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Legacies of Orthodox Christianity from the Communist Period to the 21st-Century Romania

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ABSTRACT. This paper brings to light three instances in which the forty-two years of communism in Romania in the 20th century left lasting spiritual and existentialist legacies in the 21st century. The most important instance from a spiritual point of view is the canonisation of sixteen Romanian martyrs and witnesses of Christ who lived during the communist years in 20th-century Romania, thus constituting a spiritual legacy. The other two instances derive from the autobiographical prose poetry of Lidia Vianu, i.e., *Καλειδοσκόπιο/ Kaleidoscope/ Caleidoscop* and *Vântul și Pescărușul/ The Wind and the Seagull/ La Mouette et le Vent* .... One of them brings to the fore *metanoia* or the changing of the mind, constituting a propaedeutic for bettering readers' lives. The other emanates the craving of the author to form a union with her soulmate, the University Professor George Constantin Săndulescu, in the difficult circumstances of her soulmate leaving the country because of the communist regime, thus, leading the author to literary digest an existentially traumatic perspective on love life. All three cases are potentially iterative as, although they originate in real biographies, they may well reverberate in the lives of other people marked by the communist years in Romania.

Keywords: canonisation, martyr, witness of Christ, repentance, soulmate, union.

Introduction

Ever since the year of 1579, the Oxford English Dictionary defines an extended use of the noun «legacy» as "A tangible or intangible thing handed down by a predecessor; a long lasting effect of an event of process".[1] In what

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1 OED | Oxford English Dictionary. https://www.oed.com/dictionary/legacy_n?tab=meaning_and_use#39634814. Accessed: 4th April 2025.

follows, the concept of «legacy» is exemplified by focusing on three quite different arguments—mostly related to the way of life—in direct relationship to the politics of the time, on a personal level, or in interpersonal relationships. They have derived from the existence of a totalitarian communist regime in Romania, which lasted for almost fifty years in the twentieth century, and have been the result of either extremely traumatic life experiences as in the case of sixteen Christian men who have been recently canonised, or a life marked by a persistent traumatic recollection of the dissolution of a romantic relationship in youth years, because of the partner in the relationship who left communism and never returned.

Trauma in figurative use[2] can come as a lack of fulfilment of one's life as expected to unfold. This can happen in innumerable ways. For example, it may happen as a result of a relationship which was not found trustworthy as expected (Taft et al., *Trauma* 23). It may happen as a result of a course of life which led the subject astray from happiness, as was the case of Charles Foster Kane, who, despite great fame and fortune, on his deathbed, uttered the word «Rosebud», which greatly puzzled those who knew him. However, diligent research has led to the identification of the word with the name of his childhood sled, which is now believed to symbolise loss of a soulful connection with his entourage, if not even the loss of innocence (Grumet, "The Rosebud Phenomenon").

However, a rather gruesome way trauma takes when life is brutally cut short or exposed to persecution, as was the case of the martyrs and witnesses of Christ who lived in the twentieth century in Romania. Their lives in prison and their condition as political outcasts are described on a plethora of articles posted on internet sites, such as: "Romanian martyrs ...", in *Fericiţi cei prigoniţi pentru dreptate.net*; „Sfântul Preot Mucenic Liviu Galaction Munteanu ..." [in Romanian], in *Chilia „Buna-Vestire"*; „Sfântul Cuvios Mărturisitor Arsenie de la Prislop" [in Romanian], in *DOXOLOGIA.ro*; etc.). It is precisely their traumatic lives which made them become the most spiritually important legacy of Orthodox Christianity from the communist period to the 21st century Romania, as it led to the canonisation of sixteen Romanian martyrs and witnesses of Christ („Comunicat ..." [in Romanian], "Holy Synod ...").

The other two cases derive from Lidia Vianu's autobiographical fiction novel *Καλειδοσκόπιο/ Kaleidoscope/ Caleidoscop* (2023), and her prose poem *Vântul şi Pescăruşul/ The Wind and the Seagull/ La Mouette et le Vent* ... (2022). The novel—through literature—introduces *metanoia* or the changing of the mind and, thus, constitutes a propaedeutic for bettering the life of its readers. The prose poem—through poiesis—constitutes the digestion of the traumatic

[2] "Trauma, N., Sense 2.b." Oxford English Dictionary, Oxford UP, July 2023, https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/8021223195. Accessed: 13th March 2025.

recollection of the aspiration to form a union with a soulmate in marriage in the difficult circumstances created by the soulmate who needed to leave the country because of the communist regime. All these cases are potentially iterative as, although they refer to real biographies, they may well reflect the lives of others marked by communism in Romania.

