the ire and envy of his superiors both by doing well his job and by failing to be servile and “useful” to the regime. Consider,

-
- De ce s-o cobor, Ilarie Simeonovici?
 - A ocroti e una, a zis, iar a face propaganda e alta.
 - Si vreti sa spuneti ca eu, muncind la harta asta [...]
 - E periculos, a zis.
 - Dar cum te poti ocupa cu ceva fara a cunoaste bine cu ce te ocupi, fara a avea o harta?!
 - Natural, dar harta trebuie tinuta in masa. Cee ace e in masa este serviciu, ceea ce e pe perete — propaganda. Aici tovarasul Baltatu are dreptate.
 - Dar nu poate, Ilarie Simeonovici, sa existe o scoala fara manual si catalog, un institut agricol fara harta solului, o biblioteca fara portretele lui Eminescu si Puskin. Esentele nu pot fi ascunse in sertarul mesei, vom ajunge pina la urma niste fantome daca ne vom tot ascunde ceea ce constituie esenta noastra ... (*Clopotnita*, p. 446)

³⁰⁰ Era naiv, sarmanul, si in naivitatea ceea nici sa-i fi trecut prin cap ca deseori a gasi limbaj comun cu sefii e mult mai important decit a face treaba in postul in care ai fost numit. (*Clopotnita*, p. 445)

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- What is the reason of your quarrel?

Horia smiled—was it really worth the pain to tire one's legs for such a stupid question?

— He asked me to stay in a queue and buy him something for the car.

— And, why didn't you want to do him the favour?

Horia, without stopping, looked bewildered at him.

— My religion forbids me to do that.

— And, what does your religion say?

— It says that whenever one wants something he must stay in the queue.

— What an idiot, Lord, what an idiot!!

After passing several corners in silence he continued:

— Look at me, a Christian just like you, I didn't refuse to help my superiors, because believe me, they were like parents to me. Once, I remember to have been pulling the feathers off some chickens in the professor's kitchen because there was going to be a big party at his place [...]

— Great deal to be waiting in a queue for half an hour! What shall I do now? Somebody split on us to the police saying that the workers of the society stay over the night at the office to sleep without having the passport in order. There is a possibility that an inspection is to be carried out tonight.

The face of the university worker screwed up with true despair, with fear similar to death. Horia smiled sadly and bitterly. He realised in a moment of enlightenment that this Ilarie Turcul was't even a scholar, wasn't the kind-hearted person, and wasn't the peasant from the lineage of peasants that he used to think he was.³⁰¹ (*The Spire*, p. 449)

³⁰¹ - Pentru ce v-ati sfadit voi?

Horia a zimit — facea oare, pentru o intrebare atat de stupida, sa-si trudeasca picioarele atita timp ?

- Ma rugase sa stau la coada, sa-i cumpar ceva pentru automobil.

- Si de ce n-ai vrut sa-i faci un serviciu?

Horia, din mers, s-a uitat mirat la el.

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Thus, the values of the boy from Bucovina clash with those of the young and successful lecturer from Chisinau. The latter can barely find time to turn up at the office, but he has time to walk with his protégée away from the sight of Baltatu³⁰². Moreover, the reason behind the walk is not work but terror. It seems that the Society for the Protection of Historical and Cultural Monuments needs protection itself. Consequently, the only really working specialist of the organisation that has existed mostly on paper must be dismissed. This injustice opens Horia's eyes to the real nature of the scientific world that he has been aspiring to join. Apparently, the people who want to be successful in this sphere should keep their "essence in a drawer". Furthermore, the person that he so much admired seems to have no essence at all. Therefore, the history student is more at home among peasants than in the company of the (pseudo) intellectual(s) that has once inspired him to leave the village, and come to study in Chisinau. Indeed,

He didn't mind the squash. He enjoyed observing the way the peasants talked and passed the time when left to themselves. He encountered some likeness with his fellow villagers from their way of moving and of carrying the hat as well as from the parables or the way of talking. And, the meeting of the two worlds—the one in front of him and the one he was carrying within—was a true feast to him.³⁰³ (*The Spire*, p. 398)

-
- Nu-mi permite religia.
 - Si ce spune religia ta?
 - Zice ca fiecare trebuie sa stea la rind atunci cind are nevoie de ceva.
Turcul si-a dat cu palma peste frunte :
 - Ce idiot, Dumnezeuule, ce idiot!!
Dupa citeva colturi de tacere a continuat:
 - Eu, iata, crestin ortodox ca si tine, nu m-am dat in laturi cind trebuia sa ajut sefilor mei, caci imi erau, crede-ma, ca niste parinti, iar intr-un rind, tin minte, am penit chiar si niste gaini la bucataria profesorului atunci cind se puneau acolo la cale o mare petrecere [...]
 - Auzi tu, n-a vrut sa stea o jumatate de ora la coada! S-acum eu ce ma fac? Cineva ne-a turnat la militie ca lucratorii societatii ramin peste noapte sa doarma prin birouri, fara sa aiba pasaportul in regula. Asta noapte e chiar posibil un control.

O frica sora cu moartea, o adevarata disperare crispase chipul bietului cadru universitar. Horia zimbi trist si amar. Intr-o clipa de lumina si-a dat seama ca nici om de stiinta, nici om de omenie, nici taran din neamul taranilor, cum il crezuse la inceput, nu era acest Ilarie Turcul. (*Clopotnita*, p. 449)

³⁰² Apparently a spy of the Soviet authorities.

³⁰³ Pe Horia, de altminteri, nu-l supara inghesuiala, ii facea placere sa urmareasca taranii cum discuta si cum isi petrec timpul, ramasi ei inde ei. Din anumite gesturi, din anumite feluri de a purta palaria, din anumite pilde

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So, it is obvious that the atmosphere that reigns during Horia's encounter with his teacher and boss has nothing to do with the atmosphere described in the last passage. On the one hand, the excerpt reveals the unity of the Romanians from Bessarabia and Bucovina. On the other hand, it also establishes the protagonist's collective identity—his feeling of belonging to the peasants' world, be it from Bucovina or Bessarabia. Therefore, when Horia first accompanies Jeanette to the village festival he spends his last money on good clothes. Then, once in the village, people treat him as if they have always known him. Actually, "Horia was serious and full of goodwill, as if it was not him who dropped by an aunt of Jenea, but, Bucovina paying a visit to Moldova"³⁰⁴ (*The Spire*, p. 414). Jenea's aunt offers him a place to sleep and to take a rest after the long journey. Also, the village boy that is studying at the Polytechnic in Odessa takes him on a bike ride to show him the fields and to visit his grandfather. And, as it becomes clear later that has been more than just a visit, it has been a peace-making ritual³⁰⁵. And, after visiting Jenea's parents on the patron day, another ritual follows—marriage with the girl that to Horia has been "simple and benevolent", and it seems to him that "they grew up in the same village" (*The Spire*, p. 392). So, the village world is particularly enticing to the once-ambitious history student.

