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Axa prioritară 1 *Educația și formarea profesională în sprijinul creșterii economice și dezvoltării societății bazate pe cunoaștere*

Domeniul major de intervenție 1.5 *Programe doctorale și postdoctorale în sprijinul cercetării*

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Prof.univ.dr. Gheorghe Cliveti

Instituția coordonatoare de tematică: Academia Română – Filiala Iași

Tematica: *Discurs literar-artistic și construcție identitară în secolele XVI-XX.*

Numele și prenumele cercetătorului postdoctoral: dr. Liviu Bratescu

Tema individuală de cercetare: *Liberali versus conservatori: monumente publice □ i memorii concurente în România modernă (1866-1914)*

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Liberals versus conservatives: public monuments and memories competing in modern Romanian (1866-1914).

Usually approached from the perspective of economic and/or political transformations, the modernisation of Romanian society also involved an interesting development in the arts domain, taking place in the second half of the 19th century. In the Romanian space, the phenomenon of public monuments was never just a matter of artistic taste, but also a social issue, given that it manifested itself as an important stage of the Europeanization process the Romanian state underwent after 1859.

The discourses of the 19th century, focused on the pace and the model of modernisation Romania was supposed to follow, as well as the public monuments being erected North of the Danube were concrete proof that the French standard of culture and civilisation had been taken as a model.

At the middle of the 19th century, Paris was not only the place where a large part of the Romanian political class had been educated in both culture and politics, but also the setting in which these people had discovered, as Ioana Beldiman suggests, the attraction for the "solemn art of marble and bronze", as well as "the significance of ideology-carrying statues"¹. Despite the fact that, unlike France, Romania did not go through an era of statuomania, we can nevertheless notice, in Bucharest and in the rest of the country, how private individuals as well as representatives of the local administration², came to realise that statues can have an important role in the construction of

¹ Ioana Beldiman, *Sculptura franceză în România (1848-1931) gust artistic, modă, fapt de societate*, Simetria Publishing, Bucharest, 2005

² *Despre Barbu Știrbey. Recunoașteri și mărturii*. Printing Press of the Neamul Românesc Society, 1913, pp. 7-43, Emil Ioachimovici, *O pagină din istoria politica a României*, M. C. Epureanu, Professional Printing Press D. C. Ionescu, Bucharest, 1913, pp. 93-113.

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a national ideology³. Aside from the tendency to honour the hallmark characters of our history, and aside from the obvious hope of transferring symbolic capital from those being honoured to the ones doing the honouring, the idea of erecting statues to recently "retired" characters also involved certain risks. Meaning that the closeness in time to the moment of commemoration could cause the (previously controversial) political actions of those being commemorated to resurface publicly precisely at the moment when festivities are organised in these characters' honour.

The inclusion of status in the mechanism called "national ideology" has long ceased to be a novelty. Therefore, our study is aimed at a different issue. Namely, we focus on political competition and on the attempt of political parties to acquire legitimacy from their association, in one form or another, with the heroes of the Middle Ages, thus turning monument inaugurations into opportunities to rekindle disputes between the power and the opposition. We shall give particular attention to the manner in which, despite the sentiment of national solidarity the death of political leaders usually engenders, old political rivalries tended to raise their heads again whenever the idea of dedicating a public monument came up. Beyond transient interests, rival parties would support or dispute a statue inauguration, resorting to certain values and stereotypes. For instance, the liberals saw in Ștefan cel Mare (Stephen the Great) a champion of Christianity and a pioneer of our state's process of becoming compatible with Western Europe; at the same time, the liberals would accuse the conservatives (also called "byzantinists") of using the image of an idyllic Middle Ages in order to oppose the land reform. The same type of political instrumentalisation can be easily noticed in the case of Alexandru Ioan Cuza's statue, inaugurated

³ Paul A. Pickering, Alex Tyrrell, *Contested sites: commemoration, memorial and popular politics in nineteenth century Britain*, Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2004; Front Cover and Stéphane Gerson, *The pride of place: local memories & political culture in nineteenth-century France*, Cornell University Press, 2003.

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in 1912 in Iași. That particular event shows that the commemorative phenomenon was not just a pretext for challenging – from a liberal, conservative or conservative-democrat perspective – the land reform issue or the legacy of 1907 (the year of the peasants' uprising). It was also an international negotiation instrument, and sometimes even a form of symbolic war. Whenever a hero typically associated with the idea of national unity (Ștefan cel Mare / Stephen the Great, Mihai Viteazul / Michael the Brave, Al. I. Cuza) was evoked, to commemorate meant to implicitly claim a territory (Bessarabia, Bukovina, Transylvania) that was a component of one of the neighbouring states.

The essence of our research consists, thus, in investigating the cultural and political discourse that mediates the reception of certain personalities from the Romanian national pantheon. Another point is represented by an inventory of the reactions caused by the way the Romanian state would manage inaugural events, and the manner in which the successors of political personalities (such as I.C. Brătianu, Mihail Kogălniceanu, Lascăr Catargiu or Alexandru Lahovary) tried to impose their political associates as role-models for the future generations. Such actions would benefit above all to the political parties they had been active in, their successors obtaining, with each statue, an additional source of legitimacy.

The issue of public monuments in Romania has been dealt with both by Romanian and by international historians. While authors such as Pompiliu Eliade⁴ and Georges Bengesco⁵ document the impact that the French artistic culture had on the Romanian statue commissioners, authors such as Oscar Walter Cisek⁶, Oscar Han⁷ or Remus Niculescu⁸ focused more on the actual works and on

⁴ Pompiliu Eliade, *Influența franceză asupra spiritului public în România, originile*. Humanitas Publishing, Bucharest, 2000.

⁵ Georges Bengesco, *Câteva suvenire ale carierei mele*. Ion Ghica, Vasile Alecsandri, Alexandru Lahovari, Bruxelles, Paul Lacomblez, 1899.

⁶ Oscar Walter Cisek, *Sufletul românesc în artă și literatură*, Dacia Publishing, Cluj, 1974

⁷ Oscar Han, *Dălți și pensule*, Minerva Publishing, Bucharest, 1970

⁸ Remus Niculescu, *Începuturile sculpturii statuare românești* in "Studii și cercetări de istoria artei", issue 3-4, 1954.

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the options made by the commissioning collectors. Also relevant for understanding the phenomenon we aim to analyse appear to be the works of Frederic Damé⁹, Gheorghe Bezviconi¹⁰ and Mihai Sorin Rădulescu¹¹. In contrast with classical papers that focus on *the public discourse*, on political interests and on the press reports, our research is more interested in finding out to what extent a more attentive exploration of the sources that give, as a rule, a *subjective point of view* – such as memoirs¹² or speeches held on various occasions¹³, – can produce fresh results. Apart from speeches, the letters written by political leaders such as C.A.Rosetti¹⁴ or Titu Maiorescu¹⁵ reveal important information about how certain statues came to be commissioned. Thus, we'll know whether the statues we'll discuss in the following pages were indeed assigned a patriotic value, or whether they became, instead, a symbol of the financial power of the individual commissioning the work, of his desire to be thus included in the posterity of a certain historical character.

Western historiography has had an essential contribution in establishing a research methodology that is adequate to the theme of memory – the framework of our project – as well as in clarifying concepts such as "memory" and "statuomania", vital for an undertaking like ours. At the same time, it is worth mentioning its contribution to the discovery of a public monument phenomenon also in Western Europe in late 18th century and throughout the 19th century, involving not only the presence of an artistic taste, but also of a social factor, resulting in an important step in

⁹ Frederic Dame, *Bucureștiul în 1906*, ed. Adrian Majuru, Paralela 45 Publishing, Pitesti, 2007.