The canonisation of sixteen martyrs and witnesses of Christ

Since the dawn of the 21st century, a rather significant connection between religion and politics has been revealed by the way politics as pursued by the former communist government in Romania inflicted multifarious kinds of trauma. A particular kind of trauma is the loss of life for the Name of Jesus Christ. In this respect, at the pinnacle of recent times are the martyrs and witnesses of Christ who lived during the forty-two years of communism in Romania. No less than sixteen of such martyrs and witnesses of Christ have been canonised („Comunicat ..." [in Romanian]/ "Holy Synod ..."). The proclamation of their canonisation was carried out on the occasion of the Celebration of the Anniversary of the Centenary of the Romanian Orthodox Patriarchate, on the 4th of February 2025, and was celebrated after the Divine Liturgy, at the Patriarchal Cathedral in Bucharest, with the participation of the Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church, a large part of the Holy Synod, and a wide Christian public („Moment istoric ..." [in Romanian]/ "Romanian Orthodox Church ...").

Below are their names before the canonisation followed suit by their titles as Saints and their commemoration days:

- Archimandrite Sofian Boghiu, abbot of St Anthimos Monastery in Bucharest, with the title Confessor Saint Sofian of St Anthimos Monastery, commemorated on September 16;
- Father Dumitru Stăniloae, theology professor in Sibiu and Bucharest, with the title the Holy Confessor Priest Dumitru Stăniloae, commemorated on October 4;
- Father Constantin Sârbu, with the title the Holy Priest-Martyr Constantine Sârbu, commemorated on October 23;
- Protosyncellus Arsenie Boca, with the title Confessor Saint Arsenius of Prislop, commemorated on November 28;
- Father Ilie Lăcătuşu, with the title the Holy Confessor Priest Elijah Lăcătuşu, commemorated on July 22;
- Hieroschemamonk Paisie Olaru, confessor of Sihăstria Monastery, with the title Saint Paisius of Sihăstria, commemorated on December 2;

- Archimandrite Cleopa Ilie, abbot of Sihăstria Monastery, with the title Saint Cleopas of Sihăstria, commemorated on December 2;
- Archimandrite Dometie Manolache, with the title Saint Dometios the Merciful of Râmeț, commemorated on July 6;
- Archimandrite Serafim Popescu, abbot of Sâmbăta de Sus Monastery, with the title Saint Seraphim the Enduring of Sâmbăta de Sus, commemorated on December 20;
- Father Liviu Galaction Munteanu, theology professor in Cluj-Napoca, with the title the Holy Priest-Martyr Liviu Galaction of Cluj, commemorated on March 8;
- Archimandrite Gherasim Iscu, abbot of Tismana Monastery, with the title Venerable Martyr Gerasimus of Tismana, commemorated on December 26;
- Archimandrite Visarion Toia, abbot of Lainici Monastery, with the title Venerable Martyr Bessarion of Lainici, commemorated on November 10;
- Protosyncellus Calistrat Bobu, confessor at Timişeni Monastery and Vasiova Monastery, with the title Saint Callistratus of Timişeni and Vasiova, commemorated on May 10;
- Father Ilarion Felea, theology professor in Arad, with the title the Holy Priest-Martyr Hilarion Felea, commemorated on September 18;
- Protosyncellus Iraclie Flocea, exarch of the monasteries of the Archdiocese of Chişinău, with the title Saint Heraclius of Bessarabia, commemorated on August 3;
- Archpriest Alexandru Baltaga with the title the Holy Priest-Martyr Alexander of Bessarabia, commemorated on August 8 ("Holy Synod ...")

In certain cases, their lives were cut at one point by their non-conformity with the political doctrine of atheism of the communist regime as was the case of the Holy Priest-Martyr Liviu Galaction („Sfântul Preot Mucenic Liviu Galaction Munteanu" [in Romanian]/ "Holy Priest-Martyr Liviu Galaction of Cluj", „Comunicat ..." [in Romanian]/ "Holy Synod ..."). Their commitment to their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, their courage to confess publicly that they are authentic and faithful Christian people, and their determination to act in accordance with their deeply held convictions are legacies of a most important effect not only on the belief systems or faith of other people, but also on the role of the Orthodox Church in the state.

