

# On Diffident and Dissident Practices: a Picture of Romania at the End of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** The present paper explores diffident and dissident practices reflected by the political talk at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century in Romania. Relying on Jacques Rancière's theories on the 'aesthetic regime of politics,' the introduction sketches a historical frame and proposes a focus change: the relation between 'politics' and 'aesthetics' does not stand on a set of literary cases, but on political scripts as such. Thus, the hypotheses investigated by the next three parts can be formulated as follows: 1. though determined by an ideological direction (Conservative or Liberal), the political speech still preserves his tendency towards aesthetic autonomy. 2. oratorical merits (hinting at aesthetic autonomy) can turn into practices of political autonomy, diffidence and, then, dissidence. Methodologically, two types of aesthetic practices organize the chosen materials; both *the diffident script* and the *theatre of dissidence* help us to perceive how the philosophical and moral meaning of these practices could change into an ideology of dissidence. The formalization of diffident practices, their conversion to outspoken dissidence, also corresponds to the symmetrical symptom of unlimited authority; when old-time politicians warned on 'Caesarism,' 'Vizierate,' 'Despotism,' 'Omnipotence' or 'Tyranny,' the Romanian society had already been training for a long experience of 'dictatorship.'

**Keywords:** diffident practices, dissidence, historical party, dictatorship, political speech

## I. An Introduction to the Context and a Pair of Hypotheses

The political oratory delivered within the Romanian Parliament and its premises (political clubs, electoral meetings) in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century can be organized thematically into several polemical nuclei, which reflect not only the process of modernization underwent by state institutions, but also a particular transition from political thinking to political talk. In order to get an idea of the great problems that convulsed the public sphere, one has to ponder on the followings issues: *the legal admission of minorities, the assimilation and exceptional allowances of foreign dynasty, the reformation of education, the independence of justice, the efficiency of state administration, the regulation of*

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*private and public property, the national issue* (that went along with the Danube's issue and with the ideal to reunite all Romanian provinces), and *the limits of individual freedoms* (freedom of press, freedom of gatherings). Alongside with the process of modernization, the reader of such vast material may also notice the speakers' growth into adulthood and a refinement of both political thinking and political talk: while at the beginning of Carol I's reign, statesmen were concerned only with drawing the general frames and principles of debate, coming close to the end of the century, the debates gain in focalization and specialization. Paradoxically, doctrines and ideological affiliations are articulated only at the end of the century, when both the Romanian Liberals and Conservatives rally in two so-called 'historical' parties. Correlated with the atmosphere in the Conservative Party and not with that in the Liberal camp, individualism and freedom extended to the limits of sheer anarchy (Bulei 1987, 19). However, they actually describe the whole political life of modern Romania, a country that now discovers its all-consuming passion for politics.

Nevertheless, anarchy, fragmentation, individualism and dissidence should not be considered at once as pernicious phenomena. They help the older ideological trends of '48 Revolution (nationalism, republicanism, libertarianism) to develop into finer approaches of social realities. For instance, the issue of minorities turned into theoretical speeches that would strive to surpass racial hatred and to define the typical Jew, who is now acknowledged as belonging to an ancient and praiseworthy civilization. Then, the struggle to impose an autonomous justice resulted into more specialized arguments, like those incited by the text of the Romanian Constitution (adopted in 1866, and changed twice during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in 1879, and respectively, in 1884) and by the immovability issue, upheld by the Conservatives. The propriety issue breached into three claims that concerned the peasants and their rights to own lands, the Orthodox Church and its real estate properties (the monasteries' wealth), the King's domains, the State's assets and properties and its right to sell or lease them (the 'Stroussberg' issue, the Agricultural Credit/Bank). In the administrative sector, the politicians demand the decrease of state bureaucracy and the regulation of those situations concerning the conflict of interests. The most relevant point of debate (for a more general ideological picture) alludes to the growing politicization of all public and private sectors. Quite experienced now in what may be called *tribune torpedoes*, politicians accuse each other to have lost the sense of 'simple morality' and to have skidded to language grossness and mind sophistry. Moreover, beyond its concurrent aesthetic foundation, the blame of 'decadence' and 'corruption' is eventually thrown upon the entire society, which is now styled as a larger space of conspiracy (Donskis 2013, 47). Consequently, the Parliament witnesses harsh indictments and slaughtering on topics such as *political loyalty, party-switching* and *dissidence*, a symptomatology of what Leonidas Donskis calls, in a still wider frame, the social

conspiracy theory, which actually assists the emergence of totalitarian ideologies.

