

LIMINALITY STAGES IN POST-COMMUNIST SOCIETIES: MEDIA AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN ROMANIA

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Anthropologists have always considered the ritual as a social institution capable of bringing about cohesion and equilibrium: indeed its repetitive and predictable structure is opposing the chaos and unpredictability from the real world ("Ritual is a reducer of real or imagined disorder" - G. Balandier, 1988, p. 33; "Ceremony is a declaration against indeterminacy. Through form and formality it celebrates man-made meaning, the culturally determined, the regulated, the named and the explained" SF Moore, B. Myerhoff, 1977; etc). If we accepted the idea that the ritual was used by the societies to control the disorder, then by an inversion we could say that where disorder exists, the ritual or at least the ritual manifestations show up. By extension, we can say that the periods of an intense change (crisis, revolutions, transitions) necessarily imply a ritual dimension and that the application of a ritual paradigm can offer a theoretical model for understanding the uncommon phenomena which characterize such moments.

Here we want to refer to the processual symbolic analysis, detailed by Victor Turner and his successors. The basic ideas of this theoretical body are the following:

- a) In all societies (traditional and modern) rituals are functioning as cultural mechanisms that control the social change. That's why "ritual is by definition associated with social transition" (V. Turner, 1977: 77)
- b) Rituals are enacted by basic symbolic units, which show the "root paradigms" of a culture. In this respect "ritual is a transformative performance, revealing major classifications, categories and contradictions of cultural processes". (idem)
- c) Being "between and betwixt" two social stages, rituals create a state of *liminality* - "a legitimized situation of freedom from cultural constraints and social classifications" (V. Turner, 1968, vol X: 581). Liminality, as opposed to normal social structure ("*societas*") introduce a period of "*communitas*", which means "an unstructured or rudimentary structured and relatively undifferentiated community (V. Turner, 1969: 96).

d) During the "ritual process", societies are experiencing an acceptable disorder, based on the dis-membership of the usual system of classifications (values) and of the daily behavior (norms). After this period of "structural impoverishment and symbolic enrichment" (V. Turner, 1968, vol x: 577) a process of re-membering slow starts. According to Dov Shinar (1995: 318) this process involves "the interaction of values, images and symbols (root paradigm), power and organization (formulative efforts) and action (transformative agents)."

e) On modern societies, some "phases of history [...] are in many respects homologous to the liminal period of important rituals in stable and repetitive societies." (V. Turner, 1969: 112). But, according to Victor Turner, our societies are more liminoid than liminal; in fact, the opportunities for change (and crisis) are larger now and social and cultural criticism are "no longer a matter of the interface between fixed structure, but a matter of holistically developmental" (V. Turner, 1982: 45).

Many researchers have analysed the ritual dimensions of different modern social phenomena or process, like contemporary carnivals and pilgrimages (R. Da. Matta, 1977, R.L.Grimes, 1976, V. Turner, E. Turner, 1978, R. Abrahams, 1982, A. Morinis, 1992), the Olympic Games and other sport performances (J. MacAloon, 1984, M. Real, 1989, T. B. Farrel, 1989, W. Rothenbuhler, 1989,, Ch. Bromberg, 1992), the political life (J.Mc. Weatherford, 1985, M. Edelman, 1988, D. Kertzer, 1988, Marc Abeles, 1989 and 1990, D. Nimmo, JE Combs, 1990, K. Roth, J. Roth, 1990, G. Balandier, 1992, V. Soulé, 1992, A. Corbin, 1994, Karin Becker, 1995, M. Coman, 1996), media consumption in middle class families (M. Marsden, 1980, G. Goethals, 1981); also other researches have stressed the role of mass media, especially television, in amplifying the symbolic dimensions of different public ceremonies (P. Elliot, 1982, D. Chaney, 1986, J. S. Ettema, 1990, S. M. Hoover, 1988, De Repetigny, 1985, D. Dayan, E. Katz, 1992, M. Coman, 1994, P. Marion, 1994, L. Tsaliki, 1994). At a micro-social scale, this model was applied by Barbara Myerhoff (1984) to explain the reactions of some groups of elders, after retiring from the social life, when they see their previous life broken (dis-membering) and they must create a new way of living and a new hierarchy of values (re-membering), by D. Blanc (1987), O. Ihl (1994) or C. Moricot (1996).