On the occasion of the proclamation, Daniel the Patriarch of Romanian Orthodox Church said that:

> Their canonization is an act of recognition of the holiness of their lives, which transcends any political context, underlining the fact that true Christian confession does not uphold fleeting worldly ideologies, but the eternal values of faith and love of God. („Moment istoric ..." [in Romanian]/ "Romanian Orthodox Church ...")

The politics of the communist regime in Romania during the 20th century bent the lives of people who were pro-active adepts of the Orthodox Christianity faith. The sublime effect of their lives is that, by enduring tribulations and hardships under communism, these people became Saints and acquired the grace of intercession for all of us—the rest of the people—as per the biblical example of Onias who prayed "for the entire nation of the Jews" and Jeremiah who prayed "for the people and the holy city" (2 Maccabees 15:12–14):

> **12** In his vision, Judas saw Onias, who had been high priest and was virtuous, good, modest in all things, gentle of manners, and well-spoken. From childhood he had learned all things that properly belong to a good moral life. This man had his hands extended to pray for the entire nation of the Jews.
> **13** Then in the same manner, another man, noteworthy for his gray hair and dignity, appeared with astonishing and splendid glory.
> **14** Onias said, "This man is one who loves his brothers and sisters and prays many prayers for the people and the holy city: God's prophet Jeremiah.

Leading a holy life which transcends any political context and safeguards the eternal belief in, and love of, God against any fleeting worldly ideologies is worthy of not only transcending earthly life towards an eternal one but also of marking one's fellow human beings with a spiritually charged stamp. Moreover, these saints carry on the torch of Christian faith and have the power to shape the lives of other people by the sheer example of their own lives. This spiritual leadership which obtains through sanctification could be viewed as the ideal of the intersection of politics and religion.

Metanoia at the end of Lidia Vianu's novel Καλειδοσκόπιο/ Kaleidoscope/ Caleidoscop

Written throughout a period of thirty years, spanning through both communism and post-communism in Romania, Lidia Vianu's novel *Καλειδοσκόπιο/ Kaleidoscope/ Caleidoscop* is an autobiographical fiction novel as the author declared herself in a television interview. According to the author, the fiction in her autobiography means that although the novel features authentic connections of the author yet they appear rather disguised or, perhaps, even fictionalised in the novel (Vianu "Interview" [in Romanian]). However, in terms of depth and extension, a paragon of her kind of autobiography is Goethe's *The Auto-biography*. Speaking about his autobiography, Goethe presumes that biography is concerned with describing a person in close relation to their time. Time for them means all

those elements—social, political—which can interfere with inner motives, desires, and aspirations, and ultimately determine their way of life. Goethe thinks that a person might grow into a different person altogether were they to be born in another time—even just ten years apart. This is how he justifies his involving lots of persons and events into his autobiography (*The Autobiography* vi–vii). Lidia Vianu's autobiographical fiction novel browses through her early childhood years, her teens, her student years, her professional and career aspirations with the tribulations caused by communism and the mores of the time, and resolves itself into equanimity during her retirement years. The novel is a lyrical text which makes it almost a poem in prose in several places.

The first thing which interests this paper with regard to Lidia Vianu's novel *Kaleidoscope Καλειδοσκόπιο/ Kaleidoscope/ Caleidoscop*—as a kind of «legacy» of the Orthodox Christian faith which passed even beyond the atheistic years of communism—is found at the end of the book. A scarce two-line leitmotif from John Donne's poem "A Hymn to God the Father" concludes the novel by opening up a meditation (Donne):

> *When thou hast done, thou hast not done,*
> *For I have more.* (528)

Thus, the end of the autobiographical fiction novel becomes an invitation for the reader to continue the gist of the novel by looking into their own psyche to find whatever is there. In what follows, by parsing these two verses to reflect on their role in praying for forgiveness to the Divine Being or "God the Father", a propaedeutic for confession with its effect on reaching a state of *metanoia* or change of mind will hopefully ensue. Confession is important because the repentant can ask for forgiveness from "God the Father" only by confession. However, in order to be able to confess, the repentant has to have a thorough knowledge of the thing to be forgiven. In the following paragraphs, we shall see how confession is deconstructed, first, in the modern times, and then in Hegel's finding of the "the reflection of thought within itself" in his writing about the philosophy of history (Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*, translated by Brown and Hodgson, 416).