¹⁰ Gheorghe Bezviconi, *Necropolele capitalei*, Museum Publishing, Chișinău, 1997.

¹¹ Mihai Sorin Rădulescu, *Memorie și strămoși*, Bucharest, Albatros Publishing, 2002.

¹² We can mention here works such as: Georges Bengesco, *Cateva Suveniruri ale carierei mele, Ion Ghica, V. Alecsandri, Alexandru Lahovari*, Bruxelles, Paul Lacombez, 1899, Crutescu Radu, *Amintirile colonelului Lacusteanu*, with a historical commentary by Ioan Filitti, Bucharest, "Regele Carol II" Letters and Art Foundation, 1935, Elisa Bratianu, *Memorii involuntare*, Oscar Print Publishing, Bucharest, 1999, to name but a few.

¹³ Alexandru Lahovari, *Discursuri politice, 1881-1896. Notiță biografică asupra lui Alexandru Lahovari, Discursuri pronunțate cu ocaziunea dezvelirii statuii lui Alexandru Lahovari în ziua de 17 mai 1901*, Bucharest, Dor. P. Cucu Printing Press and Letter Foundry, 1905; I.C.Bratianu, *Acte și cuvântări*, Cartea Românească Publishing, 1943.

¹⁴ C.A. Rosetti, *C.A.Rosetti catre Maria Rosetti. Corespondență*, vol. I, II, edited by Maria Bucur; vol. II, edited by Maria Bucur and Neonila Onofrei, Bucharest, Minerva Publishing, 1988, 1998;

¹⁵ George Juvara, *Din corespondența lui Titu Maiorescu*, Alexandru A. Terek Printing Press, Iasi, 1942.

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the modernisation process. A suitable analysis and a welcome comparison of the motives behind erecting statues in various cultural spaces, as well as an identification of the arguments at the foundation of the involvement of the Western European political factors in the abovementioned process was carried out by Jean Laquevre¹⁶, Jacques Lanfranchi¹⁷, Hatch Danisons¹⁸, Prieur Michel¹⁹, Paul Shackel²⁰ Walkowitz Daniel²¹, Leith James²², Kalaga Wojciech²³, Jean Brutails²⁴, Georges Huisman²⁵, Paul Sébillot²⁶. Accustomed to seeing statues as just another symbol of financial or political power, as well as a means of including a certain historical character in the successors' memory, when we read books such as *Art ou politique? Arcs, statues, et colonnes de Paris*²⁷, *Quand les monuments construisaient la nation*²⁸, *La mort et l'éclat - monuments funéraires parisiens du Grand Siècle*²⁹, *National monuments and nationalism in 19th century Germany*³⁰, we discover a new facet of statues: that of catalysts of national identities. The same Western historiography – chiefly the French one – provides sufficient explanation as to why Paris

¹⁶ Jean Laquevre, *Marseille mémoire, Marseille décor, monuments commémoratifs, statues, fontaines*, Marseille, Comite du Vieux Marseille, 1995.

¹⁷ Jacques Lanfranchi, *Les statues des grands hommes a Paris coeurs de bronze, têtes de pierre*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2004;

¹⁸ Hatch Danisons, *Statues of limitation. Intimate views of life among the marbles*, New York, 1961.

¹⁹ Prieur Michel, *Les monuments historiques, un nouvel enjeu?*, L'Harmattan, Paris, 2004.

²⁰ Paul Shackel, *Memory in black and white, race, commemoration, and the post-bellum landscape*, AltaMiraPress, 2003.

²¹ Walkowitz Daniel, *Memory and the impact of political transformation in public space*, Duke Univ. Press, 2004

²² Leith James, *The idea of art as propaganda in France, 1750-1799*, London, 1977.

²³ Kalaga Wojciech, *Memory, remembering, forgetting*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1999.

²⁴ Jean Brutails, *Pour comprendre les monuments de la France*, Editions Hachette, Paris, 2002.

²⁵ Georges Huisman, *Pour comprendre les monuments de Paris*, Editions Hachette, Paris, 1925.

²⁶ Paul Sébillot, *Les monuments*, vol. VII, Editions Imago, Paris, 1985.

²⁷ Genvieve Bresc Bautier, *Art ou politique, arcs, statues et colonnes de Paris*, Action artistique de la ville de Paris, Paris, 1999.

²⁸ Auduc Arlete, *Quand les monuments construisaient la nation - le service des monuments historiques de 1830 a 1940*, La documentation française, Paris, 2008.

²⁹ Mazel Claire, *La mort et l'éclat - monuments funéraires parisiens du Grand Siècle*, Presses universitaires de Rennes, Rennes, 2009.

³⁰ Hans Pohlsander, *National monuments and nationalism in 19th century Germany*, Peter Lang Academic Publishing, Bern, 2008.

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was, in the mid-1800s, a true place of intellectual and political training for the political elite of Eastern Europe, as well as a place for discovering the contribution the solemn art of marble and bronze could have to the construction of an ideology.

We also found remarkable the contributions of Bischof Gunter³¹ and Pessard Gustave³², through which we managed to identify the characteristics of political and cultural discourse that mediated at the time the perception of historical characters and the manner in which the authorities dealt with the organisation of the events centred on the inauguration of statues representing political leaders. The manner in which the successors of a political leader being honoured through the construction of a statue try to impose said leader as a collective hero becomes thus much clearer. Works like those mentioned above can aid in the full understanding of a complex phenomenon such as the inauguration of statues representing political leaders, as well as of the manner in which commemorations occur as effects of a theatrical outlook, where politics moves out into the streets, thus transferring these events from the aesthetic sphere to the sphere of public consumption. If there is one thing the specialists in this domain agree on, it's that statues are not just portraits, but also psychological typologies, direct or involuntarily reflecting the tastes and or the sensitivities of those erecting them, their foundation being more than a merely nationalistic one.

In the sense given by Luminița Andrei³³ we also believe that special attention should be given to the way in which the characters being honoured through the construction of a public monument managed to be present amongst those who recognised their value and merits, thus contributing directly to their casting as genuine role-models for their successors. They would remain virtually in

³¹ Bischof Gunter, *Austrian historical memory and national identity*, Transaction Publishing, New Jersey, 1997.

³² Pessard Gustave, *Public monuments: Art in Political Bondage 1870-1997*, Reaktion Books Publishing, London, 1998.

³³ Luminița Andrei, *De la Arthur la Ștefan cel Mare. Destinul miturilor și legendelor despre regi la britanici și români*, Timpul Publishing, Iași, 2004.

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a latent state, ready to come back to life whenever those still living needed their help. Such actions would benefit above all to the political parties they were active in, their successors obtaining, with each statue, an additional source of legitimacy.

Romanian historiography has so far paid less attention to the background for the entire ritual of unveiling public monuments³⁴ even restricting the meaning of the term "monument" to important buildings such as the Royal Palace in 19th century Bucharest³⁵. However, the works of Emanoil Hagi Mosco³⁶, P. Ionescu³⁷, Nicolae Bălănescu³⁸, Emil Ioachimovici³⁹, although not purely analytical – because they have a certain degree of subjectivity for the characters they focus on – have the merit of highlighting the spirit of the era and the manner in which a certain artistic taste is gradually formed.