The foreign village has begun to resemble your home village. Day after day, week after week, the village from the hill side began to wonder at the patience, the talent, the wisdom that that boy from Bucovina had demonstrated. He knew how to flatter the schoolmistress who liked to be flattered with his attentions. He knew how to make conversation when the men were left to themselves. He was good-natured, hard-working, and willing to help. Also, he was the life and soul of the party, he knew when to speak and when to hold his tongue. In spring they organised a christening feast, and, for the first time all the

si intorsaturi de vorba, el descifra chipuri de consateni de-ai lui si intilnirea acestor doua lumi — a celei pe care o avea in fata cu cea pe care o purta cu dinsul — era pentru el o adevarata sarbatoare. (*Clopotnita*, p. 398)

³⁰⁴ Horia era grav si plin de bunavointa de parca nu el intrase din drum la o matusa de-a Jenei, ci insasi Bucovina a venit in musafirie la Moldova! (*Clopotnita*, p. 414)

³⁰⁵ Apparently, the boy's father was not talking to the old man for years. And, now on this special religious day — the day of the patron saint, he sent his son to pay a visit to the lonely shepherd and to ask him come and visit them more often. (*Clopotnita*, p. 422)

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teachers came together with the headmaster to that feast. What various inspections failed to do was done by a Bucovinean.³⁰⁶ (*The Spire*, p. 468)

Everything, seemed to work perfect for Horia. He had become the teacher with most authority in the school. He had his house and child, which also made him a good householder in Capriana. And, on top of everything, a publishing house from Chisinau asked him to write a booklet, conventionally named *The History and Culture Monuments from the North of Moldova*.³⁰⁷ (*The Spire*, p. 475)

However, all this represents just a period of peace before the tempest. Troubles kept coming even when settled in Capriana, his wife's homeland. Despite the hearty welcome on the side of the school director, Horia's love for truth and history, as well as his teachings intended to arise the civic consciousness of his students, provoke a large chain of persecutions that are planned and carried out by the same director. Consequently, the young teacher has to pay a high price for his success. As already mentioned the school director becomes his worst enemy. So, when things are dearest to the hero the headmaster defiles the most sacred a man has, his love, and the young teacher gets (almost) destroyed. Ultimately, this burden leads to the transformation of the proud young student that at the beginning is described as a simple, shy boy, a son of a peasant from Bucovina that knew little Russian (*The Spire*, pp. 367, 375). Instead, he is now:

A tall and vigorous young man, with kind and sad eyes, that was coming down Lenin Avenue, carrying the burden of a poor teacher's troubles. He was

³⁰⁶ Satul strain a inceput a semana cu satul tau natal. Zi cu zi, saptamina cu saptamina, satul de pe coasta a prins a se minuna cita rabadare, cita iscusinta, cita intelepciune dovedise pina la urma baiatul cela din Bucovina. Stia a face curte invatatoarei careia ii placea sa i se faca curte, stia sa sustina un capat de vorba atunci cind barbatii ramineau ei inde ei. Era si omenos, si harnic, si saritor la nevoie, era bun de petrecere, stia sa spuna o vorba grea atunci cind era de spus, stia sa taca atunci cind era de tacut.

Mai in primavara au facut cumatrie si la cumatria ceea pentru intiia oara au venit toti invatatorii impreuna cu directorul scolii. Ceea ce nu a putut face nenumaratele comisii a obtinut un bucovinean. (*Clopotnita*, p. 468)

³⁰⁷ Lui Horia, in schimb, toate ii mergeau de minune. A ajuns a fi invatatorul cu cea mai mare autoritate din scoala, mai era si un bun gospodar in Capriana, avind casa si copil. Apoi, culmea culmilor, o editura din Chisinau i-a comandat o brosură, numita conventional „Monumentele de istorie si cultura din nordul Moldovei”. (*Clopotnita*, p. 475)

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walking slowly; the way villagers normally do. He was breathing in the scent of that beginning of spring and kept thinking about the rain that ravaged these lands a few days ago.³⁰⁸ (*The Spire*, p. 364)

The young teacher is walking slowly because he resembles the villagers but mostly because now “the town was tormenting him...”³⁰⁹ (*The Spire*, p. 367). He is fresh out of hospital because of a nervous breakdown and:

The nerves, oh, this disease of the century, was torturing him as well. Horia, emotive by nature, was burning up instantaneously, in a torment of energy that was almost beyond control that was followed by depression and moodiness. And, the only cure was the road.³¹⁰ (*The Spire*, p. 368)

Thus, now that the village Spire (just like his love) has been consumed by fire at the hand of the headmaster, Horia is pondering whether to go back to Capriana or return to his mother's village. After all, as Horia himself states, “spiritual balance is the equilibrium between the heart, mind and soul. No wonder, then, that when you lose the spiritual balance you lose everything” (*The Spire*, p. 368). However, his profound identity crisis—provoked by the loss of the things he most loved—found its resolution when during the train journey he hears someone calling his name. As it turns out, it is the voice of one of his pupils.

After all, he is a history teacher, who shows great love for the past of his people, and to his students he is a model of courage, a prototype of the model hero, intelligent and ready to sacrifice for the good of the other. Thus, he has no right to give up. He teaches his pupils that history is not just the yesterday, history is the now and here, too. He doesn't have mercy for his weak heart and goes through and through his memories to draw those spiritual teachings which he as a teacher has the duty to pass to his disciples (Oskotki, 2004, p. 61-66).

³⁰⁸ Un tinar inalt si zdravan, cu ochi blinzi si tristi, venea pe bulevardul Lenin la vale, impovarat de grijile unui sarac invatator. Pasea incet, cum umbla de obicei satenii, prindea cu adincul plaminilor mirozna acelu inceput de primavara si se tot gindea la ploaia ce bintuise acum citeva zile peste intregul nostru pamint. (*Clopomita*, p. 364)

³⁰⁹ Orasele iestea te scot cu totul din pepeni, ... (*Clopomita*, p. 367)

³¹⁰ Nervii, o, aceasta boala a secolului, il chinuia si pe dinsul. Fire emotiva, Horia se consuma fulgurator, printr-o furtuna de energie aproape nestapinita, dupa care urmau depresiunile, crizele de dispozitie, si singurul leac, singura scapare era drumul. (*Clopomita*, p. 368)

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So, Drutse's protagonist, who has been denied a brilliant career in the capital and has been robbed of his love in the village, finds a way to recover after the devastating blows of the *messengers* of civilization. Unlike the homo sovieticus, he worships history and, as a result, becomes a keeper of the village history. He is determined to blend both facts and myths about Capriana, as well as memory and imagination, in order to help the village youth overcome the terror instilled by the agents of the centre and become aware of their cultural identity. Thus, Horia becomes the guardian angel of a whole generation who are threatened by the pseudo intellectuals (the university professor, Ilarie Turcu and the school director, Nicolai Trofimovici Balta) and forced to adopt the communist values of the new Soviet society.