Man's confession to a priest is extolled by Horia-Roman Patapievici in an interview given to Cristina Teleanu at the Trinitas TV. He explains confession in relation to a presumptive analysis of man's depression. Unwilling to minimise the harm of the malady of depression, Patapievici attempts an excursion in defining it as being profound, as depending on how man perceives his metaphysics and his inability to see the multiple blessings his life offers, and, ultimately, as residing in an imbalance in the relationship between man's past and his faith in his future.

This makes him inadequate in his present. Although Patapievici sees the malady to be rather metaphysical or spiritual—which would qualify it for treatment by confession—, he adds that he views confession as the inspiration and the initiator of the modern secular practice of psychoanalysis and psychodynamic therapy (Patapievici 37:37–39:30).

To clarify what confession is as it has been for almost two thousand years, since the beginning of Christian tradition, Patapievici presents it as the examination a man should take all along his life in order to constantly check that his state has not abated from "the project of eternal life". In order to do so, he has to find out what his sins, deviations, or misses of his target are. Thus, Patapievici brings us to the part in the Lord's prayer in the Gospels where we ask for forgiveness. Though the words in *King James Version* are "forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors" (Matthew 6:12), or "forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us" (Luke 11:4), Patapievici specifies that the Greek wording for debts, or sins, is "missing the target". He insists that being on good terms with yourself means understanding your inadequacies, your misses, your sins, and confessing them as such—as they are. Confessing them requires bringing them to consciousness. Or, Patapievici continues, you truly know what they are if and only if your project of eternal life is alive and functioning. Therefore, depression is the absence of the future, and you have no future because your relation to your past has been altered by the absence of the future (Patapievici 39:30–41:54).[3]

When Patapievici is asked by Cristina Teleanu to specify which of the two orientations in confession—religious or secular—is more effective, Patapievici responds in a liberal mode that whoever has faith in the eternity of their soul would go to the priest and whoever disregards their eternity would go to secular assistance. Importantly, though, is the utter necessity of letting yourself be helped in this respect, irrespective of the chosen way: religious or secular. According to Patapievici, either confession to an Orthodox Christian priest whom one has as their sole and permanent confessor, or sessions led by psychiatrists, are sine qua non encounters with an external institution which, alone, has the potential to elevate to consciousness the status quo of how we perceive reality and manifest ourselves in it. It is only in this way that you can reach a more profound understanding of yourself and let your sins, inadequacies, and missing the target reach the conscious level. To finish off his answer, Patapievici adds that it is only the priest who can absolve you from sins, inadequacies, or missing the target. He also confesses that an encounter with a priest is "a great

[3] All Bible references are from the King James Version, https://www.biblegateway.com/.

encounter", stressing with aplomb the word «great». To lay even more emphasis on this aspect he adds as well that it is utterly important "to find a priest" (Patapievici 41:54–43:55).

Confession is a live work involving two, where the priest, or the psychiatrist for that matter, has the potential to help you unravel aspects hidden in the soul and entangled in the mind. Nevertheless, both confession and poiesis can benefit from "the reflection of thought within itself" to ferret deep into the soul to bring out the emotions there and into the mind to bring out whatever is there. Once, in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*, Hegel explored the activity of Socrates he found the "emergence of thought". Analysing the Greeks, Hegel found that the way they lived was based on "custom and practice" and that the Greeks—

> lacked a knowledge of the principle of subjectivity and conscience—*the reflection of thought within itself* in such a way that what ought to count as true confirms itself through *my* reason, through the witness of *my* spirit, through *my* feeling. Thus what is lacking here is the infinitude of spirit—spirit as an inner tribunal before which everything validated has to be justified. (*Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*, translated by Brown and Hodgson, 416) (Emphasis added for "the reflection …".)

The Sophists employed thought for all kinds of topics and referred everything to the human beings, thus leading to the telos of living to be restricted to a matter of personal preference—

> Thus the essential thing, the science of the Sophists, remains the art of 'dialectic', which must seek and recognize something as a fixed end (*festen Zweck*). They situated this fixed end in human beings; thus humans in their particularity have become the goal and end of all things, and utility the highest value. So the final end (*letzten Zweck*) is a matter of one's personal preference. This 'dialectic' regarded itself to be universally valid, and has done so [again], even today. In this way objective truth is denied. Thought makes everything vacillate depending on the preference of subjectivity. (*Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*, translated by Brown and Hodgson, 416–417)

Once Hegel reaches Socrates, he finds at him the independence of thought. Thought is no longer a mere projection of man's preference but rather an operator acting on man's own will to explore himself inwardly to find and judge whatever he finds there—