Even though our material comes exclusively from the political sphere, the political talk practiced in 19<sup>th</sup> century Romania does not have a self-limiting ideological aim. On the contrary. As it has been already proven for literature, the two definitions of 'aesthetics' and 'politics' have merged (Jameson, 1981/reprinted 2010, Rancière 2006). What happens when one exchanges the literary case-studies with texts that were not intended as literature and, thus, do not have an overt aesthetic aim? In order to answer this, the present paper sketches two research hypotheses: 1. While determined, that is, captive to an ideological direction (be it Conservative or Liberal), the political speech still preserves his tendency towards aesthetic autonomy 2. Oratorical merits – that is, legitimized aesthetic autonomy – can turn into practices of political autonomy, diffidence and, then, dissidence.

## II. Stage and Script

While literary products are subjected to a political negotiation of meaning (through their lack of determination), there is also, says Jacques Rancière, "an 'aesthetics' at the core of politics that has nothing to do with Benjamin's discussion on the 'aestheticization of politics' specific to the 'age of the masses'" (Rancière 2006, 13). It is enough to consider, in the case of political speeches, the *a priori* theatricality, the fictionalization of identities and facts, the rhythmical interventions of the public opinion. The 'aesthetic regime of politics', which can be reduced to a set of 'aesthetic practices' (the theatre, the page, the chorus) in the political sphere, is quite identical with the 'regime of democracy', adds Rancière. Even before totalitarian ideologies burst out, which stirred Benjamin's reflections on the masses, we can detect in the core of emergent South-Eastern European democracies (The Kingdom of Romania, for instance) the warning on the danger of tyranny and dictatorship. In order to determine which aesthetic practices pop up from the period's political scripts and the way they make themselves 'visible', one has to go back thus at the intricate roots of such democracies.

More than what is 'visible' at the surface – theatricality, script/page, and rhythm of audience ingressions, the political talk also preserves a literary latency that belongs to each orator's style of legitimation. The styles of legitimation may resort either to pure eloquence (Al. Lahovary, Take Ionescu) or to informed political talk, that is, speeches infused with historical dates (M. Kogălniceanu, B. P. Hasdeu), logical arguments (P. P. Carp, Titu Maiorescu) or factual information (I.C. Brătianu). As I have already shown on other occasions, personalities such as Barbu Ștefănescu Delavrancea, Titu Maiorescu, Vasile Alecsandri, Take Ionescu, P. P. Carp, Petre Grădișteanu, Alexandru Djuvara, G. Panu, Alexandru Lahovary, Nicolae Filipescu, V. G. Morțun and suchlike are recruited from the literary world, which, in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, goes through a process of

institutionalization and professionalization. Therefore, one can easily infer that literary effects and figures survive from previous aesthetic experiences, and are being extended to the new forms of public action (parliamentary speeches or political speeches in general). Examining the number of former, underlying or active literati enrolled as MPs, one can assume that the democratization of Romania was a process fired up by... literature. The displacement of literature from its consecrated premises (literary circles) to the political sphere (political clubs), then its cunning disguise into the strictest protocols of parliamentary life may look like a sabotage strategy, which converts great ideological bulks into small drifting units, also defined by Fredric Jameson as 'ideologemes' (Jameson 2010, 61). For the Romanian politics at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, not only the literary text has a 'political unconscious', but also the political text (the script) builds on a sort of 'literary preconscious' (Freud's *das Vorbewusste*), that can be brought to the foreground and turned into full awareness through attentional focalization. Within the political speeches that served me as material for inquiry, literary isles (stylistic tropes, rhetorical figures, quotations, anecdotes, exempla and so on) lay on the sill of political awareness, which means that the masters of Romanian eloquence counted on their manipulative power but did not quite imagine how far could that go. This is why, reverting to the conservative tradition of thought, theoreticians as Russell Kirk and Leonidas Donskis consider that particular social ideas and contextual events have always projected their outlines on the screen of 'moral imagination' (Kirk, 1981; Donskis, 2013), which is the most authoritative instance of them all.

My research is built on two axes of 'visibility' discernible into Romanian political talk at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The diffident script and the theatre of dissidence serve us to perceive how the philosophical and moral meaning of these practices (indulged by a young democracy) could change so soon into the ideological frame of dissidence. The formalization of diffident practices and their conversion to outspoken dissidence should be considered, symmetrically, as a symptom of unlimited authority. As a matter of fact, when the politicians of the 19<sup>th</sup> century warned on 'Caesarism,' 'Vizierate,' 'Despotism,' 'Omnipotence' or 'Tyranny,' I believe that the Romanian society had already been training for a long experience of 'dictatorship.'