Consequently, the rebellious natives, Horia—mocking and sarcastic when dealing with characters that have nothing to bring to the reader—or Onake, confront (and stop) characters such as Ilarie Turcul (*The Spire*) or like the teacher Pinzaru (*Leaves of Yearning*). The last two are given the task of recruiting potential young teachers for the new regime. Though, both of them seem to be exponents of the progress of society—which is what the Soviet literature was supposedly about—they also appear to be the target of the narrator's antipathy, which even Gusev (2008), a Russian scholar, recognizes in his essay. The protagonist—be it Horia or Onake—rises above the worries of the every-day life and comes to stand for the pure patriotic feelings. For example, Horia's kindness and compassion for the adopted village and its history make him fight the homo sovieticus Ilarie Turcul, Baltatu or Balta that only use people to gather material benefits and improve their social standing. Consequently, just like within the postcolonial reality, where according to Ellison, blending both facts and myths, as well as memory and imagination makes one stronger (as qtd. in Ibarrola, 1995, p. 155) Horia is endowed with a, one could say—supernatural, capacity of self-sacrifice for the good of the nation.

So, Drutse's fiction both eulogizes the (anonymous) national heroes, and denounces the so-called godless intellectuals that, as formulated in Gusev's (2008) essay, “forgot their roots and stick to nothing” (p. 131). The latter seem to be caught in an in-between space. The contact with (not always the best) exponents of the Soviet power corrupts them. And, although they (often) pretend to be true sons of their fathers (often peasants) that have managed to get a good social standing, the reality is that (often) in climbing the career ladder they lose the connection with or have to hide their essence “in drawers”.

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Likewise, Mircea (*The Burden of Our Goodness*) or Rusanda (*Leaves of Yearning*) return to their village after their studies in town as servants of the metropolis. Unlike Horia, both return to the home village voluntarily. Yet, it seems that the person who had left the village never returns because nobody recognises them. For example, his wife does not recognise Mircea:

Mircea Moraru, a dark-skinned sergeant, with the slowness of a Russian from upon the Volga, searched slowly the photos his comrades took out.³¹¹ (*The Burden of Our Goodness*, p. 174)

[...][she] doesn't recognise him at all! However, who returned was another person.³¹² (*The Burden of Our Goodness*, p. 187)

Nutza, who just like her mother, is a keeper of tradition and family hearth has married a young and hardworking peasant. However, what her father manages to bring back home is a Soviet soldier. Still, after a while the land seems to transform Mircea into what he used to be. Nonetheless, the famine and collectivisation come, and Mircea is sent to learn how to drive a tractor. Consequently, he becomes a slave of the iron machine that is brought by the Soviets. Thus, Nutza begs her father to save her husband, Mircea, again. However, the latter is lured to the new social order as into a swamp. It seems that the young peasant is embracing the new situation indiscriminately, without pondering over its value, and he loses the connection with the past and the secular traditions.

Consequently, when his younger son is born, Mircea invites all his (new) friends—the new Soviet “elite” of the village—to the celebration, but he doesn't invite Onake who has been there to help ever since he was a boy. Thus, the alienation of the son-in-law is the last straw that breaks the camel's back and leads to Onake's alienation. Nevertheless, when Onake's only daughter (two sons died during the war) invites him to meet the new-born, who according to her is a fair copy of Onake, he knows that the balance between the new and the old is maintained. Consequently, he returns home at peace knowing that he is leaving behind, though fragile, a

³¹¹ Mircea Moraru, sergent smolit, cu incetineala unui rus de pe Volga, cerceta domol pozele scoase de tovarasi [...] (*Povara Bunatatii Noastre*, p. 174)

³¹² [...] nu-l mai cunoaste! [...] S-a intors insa altul. (*Povara Bunatatii Noastre*, p. 187)

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guardian of the nation's tradition and history. And, although he does not recognise Mircea anymore he leaves his legacy to his daughter ('s son).

Similarly, when Rusanda returns from the specialization courses, which the authorities sent her to, in the city, the village does not recognise her:

When she went out, the passers-by slowed the pace in front of their gate, as if they wanted to see what was there so special about this young girl to make her a teacher. When she entered the house, aunt Catinca immediately gave her a stool, so that she would not get tired standing. So, she wandered the whole day, looking for that very place where she'd no longer be a stranger for anyone. But, she couldn't find it, and when you cannot find your place, you can't find yourself, and when you can't find yourself, nothing can make you happy anymore ...³¹³
(*Leaves of Yearning*, p. 430)

Thus, there is nothing left of the girl Rusanda used to be:

There was a girl in a yard whitewashing, weaving, sewing or doing whatever she could to help her parents. But, she is no longer theirs, she is already his [Gheorghe's]. She was carrying within the star of all the babies that she was going to give him. That girl was his future home, his future life, and they only had to take one last step!³¹⁴ (*Leaves of Yearning*, p. 382)

Indeed, Rusanda is hardworking. Also, the only daughter of uncle Mihalake and aunt Catinca, she is among the few to graduate from school, and later she becomes a teacher in the same school. Nevertheless, as already mentioned above, Rusanda's alienation from the land

³¹³ Si daca iesea afara, trecatorii isi conteneau pasii drept poarta lor, parca vrind s-o vada ce o fi avind asa grozav fetita asta, de-au pus-o invatatoare, si daca intra in casa, lelea Catinca indata ii pune un scaunel, ca sa nu osteneasca stind in picioare. Si a umblat ea toata ziua, cautindu-si locul cela unde n-ar mai fi fost pentru nimenea straina. Dar nu-l gasea, si cind nu-ti gasesti locul, nu te poti gasi pe tine insuti, iar cind nu te mai poti regasi pe tine, nimic nu te mai poate bucura ... (*Frunze de Dor*, p. 430)

³¹⁴ Acolo, intr-o ograda, o fetiscana da cu var, tese, coase ori stie el ce mai face ea acolo, ca sa le fie parintilor de folos, dar nu mai este a lor, este de acum a lui. Purta in sine zodia tuturor odraslelor pe care urma sa i le nasca, copila ceea era casa lui de mine, era viata lui de mine si nu le raminea sa faca decit un singur pas! (*Frunze de Dor*, p. 382)

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estranges her from Gheorghe as well. So, she would give him no home and no children. Actually, just like Gheorghe, she seems to be doomed to have a destiny that was different from that of her ancestors. Definitely, as an only child her life is different even from that of her friends. Consider the following passage:

There was a time when they were sharing meals and bed. Then, they shared the same inkpot at school, the same dog bit both of them on the same day, and they learned to spin with the same spindle. [...] If they bore any resemblance at all, one would have taken them for sisters.

Yet, what was to be done: they were not alike.

[...] When they completed the fourth grade and were told at home that they had enough schooling—after all no clergyman's wife shall come out of them—Domnica threw her knapsack with books to the attic and gladdened her parents saying: "OK".