Starting from this ritualistic paradigm, Dov Shinar (1995 and 1996) proposes a wider perspective: the global social changing is seen as a liminal configuration, which means a combination between "dis-membering" and "re-membering". Dov Shinar doesn't sustain explicitly that the social change is a ritually patterned. Applying the concepts detached by Turner from his ritual analysis he suggests that social change can be understood as a ritual configuration. In Dov Shinar's model, the dis-membering phenomena are less theorized: they

are considered as more or less "natural" stages of the crisis and sudden social change; on the other hand, the phenomena of coming back to order (re-membering), considered culturally and historically determined, totally concentrate the researchers' attention. Making a synthesis between Turner's and Myerhoff's concepts, Shinar sustains that re-membering is realized through the varied combinations of three factors: the values (the root paradigms), the institutions (the formulative efforts) and the actors (the transformative agents): "First, re-membering involves a formulative effort, a concerted search for new consciousness. Second, this effort is oriented by root paradigms: consciousness recognized cultural models of an allusive, metaphorical kind, cognitively delimited, emotionally loaded and ethically impelled that give form to action in publicly critical circumstances. Third, formulative efforts are conducted through transformative agents such as collective memory, or increased awareness of a unique collective self" (D.Shinar, 1996, p.95). In a dis-membering or re-membering social space, these factors of social change would "float" like in an aquarium and the different forms in which they are combined would give birth to three configurations: the Merlin model (1995), rebaptised Avis model (1996) - in which the reconstruction process starts from the root paradigms (RP), the Pirandello model - in which the remaking process is dominated by the formulative efforts (FE) and the Che Guevara model - in which the transformative agents (TA) are on the top. The theoretical construction proposed by Dov Shinar surpasses the frames settled by V.Turner. Thus, although the former granted to some of the concepts he created (liminality, social dramas, root paradigms, dis-membering and re-membering) a more general sphere of application, V.Turner has never said that his model can be transformed from one for a local phenomenon (model off) to one for the entire society (model for). For example, he analyzed the contemporary pilgrimages or the forms of the theatralisation of the social conflicts through the concepts detached from his earlier study over the Ndembu tribes (see Turner, 1974, 1978 and 1982), but he didn't globalize this model for the whole social life

However, Victor Turner model can be applied to specific social and political phenomena - like those which have marked Romania between 1990-1992 period - which, through lot of their characteristics, can claim the statute of a *liminal* interlude. The period is characterised by the weakness of the political institutions and the permanent anti-establishment manifestations, the tearing of the traditional social texture, the ideological confusion, the scope of the mediated and non-mediated public debate, the predominance of the symbolic forms in the public communication, the existence of numerous micro and macro-ritual's chains, and so on. In such a state, the dis-membering factors are stronger; they contribute to the maintenance and prolongation of the liminal interval, annihilating and

embezzling the efforts of re-membering. From this perspective, the study of the after communist period as a liminal interval (even through the re-membering model as proposed by Dov Shinar) is, in fact, synonymous with the analysis of a permanent dis-membering.

Between 1992-1993, I had several discussions with Dov Shinar about both the theoretical resources of his model and its ability of explaining the complexity of crises in modern societies. This discussions and a deeper reflection, allowed me to have a more adequate view on the ritualistic model on social change. A first and theoretically less critical version of my research was followed by Shinar in his study, in order to show "the occurrence of the three scenarios in separate and simultaneous instances" (1996, p. 98).

The following study is the result of a far larger analysis; it goes deeper in Turner ideas and tries to explain the Romanian post-communist turmoil as a liminal configuration, in which the dis-membering tendencies overtake the re-membering process.

The Merlin Model

Dov Shinar considers that this model is referring to the situation in which "promoters of existing organisations search for organisational and power structures (FE) and action agencies (TA), in order to reach re-membering, dominance or consensus." (D. Shinar, 1996, p. 98). In this situation the reconstruction starts from the existing values in the cultural repertoire, values for which there are searched institutions and spreading agents capable of organising, transmitting and imposing this project in the same way so as to realise his aims the wizard Merlin needed an agent - the hero - and an institution - the royalty. Starting from Dov Shinar hypothesis, I think that we are not dealing with a simple process, but with a variety of possible combinations; generally speaking two configurations are dominant:

- a) values (RP) - institutions (FE) - actants (TA)
- b) values (RP) - actants (TA) - institutions (FE).