### **III. Diffident Scripts. Dissident Movements**

Let us begin by discriminating between the meanings of 'diffident'/'diffidence' and 'dissent'/'dissidence.' While the former appears to pertain with democratic societies that do not interdict individuals to assume a diffident hypostasis, the second has been coined chiefly in relation to totalitarian regimes from South-Eastern and Central Europe. Hannah Arendt's reflection on the need to take personal responsibility under dictatorship engendered several books that documented the notion of dissidence within the Communist block: Leonidas Donskis' *Loyalty, Dissent, and Betrayal: Modern Lithuania and East-Central*

*European Moral Imagination* (2005), Barbara J. Falk's *The Dilemmas of Dissidence in East Central Europe* (2003), Aviezer Tucker's *Philosophy and Politics of Czech Dissidence from Patocka to Havel* (2000) etc. Over the last two decades, the word 'dissidence' has also assumed new meanings for democratic pluralist societies, mainly in phrases such as 'sexual dissidence.' For the moment, I shall stick to a possible discrimination – yet not the only one – between the ideological meaning of 'dissent'/'dissidence' and the moral meaning of 'diffident'/'diffidence,' both of them justified etymologically.

For the Kingdom of Romania, the period that crystallizes the better the polemical nuclei aforementioned is the age when the national state reaches the maximum stability, guaranteed after the Independence War from 1877. But the brand new territorial autonomy and the ostensible foundation of all state institutions (dynastic monarchy, Parliament, independent Justice, ranks of state administration) does not mirror in the stability of political life. On the contrary, one might notice that the fresh blood injected into both the Liberal and the Conservative Parties manifests as a virus, infecting the old structures with a discourse of the 'heart.' Once entered on the political scene, the new leagues of party members – either newly-anointed Liberals such as Take Ionescu, N. Fleva, C. C. Arion, Haralambie and Octav Lecca, Al. Djuvara, or untamed Conservatives such as B. Șt. Delavrancea, P. P. Carp, Titu Maiorescu, Al. Marghiloman, Nicolae Filipescu – start to destabilize the old doctrinarian loyalties, formed during the '48 Revolution and a little while after. Nevertheless, Romania had already gone through conspiracies of various consequences: the Monstrous Coalition (C. A. Rosetti, Ion Ghica, and Lascăr Catargi) that forced Al. I. Cuza to abdicate, the so-called Revolution of Ploiești upheld by I.C. Brătianu and C. A. Rosetti, who tried to chase out Carol I from the throne of Romania and proclaim the Republic, the quasi-secret meetings at Mazar Pacha's house, the dissensions between the white and the red Liberals, the several breaks of Moldavian Conservatives, such as the 'Junimea' circle and the Liberal-Conservatives, with the Conservative party (Bulei 1987, 11-75, Stoenescu 2010).

The entire public life grows more and more absorbed into political disputes (Bacalbașa 1935, 17, qtd. in Bulei 1987). In their turn, parliamentary debates exchange the discussions on practical things with moral and theoretical themes: corruption, the lack of ideological programs, decay of personal loyalty, and poor political cohesion. Nevertheless, all rhetorical efforts applied exclusively to doctrinarian legitimation, were founded mainly on the formal argument of the 'historical party.' At the turn of the century, both the Liberals and Conservatives could take pride in their doctrinarian 'dowry,' so that C. Rădulescu-Motru could say that the 'historical parties' had not been issued from general social claims (chiefly nationalism), but from an abstract, textual frame such as the Constitution of 1866 (Rădulescu-Motru, qtd. in Bulei 1987, 11). Afterwards, a score of new political leaders tracked down the ideological traits pinpointed by the conservative thinker; after 1900, the Conservatives' principles

appear to be the main concern of Al. Marghiloman (Marghiloman 1914; Marghiloman 1923) and Mihail G. Cantacuzino (Cantacuzino 1905; Cantacuzino 1907).

Before 1900 instead, the parties' 'historicity' is one of the most troubling concerns of both ideological camps. First, it meant drawing a history of achievements and triumphs. On the one hand, the Liberals boast with the great reforms that pushed forward the Romanian society. Consequently, I.C. Brătianu's name is convoked and praised on every context that refers to the Principalities' Union, to the establishment of the Constitution, to Independence or to the Proclamation of the kingdom; on the other, Lascăr Catargiu's name epitomizes political balance, mind simplicity, kindness of heart and even unsullied morality (Ionescu 1903, 648). He is the inspired supporter of the first Romanian Constitution, he is the providential savior of monarchy after the Palace insurgency in 1870, he is also the patient 'mason' that mends the wrong architecture edified by Liberals (Filipescu 1912, 151-157). Second, the parties' 'historicity' meant that freshmen had been called to a sort of re-enactment of glorious past, which resulted, in some of their speeches, in expanded sequences of allegiance and in visible efforts to internalize the meaning of each party's history. Not always with success. Vice versa, when they failed to express allegiance and internalize, within their personal biographies, the moments of party history, these new generations slipped to various diffident practices and, finally, to outspoken dissidence.