Our intention is to analyse the value criteria and the cultural codes that underpinned the decision to turn certain historical characters into models that the entire society could follow. The greatest difficulty at that moment was that the Romanian society lacked not only a tradition of historicist statues, but also a Romanian school of sculpture, and this was the reason why French artists found here a virgin ground for their creations. Building statues in honour of "important people" long- or not-so-long gone, became after 1870 a matter of politics, but also of art. A first challenge in this direction is posed by establishing the extent to which participation in the unveiling of a statue was the expression of the development of a distinct cultural life, or a mere

³⁴ Radu Rosetti, *Scrieri*, Minerva Publishing, Bucharest, 1980.

³⁵ Ulysse de Marsillac, *Bucureștiul în secolul XIX*, translation by Elena Rădulescu, Meridiane Publishing, Bucharest, 1999, pp. 158-174.

³⁶ Emanoil Hagi Mosco, *București. Amintirile unui oraș. Ziduri vechi, ființe dispărute*, the Romanian Cultural Foundation Press, Bucharest, 1995.

³⁷ P. Ionescu (editor), *Catalog de tablouri, statui, desenuri și aquarele expuse în Pinacoteca din București*, Imprimeria Statului, Bucharest, 1888.

³⁸ N. Bălănescu, *Eugeniu Carada (1836-1910)*, Bucharest, 1937.

³⁹ Emil Ioachimovici, *O pagină din istoria politică a României. M. C. Epureanu*, D.C. Ionescu Professional Printing Press, Bucharest, 1913.

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spectacle, completely indebted to the existence of skilful stage directors who carefully managed every detail. The introduction of statues in a period in which Romania was beginning to relate in a different manner to its neighbours was proof to the fact that the Romanian political elite had adopted the instructive function of sculpture, social art having the aim of strengthening the affirmation of national identity. It is important to mention that, apart from the exaggerated festive character, commemoration involved the participation of three factors, which would constantly negotiate the tone and the meaning of the celebrations: a) the cultural organisations, with their intransigent patriotic discourse, the initiators of most such events, b) the Romanian society, with a rather perfunctory presence, without reactions that would individualise it in a particular way, and c) the political power, always forced to strike a balance between sometimes extremely lofty goals on the one hand and the constraints imposed by the need to reconcile internal and foreign politics on the other. Given the fact that records show a high degree of participation in all public manifestations taking place after 1866, our paper will also pay due attention to the fact that, despite the repetitive character of the commemoration phenomenon, official festivities tended to have considerable pulling power. This did not exclude the existence of tense moments, whenever political passions took centre stage. It is up to us to determine whether the Bucharest political regime installed after the ascension to the throne of Carol I had a propaganda machine so effective as to maintain a constant interest in solemn speeches, commendations and self-pity, or whether we need to look for explanations elsewhere.

One direction for analysis in this study will concern the place occupied in the Romanian political discourse by topics such as "Mihai Viteazul" or "Ștefan cel Mare" before the inauguration of any statues honouring these two personalities (in 1874 and 1883, respectively). Did any changes occur after these two milestones, 1874 and 1883? Apart from the way these two rulers, as well as Al. I. Cuza, are perceived on the political scene, we are interested in discovering the perception of

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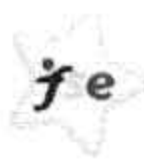
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the greater public concerning these two "heroes". Thus, we'll also see what chances the entire ceremonial construction has at reaching its proposed objectives. Romania did not have a phenomenon similar to the French statuomania after 1870, generated by the state's energetic intervention in the revival of national sentiment. However, Romanian society was preparing – with the help of newspapers such as *La Roumanie* and *L'Independance Roumaine*, which were keeping the public updated with the events taking place in France in the artistic field – for a similarly interesting phenomenon: the start of a genuine competition between the posthumous legacies of certain political leaders.

Romanian historiography has so far paid less attention to the background for the entire ritual of unveiling public monuments. Statues do not speak for themselves, it is the latest ceremony organised around the pedestal that decides the most recent meaning of the monument. Commemorations are the effect of a theatrical outlook, where politics moves out into the streets, thus transferring these events from the aesthetic sphere to the sphere of public consumption. We start from the assumption that statues are not just portraits, but also psychological typologies, direct or involuntarily reflecting the tastes and or the sensitivities of those erecting them. Their foundation is more than merely nationalistic, because they give clues as to the genesis of the modern era through their relation to the body, to art, to extinction and posterity. We also must accept the fact that for some individuals statues have an evocative role, while for others they are mere decorations. In the following pages we shall attempt to identify a typology of the individuals taking part in this sort of events and the diversity of impressions left by the latter. Diverse/differing perceptions are justified, bearing in mind the differences in life experience, in political culture, and, last but not least, the different levels of expectation the participants in such festivities have. Naturally, a study such as ours cannot leave out an analysis of the discourse of all those involved.

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A comparison between the trends observed in the speeches of the authorities taking part in the events on the one hand and the way the press reported them can be very useful in our endeavour.

Our analysis will focus then on several apparently contradictory discourses and behaviours generated by the passing of a politician, immediately declared as irreparable, this declaration being followed by a dissimulation of the grief under a heap of civic and funerary festivities, a testimony to the idea that life goes on, and "we" carry on the work of said personality. The origins of the heritage speech can be traced to the tension that existed between these two trends, the issue at stake in these festivities being the preservation of the meaning of community existence, as well as the revival of the temporal connections (and the preservation of continuity with) the period of time the deceased person had been most illustrious in.

The assumption our study starts from is that, after the political, economic and cultural isolation from Western Europe that Romania had suffered up until the middle of the 19th century, the adoption of the French model in more than one area of activity could not leave out the French fashion in statue building, especially that, around the time of the 1848 revolution, the works of French sculptors were a staple of the daily Parisian life. Present in Paris at the time, the Romanian political leaders assimilated not only the Enlightenment ideas they wished to apply in Romania, but also many conventions of the Western civilisation, one of them being the consecration of the memory of remarkable politicians through the construction of statues in their honour⁴⁰. Very likely, few of them surmised at the time that this kind of connection to "Europe" would generate so many controversies. From today's perspective, the theatre of operations deployed around the Romanian public monuments at the time appears as an elaborate drama performance.

⁴⁰ Michael Garval, *A Dream of Stone - Fame, Vision, and the Monument in Nineteenth-Century French Literary Culture*, College Literature, 2003, pp. 86-87; Patricia Mazon, *Germania Triumphant: The Niederwald National Monument and the Liberal Monument in Imperial Germany*, in *Germany History*, Sage Publication, 2000, Krystyna von Henneberg, *Monuments, public space, and the memory of Empire in modern Italy*, <http://muse.jhu.edu>;

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In the mid-19th century Romania, the "passion for France" and the desire to escape at least culturally from a world that was virtually closed manifested themselves in many forms. Whereas those who were well-off managed to buy from Paris interior sculptures and engravings, others had to be content with the education they received in their parents' homes from French teachers who had settled in the Romanian Principalities. By this time, several libraries had been established in the Romanian space, giving youth the opportunity to become familiar with this intellectual universe, and encouraging many of them to go on to improve their knowledge about it the capital of France⁴¹. One question remains: what was behind the decision of a large part of the Romanian political class to find the means to turn certain historical characters into models that the entire society could follow. The greatest difficulty at that moment was that the Romanian society lacked not only a tradition of such statues, heroic equestrian and historicist, but also a Romanian school of sculpture, and this was the reason why French artists found here a virgin ground for their creations⁴².