However, Rusanda *disobeyed* [emphasis added]. She was the only heir, her parents had little or no troubles and she could afford to disobey them. Then, years passed, and when our girls met once near the bridge, they were somehow *estranged* [emphasis added] and could find nothing to talk about.³¹⁵ (*Leaves of Yearning*, p. 321)

So, the seed of Rusanda's loneliness and alienation has been planted rather early. The girl could not even imagine that her (early) love for knowledge would make her a stranger in her own house, in her own village. She has never thought that her choice would bring about changes that would separate her from her best friend and from the boy she loved, and that her appointment as a teacher in the village school would lead to the ultimate break up with the local society.

³¹⁵ A fost o vreme cind mincau si dormeau una la alta. La scoala au umblat cu o singura calimara, un singur ciine le-a muscat pe amindoua intr-o zi si cu un singur fus au invatat a toarce. [...] Sa fi semanat macar cit de putin, puteai sa zici ca sunt surori. Dar, ce sa-i faci: nu semanau.

[...] Cind au terminat cite patru clase si li s-a spus acasa ca li-i de ajuns atita invatatura, ca preotese totuna n-au sa ajunga, Domnica si-a azvirlit traistuta cu carti in pod si i-a bucurat pe parinti, spunindu-le: „Bine”.

Rusanda insa nu i-a ascultat. Era singura mostenitoare, parintii nu i se prea plingeau de necazuri si avea de unde sa nu-i asculte. Apoi au trecut ani, si cind odata s-au intilnit fetele noastre linga pod, erau oarecum instrainate si nici nu mai gaseau capat de vorba. (*Frunze de Dor*, p. 321)

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Therefore, although Hitchins (2008) expresses the opinion that change is positive for the peasants who thus benefited from getting free from old traditions and from embracing new professions, the message of the novels appears to be far more complex. Despite an apparent conformation with the imposed changes the narrator denounces denationalization.

Moreover, Corbu (2008) claims that (some of) Drutse's heroes are tormented by the fact that, on account of the external factors, the unity of the nation is being crushed. So, they do everything in their power to preserve the little that can be kept unspoiled (p. 97). They struggle against what in postcolonial theory is defined as "a brooding nemesis" (Boehmer, 1995, p. 90). And, it seems that what Boehmer (1995) defined as a balance on the edge between "moral failure" and "the loss of rational control" (p. 90) is also applicable to Drutse's characters. Also, Boehmer explained this to be determined by the individual's growing alienation due to the dramatic changes in the environment. These changes are particularly well depicted in the duology *The Burden of Our Goodness*, in which Onake has had to serve in three different armies, that of the (Russian) czar, of the (Romanian) king and the Red Army.

Thus, Corbu's (2008) question: Is it possible for a people, which in the course of a human life had to bend the knee in front of so many flags, to preserve the basis of its consciousness untouched, unbendable? (pp. 95-96) seems particularly relevant. In fact, Mihail Dolgan (2008) provides some sort of answer to this question. On the one hand, this scholar finds Drutse's characters to possess poetic natures that live life to the fullest, with all its joys, sorrows, and tragedies. They are fond of old songs and witty expressions. They value humour and irony. And what is more important, they are full of *pride* [emphasis added], good-will and respect for the sacred. They are in a continuous search of the truth and of the meaning of life (p. 166). To sum up, they are everything that a homo sovieticus is not. Moreover, the Russian scholar Igor Dedkov (2008) states that Drutse's heroes, though (historically) small and unimportant persons, through the wisdom that life itself endowed them with, and their shatterproof hope in the continuity of the national identity, are inspiring models to be followed (p. 178).

On the other hand, as already noticed, characters like Ilarie Turcul, Baltatu, Balta, Rusanda or Mircea Moraru are just some examples of the homo sovieticus that appear in Drutse's novels. In this sense, besides Mircea and Rusanda, the lost identity of the Moldovan is represented by Baltatu, who is a much more dangerous specimen. According to the narrator, he is easily shaped by the things poured into him. Therefore, his activity while in office is reduced to

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solving cryptograms while the inspector is on business trips and the president mostly absent. However, besides this idle enterprise, his other pursuit is to track Horia's line of activity. Thus, he asks the latter:

— Why are you always on the road, comrade Holban? What are you looking for high and law, what are you prying into?

This is another strange and mysterious figure in his life... [...] the secretary of the society. He was meagre and pale, and hardly had a colour of his own. And, like a bottle he borrowed the colour of the liquid that was inside, [...] ³¹⁶ (*The Spire*, p. 445)

So, Baltatu is the opposite of the protagonist. He easily adapts to the environment and cares not about his essence. Also, his actions reveal that he is an evil and vengeful person. When Horia refuses to do him a favour, he does everything possible to have the poor young man exiled from the capital. Moreover, he is a poor worker. Besides doing nothing in his office hours, he throws away the entire collection of objects of history and culture that Horia has brought from his expeditions. In addition, although it is Turcul who committed various acts of corruption and abuse of authority, he reports on Horia for sleeping at the office without having the permission to live in Chisinau.

As for Turcul, he seems to be the typical homo sovieticus that in his search for a bright career is ready to exploit the native and when he is no longer beneficial, he gets rid of it, just like he has got rid of Horia. The narrator describes him as the young and elegant university lecturer that was thought to have founded the Society for the Protection of Historical and Cultural Monuments. Also, he appears as the most famous scholar of the university that was always on the go—Moscow, Tbilisi and so on. But, students seemed to value most his human qualities. Nevertheless, both Horia and Jeanette get to see his true face. Actually, the latter confronted him in front of the whole university when he tried to criticise groundlessly her fellow villagers for not caring for the historical monument located in the village. She brings arguments against his

³¹⁶ - Ce tot umbli atita pe drumuri, tovarase Holban, ce tot cauti si iscodesti peste tot?!

Iata inca o figura ciudata si enigmatica in viata lui... [...] secretarul societatii. Slabanog, palid, el nici macar n-avea culoarea sa proprie si, asemeni unei sticle, imprumuta culoarea lichidului pe care il continea, [...] (*Clopotnita*, p. 445)

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speculations, in French, and when he asks why she does not speak in Romanian if her arguments are true, she says that:

— I wanted to spare your authority. [...] because it is a custom to believe that at the university those who know everything are the professors and those who know nothing are the students... ³¹⁷ (*The Spire*, p. 385)

So, both Turcu and his authority is nothing but a mere façade. As already noticed earlier, he is neither a brilliant scholar nor a good person. He is corrupt and cowardly. As an illustration of his corrupt nature, consider the next excerpt:

Among the dignitaries that participated at the event, Professor Ilarie Turcu was also mentioned. [...] The title of Professor was followed by another—Corresponding Member of the Academy of Sciences. Horia thought there was some misunderstanding—Turcu didn't even defend his doctoral thesis, and about fifty doctors were in a queue waiting to join the academy, waiting to be chosen. So, how could a PhD student get there where so many doctors were at pains to get and didn't succeed? [...] If the price of advancement is giving up all the sacred things we have, then God help us ... ³¹⁸ (*The Spire*, p. 534)

Just like Balta, Turcu is afraid that his misdeeds might be tracked down and thus his authority questioned. After all, what he most fears is the loss of his privileged position in the Soviet (socialist) society. This is particularly clear in the following examples:

The next day he called Horia and told him to take off the map from the wall.