From the stands of the turbulent Opposition, Al. Lahovary used to attack the unreformed creeds of '48 Revolution and to show that I.C. Brătianu's government (extending from 1876 to 1888, in spite of violent contestation) had mystified the merits of the Independence War, which had been assumed exclusively by the bourgeoisie (Lahovary 1905, 17-26). Then, in his speech entitled *Regele Carol și Dorobanțul/ King Carol and the Romanian Soldier*, P. P. Carp reiterated the Conservatives' claim to be considered as an active part in the process of state modernization, even though, under the prime minister's coat of arms, had been stocked all the significant moments of recent history. The famous speech comes here to a sort of turning point, hereby crowned through a cunning doctrinarian syllogism. By accepting Brătianu's talents and then dismissing him completely from the frame of debate, Carp argues that the modernization of Romania had not been granted by the masses, but by their personification: the highest and lowest social extremes, that is, by the king Carol and by the generic Romanian soldier, who imperiled and sacrificed their lives in the battles with the Ottoman Empire. Twenty years after, G. Vernescu would develop the same topic with the very same arguments, a sure sign of how much the Conservatives had been frustrated by the Liberals' adjudication of past glory: not only Brătianu's supporters had been shedding blood in the War of Independence, and not only Brătianu's party had crowned Carol I as the King of Romania (Bulei 1987, 26 infra).

However, once with the complete absorption of the dynastic idea (1881), the public opinion compels all political actors to import or to invent pieces of glorious, legitimizing past. When the kingdom is finally proclaimed, Vasile Boerescu assures the Senate audience that the new denomination and status will not erase the previous accomplishments (Boerescu 1910, 1249-1256). Hereditary monarchy represents a necessary 'tribute to authority', he adds. And the same goes with the official history of political parties, spoken at the Parliament tribunes: it is a source of authority (the leader's authority), intended to push back the dissident movements.

Beginning with 1881 – when Titu Maiorescu is letting himself lured into the liberal lair, his speeches appeal to political pacification and to the restraint of political skirmishes. The establishment of monarchy should bring the freeze of all fights so as to ensure administrative stability (Maiorescu 2006, 753-769). However, by 'stability,' Maiorescu understands the Conservatives' settlement on key positions during the liberal government. Eventually, it was an obvious barter, edified on the diffident attitude toward the political world, taken as a whole, without doctrinarian differences. His project for response to the Royal Address shows that the movement of 1848 – associated with the liberal leaders – was determined by passion (the patriotic impulse) and not by clear ideas. The principalities' unification and the independence result from the gathered efforts of both parties, and it is just lucky that the Liberals were on the button. It was high time the Conservatives had come with a rational platform of 'inner edification,' with a politics of reason. Maiorescu, as well as others from his league surreptitiously hint that the politics of reason should chase away the politics of heart, that is, the liberal taste for adventure, perpetual change and reformation. Examples are not chosen anymore from local history (and its revered achievements), but from foreign democracies such as England (chiefly), France, Poland, USA.

Bringing instances of political civility in England and Poland, the 'Junimea' leader has a second intervention on the 'points of unification' (Maiorescu 2006, 780-800), which now emphasizes not on the transitory political power or allegiances, but on the power of abstraction in the realm of ideas (Maiorescu 2006, 793). It is a way of suggesting that the party history cannot be assumed to the bitter end. Indeed, the speaker's abstracted, philosophical attitude – Delavrancea ironized Maiorescu's pose as 'not-at-all-passionate by politics' – had caused Kogălniceanu's interruption on a few historical inaccuracies trafficked by Maiorescu's speech. The first reaction to his own blunders is to draw back and to change for a minute the politician's frock with the philosopher's rags. Unfortunately, the latter hypostasis does not last for a long time; now that his inability to internalize the Conservatives' history has been revealed, Maiorescu swerves from unionist and pacifist premises, mentioning the poor quality of liberal eloquence, shooting in all directions with animal allegories. To emphasize the true intention of his argument, the tribune man gives a smart definition of

dictatorship. Alluding to the elder Brătianu, Maiorescu concludes that even though the dictators are chosen amongst the worthiest, they behave as such because they are invested with 'too much trust' by their communities. A reaction against such a dictator is 'to take back the unlimited trust.' That is, to rest diffident.

It is noteworthy that, as early as 1881, Romania had been already haunted by the ugly phantasms of dictatorship. The word was not completely unknown to the Romanian politicians, since A.C. Cuza (the United Principalities first sovereign) used to be labelled the same on the model of Napoleon III (Filipescu 1912, 154). Anyway, during the last two decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, an awful lot of political speeches (published chiefly in pamphlet form) warn the public opinion on the danger of dictatorship on both sides: Nicolae Fleava's *Autocratic Regime* (1893), *Right of Free Meeting and Delegation to the King* (1893), *The Oculist Government* (1898); Barbu Ştefănescu Delavrancea's *Personal Regime* (1894), Nicolae Filipescu's *Dominant Party* (1896); Take Ionescu's *Personal Government* (1890) and so forth.