The political regime installed on the 11th of February 1866 understood very quickly the need not only for quashing as soon as possible domestic and international contestations concerning it, but also the importance of creating a dynastic sentiment. The "strategy" involved on the one hand the constant presence of prince Carol of Hohenzollern at various public events, as well as his positioning, from the earliest speeches in the Parliament (and not only), as a worthy successors of the nation's great rulers⁴³. At the same time, the year 1866 instituted the practice of public events,

⁴¹ Works such as those of Ulysse de Marsillac (*Bucureștiul în secolul XIX*, translation by Elena Rădulescu, Meridiane Publishing, Bucharest, 1999) and Emanoil Hagi Mosco (*București. Amintirile unui oraș. Ziduri vechi, ființe dispărute*, Bucharest) suggest the existence, at least in Bucharest, of an atmosphere that fostered the development of artistic taste.

⁴² The fact that the winning design for the statue of I.C. Brătianu was that of Ernest Dubois, and not that of a Romanian artist, was sternly criticised by Nicolae Iorga, in Nicolae Iorga, *Pictură și statui naționale*, "Semănătorul", issue 18, 4 May 1903, p. 288.

⁴³ Constantin Răutu, *I.C. Brătianu-Omul, timpurile, opera (1821-1891)*, "Datina" Typographical Institute, Turnu-Severin, 1940, p. 89.

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during which, apart from the massive presence of the state throughout their length, religious insignia became increasingly common. It could be said that, apart the controversies caused by events such as those in 1874 and 1883 (the inauguration of the statues representing Michael the Brave and Stephen the Great, respectively) or that in 1912 (the inauguration of Al.I.Cuza's statue), the presence of the religious element in the public space would never be challenged⁴⁴. Given that after 1866 the trend was to symbolically connect as closely as possible the new monarch to the most popular Romanian rulers, the construction of statues representing personalities such as Stephen the Great or Michael the Brave comes as no surprise. However, political competition and the attempt of certain political leaders⁴⁵ to gain a modicum of symbolic capital from their association with the aforementioned figures turned such moments from occasions of manifested solidarity into settings for the usual quarrels between the power and the opposition. A good example in this respect is what happened at the inauguration of Cuza's statue: the honouring of his memory in 1912 coincided with the start of the perfect drama storm. For several years, the protagonists of the new conflict (and not only) expended vast amounts of energy in order to prove or disprove the appropriateness of honouring "the Prince of the Union" in particular fashion⁴⁶. Leaving aside the sympathies or antipathies these leaders might have had for this particular head of state, the atmosphere became tense in the early 20th century for an apparently trivial reason: the way in which the contribution a political leader had had in the modernisation of Romanian society

⁴⁴ If we were to consider only the inauguration of Stephen the Great's statue, we would notice that all the events taking place on the day of 5 May 1883 (as well as those occurring in the previous days) were accompanied by religious services celebrated at the Metropolitan Cathedral, as recorded by the National Archives in Iași (ANI), Rectorate File, 12 March, sheet 11, 6 April, sheet 12, 22 April, sheet 15.

⁴⁵ *Regele Carol I al României. Cuvântări și scrisori*. Tome I, 1866-1877, Carol Göbl Graphic Arts Institute, 1909, Bucharest, p. 375.

⁴⁶ Andi Mihalache, *Mănuși albe, mănuși negre. Cultul eroilor în vremea Dinastiei Hohenzollern*, Limes Publishing, Cluj Napoca, 2007, p.163.

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should be remembered.⁴⁷ This attempt generated, in its turn, numerous controversies in a society that was still searching for political stability.

After its onset in 1874, when the statue of Michael the Brave made by Albert Carrier Belleuse was inaugurated (the project dated from 1865, but it had been put on hold after the abdication of Alexandru Ioan Cuza), the process of mobilising the national consciousness would involve in the following years an attempt at remodelling the central area of Bucharest, that is of the vicinity of the statue representing Romania's "first unifier"⁴⁸. The positioning of two monuments honouring two founders of modern Romanian institutions, Ion Heliade Rădulescu (1879) and Gheorghe Lazăr (1886), close to Michael the Brave's equestrian statue was no surprise for a society that was paying increasingly more attention to details. At the same time, in the case of the statue of Mihai Viteazul one cannot ignore the connection to the clashes between liberal students and the representatives of the conservative government, which took place in the autumn of 1874 in Bucharest, in front of the University, as well as the intensification of manoeuvres on the part of the political circles aiming to take the first steps for obtaining the state's independence from the Ottoman Empire⁴⁹.

The inauguration of Stephen the Great's statue in Iași in 1883 also took place at a time of peak political contestation of the liberal government led by I.C.Brătianu⁵⁰; the inauguration was used in the political struggle that had as an objective to prove the existence of a particular character of Moldavia in contract with Walachia, an objective that disclosed the existence of local egos and political motivations, as well as of cultural ambitions. Similar to the statue of Stephen the Great,

⁴⁷ The dailies "Telegraful", "Adevărul", "Timpul" published texts praising I.C.Brătianu and his role in Romania's modernisation process; these articles were reprinted by "Românul", 7 May 1891, p. 2.

⁴⁸ Ioana Beldiman, *op. cit.*, p. 198.

⁴⁹ I. Scurtu, *Carol I*, TipoMoldova Publishing, Iași, 2010, p. 89.

⁵⁰ Anastasie Iordache, *Dumitru Brătianu. Diplomatul, doctrinarul liberal și omul politic*, Bucharest, Paideia Publishing, 2003, p. 322.

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the one representing Michael the Brave was one of the statues with a high historical charge, hence the virulence of the disputes⁵¹. The latter was part of a broader political vision, as well as of a plan to transform the centre of the Capital. The Parisian fashion of thoroughfares and squares complemented with statues meant for decoration as well as for education in a certain spirit was thus present in the capital of the young Romanian state, even though for the moment it was more of a distant dream⁵². The great echo of the inauguration of statues such as those representing Michael the Brave and Stephen the Great was due to the existence in the Romanian public opinion of a certain perception concerning these two personalities, further cultivated by the political speeches held after 1866, during which the two historical characters were often invoked. Thus, the entire ceremonial construction⁵³ had a greater chance to reach its objectives.

An analysis of the cultural and political discourse in relation to the reception by the Romanian society of personalities from the Romanian national pantheon and of the reactions caused, by the latter allows us to see the way the Romanian state would manage inaugural events, and the manner in which the successors of political personalities (such as I.C. Brătianu⁵⁴, Mihail Kogălniceanu⁵⁵, Lascăr Catargiu⁵⁶ sau Alexandru Lahovary⁵⁷) tried to contribute to the

⁵¹D. Berindei, *Societatea romaneasca in vremea lui Carol I*, Editura Militară, Bucharest, 1921, p. 206; *Regele Carol I al României. Cuvântări și scrisori*, p. 375.

⁵²Ioana Beldiman, *op. cit.*, p. 198.

⁵³Aloïs Riegl, *Le culte moderne des monuments* in *Socio-Anthropologie*, issue 9, p. 1.

⁵⁴"Observatorul", 18, 20 May 1903, p. 1, "Voința Națională", 18 May 1903, p. 1.

⁵⁵The demise of the Moldavian liberal one month later causes a similarly strong emotional reaction throughout the country, the most visible signs being recorded in Iași, at the National Archives: Rectorate File, roll 38, brief 592, sheets 154, 177, 178, 180, 187, 280, 281.

⁵⁶"Observatorul", an openly liberal newspaper published throughout 1903 several articles praising Lascăr Catargiu. The members of the Conservative Party who were raising funds for a statue in Lascăr Catargiu's honour were criticised by the liberal newspaper for the delays in its inauguration and even of having embezzled the money collected through public subscription.