> Being-in-and-for-itself came to be recognized as the universal, and thinking as the final end, as what is valid, in that human beings are able to discover and recognize from themselves—not from their own preferences but from themselves as

> universal and thinking beings—what is right and good, and that everything that is to be valued has to justify itself before this inner tribunal of thought. (*Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*, translated by Brown and Hodgson, 417)

Ethics as customary and eminently external ways of living in communities give way to moral values which spring from the operation of thought bent upon itself in each and every man:

> In this way Socrates discovered what is essential (das Eigentliche), what is called morality. […] [T]he Greeks knew well what was ethical. Ethical life was present in the entire objective content [of their society] and was known in every relationship. But the position at which Socrates arrived is that human beings must essentially seek and find this within themselves, determining it from conviction and reasons for action. He is no mere agitator (Aufregender) and pedagogue (Bildender); rather conversation (das Gesagte) is his essential principle. (Lectures on the Philosophy of World History, translated by Brown and Hodgson, 417) (Emphasis added for "within themselves".)

Therefore, since Socrates, thought has the quality to sieve through good and wrong in relation to the subjectivity of the person. Only since Socrates, Hegel maintains, and particularly through his "conversation (das Gesagte)" as a proper manner of bringing up at the level of consciousness what is found good as differing from wrong—which is eloquently predated through Plato's *Dialogues*—, has man learned to use thought as a utensil in his spiritual enlightenment by exposing his inner waves of soul and mind.

Hegel clarifies his findings further by actualising the dichotomy between man's "inner world" and the "sole objective world" (or "the prior actual world"). The latter turns into an interviewee, as it were, for the thought, and is opposed to the "inner world", the thought becoming the arbiter of what is right between these two "worlds":

> By this principle, the discontinuity in which an inner world has found firm footing is expressed, an inner world that sets itself apart from what previously has been the sole objective world. The prior actual world is now defined as exterior *vis-à-vis* this interior world. [. . .] [H]uman beings find their tribunal in their inwardness [. . .]. Thought began to want the validity of everything to be justified in its own eyes. (*Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*, translated by Brown and Hodgson, 417)

In deconstructing the process of inner examination in preparation for confession, but in Hegel's terms, thought—viewed as an interviewer, to round off the former metaphor—has the mission to examine everything it finds in the "inner

world" as marks or stains or streaks in the form of memory and imagination of all the thoughts, utterances, and actions of man in the "sole objective world". Further on, thought has to validate the good, set apart the wrong, and hold the latter for confession. Once validation has segregated the good from the bad, the bad has been elevated to the level of the consciousness and, at this stage, it is imperative that the bad be subjected to confession as soon as possible. The urgency is dictated by the surreptitious tendency of the "inner world"—this time also involving consciousness—to conceal part or even all of its content. Concealing allows lapses to occur, which renders the examination ineffective and requires a resit.

Let us see now Donne's approach to confession in "A Hymn to God the Father". The poem is made up of three sestets—we use the word sestet for the stanza of six-line in Donne's poem.

Wilt thou forgive that sin where I begun,
Which was my sin, though it were done before?
Wilt thou forgive that sin, through which I run,
And do run still, though still I do deplore?
When thou hast done, thou hast not done,
For I have more.

Wilt thou forgive that sin which I have won
Others to sin, and made my sin their door?
Wilt thou forgive that sin which I did shun
A year or two, but wallow'd in, a score?
When thou hast done, thou hast not done,
For I have more.

I have a sin of fear, that when I have spun
My last thread, I shall perish on the shore;
But swear by thyself, that at my death thy Son
Shall shine as he shines now, and heretofore;
And, having done that, thou hast done;
I fear no more.

The first two sestets end with two identical verses—which appear as a leitmotif. The end of the novel *Καλειδοσκόπιο/ Kaleidoscope/ Caleidoscop* consists of the two lines repeated at the end of the first two sestets of Donne's poem:

When thou hast done, thou hast not done,
For I have more. (528)

There is an implicit prayer in these two verses, and that is part of man's life-long programme of repentance. In a conference for students, Daniel the Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church paraphrased Isaiah 59:2 and other prophets in describing sin: "What is sin? It is a wall between you and God, says the prophet Isaiah, it is a disgrace before God, it is a rupture in the connection with God as other prophets say. And, ultimately, it is a failure in love—in love for God and for people". Then, Daniel relates the fight against sin with the strive to obtain the peace and joy of the heart: "All the hermits' ascetic strive is an effort to remove the obstacles which hinder the heart from having peace and joy in itself, and impede the heart's love for God and for people. Repentance is a life-long programme for every Christian" (Daniel, „Pocăința" 9th December 2024, 9:05–10:05 [in Romanian], English translation).