Five years later, Titu Maiorescu himself would not blame the anarchic movements inside the Liberal Party and the violent gestures committed by the United Opposition. They are natural effects of Brătianu's 'Caesarism,' of the so-called 'Vizierate.' But the same as in his past interventions, the young Conservative does not lead the anti-liberal offensive until the last consequences, and affirms that even though the liberal leader may be seriously contested, he has already gained his portion of historical 'imperishability.' Thus the hero's imperishability is faced against the eternity of ideas. Harsh criticism against the Liberals (but not against liberalism!) is covered in a series of cautious remarks where Maiorescu styles himself, again, as a dispassionate stoic philosopher (Maiorescu 2006, 966-983). Moreover, he claims that the group self-entitled *The Dissidence* – formed by young Liberals such as Take Ionescu, C. C. Arion, Nicolae Fleava, Al. Djuvara – is in its right to rebel against the central authority on grounds of intelligence and culture (Maiorescu 2006, 975). Acknowledging the fiasco of his appeal to political pacification, Maiorescu pursues now a unification of unhistorical elites, in spite of doctrinarian differences; the assembling of a new, intellectual 'Caesarism,' this time under his own scepter.

What the Conservatives of Iaşi imposed was a style of methodical diffidence and doubt, justified in a philosophical manner, according to Socrates' example. Perhaps the best example of such diffident practices is provided by P. P. Carp in his discussion on the 7<sup>th</sup> Article of the Romanian Constitution, which was put under revision in 1879, in order to grant citizenship and rights to minorities. His coming to the tribune is acclaimed as a necessary moment of balance within the turmoil of racial debates. Yet, even if the conservative orator promises to be objective and to rise 'as a peak over the mountain outline,' he does not bring conciliation. On the contrary, he slides to a completely divergent topic: the issue of politician-ism (Carp 2000, 88-99). Beyond and far from a strict definition of

the typical Jew – which had been promised from the very beginning – the diagnosis put to the whole Romanian society is one of corruption caused uncontrollable liberties: the wider the circle of individual liberties, the greater the number of Jews that assume the social roles left vacant by the Romanians. That P. P. Carp was almost indifferent to the current debates and, in a sense, completely absent from his own speech is proven by his final vote. In the end of the day, he would vote neither for the admission of Jews nor for their ostracism. P. P. Carp would resolve to abstain from making a clear decision. After all, his interest directed sideways, to the higher realm of speculative ideas, towards the reformation of the political class and towards the re-evaluation of morality in politics.

Another type of diffident practices comes from Brătianu's headquarters. Attending a great reunion at the Conservative Club in 1896, Nicolae Filipescu notices the following: while the Liberals could be educated to observe the leader's authority – subsequently, the authority of the party's history, the Conservatives have not got any sense of discipline (Filipescu 1912, 202). Ion Bulei considers that the Conservatives' individualism, lack of organization, and even anarchy can be explained through their financial independence, which actually encouraged their shifting political moods:

[The Liberal Party] was the party of mercantile people, which opposed to the aesthetic conceptions advanced by the Conservatives [my translation] (Bulei 1987, 20-21).

Bulei's distinction between the categories of aestheticized and mercantile politics is worth further development. Nevertheless, one should discard the old cultural dichotomy between the dispassionate and moral Conservatism (Junimism) and the passionate and immoral Liberalism; actually, the entire political world was driven by the mechanics of interest, while still keeping open to 'historicizing,' 'philosophizing,' 'ideologizing,' and other practices that could aestheticize its interests. And truth is that not only the boyars' party experienced dissension and acute conflicts. Within the 'disciplined' lines of the Liberals one can still count a few black sheep.

In 1883, one of the most troubled personalities of the Romanian public scene is elected, on the Liberals' account, for the second time in the Lower Chamber of Parliament. Inflamed with hearty patriotism, stuffed with historical proofs and occasionally tamed by sophisms, which is actually illustrative for the rhetoric before 1859, B. P. Hasdeu's speech at Craiova illustrates a personal story, apt to legitimise a Bessarabian's candidature in a county located in the South of Romania. Unlike Maiorescu, his steadfast enemy proves a thorough and exact knowledge of his party's history. Nevertheless, not factuality, maneuvered fancifully, should arrest our attention, but the attempt at importing a larger historical narrative into the frame of Hasdeu's own biography. For now, I shall retain the speaker's ostentation in using the first person singular and the

melodramatic notes of his discourse, altogether with his pose as pacificator of 'divergent opinions' – if any – inside the Liberal Party (Hasdeu 2007, 1523).