⁵⁷As he was renowned for his poise and diplomacy, when Al. Lahovary died in 1897, the Romanian society was quite shaken. The inauguration of a statue for the conservative leader on the 17th of June 1901 would become a moment of solidarity for the Romanian political scene, because both the liberals and the conservatives appreciated his activity, in Ioana Beldiman, *op. cit.*, pp. 35-38.

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transformation of their political associates into role-models for the future generations. Such actions would benefit above all to the political parties they had been active in.

The initiative of erecting statues in honour of "important people" long- or not-so-long gone, became after 1870 a matter of politics, but also of art, and would enjoy an ever-growing popularity. An event such as the unveiling of a sculpture was the expression of the development of a distinct cultural life⁵⁸, as well as a spectacle that owed everything to the existence of skilful stage directors who carefully managed every detail⁵⁹. The introduction of statues such as those representing Stephen the Great and Michael the Brave in a period in which Romania was beginning to change the way it had so far related to its neighbours was proof to the fact that the Romanian political elite had adopted the instructive function of sculpture, social art having the aim of strengthening the affirmation of national identity. The entire show takes on a special significance, especially that the king was the one heading the fundraising committees for historical statues (1874, 1883, 1903 – the statue of I.C. Brătianu). This was probably the reason why the representatives of the local and central administration – and in one case, that of Cuza's statue, King Carol I himself – were not only present for the inauguration, but would also try to control the entire running of the event. If we look at the events surrounding the unveiling of statues representing leaders such as Alexandru Lahovary (1901), Lascăr Catargiu (1907), I.C. Brătianu (1903), Gh. Gr. Cantacuzino (1904), we see how their political successors managed to stage spectacles that were at least as interesting as those of 1874 and 1883. In all these cases, it can be noticed that, aside from the successor's desire of securing a centre-stage place for the hallmark characters of our history, there is an obvious hope of later transferring symbolic capital from those being publicly honoured to the ones doing the honouring⁶⁰. Closely watching the developments in the capital, the province

⁵⁸ Andi Mihalache, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

⁵⁹ *Ibidem*, p.189.

⁶⁰ "Românul", 7 May 1891, p. 2.

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would also take part in the grandiose show. Local leaders of various political parties, as well as the mayors of cities around the country become preoccupied at the end of the 19th century and in the early 20th century with the consecration as authority figures of politicians who had some sort of connection with the cities governed by the former. While we do not know whether we are dealing with a show of pride or with a phenomenon similar to that in England and France around the same time – mentioned by historians such as Paul A. Pickering and Alex Tyrrell⁶¹ – we do notice that, gradually, the Romanian space began to give equal importance to "regional" statues⁶².

A spectacle such as tat organised around the unveiling of a statue involved each time the presence of a large number of participants, given the fact that the organisers wanted to underline, among other things, the existence of a "profound" connection between the population, the government and the king. What becomes obvious after studying the show⁶³ put on by the authorities is that we are dealing with a diverse typology of individuals taking part in the event and with a wide diversity of impressions left by it. Diverse/differing perceptions are justified, bearing in mind the differences in life experience, in political culture, and, last but not least, the different levels of expectation the participants in such festivities had. The many witnesses to the unveiling wanted to certify through their very presence the fact that themselves and the departed were part of the same symbolic family or genealogy. Thus, the deceased was remembered, evoked in a special manner, by underlining his absence. After all, this is the purpose of statues and commemorations⁶⁴. Unlike academic history, which is concerned more with chains of events, the speeches held at the

⁶¹ Paul A. Pickering, Alex Tyrrell, *Contested sites: commemoration, memorial and popular politics in nineteenth century Britain*, Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2004 - Business & Economics

⁶² *Despre Barbu Știrbey. Recunoașteri și mărturii*, pp. 7-43, Emil Ioachimovici, *op cit.*, pp. 93-113.

⁶³ Andi Mihalache, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

⁶⁴ Idem, *Eroi, morminte și statui: poetica evanescenței în secolul XIX*, in "In Medias Res. Studii de istorie culturală", edited by Andi Mihalache and Adrian Cioflâncă, Iași, "Al. I. Cuza" University Press 2007, p. 252.

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inauguration of a statue revealed the temptation to reclaim and "update" the one being evoked, making him a contemporary of the new generations.

Also important is the way in which the characters being honoured through the construction of a public monument managed to be present amongst those who recognised their value and merits, thus contributing directly to their casting as genuine role-models for their successors.⁶⁵ They would remain in a virtually latent state, ready to come back to life whenever those still living needed their help. Irrespective of the era they lived in, the community does not ask them to spring into action, instead stopping at reading out the political testament left by these personalities and vowing to keep it and hand it down to their own successors⁶⁶. No-one's memory can be kept alive eternally through festivities, no matter how enthusiastic. By endlessly pretending that nothing happened, that the much-revered deceased is still among us despite his physical demise, the first steps are taken towards normality – that is towards oblivion.⁶⁷

Despite the fact that the public manifestations taking place after 1866 managed to mobilise very diverse social categories and a large number of citizens, proving that official festivities tended to have considerable pulling power, such events did not exclude the existence of tense moments, whenever political passions took centre stage⁶⁸. Also remarkable is the capacity the Bucharest political regime installed after the ascension to the throne of Carol I for setting in motion a propaganda machine so effective as to maintain a constant interest in solemn speeches, commendations and self-pity.⁶⁹ A celebration event in the live of a modern city, a statue unveiling meant, as it means today, a ceremonial run in several stages, surrounded by festive scenography.

⁶⁵ "Românul", 7 May 1891, p. 2.

⁶⁶ "Voința Națională", 12 May 189.

⁶⁷ Andi Mihalache, op. cit., pp.31-32.

⁶⁸ C. Sălăvăstru, *Discursul puterii*, Institutul European Publishing, Iași, 1999.

⁶⁹ ANI, file "Prefectura", brief 96, 1883, 8 May, sheets 19, 20, brief 483, 1882-1883, sheets 3, 4.

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If we decide to discuss the scenography of events such as those taking place in 1874, 1883 or 1912, we must remember that each important political group had its own strategy in relation to the idea of raising a statue. In order to exemplify, we'll discuss here the first commemorative action mentioned above, that is the inauguration of Michael the Brave's statue in front of the University in Bucharest. An emblematic character in the Romanian national pantheon, as well as a constant presence in the liberals' discourse, the invocation of Michael the Brave's name never failed to ignite political passions. Unlike the liberals, thrilled about the perspective of putting into practice the 1865 project for the monument, the conservatives, the main governmental factor around 1874, aiming for an improvement of Romania's relationship with the Austro-Hungarian Empire, were very reluctant to accept the organisation of such events (chiefly because in 1599 the prince had brought Transylvania into the composition of the Romanian state, only to relinquish it one year later; in 1874, Transylvania had become part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire); they knew the mobilising and boosting effect the figure of a ruler such as Michael the Brave had on Romanian political speeches.⁷⁰ Careful with the direction Romanian society was taking in its evolution, in his November 8 inauguration speech Carol I not only presented Michael the Brave as a model ruler, remembering his contribution to the "defence and autonomy of the country"⁷¹, but he also decreed on September 5, 1877 that the cannons captured at Plevna be placed on either side of the statue⁷². The discourse of the Romanian king seemed to have as an objective placing him in a symbolic lineage, as well the recognition of a testament left by the prince, which the king felt compelled to put into practice. The consideration that the Romanian authorities had for Michael

⁷⁰ Dan Berindei, *Diplomația românească modernă*, Bucharest, Albatros Publishing, 1995, p. 206.