³¹⁷ — Am vrut sa crut autoritatea dumitale. [...] pentru ca s-a obisnuit a crede ca la universitate cei care cunosc totul sunt profesorii, iar cei care nu cunosc nimic — studentimea... (*Clopotmitak*, p. 385)

³¹⁸ Printre demnitarii pomeniti ca au participat la o oarecare solemnitate a dat si de profesorul Ilarie Turcul. [...] dupa titlul de profesor mai urma unul – de membru – corespondent al Academiei de Stiinte. Horia s-a gindit ca e o confuzie la mijloc – Turcul inca nici nu-si sustinuse doctoratul, iar la Academie stateau la rind vreo cincizeci de doctori, asteptind sa fie alesi, si cum poate sa ajunga un candidat acolo unde atitia doctori de atita amar de vreme se caznesc si nu pot ajunge? [...] Daca pretul avansarilor este renuntarea la tot ce avem mai sfint, atunci, fereasca-ne Domnul ... (*Clopotmita*, p. 534)

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- Why take it down, Ilarie Simeonovici?
- One thing is to protect but another thing is to make propaganda, he said.
- And you want to say that working on this map, I ...
- It's dangerous, he said.³¹⁹ (*The Spire*, p. 446)

Or:

- And, why didn't you want to do him the favour?
Horia, without stopping, looked bewildered at him.
- My religion forbids me to do that.
- And, what does your religion say?
- It says that whenever one wants something he must stay in the queue.
- What an idiot, Lord, what an idiot!!
After passing several corners in silence he continued:
- Look at me, a Christian just like you, I didn't refuse to help my superiors, because believe me, they were like parents to me. Once, I remember to have been pulling the feathers off some chickens in the professor's kitchen because there was going to be a big party at his place [...]
- Great deal to be waiting in a queue for half an hour! What shall I do now? Somebody split on us to the police saying that the workers of the society stay over the night at the office to sleep without having the passport in order. There is a possibility that an inspection is to be carried out tonight.
The face of the university worker screwed up with true despair, with a fear similar to death. Horia smiled sadly and bitterly. He realised in a

³¹⁹ A doua zi insa l-a chemat pe Horia si i-a zis sa coboare harta de pe perete.

- De ce s-o cobor, Ilarie Simeonovici?
- A ocroti e una, a zis, iar a face propaganda e alta.
- Si vreti sa spuneti ca eu, muncind la harta asta [...]
- E periculos, a zis. (*Clopotnita*, p. 446)

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moment of enlightenment that this Ilarie Turcul was't even a scholar, wasn't the kind-hearted person, and wasn't the peasant from the lineage of peasants that he used to think he was.³²⁰ (*The Spire*, p. 449)

Likewise, Balta appears as the perfect embodiment of the homo sovieticus. Consider, for instance, the following lines:

[...] Nicolai Trofimovici Balta, the director of the school from Capriana village was a skunk of a man who did never stop hunting you down once he was after you. [...] Quiet, stubborn, made of an old aggressiveness, [...] hale and hearty, *with a catastrophic blank in what concerns his professional formation* [emphasis added], a fact which made him be chary of words, slow, and even lazy in some way, Nicolai Trofimovici turned fire and fury when it came to his (personal) interests. [...] He was a good worker, one rarely to be encountered. He worked in all the schools from the north of Moldova, and was considered one of the best directors. He was teaching Moldovan literature but his true passion was construction. The schoolyard was full of heaps of sand, wood chips, slaked lime, stones and cement.

Nobody knew when, how and where he got everything, how much he paid for everything and where the money was taken from. [...] Work was being done mostly outside the school, in the yard. And, so time flies, years pass, the bureau

³²⁰ - Si de ce n-ai vrut sa-i faci un serviciu?

Horia, din mers, s-a uitat mirat la el.

- Nu-mi permite religia.

- Si ce spune religia ta?

- Zice ca fiecare trebuie sa stea la rind atunci cind are nevoie de ceva.

Turcul si-a dat cu palma peste frunte :

- Ce idiot, Dumnezeuule, ce idiot!!

Dupa citeva culturi de tacere a continuat:

- Eu, iata, crestin ortodox ca si tine, nu m-am dat in laturi cind trebuia sa ajut sefilor mei, caci imi erau, crede-ma, ca niste parinti, iar intr-un rind, tin minte, am penit chiar si niste gaini la bucataria profesorului atunci cind se punea acolo la cale o mare petrecere [...]

- Auzi tu, n-a vrut sa stea o jumatate de ora la coada! S-acum eu ce ma fac? Cineva ne-a turnat la militie ca lucratorii societatii ramin peste noapte sa doarma prin birouri, fara sa aiba pasaportul in regula. Asta noapte e chiar posibil un control.

O frica sora cu moartea, o adevarata disperare crispase chipul bietului cadru universitar. Horia zimbi trist si amar. Intr-o clipa de lumina si-a dat seama ca nici om de stiinta, nici om de omenie, nici taran din neamul taranilor, cum il crezuse la inceput, nu era acest Ilarie Turcul. (*Clopotnita*, p. 449)

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keeps the records, and the work goes on... It seems that Nicolai Trofimovici's passion for building was highly valued at the rayon forums, and always there was a need to transform another 8 years' school into a general one, with the same decision, on the same paper, Balta would be appointed director of the very school. [...] He had a blue Volga³²¹, big and heavy like a tank. [...] Rumours circulated in villages and in rayons³²² that comrade Balta, every time he built or rebuilt a school didn't forget his personal interests either. About a week after the works on the school were over so were the works on the house the director was building for himself. [...] He lived in the new house for a year or two [...] and once he got a new assignment, he sold the house for a pretty amount of money and there, in the village where he was named director, he initiated simultaneously with the school renovation the building of a new house.

[...] some of the most beautiful parties were held in their house. The table was laid for builders, for relatives, for superiors. The superiors especially liked to party in Nicolai Trofimovici's house as they knew that at any hour of day or night, when they would stop the car at his gate, before they would get out of car, before they would come in, bottles of cognac, glasses and snacks would appear on the director's table as if by miracle.

Balta, seated at the end of the table, silently showed everyone that he was more than pleased with everything. The names of the villages that he worked in, the faces and the voices of the guests seated around his table changed. However, the cutlery, the jokes and the sweating smile with which Balta urged his guests to have some more did not change. The price of the wine, *the orthography* [emphasis added], the fashion of skirts changed, but the order and customs of Nicolai Trofimovici's house didn't budge.³²³ (*The Spire*, pp. 471-473)

³²¹ **Volga** (Russian: Волга) is an automobile brand that originated in the Soviet Union to replace the venerated GAZ Pobeda in 1956. Modern in design, it became a symbol of higher status in the Soviet nomenclature.

³²² An administrative unit in Soviet Moldova.