Political 'earnestness' turned into tribune confession and autobiography does not belong only to B. P. Hasdeu. Mihail Kogălniceanu is the hailed master of such discursive fashion if one recalls his famous speech of Reception to the Romanian Academy (1891). One can just infer that the politics of heart, the discourse in the first person singular, and the public dissemination of personal past belong mainly to liberal orators. But that would preserve the cultural dichotomy aforementioned. For the two hypotheses of the present paper, it is perhaps more profitable to see the correlation between the personal and party histories. While both the Liberals and Conservatives strive to legitimize through a historical narrative, particular members try really hard to come with a structured image of their own political past and, in doing that, they put to work their own biographies and family lines. Just that sometimes biographies would not fit in the doctrinarian frame and bring out one's unhealed skepticism and diffident practices.

The most astounding case is, by far, Barbu Ștefănescu Delavrancea's. At the moment of his 'maiden speech' (the first one delivered within the Romanian Parliament), he has neither name nor family pedigree. On the contrary, everybody attacks him on grounds of mystification because he used to consecrate himself as politician with his *nom de plume* (Delavrancea). Old boys from both parties found it difficult to accept a fictionalized identity, that is, a name without a documented, factual past. In December the 9<sup>th</sup> 1894, the liberal Deputy decides to put an end to this mischievous situation, and – counting on a different type of political earnestness – succeeds in battering down the Conservatives' block (Săulescu, Filipescu, Măiorescu, Arion, Rosetti-Tețcanu and Carp). Delavrancea explains that he did not introduce himself through his family name (Ștefănescu) because, being derived from his father's first name (Ștefan), it is as fortuitous and insignificant as his pen name. Yet, the orator shows that having a pseudonym is probably as immoral as parading a false name or a false title, which was actually the established fashion in families with a certain wealth and reputation (Sturdza 2004).

Going against the stream, what Delavrancea is actually doing is to present himself as a man without a historical past (Delavrancea 1977, 58), therefore apt to embrace just any party history. His own personal history has been poured into the amphora of his fictional and moral works. Above constitutionalism, party doctrine, and party history, the eloquent speaker believes, lies a greater authority: the 'moral law' and the 'moral order' (Delavrancea 1977, 47-52). Obviously, this is a polemical reply to several speeches by P. P Carp such as *The Social Order* (1881), *The New Era* (1884), *The Political and the Moral Judgment* (1889), where the Conservative leader insists on the necessity of practicing a politics of reason, which, on a higher scale, should be raised to the commandments of moral thinking. Compared to the mercantilism of liberals,

either one of the two Conservative political postures – be it Maiorescu’s towering disengaged attitude or Carp’s refined play with abstract ideas – is coined as a means of higher corruption (Delavrancea 1977, 67).

Delavrancea’s own political shifts (first, he is the editor of a conservative newspaper, then a liberal deputy), as well as his 1894 mordant speeches (on his blank historical past) have turned my attention toward the effects of conservative ‘rationality’ and ‘aestheticism’ within the sphere of 19<sup>th</sup> century political life. P. P. Carp himself admits that Titu Maiorescu, his colleague from Junimea circle, celebrates the rituals of a ‘consummated art, whose purpose is to decompose ideas’ (Carp 2000, 88-89). Thus, Delavrancea is in his right to perplex one of his adversaries with the following question: “Are you a Conservative or what?” (Delavrancea 1977, 60). In spite of their efforts to coagulate an authoritative doctrine, the ‘historical parties’ of this period could not stop incessant fractioning and decay. Literature and arts, in their turn, are seriously tested by the corroding forces of Decadence (Mitchievici 2011, 2011). Thus, Take Ionescu is perhaps the spokesman of general disorientation:

From the very beginning, they would try, by playing upon the words such as ‘Conservatives,’ ‘Liberal-Conservatives,’ ‘The Great Conservative Family,’ ‘Conservative Elements’ ... ‘Conservative concentration,’ ‘New Conservatives’ and so on and so forth, to pass as parties, as definite formations, what had been nothing else but transitory and mismatched marriages; to hide under the same word both the government and the opposition, eventually to create such a confusion that, unable to find its place in the midst of all these confusions, the public opinion ended by not understanding anything at all (Ionescu 1899, 365)

#### **IV. A Theatre of Dissidents: On Heart’s Autonomy and ‘Hearty’ Party-Switching**

After the proclamation of the kingdom, Titu Maiorescu delivers a speech on the necessity of political union, perchance of political crossbreeding, under the primate of abstract ideas (Maiorescu 2006, 768). Ideological thinking – that is, the intellectualization of political talk – was meant to replace old-school politics, grounded on particular judgments, contextual negotiations and, last but not least, on the argument of ‘historicity.’ But the use of abstract conceptions and the appeal to political philosophy, John Rawls believes, is set in motion by ‘break-downs,’ by unacknowledged political conflicts:

the deeper the conflict, the higher the level of abstraction to which we must ascend to get a clear and uncluttered view of its roots (Rawls 1996, 44-46).