However, calling Donne's above quoted poetic prayer just a «repentance program» is too narrow—and we shall see why it is so narrow. The first two stanzas of the poem contain a prayer addressed to the Heavenly Father for forgiving the personal sin. The personal sin is recognized as such and the stages of its manifestation are also disclosed.

In the first line of the first sestet, Donne shows the recognition of the existence of sin from the very beginning of one's life (Genesis 3:9–19) and pleads for its absolution:

> Wilt thou forgive that sin where I begun, (Donne, line 1)

Then, the conscience admits to having sinned:

> Which was my sin, [...] (Donne, line 2)

starting right from the original sin—aspect suggested by the time adverb "before":

> [...] though it were done before? (Donne, line 2)

The bible introduces the notion of original sin, but Donne goes beyond reaffirming the bible. He shows that he is «aware» that he has a conscience of sin.

To pinpoint what consciousness is in Donne's lines—instead of iterating divisions and differences between the phenomenological aspects of consciousness which is currently the major object of the study of mind (Van Gulick "Consciousness")—, a return to the consciousness found by Hegel amongst the Greeks suffices to understand Donne's viewpoint. Whereas Socrates' contemporaries used to make resort to a "customary morality"—meaning that they obeyed a statutory propriety and kept themselves free from any interpretation or judgement of such customs—, and after Anaxagoras "had taught, that Thought

itself was the absolute Essence of the World", along came Socrates who posited that "The moral man is not he who merely wills and does that which is right—not the merely innocent man—but he who has the consciousness of what he is doing". By diligent conversation, Socrates shows his friends the difference between thinking attached to external things and thought which reflects upon itself, and teaches them how to discern the right from wrong:

> The principle of Socrates manifests a revolutionary aspect towards the Athenian State; for the peculiarity of this State was, that Customary Morality was the form in which its existence was moulded, viz.—an inseparable connection of Thought with actual life. When Socrates wishes to induce his friends to reflection, the discourse has always a negative tone; he brings them to the consciousness that they do not know what the Right is. (*Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*, translated by J. Sibree, 281)

Therefore, to reveal his aptitude to see within himself and appreciate what is right and what is wrong, Donne appropriates the original sin in line 2. After these two verses, there are two others that iterate, in a canonical construction, a request for forgiveness spurred by the sin once committed:

> Wilt thou forgive that sin, through which I run, (Donne, line 3)

and which has a continuation, in which, despite the existence of the consciousness of committing the sin once, the poet admits that he has not freed himself from it, but continues to commit it:

> And do run still, (Donne, line 4)

He commits the sin even if he abhors it, even if he regrets it:

> though still I do deplore? (Donne, line 4)

After this first quatrain—we should call it a quatrain because although the stanza has six lines, the first four are distinctly placed on the page as opposed to the last two. Therefore, they can be called quatrains—with the two lines concluding the sestet being, in fact, the same two lines which conclude the novel *Καλειδοσκόπιο*/ *Kaleidoscope*/ *Caleidoscop*. They represent a prayer of particular beauty. Its beauty as well as force emanates from the power of the poet's faith in the merciful love of Christ which is described by Daniel the Patriarch as "an unassuming and kind-hearted and generous love" (Daniel, „Cuvântul" 7:30–7:40 [in Romanian], English translation). This prayer is the poet's faith in God's forgiving nature ("*When thou hast done*"); but also the belief in the human

being's desire to cleanse their mind as shown by the Greek-originating word *metanoia*, meaning through repentance or a change of the habits of mind. That is why it is also the recognition of the fallen nature of man who—once forgiven—falls again ("*For I have more*"), and again asks God for forgiveness ("*thou hast not done*").

These lines at the end of Vianu's novel are a profound conclusion to an in-depth, soulful meditation, and they emphasise something which Horia-Roman Patapievici told Eugenia Vodă in an interview on the *Profesioniştii* programme. He argues that, when we lower our perception of the things around us, we become open to more diaphanous perceptions, which, however, exist all the time alongside us. We do perceive such things when we are confronted with suffering, love, illness, betrayal—any kind of existential problems (*Profesioniştii* 1:01:58–1:03:27 [in Romanian], English translation). Amongst the last lines in *Καλειδοσκόπιο/ Kaleidoscope/ Caleidoscop* there is one which testifies to the above: "While I was blinded by my being alive, nothing began and nothing ended. Only now can I see without eyes" (Vianu 528).