³²³ [...] Nicolai Trofimovici Balta, directorul scolii din Capriana. Era o lifta de om care, odata ce-ti ieseai in cale, nu mai dadea napoi. [...] Domol, incapatinat, plamadit dintr-o agresivitate seculara, [...] voinic si sanatos, cu lacune catastrofale in pregatirea sa profesionala, ceea ce il facea sa fie zgircit la vorba, incetinel, chiar lenes intr-un anumit fel, Nicolai Trofimovici devenea numai foc si para atunci cind erau atinse interesele sale. [...] Era un muncitor cum rar se intimpla. A lucrat prin toate scolile din nordul Moldovei, era considerat drept unul dintre cei

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Thus, the narrator exposes the corrupt and evil nature of the Sovietised subaltern that only served the communist authorities and his own economic interests. However, despite his dangerous nature he was about to be exiled to Siberia because:

When the documents were ready, two of the elders of Capriana returned to the village, together with Simionel. The other three took the plane to Moscow, to see the country general prosecutor. [...] Unexpectedly, two colonels from the Ministry of Internal Affairs from Moscow arrived. They started the investigation immediately. Balta called Chisinau from the post office in the neighbouring village. He reported the situation and, as a result of the communication, a long and alarming silence followed. Chisinau didn't know anything about the arrival of the high inspection. Moscow decided to intervene in the Capriana case directly, in order to avoid any local influence.³²⁴ (*The Spire*, p. 509)

To conclude, I would agree with Melnic (2008, p. 240) that Drutse's complex characters are found to expose the destruction of the nation's character and ideals, as well as its genetic

mai buni directori. Preda literatura moldoveneasca, dar adevarata lui patima erau constructiile, ograda scolii era numai movile de nisip, surcele, var, piatra, ciment.

Nimeni nu stia cind, cum, de unde se luau toate celea, cit s-a platit pentru ele si de unde s-au gasit bani pentru a le plati. [...] Se lucra nu atit in scoala, cit pe afara, in ograda, si tot asa – anii se duc, vremea trece, biroul tine evidenta, treaba merge ... Pe semne, aceasta patima a lui Nicolai Trofimovici pentru constructii era mult apreciata de forurile raionale, si cum se ajunge la necesitatea de-a se mai transforma una din scolile de opt ani in scoala medie, in aceeasi hotarire, pe aceeasi foaie, Balta era numit directorul acelei scoli. [...]

Avea o „Volga” albastra, mare si grea cit un tanc. [...]

Se vorbea prin sate, si prin raioane se vorbea ca tovarasul Balta, construind ori reconstruind cite-o scoala, nu-si uita si propriile interese. Cam la vreo saptamina dupa terminarea scolii, sfirseau si lucrarile in casa ce si-o facea directorul. [...] Locuia in casa noua un an –doi [...] si cum primea o numire noua, vindea casa pentru o suma rotunjoara si acolo, in satul unde era numit ca director, pornea odata cu reconstructia scolii o casa noua.

[...] si in casa lor se faceau petreceri dintre cele mai frumoase. Se pregateau mese pentru zidari, pentru rude, pentru sefi. Mai ales sefilor le placea sa petreaca in casa lui Nicolai Trofimovici, stiind bine ca la fiecra ora de zi sau de noapte, cind vor opri masina la poarta lui, pina sa coboare din masina, pina sa intre, pe masa directorului, ca prin minune, vor aparea sticle cu coniac, pahare si zacusca. (*Clopotnita*, pp. 471-473)

³²⁴ Cum documentele au fost gata, doi dintre batrinii Caprianei s-au intors in sat, impreuna cu Simionel, iar altii trei au urcat in avion si au plecat la Moscova, la procurorul general al tarii. [...] Pe neasteptate au sosit doi colonei de la Ministerul de Interne din Moscova, si cum au intrat in Capriana, imediat au si inceput cercetarile. De la posta din satul vecin Balta a telefonat la Chisinau, comunicind faptul, in urma carei comunicari in receptor s-a lasat o mutenie lunga, ingrijoratoare, dat fiind ca Chisinaul nu stia nici cu spatele de sosirea inaltei inspectii. Moscova hotarise sa intervina in cazul Capriana direct, pentru a evita orice influenta locala. (*Clopotnita*, p. 509)

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make-up. This reaffirms us in the idea that they are created to divulge the nation's denationalization and subjugation by the communist "other".

However, subjugation is possible because of people's fear. For example, according to Ghilas (2004), fear to lose the approbation of the superiors makes Turcul betray Horia; the fear of the (young) villagers to accept the spire as an embodiment of their moral values prevents them from putting out the fire that turns it into ashes (p. 400); the fear of Jenea to confront the homo sovieticus—Balta paralyzes her at one of the crucial moments. To sum up, it can be said that the Soviet terror has created a fear in human beings to live freely, to think and be honest with others and themselves. However, it is alienation that marks the destiny of Horia who is bewildered by the fear and the (apparent) indifference of the natives. He cannot understand how they can leave the past turn into ashes after it has been crucified.

However, despite Dedkov's (2008) argument that the Moldovans seem to be like the much suffering, biblical Job, who was obedient and patient in his suffering (p. 179), Drutse's characters contribute to the message of what one should never become—a homo sovieticus. And, as Alexandrescu and Gavrilă (2000) claim, one should prove lots of tenacity, courage, force and sacrifice (pp. 495-497), like Onake or Horia, to be able to struggle for the survival of the Romanians between the Dniester and the Prut rivers.

So, in agreement with Bilețchi, N. (1998), Drutse's heroes are often the keepers of the nation's faith, traditions (pp. 93-97), and history. Also, Corcodel's (2008a) argument concerning Drutse's techniques of portraying the heroes of *The White Church* (p.151) is applicable to the novels analysed above as well. It has been observed that the details concerning physical appearance are employed quite often, especially with the purpose to complement the description of the inner world of the heroes and often reflect the personality alterations caused by the new regime.

Chapter VI: Conclusions, Limitations, and Questions for Further Research

Are we trapped in a politics of struggle where the representation of social antagonism and historical contradictions can take no other form than a binarism of theory vs. politics? Can the aim of freedom of knowledge be the simple inversion of the relation of oppressor and oppressed, centre and periphery, negative image and positive image?

Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*

Indeed, this dissertation has refrained from labelling the post-Soviet period of the history of Moldova as a black moment in the lives of the natives. This has been quite a challenge because, on the one hand, the new approach to the history of Moldova accentuates the subaltern status of the colonised. Therefore, the natural impulse is to condemn the tragic past. On the other hand, the establishment of Soviet domination put an end to the early 20th-century dream of the united Moldova which would include both the right and left side of the river Prut. Nevertheless, the dissertation has focused on reproducing the fresco of post-Soviet Moldova as depicted in the fiction of the time, a fiction that as it results from the textual analysis has a subversive character. Indeed, Drutse's fiction mainly focused on the aspects of history that were generally silenced within the dominant Soviet discourse. And, given the communist censorship, the Moldovan writer had to use symbols, metaphors and motifs to camouflage the nationalist message. So, often, I had to read between the lines in order to get closer to the core of the identity issue that the country has been facing in the post-Soviet era. Hence, the postcolonial approach was used to provide an "other" perspective on the history of this former Soviet republic. Life stories, which were barely known beyond the (now, gone) Iron Curtain, were voiced and the subaltern's voice was carried to a wider audience. Thus, *Struggle for National Identity Preservation in Central and Eastern Europe. A Case Study of Ion Drutse's Prose, an Echo from the Soviet Metropolis* presents an attempt at breaking the decades-long silence into which the post-Soviet Moldova had been immersed.