⁷¹ *Regele Carol I al României. Cuvântări și scrisori*, p.375.

⁷² I. Scurtu, *Carol I*, Tipo Moldova Publishing, Iasi, 2010, p. 89.

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the Brave would be proven in the following years, when most of the public events with a political character took place in front of his statue⁷³.

In our opinion, it is remarkable how the liberals managed to win not only this symbolic political competition, but also that of 1883, triggered by the inauguration of Stephen the Great's statue in Iași. Its unveiling was an occasion to use for their own purposes an old symbol, but in a new ceremonial setting. For the liberals, as well as for Carol, the inauguration ceremony was the best way to express their status as leaders. Similar to the government formed around I.C. Brătianu, Carol I knew that the feeling of security amongst the population could be enhanced if very prominent political and historical symbols such as Stephen the Great were brought onto a public stage. Through the statues of Stephen the Great, built at a moment of strong political challenges directed at the liberal government, as well as at the monarch himself, tradition prove its constructive force, and the resurrected past appeared as a mix, bringing together nostalgia, frustration and satisfaction. The entertainment aspect was also part of the staging of the commemoration, without being characteristic, being however extremely useful, as it provided the certainty that people came to these commemorations of their own will, without obligation, in order to selectively consume a performance containing messages for all tastes and opinions⁷⁴. The fact that the political ritual was perceived in an entertainment frame of mind did not lessen it in any way, people extracting from it the feeling that they were the masters of their own beliefs, and that they were participating to the event in a relaxed manner, without allowing themselves to be manipulated. Given the fact that administrations have as a rule a penchant towards inventing celebrations and using certain symbols in order to justify their existence, the unveiling of Stephen the Great's statue may be considered an example for the way in which society takes part in public festivals, which have a political character due to the very fact that they are repeated periodically

⁷³ Ibidem.

⁷⁴ "Românul", 8 May 1891, p. 1.

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and the authorities never miss an opportunity to attend them. The mobilisation of masses that took place that year makes us think that the government representatives in the territory, as well as those residing in the capital, believed that, for an increasingly important segment of the population, the reason for the celebrations was becoming uninteresting on the backdrop of the heightened conflict between liberals and conservatives. There was, at the same time, an attempt by the power to legitimise itself before the voters through the organisation of such events, to attract upon it the popularity enjoyed by historical characters like Stephen the Great.

Keeping a close eye on the organisation of the event, the opposition newspapers underscored the contrast between the lavish inauguration and the difficult economic situation the country was in. Newspapers such as "Pactul Social" pointed out that the liberals' objective may already have been undermined by the parallel made involuntarily by the public between the situation of the country at the time and the memorable past, the times "the greatest Romanian in our Moldavian history". It became obvious that "the hero that Europe had acclaimed as the shield of Christendom" was invoked now as a means for enacting new political delimitations. In the same breath, the conservative leaning press went from evoking Stephen's heroic Moldavia to blaming the liberal government for losing the South of Bessarabia to the Russians/Tsarist Empire, for accepting the alteration of article seven of the Constitution (which granted full rights only to Christian citizens; its alteration had been requested by the 1878 Berlin Congress as a requirement for recognising Romania's independence from the Ottoman Empire), for the costly acquisition of the Cernavoda-Constanta railroad (overpriced by the owner/constructor) and for the problems created by Austria's ascension in the Danube area. All of the above were presented as proof to the liberals inability to rule the country and to their lack of patriotism⁷⁵. The oppositions press' strategy at the moment included quoting speeches held by former associates of I.C. Brătianu. The new

⁷⁵ "Pactul social" 4 June 1883, p. 1.

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adversary of the government, Dimitrie Brătianu, was quoted by the "Pactul Social" of 4 June 1883 for the parallel he had drawn between the political and economic situation of the country during the times of Stephen the Great and the numerous difficulties that Romania was facing at the end of the 19th century.

Apart from the techniques used by political adversaries in order to garner votes, the opposition was right at least partially; one of the issues it had understood right was the interference of the central authorities in the organisation and running of an event that could have been very well left in the hands the local authorities. Bearing in mind that the issue of finances was becoming increasingly sensitive, especially due to the government's low financial support, the involvement of the Capital caused discontent, and rightly so. This problem would be solved through the method of public subscription⁷⁶, admittedly with support from funds issued by the government⁷⁷ and the Chamber of Deputies⁷⁸, as well as by the local authorities. The essence of these texts, their common thread was the symbolic filiation between Stephen the Great and Carol, as well as the fact that many of them focused more on the current monarch⁷⁹.

With a few exceptions caused by difficulties we have already mentioned, the construction of statues honouring political leaders such as Lascăr Catargiu, Alexandru Lahovary and I.C. Brătianu would go through stages that are now standard: public call for projects, design competition, establishment of a committee, public subscription and serious commitment from

⁷⁶ Nicolae Grigoraș, *op. cit.*, p. 301.

⁷⁷ On June 3, the City Council unanimously approved the amount of 27,038 lei for expenses connected to the inauguration. However, due to the fact that the ceremony had been given nation-wide importance, the City Council Municipal asked the Ministry of the Interior to request from the Assembly of Deputies authorisation for a special fund, and the reimbursement of the abovementioned amount to the Iași City Hall (the government, however, only approved the amount of 10,000 lei, the same amount being made available to the Iași City Hall). See *Ibidem*, p. 302.

⁷⁸ ANI, file "Prefectura", brief no. 96, 1883, 28 April, sheet 8.

⁷⁹ "Curierul", 12 June, 1883, year XI, issue 65, p. 2.

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those who were part of the political faction that particular personality used to be active in.⁸⁰ Apart from these shared elements there were also distinctive elements, as, for example, between the stories behind the construction of I.C.Brătianu's statue and that of Mihail Kogălniceanu. Whereas in the case of the former prime minister (Brătianu) the involvement of the liberal party came from the highest national level, in the case of the Moldavian leader (Kogălniceanu) the event was somewhat restricted to the local level, although the monarch and his wife were in attendance⁸¹. Whereas in 1903 the conservatives could not have been very calm in the moments preceding the day of 18 May 1903 (or in the moments coming after this date, for that matter), because the liberals coming from the entire country to witness the inauguration of the statue⁸² were underlining Brătianu's contribution to the events in 1866, 1877 and 1881, on the other hand, in 1911 the same conservatives would evoke Kogălniceanu as an even-handed politician, in order to show what was the benchmark of their own political action. All this while, the liberals would invoke the same period in order to underline the decadence of their contemporary era, by the sole fault of their political adversaries⁸³.

In this whole climate of mistrust, the printing of an article in the "Voința Națională" stating the minor political value of Al. I. Cuza seriously contributed to heating the debate⁸⁴. Such assertions notwithstanding, the minister of education, Spiru Haret, wishing to shift the focus away from the political reasons for the unveiling on 18 May 1903, announced at the beginning of 1904 the nationwide commemoration, both in cities and in the countryside of 500 years since the death

⁸⁰ Al. Lahovary, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

⁸¹ "Mișcarea", Iași, issue 200, 14 September 1911, p. 3.

⁸² Carol I was not present at the inauguration, sending instead a wreath with the simple inscription "I.C.Brătianu's King". See "Observatorul", 20 May 1903, p. 1.

⁸³ "Opinia" issue 1407, 25 September 1911, p. 3.

⁸⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 163.