a) The fall of communism and of its ideology has come to the lack of some, until then, basic marks. To fill the newly-born vacuum, the society has adhered, almost spontaneously, to the non-communist values: democracy, individual rights, liberty of statement, civic society and so on. By a game of simple symmetries (the fall of a system implies the victory of the other one and the failure of one confirms the values of an other) all that was presented as "non-communism" benefited from the adhesion of the society. This fact explains the excessive use, more instrumental than doctrinary, of all the specific manifestation of the western political systems: their assuming was seen as a rapid and effective liberation from the previous system. For they proved to be convenient and accessible, these values have circulated intensively,

being, just like money, used by all political groups. This "liquidity" of the capital of values and symbols was skilfully speculated by the structures of the power: the NSF (National Salvation Front) has presented itself as an exponent of the general interests and aspirations, of democracy and freedom, staking on homogeneity and indistinction, not on the specificity and the doctrinary difference. The structures of the political opposition were also created from values (RP) to institutions: right after the fall of Ceausescu, many personalities put in light by their "dissident" fame, have started to create political or civic groups: Corneliu Coposu has revigorated the national-peasant doctrine and initiated the National Peasant Party; Radu Ciuceanu and Radu Cimpeanu, as exponents of liberalism before the second World War, made the National Liberal Party to revive; Sergiu Curescu created the Social Democratic Party; around them, hundred of other small parties tried to re-activate the "treasure" of non-communist doctrines. Then, intellectuals, political activists and even simple people started to promote, by media or by meetings and demonstrations the values and the projects of their parties.

More than this, a lot of associations have appeared as promoters of the values of democracy: conceived as forums of debate and clarification of the main concept of western democracies, they played an important role in the social communication during that period. Among them, the most well-known association was the Group of Social Dialogue (GSD) which has united the majority of the intellectuals who sympathised with the opposition and which printed a very influent magazine in the elite groups, called "22". GSD has carefully kept its independence, refusing to adhere to a political party or to become one; but practically it was active associated with the Opposition in all their important political initiatives. Not the same thing happened with other associations: the cultural association "Vatra", created to promote the national values (as a reaction to "The Democratic Union of the Magyars in Romania") has given birth to the Romanian National Unity Party (RNUP). The Civic Alliance, established at the beginning as a civil forum, has later split into the Alliance and the Civic Alliance Party, an active political forum, especially at the parliamentary level. The Association of Victims of Communism Jails was another active political who became rapidly a member of The Democratic Convention, the political body integrating the parties and associations fighting the so-called "post-communist Power". All these cases point out the difficulty of keeping the RP out of the institutional mechanisms (FE) in the conditions of a liminality period characterised by the feverish searching for organizational structures capable of uniting the energy and the aspirations of the society. That's why some of the main intellectual leaders of that period were marginalized, because, defending RP as values against

their instrumentalisation as ideology, is to contradict the political games (FE); isolated by their "road companions", they came to anchor in a "dissidence" metaphysically amplified. In my opinion, this process proves that the attempt of re-membering based on the re-activation of some important values of the pre-communist period, can not succeed in a liminal system, dominated by the "terrified bazareries" of the mixed values, the chaotic combination of ideas and violent language of the new utopia. The given situation is similar to the phenomena of the post-French Revolution, when the attempts of establishing some new values system through a combination of new ceremonies and new spiritual pantheon have failed (see Mona Ouzuf).

During the electoral campaign in 1990, four cultural personalities, morally validated by their dissidence against communism (Andrei Plesu, Gabriel Liiceanu, Ion Caramitru and P.M. Bacanu) have presented in front of the electors as "a group for defending democracy". After the electoral failure, they separated and have never become a group again. The same destiny had the parties which entered the elections as defenders of democratic values: "The Alliance for the Antitotalitarian Dignity", "The Party of the Democratic Future", "The Humanist Party of the Peace", and so on.

b) Another type of possible route of re-membering in the Merlin model, the one from the root paradigm to the transformative agents, has known the same vicissitudes. It's interesting to point out that in that period the spiritual leaders, known as dissidents during the communist last years (Doina Cornea, Ana Blandiana, father Galeriu, A. Paleologu, Gabriel Liiceanu, Andrei Plesu, O. Paler) have functioned as symbolic criteria of some social aspirations, but not as organizers or animators of coherent political or civic structures. Tired or dissatisfied of the inevitable negotiations and concessions specific to the political game, they were less attracted to the parties (FE) and more attracted to the forms of direct communication and interaction with the masses: conferences, meetings, pilgrimages, or by the power of mass mediated communication. Their messages were based on an urge for the simple political action-revolution or rebellion: they started from the pathetic statement of the democratic values and presented themselves as fighting against the communists and their descendants, "neo" or "krypto", who "stole" the revolution, and who controlled the power.