Such appeals to reunite the whole political class under the sign of ideology eventually failed, and what had been only mere discontent turned into real brawls and shooting: the windows of the king’s palace are broken; the Parliament is under the siege of mobs; Nicolae Fleva and Nicolae Filipescu – both of them MPs – are arrested and suspected of murder; Brătianu has a narrow escape from an assassination attempt; politicians step down from the

parliamentary tribunes and decide that only the duel can set straight political things.

In 1882, the Conservative Club hosts a meeting where Alexandru Lahovary speaks on behalf of the United Opposition. For an old standard-bearer such as he is, his own doctrinarian definition is rather ambiguous:

when I speak of Conservatism, I understand a wise liberalism that respects rights and wishes the regulate progress (Lahovary 1905, 17-26).

Later on, in 1888, the Conservative spokesman reacts on the Liberals' accusations of them being 'aristocrats, reactionaries, climbers, and ghosts;' modernity, thinks Lahovary, does not stand aristocracy anymore (in the original meaning of the term), but it encourages the 'double aristocracy of science and morals' (Lahovary 1905, 120-121). As early as 1879, a harsher conservative such as P. P. Carp was admitting that Romania had 'a Liberal Constitution,' yet still needed 'a Conservative social organization' (Carp 2000, 95). Similarly, Vasile Boerescu was emphasizing on the need of conciliation, in politics, between the two essential drives, that is, the 'heart's impulsion' and the 'voice of reason' (Boerescu 1910, 1254). In 1884, when he is forced to resign his Deputy mandate, Hasdeu presents himself as politically involved and autonomous at the same time, as a 'man of science ... liberal and independent' (Hasdeu 2007, 1529). In the same year, P. P. Carp proves that the differences between the historical parties are only 'psychological' and that ideological labels are only pure casualties:

the labels have been already taken by the freshmen: one called himself a Conservative, one, a National-Liberal, one, a Sincere-Liberal, a third declared himself free and independent (Laughter), and, when I'm picking my brains, well, under what sign I should introduce myself, I just find that all paths have been already taken by individualities more or less grouped around our consecrated politicians (Great Laughter). Even the public is in great query, and, driven by despair, named us 'Junimists', which can weigh rather much for certain people. For instance, for Mr. Epurescu the 'Junimists' are the purports of cosmopolitanism and I do not know what else; in Mr Nacu's eyes instead, it represents a Conservative machination. Yet, within the political terminology, the word 'Junimism' does not stand for anything at all [my translation] (Carp 2000, 185).

From Titu Maiorescu's ironies, we are informed that, even though publicly known to have plotted against the king and to have had a Republican agenda, the Liberals legitimize themselves throughout 'monarchism and dynasty-cism' (Maiorescu 2006, 978).

Within the context of ideological bafflement, the group self-entitled 'The Dissidence,' branded by Take Ionescu in his speech on December the 6<sup>th</sup> 1886, actually substantiates the generalized diffident practices. After the Free and Independent Fraction (lead by old Nicolae Ionescu) and the Sincere Liberal Party (lead by George D. Vernescu) had severed from the core Liberal Party, it was young Ionescu's turn to create such parliamentary group, supported by N. Fleva,

C. C. Arion, the Lecca brothers, and Al. Djuvara. All of them had been perceived as potential reformers of Romanian liberalism, as born leaders and perhaps as continuators of I. C. Brătianu's authoritative style. Take Ionescu's position stands on both P. P. Carp's remarks from *The New Era* (1884) and C. Dissescu's ideas from *The Parties in a Constitutional State* (1884). It is important that the young dissident draws his arguments from two concurrent ideologues who meet in their theories on the reformation of the Romanian political class. The two quotations are excerpted, coincidence or not, from speeches delivered in the same year, which is also the year of Take Ionescu's entrance in politics. Still, in spite of their conceptualized air, they are not considered 'ideologues,' but 'practical politicians' (Ionescu 1897, 97). Speaking of individual values that weigh more than party discipline, the fresh 'dissident' seems to revolve back to the liberal politics of heart. However, his stylistic accents – the repetition of the words 'heart' and 'party' – lead us to some other interpretation. As a matter of fact, the 'heart,' which is the location of one's individuality, stays in open antithesis with 'party' and 'politics:'

Whoever wants to make politics has to be enrolled into a party; but it is also true that to be a part of a party means a sacrifice, the sacrifice of one's own individuality, and that nobody can possibly make this sacrifice when principles are not at stake (Ionescu 1897, 96).