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of Stephen the Great⁸⁵. Through this decree, the astute minister single-handedly diverted attention from recent history, channelling any commemorative sensitivities towards a much more remote era, the Middle Ages, on which all opinions concurred⁸⁶. With the monument honouring Alexandru Lahovary, the issue of building a statue for a political leader crossed into another territory, apart from the territory of publicly manifested political gratitude: it stepped into the realm of artistic taste and towards the adaptation of French public sculpture forms to the contents provided by the Romanian contemporary history⁸⁷.

Coming back to one of the statues whose unveiling had created great agitation on the political scene, the statue of I.C. Brătianu (1903), we see that the active legacy that the liberals wanted to assign to the former prime minister was also confirmed by their intention to dedicate him a public monument. The action would have the desired effects not only through the grandeur of the monument itself, but also through its placement in a place with intense traffic in the Capital. This was the reason why – as early as 1891 – there was talk of moving the statue of Michael the Brave on the Mihai Vodă hill⁸⁸, in order to make room for I.C. Brătianu's statue⁸⁹. In April 1898, in a letter signed by D.A. Sturdza, "the Brătianu committee" petitioned the Bucharest City Hall to authorise three proposed locations in the centre of the city, for three sculptures that would be commissioned by the liberals: the statues of C.A. Rosetti, I.C. Brătianu and Mihail Kogălniceanu⁹⁰. Placing the statue in a place of maximum visibility would give the future event a claim to eternity,

⁸⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 73.

⁸⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. 73-79.

⁸⁷ Commissioned in 1899, the statue of Alexandru Lahovary, made by Antonin Mercié, was brought to Romania around May 1, 1901 and inaugurated on the 17th of June the same year. Lahovary had died in Paris in 1897, and the order was placed by the Conservative Club. In Ioana Beldiman, *op. cit.*, p. 184,.

⁸⁹ *L'Indépendance Roumaine*, 23 May 1891, p. 3.

⁹⁰ Sturdza would have liked to create squares around each monument, with the same name of the personality whose statue was located there. The statues representing liberal personalities would be installed in the interval 1903-1936 on the East-West axis of the Capital, while the conservatives' monuments would remain in the proximity of the Romană Square. See Beldiman, *op. cit.*, p. 198.

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providing to the onlookers a genuine story and at the same time an encouragement to periodically relive history⁹¹. However, a statue could only be the result of a public international competition⁹². A celebration event in the life of a modern city⁹³, a statue unveiling meant a ceremonial run in several stages, surrounded by festive scenography. Obviously, a religious service, the laying of wreaths, the presence of officials, not least of schools representatives, and even the writing and recitation of poems for those being honoured were mandatory⁹⁴. The speeches held by politicians such as D.A. Sturdza (prime minister and president of the National Liberal Party), P.S. Aurelian (representing the Senate and the Romanian Academy) or Mihail Pherekyde (representing the Assembly of Deputies)⁹⁵, apart from the intention of showing that the man being honoured was still among them despite his physical demise⁹⁶, were the first steps taken towards normality – that is towards oblivion. On the contrary, the worth of a hero was represented by the recognition of the fact that his death was an irreparable loss⁹⁷ and that nothing could replace him, the community adopting him as a perennial symbol. Brătianu's memory continued to be active as long as it was translated into a number of patriotic acts⁹⁸. Thus, a community bereft of a personality such as the former prime minister, somehow got this personality back when a statue was unveiled in his honour⁹⁹. Almost paradoxically, the monument would end the grieving, the regrets and the self-pity, turning the one being honoured into a person capable of being analysed in a realistic light,

⁹¹ Doru Pop, *Ochiul și corpul. Modern și postmodern în filosofia culturii vizuale*, Cluj Napoca, Dacia Publishing, 2005, p. 173.

⁹² Ioana Beldiman, *op.cit.*, p. 192.

⁹³ Catherin Bell, *Ritual theory, ritual practice*, Oxford University Press, 1922, p. 123.

⁹⁴ "Observatorul" 20 May 1903, p. 1. "Voința Națională", 18 May 1903, p. 1; "Liberalul", 18 May 1903, p. 1.

⁹⁵ "Observatorul", 20 May 1903, p. 1.

⁹⁶ "Voința Națională" 18 May 1903, p. 1; "We have his example before our eyes, because he is alive, because he is living, and because his spirit will stay with us and will continue to be amongst us for as long as there is a Romanian construction left", *Ibidem*.

⁹⁷ "Here sleeps a giant", in "Observatorul", 18 May 1903, p. 1.

⁹⁸ "Voința Națională" 18 May 1903, p. 1.

⁹⁹ Andi Mihalache, *op.cit.*, p. 70.

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with his flaws and qualities. This was what indeed happened a short while after the death of the former prime minister: the editorial published by the "Naționalul" newspaper on June 12, 1891, spoke about his authoritarianism and his administrative excesses¹⁰⁰. The same Romanian press also gives us another dimension of commemorations – the entertainment aspect¹⁰¹ was also part of the staging of the commemoration, without being characteristic, however being extremely useful, as it provided the certainty that people came to these commemorations of their own will, without obligation¹⁰². The spectacle of the inauguration of Brătianu's statue did not bring new information about him, given that the definition of commemorations is to resurrect the departed one the way he had been known¹⁰³. If we look closely at the entire event of May 1903, we'll notice that it was virtually "calling back" the departed one¹⁰⁴. The tensions felt in 1903, bearing in mind that the liberals had inaugurated one month earlier the statue of C.A. Rosetti¹⁰⁵, were also generated by the political parties' concern about making sure the contribution one of them had had in the modernisation of Romanian society would be remembered¹⁰⁶. Thus, the statue became an eternal *memento* of the role played by liberals in Romania's political history¹⁰⁷. The ritual does not reflect, but instead spontaneously produces values, images and interpretations that are not always constant or congruent. As a result, even the phenomenon of re-adopting a symbol – because Brătianu had reached symbol status – took place with the help of strategies for the tacit but tenacious reinterpretation of the fundamental myths of establishment.

¹⁰⁰ "Voința Națională", 12 June 1891, p. 1.

¹⁰¹ Entertainment is also present at the inauguration of statues, in "Observatorul", 14, 20 May 1903, p. 1; Public duty was twined with private leisure, such an event combining the public domain of life with the domestic one, in Andi Mihalache, *op. cit.*, p. 189.

¹⁰² "Voința Națională", 17 May, p. 2; "Liberalul", 18 May, p. 2; "Observatorul", 18 May, p. 2.

¹⁰³ "Voința Națională", 21 May 1903, p. 1.

¹⁰⁴ Jean-Yves Boursier, *Le monument, la commémoration et l'écriture de l'histoire*, Socio-Anthropologie, n° 9, p. 15.

¹⁰⁵ "Observatorul", 22 April 1903, p. 1.

¹⁰⁶ "Voința Națională", 18 May 1903, p. 1.

¹⁰⁷ "Voința Națională" 21 May 1903, p. 1 and "Observatorul", 18 May, p. 1. published a brief biography of I.C. Brătianu; see also "Observatorul" 25 May 1903, p. 1.

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Unlike the monument in honour of I.C.Brătianu, Mihail Kogălniceanu's statue, although scheduled for inauguration in a troubled political moment, did not contribute to the resurfacing of his controversial political actions. What can be noticed close to the inauguration is the fact that there exists, fortunately, a certain consensus around 1911 concerning the activity of Mihail Kogălniceanu as a politician.