This manicheistic and romantic programme was aimed at the masses, in their quality of global force (TA), capable of upsetting the political power by an energetic street moving. Resuming the scheme of the events which favoured the fall of Ceausescu's regime, this strategy suggests this configuration: RP (values and their defenders) - TA (masses and the press as a mobilisation instrument) - FE (political organisations that were to take over and to

restore democracy). In both cases, RP have a negative (they are based on being against a political power), utopian (they presume the rapid removing of a power) and fortune-teller configuration (it's an announcement of a future order); TA are homogenous (the undifferentiated masses and a "revolutionary" press) and they manifest like the rituals of violence (Z. Davis, 1975) or the struggle rituals (Abeles, 1989), or the rituals of rebellion (Max Gluckman, 1963); FE don't look as an instrument built up for social change, but as a consequence, almost a natural one, of its achievement. We notice that the position of these defenders of the values is one of a radical re-membering by a set up disorder (and an inevitably ritual one) produced by a "communitas" of the revolted masses, and not a progressive and tidy route ensured by social political space. Which proves that these leaders too, believe that the reorganisation of the society has to be done by a dis-membering, by the distuction of the neo-communist order through a new revolution - and a new liminal stage..

The same scenario lead to the creation of another configuration:: thus, the "left-wing" values (RP), marked by the "de facto" dissapearance of the communist party, were looking for political groups (FE). So was born the Social Labour Party, revigorating a doctrine which claims to derive from Marxism and Leninism. More discrete, (because of the negative symbolic capital), this party was not remarked by the appeal to spectacular manifestations (TA) but by the institutionalizing and the minute organizing of its structures. Yet, it hasn't imposed itself through a newspaper of its own, but through the spreading of its ideas in some of the newspaper, left-wing oriented, but independents.

More spectacular is the case of the "Great Romania" party, an exponent of nationalist positions. It was born around a succesful magazine (called "The Great Romania"), which, using a popular humour and an aggressive language against the political leaders from the opposition and promoting a feverish nationalism, meant to win a constant audience. In 1991, the editor-in-chief of the magazine created this party and the members of his audience became his electors. The unity created through the journalistic communication was used in order to create another type of unity: the political one. In this case the T.A., as media-public community, were the source for the F.E., for a party and a political institution.

The Pirandello model

If, on contrary, a re-membering process starts from institutions, one can find the same two patterns of combining the main factors :

- a) institutions (FE) - values (RP) - agents of transformation (TA)
- b) institutions (FE) - agents of transformation (TA) - values (RP)

a) In the middle of all that turbulence caused by the mass uprising that led to the final act of the communist regime and through some still less known fluctuations of the different power factors in the country, a new political force was born: The National Salvation Front (NSF). The denomination was eloquent: it speaks about a mission of redemption in the name of a whole nation and not about any kind of ideology used by a certain social group. Gathering well-known dissidents, people from the street pushed in the forefront by the uprisings against Ceausescu, militarymen, intellectuals the NSF was presented at the beginning as a structure of transition, promising to ensure the power management till the next election. Soon enough people learned that the NSF decided to become a political party and to run in this quality (i.e. structure of power) for the elections. In order to legitimize such a step, it presented itself as a emanation of the antitotalitarian revolution, as a representative of people's aspirations; so it employed on the one hand the fundamental values of democracy and on the other the populist values specific to everything concerning the mass-will. The NSF spokesmen carefully avoided to adopt any ideological position and justified all their strategical decisions by resorting to the general values: democracy, prosperity, national salvation, consensus, etc. Being everywhere and nowhere at the same time, the NSF had, during that period of euphoria, of general (and irrational) hope, a rethoric advantage over the other parties constrained by their political doctrines within a narrower range of action (G.Stoiciu, A. Stoiciu, 1995). Those were victims of an ideology of differences offered to a society suffering a "crisis of difference" (Rene Girard), a society desperately looking for solutions to get over the crisis and to find a (even temporary) unity! Thus, this generalization and this axiological vacuity were more appropriate for the lack of ideological guide-marks that characterised the society, and that offered extra-legitimacy to the party that spoke in the name of all and for all.