Constantin Dissescu, also the authority source mentioned by Take Ionescu, interrupts the speaker's avalanche and is warning that the new dissidents will be the sure victims of a 'perpetual political rambling' (Ionescu 1897, 95). Nevertheless, Take Ionescu is shooting back by saying that, still standing by the flag of liberalism, he would not take 'fidelity to ideas' for 'fidelity to persons' (Ionescu 1897, 99). Eventually, the legitimation of his own dissidence pertains to a practical view of individual liberties:

Liberties are not those written on paper; liberties are those that are put into practice (Ionescu 1897, 100).

Drawing near to a practical, even contextual, concept of freedom, Take Ionescu introduces his reflections on political autonomy: even though party members are united by the same 'ideal' and observe the same 'discipline,' they should behave as an assembly of 'independent people' (Ionescu 1897, 357). Already a well-versed tribune man and now Minister of Public Instruction, the 'dissident' gives, in 1892, a memorable definition of politics:

In politics, there are not problems of philosophy, but problems of mechanics; politics, if resembled to anything, is more like mechanics; like mechanics, it has to calculate with precision the available social forces; to see of how much energy these social forces are able; to look for the '*contre-poids*' and, out of all these, to find the formula that can push further society (Ionescu 1902, 117).

Developing previous dissident practices into overt party-switching, we discover both Take Ionescu and Barbu Ștefănescu Delavrancea justifying their

political volatility and lack of loyalty through the figure of 'divorce' (grounded on incompatible character /cardinal humor). The former has now changed into a Conservative, whereas the latter has just been converted – not for long, though – into a Liberal. Beyond the pleas *pro domo sua*, one has to notice that both of them try to drag politics off the domain of literature. Sure thing is that dissidents refuse the comparison with literary heroes such as Cervantes' (Ionescu 1897, 96). From the literate Delavrancea, the Conservatives had expected a 'literary' approach of politics and a 'rhetoric tournament', while he would rather assign it with a logical, austere definition (Delavrancea 1977, 53-54). From the ex-literate Take Ionescu, the Liberals had expected a 'philosophy,' that is, a sort of structured literature, while the endowed policy-maker would rather come with a mechanical, technical definition. They deal their literary talents as weak points, therefore literary memories and techniques are banished to pre-conscious activity.

Anyway, their literary habits will take revenge because both orators used to quote extensively and to authorize political ideas through massive citation of sources. In all respects, their political shows preserve the neatness of the written page and an obvious tendency toward aesthetic autonomy. I can assume that both Take Ionescu and Barbu Ştefănescu Delavrancea realized they could not incorporate the greater narratives of party histories, so that their political speeches relied on other forms of legitimation. References and extensive quotations (from worshipped 'masters' of tribune) replace the appeal to historical dates and facts. Very sensitive to our traditions of eloquence, the two examples assent to re-stage former speeches and to refer to individual models (and to their favorite rhetoric tropes) and not to party doctrine. To a certain extent, intellectual biography overwhelms national history. Even though they banish literature out of their premises, the technique of citation pertains, as such, to their literary past.

The author of *Hagi Tudose* believed that, when it is not driven by material interest or personal vanity, the 'political inconsequence' can and must be embraced because it does not harm the public morals (Delavrancea 1977, 91). On the other hand, Take Ionescu comes with a full load of precedents, both from local and foreign politics: Dimitrie Ghica, Vasile Boerescu, Gh. Păucescu, Dimitrie A. Sturdza, Charles Fox, William Pitt the Younger (who, even though a Tory, used to call himself 'an independent Whig'), Benjamin Disraeli, William Gladstone, and Joseph Chamberlain. Thus, the immediate effect of dissidence (party-switching) and its justification stand on a broad base of precedents. While they are gradually forgetting the party history, the most eloquent speakers concede their political movements with a presumption of pure gratuity, according to the model of aesthetic gratuity. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, all diffident attitudes, systematic rioting, and dissidence resulted in party-switching, which soon turned into a stylistic feature of Romanian politics. After the model of skeptical literature relieved by Rancière, it seems that political talk also internalizes its

own negation: the historical and abstract authority of the party coexists with the party member's dispersed biography and autonomy.

Nevertheless, the meaning of my research here lies elsewhere. I still wonder if certain forms of dissidence during Communism preserved the stylistic features of the Romanian politics practiced a century ago, and if they have anything in common with the professionalized maneuvers of party-switching executed nowadays by the Romanian intellectuals.

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