The last section of this dissertation will sum up the entire debate by restating the important points. First, it has to be mentioned here that the approach taken has summarised a

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considerable amount of arguments in favour of the hypothesis that the post- in post-Soviet is similar to the post- in post-colonial. After all, in either case there is a victim and a perpetrator driven by an imperialist urge. And, the hegemony of the latter implies (some degree of) curtailment of the freedom of the subaltern. Also, in both cases, the subaltern's subversion impulse is kept under control by means of various forms of oppression that range from military to economic, political, and cultural domination.

Second, although the sphere and nature of Russian imperialism is slightly different from the British one, it shares most of the (political and/or mercantilist) objectives—to enlarge the sphere of influence and the sources of potential income—and practices. Indeed, both capitalism and communism aimed at the subjugation or (almost) enslavement of the subaltern in favour of the imperial centre. Also, dispossession and dislocation of the natives was (often) followed by their “civilization” or Sovietization. In addition, considering Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*, I reached the conclusion that the inhabitants of both British and Soviet peripheries were seen as inferior to the coloniser. Thus, the colonised often craved for being a “man” just like his master. The Soviet subaltern wanted to be in his master's shoes. Consequently, he/she embraced the “ideals” which the *homo sovieticus* embodied. And, last but not least, despite the impermeability of the Soviet discourse to the idea, there was a dependency of the colonies/Soviet republics from the metropolis. After all, the relocation of the borders of (former) Bessarabia led to the republic's isolation from Romania. This together with the economic policies imposed by the Kremlin made the country completely dependent on Moscow and the other Soviet Socialist Republics.

Thus, the postcolonial approach has provided the key concepts for the analysis of the subaltern position and the identity issue in the case of Moldova. On the one hand, the more recent insights provided by scholars such as Thompson (2008), Turoma and Waldstein (2013), or Sandru (2012), and, on the other hand, the more traditional definitions provided by post-colonial scholars such as Boehmer (1995) and Said (1994) have made the smoke-screen camouflaging Russian imperialism disappear. Also, the hegemony of Russian language and culture—carriers of the Soviet ideology—has been brought into attention for its role in building the *homo Sovieticus*. Consequently, the victimisation and denationalization of the subaltern have been identified as the basic features of Soviet domination.

Consider, for example, the situation described in *The Burden of our Goodness* or *Leaves of Yearning*: towards the end of the Second World War the Russian Army regained control of the

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territory between the Prut and the Dniester. The small isolated Moldovan village is invaded by Russian soldiers and the patriarchal order is altered. The once loved folk songs are replaced by Russian songs. People are interrogated and sent to Siberia while their property is converted into the property of the state. Then, the lands are taken from the peasants and kolkhozes are created. Young people who agree to do what the new authorities require from them are promised a better future. Consequently, the younger generations suffer from alienation. For instance, Rusanda is no longer at home neither in her parents' home nor in her village.

Nevertheless, the postcolonial perspective made it possible to identify the way the European subalterns fought against the devastating effects of the Soviet melting pot. In this sense, it has been found that the very interaction of the native element with the agents of the metropolis provoked a subversive reaction. And, despite the centre's intentions to assimilate/annihilate the autochthonous population(s) and to transform them into clones of the superior Russian, a hybrid came out. As an illustration, there is Horia the young history teacher who accepts to be instructed in accordance with the Soviet model. Yet, he uses the knowledge he receives to fight the monopoly of the dominant discourse. He mixes history and myth to recreate a heroic past and to emancipate the colonised. Thus, it has been concluded that the national elements could subsist by penetrating the dominating discourse.

As should be evident by now, the dissertation focused on the case of the Moldovan writer and political activist, Ion Drutse. The literary review of the existing critical paradigm has revealed that Drutse and his work seem to be a hybrid. Indeed, the critics' opinions have created a picture of the artist (and his creation) as a combination of the dedication and respect for the Romanian (literary) tradition(s) and patriarchal values of the Moldovan society, and some style and techniques borrowed from Russian classics. Yet, in the absence of a postcolonial tradition in what concerns the study of Moldovan literature, and the inability to contrast Drutse's works with those of his models, the findings cannot be fully generalised. Nevertheless, the new perspective revealed that Drutse made use of both abrogation and appropriation to express the Moldovans' national identity. Thus, he has been grouped with the school of artists that refrained from becoming the typical Socialist realist writer that the Soviet propaganda used for the ideological manipulation of the subjugated people. Also, it has been deduced that Drutse has appropriated Russian to make it a carrier of the oppressed national identity/culture and to evade the censorship of the servile communist regime from Chisinau.

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In addition, Drutse has been seen to subvert the “superior” Soviet culture that imposed its “universal” values as something that should be unanimously accepted by the individuals of the subaltern communities. And, instead of promoting the “new” values of the communist society, he focused on the history and language that, together with the (home)land, have always been the pillars of the Moldovans’ identity. Therefore, special attention has been paid to the history that Drutse was subtly describing in his novels. And, it has been observed that after the (re)annexation of Bessarabia in 1940, the measures employed to destroy the nationalist movements/ideals were much harsher than the ones practiced under the Russian Czar. As a result, much of the remaining population was too terrified to take a stand, and complied with the collectivisation, alienation from the national ideal and Russification imposed by the Kremlin. So, the Moldovans mainly limited their resistance to conserving the mother tongue and the collective memory as intact as possible.

Moreover, it has been found that besides language and history, some other themes specific to the postcolonial experience are also covered in Drutse’s novels. In this regard, the postcolonial issues that have formed the focus of the dissertation have revealed that Moscow was to Moldova what London was to its colonies. Soviet domination found expression in all the spheres of human activity of the natives—culture, education, agriculture, industry, architecture, administration, justice. Indeed, such was the nature of Soviet domination that the existing patriarchal order could not exist without being altered by the intrusion of the other. Thus, the first/older generations of dominated natives were drained of the force to fight—mainly by means of terror, deportations and famine. In most of the cases they had to make do with a silent resistance, with an uncorrupted faith and respect of the ancestral customs and traditions, just like Onake. In contrast, much of the youth, consider the example of Rusanda or Mircea, had been lured to the utopia of the communist ideology and converted into *homo Sovieticus*. Yet, there were many who, like Drutse’s Gheorghe, were doomed to experience a painful *dor*³²⁵ for the destroyed home. Still, there were a few who found a way to overcome the identity crisis and to fight back the way Horia did. So, it has been found that the struggle for national identity preservation (has) never ceased. And, even after over twenty years of independence, Drutse’s novels are relevant, because the shadow of the metropolis still lingers over the sapling of the Moldovan national identity.