Always searching not only for a political cover but also for rather philosophic base, the NSF endorsed the creation of a nucleus of intellectuals gathered in a "thinking group" known as the "Society of Tomorrow". The theoretical goal was to offer the NSF a legitimacy to a historical extent. If, as far as the past was concerned, the party could consider itself valid thanks to its statute of emanation from the fight against communism, it was still in need of a validity for the future perspective: as the one to guarantee the accomplishment of people's hopes, as the iron-arm fighting for a better society. The practical goal was to create a counter-weight for the concentration of intellectuals around the opposition movement, especially around the Group of Social Dialogue. As long as GSD's ideas were reaching the public through a weekly newspaper (the "22"), the other group also founded its own magazine; after

the latter's failure it started again close to another newly born of the media, a magazine called "The Literator".

Due to the victory in the May 1990 elections, the NSF gained the control over the Parliament and the executive; eroded by the prolonged social and economic crisis, by the political life evolution and by its own eclecticism, the NSF was confronted, during the 1992 election year, a deep crisis which led it to its division. Therefore, we could find on the one side the supporters of the national leader of the party (and ex-prime minister) Petre Roman, and on the other side his opponents; the latter were also divided between the supporters of the president Ion Iliescu and other two wings consisting of the party's "technocrats". After a lot of struggling (more or less covered by the media) the "unique party" gave birth to three structures: the NSF (Petre Roman), The Democratic National Salvation Front (DNSF-Ion Iliescu) and "A Future for Romania" - which would soon disappear from the political stage. In order to achieve a new legitimacy, the NSF and the DNSF chose different tactics: DNSF would present itself as the inheritor of the original aspirations only now displayed within the socio-democracy ideological limits; it would direct its future steps and efforts towards the concerns and aspirations of the middle class (the strategy of "social protection"). For a change, the NSF would accuse the people of DNSF of neo-communism and conservatism; it would present itself as the party of the real economic and political reform, insisting upon a rather neo-liberal ideology, upon a "shock therapy" strategy, and pretending to have the support of the technocratic strata of the Romanian society.

As far as the TA are concerned, from 1990 to 1992 the NSF showed a special dedication in exploiting all the communicational resources. In this context we must underline the (almost excessive) advantage they took of the church: the services and the religiosity had been abundantly used as a means of legitimizing. Thus, the many Masses in the memory of the young people that died during the popular uprisings, which were wildly covered by the media, were sanctifying (i.e. offering a RP) not only the heroes but also the party that claimed to be the leader of the battle against dictatorship. Meanwhile, the NSF representatives were always in sight during the most important holidays of the orthodox calendar, this way providing themselves with more credibility in front of a nation paying much interest to the religious phenomenon.

In addition to that the NSF created its own newspaper ("Today") and influenced several other newspapers favourable to its policy. It organized meetings, public conferences, cultural manifestations; it created regional subsidiaries and animated a rich party-life. But more than all that, it settled over the television, mainly over the first channel - the only one

with a national audience and the advantage of a wide influence over the population. Consequently, the television became one of the major stakes in the political (even street) fights of the year 1990. The NSF kept a strong influence over the television, thus gaining a better positioning (in comparison to other political parties) for broadcasting its speeches, its messages with political contents as well as constructions with (symbolic) contents, and also for legitimizing its strategies meant to help overcome the crisis.

b) The second version of the Pirandello model (FE - TA - RP) is also offering the possibility to understand the machinery and the tendencies that ruled another two state institutions: the presidency and the unions. In the Romania of 1990 these institutions were under the sign of the distortions, of the aberrations induced by the "personal" use of Ceausescu. That's why their efforts towards achieving a new legitimacy were much more intense than the ones made by other FE components.

The presidency (which had to suffer all the attacks personally addressed to the elected president Ion Iliescu) had chosen the alternative of symbolic discourses and meaningful silences; each time the protests increased, the presidency faded away under the shadow of the common daily affairs, scarcely covered by the media; whenever the times were quiet, the presidency rose again as a symbolic instance: it participated in international highly mediated forums (The UN Conference over Children's Rights, the Rio Reunion Over the Planet's Health), at reunions with businessmen willing to invest in Romania, meeting and ceremonies concerning the Romanian Diaspora, debates with party leaders or Parliament members, talks with people on the street while visiting different places of the country. Those appearances were providing the image of a diligent presidency, sensible to the vital problems of the country, careful to maintain the political balance, and active in the international relations. So, for the media that covered such information, the presidency appeared as a dual discourse: narrative (it "did") and valuing (it did "for us"). This was a symbolic alternative for the Opposition's too static (always speaking about the communist past of the president) and negative (finding that the source of all bad things in the country) discourse.