The placement of the *metanoia*-inspiring verses at the end of the autobiographical fiction novel reveals a special kind of denouement as, with its structure lacking a proper epic, the novel calls for a poetic finale. Such an ending is apt to transfer its message right away towards the reader, and can have formative influences on them not only through John Donne's verses, but also through the propaedeutic proper of the autobiographical novel.

On the different paths taken by the Professor and the author, his student

The metaphor which was to become «the wall» in the poem *Vântul şi Pescăruşul/ The Wind and the Seagull/ La Mouette et le Vent* ..., and develop into a poetic device has its roots in two contexts in the novel *Καλειδοσκόπιο/ Kaleidoscope/ Caleidoscop*. With the kaleidoscopic distribution of the autobiographical passages in the novel, the metaphor appears in a time-reverse order. The first mention of «the wall» appears in relation to a letter received by the author from her Professor in their late age, when the author has already regained contact with him. Remembering her Professor's conditional sentence which he told her not long before his leaving the country, namely, "I had the feeling that, if I did not call you today, I would never see you again", which is twice present in *Vântul şi Pescăruşul/ The Wind and the Seagull/ La Mouette et le Vent* ... (22, 80) and seven times in *Καλειδοσκόπιο/ Kaleidoscope/ Caleidoscop* (288, 312, 350, 402, 452, 504, 526), the author continues to ask herself in Chapter 145:

> Where are you, Den-Disco, this summer Sunday afternoon, while I watch the seagulls circling the blocks? There were no seagulls in Bucharest back then. They only lived by the sea. Like you, now. *(Kaleidoscope* 404*)*

Then, she inserts her Professor's letter which is followed by the wall metaphor:

> No seagull can ever fly over the wall between what was and what could have been. We are both running away. Now. *(Kaleidoscope* 406*)*

She refrains to comment on her Professor's letter—his doubts in his old age about another course of life in his former years—but she devises «the wall» as the most telling stance in the situation. More about this stance is to be expected from its development in the poem *Vântul şi Pescăruşul/ The Wind and the Seagull/ La Mouette et le Vent* ... which, however, is programmed to enter another paper or article.

The very next chapter—146, after Chapter 145—brings the memory of the kaleidoscope the author received as a present from Layla—a maid living close to her family's place when the author was just a child: "Layla — who gave me a kaleidoscope" (*Kaleidoscope* 412). This memory is meant to bring in the sentence: "I dropped it". (*Kaleidoscope* 412). No causal relationship exists between the broken kaleidoscope and the author's life, although she perceives her life as a broken succession of events "My entire life is a Kaleidoscope" (*Kaleidoscope* 412), which she strives to mend by creating a series of literary works—her series of prose poetry parallel texts. Lidia Vianu admits to her novel being a recreation of her life out of disparate fragments of living moments: "My soul keeps gluing it back whenever I remember I have broken it. My entire life is a Kaleidoscope" (*Kaleidoscope* 412). If we consider the author's life—which she deems unravelled and in dire need of reconstruction—a figurative kind of trauma, which she can digest in order to feel good about herself, then the mere writing of the novel *Καλειδοσκόπιο/ Kaleidoscope/ Caleidoscop* is the proper kind of therapy according to modern psychological treatments (Muller, "Written Exposure Therapy"; Jensen, "I've Never Been Poetic Like This Before").

The novel continues with Chapter 147 which starts with the encouragement of the author's father for his daughter and her future-to-be writing work. There is another statement of the author about her father's encouragement told to Professor Sorin Ivan in an interview. There, Lidia Vianu says she abhors rhyme verses. It seems that her hate for rhyming verses sprang from her father's few verses he showed her in order to teach her how to write (Vianu, „Între Profesie .../Between Profession ..." 20). Here are the author's father's few words in *Καλειδοσκόπιο/ Kaleidoscope/ Caleidoscop*:

> "*You do not know much about me. Here are a few of my memories. I have put them down for you. They might come in handy sometime.*" (412)