³²⁵ Yearning or what is generally known as alienation

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In other words, this thesis is an answer to the plea raised by David Chioni Moore (2005, p. 519). Thus, the kind of questions raised by *Struggle for National Identity Preservation in Central and Eastern Europe. A Case Study of Ion Drutse's Prose, an Echo from the Soviet Metropolis* are as follows: What changes, acts of resistance, even rebellions took place under the authoritarian communist regime? What was the meaning of individuality and/or originality (national identity), of continuity (collective memory) in the context of the Soviet melting pot? And, how could we treat the cultural, historical phenomenon of *homo Sovieticus* in all its historical complexity and detail, without at the same time losing sight of, the alliance between cultural work, political tendencies, the state, and the specific realities of Soviet (colonial) domination? Are we really trapped as Bhabha (1994) wonders? So the investigation attempts to describe the nature of the connection between Russian imperialism, Soviet domination and postcolonial experience in the specific case of Moldova.

However, it must be admitted that the postcolonial approach to the investigation of the *Struggle for National Identity Preservation in Central and Eastern Europe. Case study: Ion Drutse's prose, an echo from the Soviet metropolis* contains its own sets of theoretical and practical *limitations*. These derive, in part, from my background, but, also from the necessity of narrowing down a very vast body of literature. After all, Drutse is just one of the many post-Soviet intellectuals from the USSR that made of the written word a sword. The purpose of this section, therefore, is to inform the reader of all the possible ramifications associated with this topic of investigation. Firstly, one of the challenges concerns the lack of a unified body of theory on the identity issue in the post-Soviet space. The fact is that, on the one hand, the scientific discourse within the USSR was controlled by Moscow, and, after the collapse of the Union the connection between the Academies of the independent republics was lost. On the other hand, the newly liberated republics faced many economic and political challenges, thus little attention was paid to the identity issue. Also, the abrogation of the Soviet hegemony often implied the abrogation of the Russian language, consequently the discourses published in the different post-Soviet states was not accessible without translation.

Secondly, there was little unbiased criticism of Drutse, the Moldovan writer who moved to Moscow, and his works. Indeed, the third chapter of this dissertation reveals that many of the critics were "expected" to have a specific attitude towards Drutse, and, many others simply did not know him. Thirdly, there were no translations into English of the writer's prose. As a result

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of all these gaps, the scope of the research had to be narrowed down to the text analysis of Drutse's novels, mostly isolated from other literary works produced in the post-Soviet republics. So, no comparative analysis of Drutse, Chinghiz Aitmatov and/or Alexandr Solzhenitsyn, who are just some of the post-Soviet intellectuals that denounced the crimes of communism, could be carried out.

Actually, unlike within the Western paradigm of postcolonial literature, the author has encountered neither a systematised and/ or unified framework nor a complex methodology for the study of the post-colonial/Soviet reality within the post-Soviet studies. Most frequently, scholars specialising in the study of the sphere of influence of the USSR were found to operate with concepts and approaches provided by the post-colonial theory. But, no study was found to consider Moldovan (Soviet) literature from a postcolonial approach. Therefore, the case of other subalterns of Moscow had to be considered, though, only in terms of theoretical framework. The comparative analysis of literature produced in different Soviet republics would have implied working with novels written in Russian or translations into English. And, this would have made some of the language issues less visible because in Drutse's novels (the Romanian versions being considered) Russian is often presented as the language of the "other"—a tool of hegemonic oppression of the subaltern—and is often contrasted with the natives' mother tongue. Also, the approach to the theme of Soviet domination and cultural fragmentation would have been complicated as it was often also related to the language issue. Consequently, most of the text analysis was based on the studies elaborated by scholars from outside Moldova but with no detailed consideration of the other post-colonial/Soviet literatures. Yet, as already mentioned in the introduction, this would make a good topic for a potential comparative analysis in a future investigation. Thus, following the example of postcolonial English literature, clusters could be created based on origins (or language groups—Slavic vs Non-Slavic literatures) and geographic location (the republics of the Soviet Union and the literatures of the other Warsaw Pact countries).

Furthermore, it was impossible to avoid some degree of subjectivity in what concerns the investigation of the fundamental problem because the other limitation that accompanied the investigation is the lack of reliable data. What is meant here is that there was little, if any at all, unbiased criticism of Drutse's works. On the one hand, most of the criticism that was published in the time when Moldova was a Soviet republic was mostly conditioned by the communist

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ensorship of the time. On the other hand, the most recent literary studies either sacrificed or eulogized Drutse without really considering all the factors that influenced his life/career and artistic decisions. Thus, besides analysing the reality depicted in his novels, the historical accuracy of the major events had to be checked. Still, the different approaches and attitudes of the academic world of Moldova, Romania or Russia towards Ion Drutse's person and art made (almost) impossible the generalization of the findings of the analysis. So, the question of why so many old and young individuals—with a passport in which Moldovan appears in the line of nationality—deny their Moldovan identity remains open for further interdisciplinary inquiry.

Ultimately, the lack of English versions of Drutse's novels made the analysis and interpretation of the selected data quite time consuming. Moreover, as a consequence of the fact that there is no translation of Drutse's novels into English, only the most outstanding excerpts could be considered, since they had to be translated and incorporated into the body of the dissertation. Many interesting parts, however, had to be discarded because they lost their connotative meaning out of the context which was often pages long. For example, it was also impossible to thoroughly analyse all the cases of usage of Russian words in the speech/writing of the natives. Besides, third-person omniscient narration is the predominant form of literary discourse in the analysed novels, thus, it would have been impossible to make a generalizing conclusion as to the degree of hybridity of Russian or Romanian in the speech of the fictional characters. Consequently, one of the methodological limitations concerned the sample size selected for analysis which had to be adjusted to the time and volume limits of this doctoral thesis.

Nonetheless, the analysis that has been carried in the second part of this dissertation opens the path for a possible investigation of the representations or the identities ascribed to Moldovans in the literature of the metropolis. Thus, a complex analysis of the literature produced in Russia could contribute to generalizing the findings of this investigation. And, it could provide an insight to the way the colonisers built the "otherness" of the (Moldavian) subaltern.

In conclusion, this research has aimed to respond to Moore's plea and fill the gap existing in the study of the post-Soviet identity in the case of Moldova. Also, it has intended to shed light on some of the challenges faced by the Sovietised subaltern and to identify some of the strategies/ used to resist or adapt to the changing (Soviet) Moldovan society. However, it did not attempt to provide a definite answer to the question of how to solve the identity issue. After all,

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the first step to solving a problem is to acknowledge its existence. Hopefully, the personal and critics' opinions expressed in the chapters of this doctoral thesis will offer valuable food for thought for anybody interested in postcolonial/post-soviet literature, identity issues, subversion and appropriation.

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