The strategy of discretion is fully visible in the (so-called) "Constantza scandal": one month before the presidential election, in August 1992, allegations were made by media that the president slapped right out in the street a journalist who had hooted after him. The opposition newspapers instantly started a violent campaign: using the victim's and other journalists' declarations (without having any photos or audio-visual documents) they predicted the end of the president's political career. Two days after, the presidency spokesman presented

on the first channel of the national television a video-cassette showing the president in the middle of a contradictory discussion with the journalist, without any violent sign being visible. Then, during the long debates that followed, the presidency kept a impenetrable silence. Till now, no one can tell what has really happened, but due to the asymmetry between the presidency's impassibility and the violence shown by the media sympathizing with the Opposition, a large mass still believe that the president has been the victim of a blow coming from the Opposition.

The strategy of the symbolic work was about to appear a few weeks later, when the presidency opened to the visit of the pop-singer Michael Jackson as he came for his concert in Bucharest. After showing the images of the crowds surrounding Michael Jackson everywhere, the Romanian television showed the president walking arm in arm with the singer through the gardens of the presidential palace, and offering him a military uniform which the 19th century officers of the Romanian army used to wear (it should be underlined that the up-mentioned uniform had been worn during the National Independence War). Although they stirred up the irony and the criticism of the media sympathizing with the Opposition, those images touched the public which had a very good time watching two poles (the politics and the show-bis) reaching each other, watching the representative of the power becoming more human near that exotic and funny stranger. This way the presidency tried to impose its legitimacy less by a theoretical discourse and more by a symbolical framework, less by an active intervention and more by playing a discreet game of absences and presences. All this was meant to aim a double target: Ceausescu's activities-noisy, useless, oriented towards a megalomaniacal ceremonialism, and the Opposition's attacks.

On the other side the second possible development of Pirandello Model (FE - TA - RP) is illustrated by the political evolution of the trade unions. The unions (a large number of them were formed after Ceausescu's collapsed) had to erase the passivity, the formalism and the non-involvement in the real problems of the workers, which characterised them during the communist period. Consequently, they presented themselves as the ones to defend the interests of all professional categories, as the counter-balance for the power, especially for the government. Therefore, the unions centered their discourse round the "refusal", round denying the government's initiatives, round taking the measures for payment increasing and for diminishing the number of dismissals, promoting the financial involvement of the state in supporting the economy. As all "instances" of insubordination they used the TA oriented towards immediate communication: meetings, strikes, marches, hunger strikes, press conferences, and (even) worker "commandos". Thus, the big demonstrations or "strikes" of

the truckmen, the railwaymen, the subway workers, of the miners as well as the violence of their actions and speeches, led to a high state of tension, deepened the crisis, and related the disorder to the unions' image. Choosing the alternative of violent action (instead of the organizing one - FE or the ideological validation one - RP) the unions had finally sunk in the TA configuration, they became a source of "communitas", of crisis and careless solidarity in confusion, in denying the existing order. The attempts of reorganisation which started from institutions and different forms of institutionalised power, have failed, given the evidence of the political turmoil which has deeply shaken all levels of Power. Contesting every action of Power, opposition parties and associations became the main agents of deconstruction and created an identity based exclusively on its status of dis-membering.

The Che Guevara model

It looks to me that within an interval of liminality, lasting liminality especially, the TA take a privileged position: they are both tools and releasers for the changing. Thanks to the ambiguous way they are running, they are more compatible with the process of transformation and all the same more able to come out unweakened, even stronger, from the failings or the breakdowns of that process. In this respect we may consider that the transition periods (i.e. of complex changing, of lasting bounds) are frames ruled by the TA which impose their own logic to the RP and FE. This means that the re-membering oriented configurations built by the RP or FE are destabilised by the TA intervention, and the configurations coming from the TA's are always dis-membering oriented configurations setting up the disorder of "communitas" and the immediate priority of communication.