Left suspended for a long time, the participation of the monarch to the inauguration of the Moldavian leader's statue was announced to the University Rector by the Mayor of Iași on 14 September 1911, and the preparations for the event became even more intense¹⁰⁸. As the authorities intended to have as many common citizens as possible in attendance, rather than just the representatives of the authorities, the City representatives communicated through the local press the official schedule for the festivities¹⁰⁹. The main outlets for the publicity surrounding the event were the dailies "Opinia" and "Mișcarea". As the main focus of attention was the royal couple – which would arrive in Iași on September 25 – the agenda included, as it was customary, a visit of the monarch and his wife to the Metropolitan Cathedral for the required *Te Deum*, celebrated by the Moldavian Bishop. The actual unveiling, scheduled to take part three days later, would be part of an entire array of events, which included horse racing and balls organised at the Iași Theatre.¹¹⁰

The statue of Mihai Kogălniceanu, made by Italian sculptor Raffaello Romanelli, was the materialisation of a project that originated in 1891 (the year Kogălniceanu had died). Without going into details, we must mention that the construction of Kogălniceanu's statue came at a time when the political actors had reached an agreement concerning the role he had played, and that the

¹⁰⁸ "Mișcarea", Iași, issue 200, 14 September 1911, p. 3.

¹⁰⁹ N. A. Bogdan, *Regele Carol I și a doua sa capitală. Relații istorico-politice scrise din inițiativa primarului Iașului* G. G. Mironescu, Iași, 1916, pp. 569-570.

¹¹⁰ "Opinia", Iași, issue 1400, 17 September 1911, p. 3.

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unveiling also had, as in other leaders' cases, the meaning of a reparation for the many injustices done to him after 1866.

The liberals' unvoiced discontent was caused by the fact that, by not taking part in the decision-making concerning the organisation of the ceremonies that were to take place, they would not have any gain as a result of the event. The opposition knew very well that, when contestation was most heated, the group in position of power would establish the rules of the game in such a way as to benefit from all the resulting goodwill, achieving thus a new legitimisation¹¹¹. Therefore, the speeches had to be accompanied by notable achievements and memorable acts. The inauguration of Kogălniceanu's statue and the anniversary from the foundation of the University, which the Iași citizens (and not only) were looking forward to, was a good opportunity for the power to use a symbol in a new setting, again for its own.¹¹² This will be done by evoking a political character shared by a group (the Moldavians) or even by the entire society, thus engendering feelings of solidarity and support for those organising the event. The extent to which this strategy was yielding the results expected by the conservatives would be seen in the years that followed. If we were to consider the obvious increase in contestations and the fact that the prominent conservative P.P. Carp resigned from government in March 1912, we would have to say the "plan" had not been that effective.

Leaving aside the sympathies or antipathies these leaders might have had for this particular head of state, the atmosphere became tense in the early 20th century for an apparently trivial reason: the way in which the contribution a political leader had had in the modernisation of Romanian society should be remembered. This attempt generated, in its turn, numerous controversies in a society that was still searching for political stability. By erecting monuments to its great political leaders, the modern society was taking a metaphorical step back, in order to have

¹¹¹ C. Sălăvăstru, *Discursul puterii*, Iași, Institutul European Press, 1999, p. 39.

¹¹² "Opinia", issue 1415, 4 October 1911, p. 3.

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a panoramic view of its recent history, statues being a good indicator for the historic culture of a people and for the way it wished to end certain disputes.

Raising above these political squabbles, King Carol I managed to implement a long-term image strategy, a policy of symbolic equilibrium between Romania's past and present. The authorities' mobilisation of masses notwithstanding, a performance such as the one discussed above might have remained largely unknown to the greater public were it not for the ongoing support of the Romanian press¹¹³. Part of the publicity also came from the colourful chronicles published in the early 20th century by Jules Brun in "La Roumanie", to name but one example.

Viewed as a whole, the speeches held at inaugurations of statues honouring political leaders show that the discourses and behaviours are apparently contradictory¹¹⁴. The passing of a politician was immediately declared as irreparable, and grief was dissimulated by the plethora of civic and funerary festivities as a testimony to the idea that life goes on, and "we" carry on the work of said personality. The origins of the heritage speech can be traced to the tension that existed between these two trends, the issue at stake in these festivities being the preservation of the meaning of community existence, sought in the revival of the temporal connections (and the preservation of continuity with) the period of time the deceased person had been most illustrious in.

Statues do not speak for themselves, it is the latest ceremony organised around the pedestal that decides the most recent meaning of the monument¹¹⁵. Commemorations are the effect of a theatrical outlook, where politics moves out into the streets, thus transferring these events from the aesthetic sphere to the sphere of public consumption. Once we accept the assumption that statues are not just typological portraits but also psychological sketches, we are tempted to accept another

¹¹³ "Voința națională", 7 May 1891, p. 2, "Românul", 8 May 1891, p. 2.

¹¹⁴ Al. Lahovary, *op. cit.*, p. 38; Emil Ioachimovici, *op. cit.*, p. 93; Nicolae Bălănescu, *Eugeniu Carada*, Bucharest, 1937, p. 380.

¹¹⁵ "Observatorul", 20 May 1903, p. 2.

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reality, that statues reflect directly or involuntarily the tastes and sensitivities of those building them. Their foundation is more than merely nationalistic, because they give clues as to the genesis of the modern era through their relation to the body, to art, to extinction and posterity. We also must accept the fact that for some individuals statues have an evocative role, while for others they are mere decorations. According to motivation, we conclude that there are three types of statues: a) *consensual*, when the inauguration is the result of an agreement that is negotiated, but it is unanimous as to the personality to be honoured; b) *reparatory*, when a monument is dedicated to a hero towards whom the society feels guilty; c) *rebellious / of opposition*, when it is known that a particular statue will defy the acting regime, being used as an indirect reprimand to the contemporaries and to political adversaries¹¹⁶.

Given the fact that administrations have as a rule a penchant towards inventing celebrations and using certain symbols in order to justify their existence, the years 1874, 1883, 1912 and others may be considered examples for the way in which society takes part in public festivals, which have a political character due to the very fact that they are repeated periodically and the authorities never miss an opportunity to attend them¹¹⁷. The mobilisation of masses that took place for the abovementioned events makes us think that the government representatives in the territory, as well as those residing in the capital, believed that, for an increasingly important segment of the population, the reason for the celebrations was becoming uninteresting and colourless on the backdrop of the heightened conflict between liberals and conservatives around the time of each such event. There was, at the same time, an attempt by the power to legitimise itself before the voters through the organisation of such events¹¹⁸, to attract upon it the popularity enjoyed by King Carol I in the Romanian society.

¹¹⁶ Andi Mihalache, *op. cit.* P. 192.

¹¹⁷ C. Sălăvăstru, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

¹¹⁸ Iași National Archives, file "Prefectura Iași", brief 51/ 1903, sheet 1-3.

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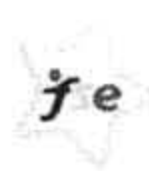
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The elevation of day-to-day occurrences to the superlative and their transformation into national epopees is done not only for the sake of political competition, but mainly in order to give the people the feeling that something important is happening and that that "important thing" is the result of the efforts made by the powers that be. The multiplication of national holidays was used by political leaders in order to give them the opportunity of appearing centre-stage and of playing popular roles. Seen from an artistic point of view, the statues of political leaders reflected a certain evolution of the taste in art and aesthetics, as well as the change in the mentality of Romanian decision-makers.

28.02. 2012

Iași

Cercetător postdoctoral,
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