The period 1990-1992 can be defined by the collapse suffered not only by the standards and the value scales, by the institutions and power structures, but also by the "action agencies" existing in the communist era. As the structuring factors of the system (factors for maintaining the "difference") had been abolished, the social space thus delivered had been invaded by "ad-hoc" modalities of aggregation that is, by some kind of aleatory exchange machineries, unstable or poorly structured. "So all the fields of activity, the exchanges, that once looked almost fluid, transparent, and predictable, now appear viscid, obscure, unpredictable" (A. Bejin, 1976, p 61). Those exchange machineries no longer organized by a coherent group of rules are more and more dependent on the immediate contexts they issue from that is, on the process of action or/and of communication that provide the act of exchange.

Street manifestations (which took place almost every day during the first half of 1990),

reunions and spontaneous meetings, a fabulous number of newspapers making the rumors from the street even more confusing, violent arguments between different groups, the reckless game of now -here-then-gone played by all sorts of "societies", "associations", "parties", "party-wings"-they were all proofs for the ebullition of the TA and the obstructions preceding the FEor RP patterns. The state of continuous crisis had established a communion space which was replacing the systems of communication and organized behavior principles belonging to the public sphere, by their informal exchanges specific to the liminality - no matter if ritual, carnival like, pilgrimage or "performance" like.

The state of communion had been totally reached during the demonstrations of the University Square of Bucharest (May-June 1990). They represented the victory of total communication, of the non-imposed behavior and of the general identification with the collective ideals. Thus, using the Word "hooligan" (that the president once called the manifestants) in order to distinguish between "us" and the others (the NSF leaders, the neo-communists, the non-participants) and in order to assume a certain identity, new names like "diplomat-hooligan", "engineer-hooligan", "student-hooligan", etc appeared. The behaviours were dominated by ritual theatricality : choir singing, kneelings, prayers, slogans spelled by the entire crowd, etc. Everybody was free to take the floor: from the University balcony or in the middle of the street, "ad-hoc" public speakers spoke to the crowds in that mix of confessions slogans and callings to action which composed the "revolutionary" discourse. A mythical abyss separated the communion space from the rest: the Square had been called the "communism-free zone". Finally the common time boundaries were there no more: day or night, work-day or holiday, morning or evening, there was always something happening: a speech, a song, blasphemy uttering against communism, a fight, etc. Ad-hoc hierarchies were set up, new charismatic leaders as well as heroes and martyrs came into being: a special rank (and veneration) was given to those protesters calling the hunger style in order to force the NSF to give up the power (M. Coman, 1996).

The University Square universe was built on the TA logical framework - the total communication and the unlimited behaviour had finally created a certain social structure where the usual values were either inverted or ridiculed, where through a "bizarre imagery" people thought (or rather dreamed) of a brand new society. All this configurations occurred and disappeared at the same pace as the communication vectors, without ever reaching a unitary process .

The media invasion (a phenomenon which has impressed and enthused the foreign observers) is also a fit model for the "Che Guevara" model. Created as a huge

"interface", of the social communication, the media (especially the written-press) have initiated the sovereignty of the unstable, the unpredictable, and the uncertain. This wasn't because of the competition for "scoops" or "entertainment news", but because of the street rumors sold as truths, as "revealing" informations, but contradicted the next day; because of the never-ceasing attacks against all forms of authority, never-ending aggressive and apocalyptical dramatizing quarells between journalists. The functioning of the mass-media brought to a communicational "space", a mass-mediated "communitas", where everything seemed possible but nothing was sure (M. Coman, 1995).

As a matter of fact, the mass-media institutions considered that the proof for their independence and their final goal should be the fight against the power and the attitude of permanent opposition (M. Coman, P. Gross, 1994; P. Gross, 1996). Proud of being the fourth power in the state, the mass-media tried to impose its principles, that is, those inspired by a no-limited liberty of statement. Which in fact are the principles of communicational estate based on the avatars of the "word" (not on the rules of the "language"), on the dynamic and unstructured exchanges, on the unpredictable reiteration of the communicational situations (not on establishing principles for this communications). The journalists' aversion for any kind of press-law is also proving the dominance of the TA over the RP or FE : the media exchange (in order to be experienced by this mass-media in and belonging to transition) must stay informal and without any structures of adjustment.

Mass media were the most important agent of dis-membering trends, the major factor of the maintenance of the liminal stage. So, in Victor Turner words, media was the " ritual agent" of liminality, the agent who inhibited or stopped all the attempts or the short moments of re-membering.

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