They are followed by a rounded story written by the author's father. The next chapter, 148, consists of a series of the author's diary entries written between the summer of 1965, when the author became of age, and the summer of 1969, just before the end of her fourth year at the faculty. In June 1969, with one more exam to sit, the then-student Lidia Vianu was to go to an international conference at Snagov. There, she totally unexpectedly meet Professor Den-Disco. Right after this encounter, the author recalls in her novel a short mention made on the 29th of July 1969 when she met her Professor for the last time before his leaving the country. The as-if-a-diary entry begins with the Professor's conditional leitmotif statement: "I had the feeling that, if I did not call you today, I would never see you again" (*Kaleidoscope* 452). Immediately after that comes the metaphor «the wall» when they part:

> He left without a word. My mind swam in frozen darkness. No words could cross the wall that I felt rising between us.
> The never-again. *(Kaleidoscope* 454*)*

And only a little while later, the diary entry on the 6th of September in the same year of 1969 shows the author's heartbreak:

> *Saturday 6 September*
>
> Where is he, what is he doing, who is with him.
> It was never-again.
> "You run away sometimes."
> No. I did not run. I am here. He ran.
> That moment of a Seagull flying in a dream, carried by the Wind over the blue sea. That Seagull was and will never again be — me. *(Kaleidoscope* 454*)*

The above poetic—albeit written in prose—passage recaptures at once the astral—crucial—moments between the author and Professor Den-Disco. It has a circularity between the wondering moment of start—"Where is he, what is he doing, who is with him"—in which the author finds herself alone and the last image—"That Seagull was and will never again be — me"—in which she sees herself again irremediably alone. In between, the novel reiterates, as in a poem proper, the cardinal moments. First, the author repeats the phrase «never-again» from the construct "The never-again" (*Kaleidoscope* 454), which marked her good-bye separation from the Professor on the 29th of July. It did not seem to be a true «never-again» when it was first thought of—perhaps just a grey premonition—, but it turned out to be a real «never-again» when it was written after it happened. The phrase appears again on the 6th of September 1969, after

the Professor left the country. Only when the author relives the feeling of separation from the Professor and recaptures it in writing, later, when she writes the novel, does the feeling which accompanies the «never-again» phase acquire the valence of a painful truth, which is expressed elliptically as in a lyric poem from which the feeling emerges as an effluvium: "It *was* never-again" (*Kaleidoscope* 454).

The above conjectural writing is a faithful mirror of an act of purging the traumatic feeling of whole-life separation of the author from the Professor. By putting aside, in writing, the tension lent by the feeling of separation, the author gets closer to the state of *theosis* or the union with God[4] (Archimandrite George, *Theosis* 15). The entire series of parallel texts, originating in the autobiographical depiction of the author's life, with a stress on her unfulfilled union with the university Professor George Constantin Săndulescu, who left the

[4] In the introduction to his book on *theosis*, Archimandrite George from the Holy Monastery of Saint Gregorios in Mount Athos, Greece shows that it would be a haughty enterprise for a writer to write about such a subject unless he has attained *theosis* proper. However, because *theosis* is the true purpose of man in life he has opted to write about it:

> This is done so as not to hide from our Christian brothers the highest and ultimate purpose of our life; that for which we were created.
> This is done so that it will become clear that the only truly Orthodox form of pastoral guidance is that which is intended to lead to Theosis, and is not, as in Western Christianity, aimed at a moral perfection for man which does not depend on God's Grace. (*Theosis* 15)

The point of departure in his endeavour is the Scripture, where it is written that man was created in the image of God:

> Our life's purpose is declared in the first chapter of the Holy Bible, when the Holy author tells us that God created man "in His image and likeness." [...] He does not wish [man] simply to be a being with certain gifts, certain qualities, a certain superiority over the rest of creation, He wishes him to be a god by Grace. (*Theosis* 19)

He continues with an enumeration of the 'charismata' by which man is created by God 'in His image':

> a logos-related *nous*,* conscience, and individual sovereignty, i.e. freedom, creativity, eros, and the yearning for the absolute and for God, personal self-awareness, and anything else which puts man above all other living beings in creation and makes him a man and an individual. That is to say, everything that makes man a person. (*Theosis* 20)

Archimandrite George avows that *theosis* is the union of man with God because, since man has been 'endowed "in His image", man is called upon to be completed "in His likeness". This is Theosis. The Creator, God by nature, calls man to become a god by Grace' (*Theosis* 2). He says that the Church Fathers have reasoned that 'God became man in order to make man a god. If God had not taken flesh, man would not be able to achieve Theosis' (*Theosis* 24). In another place, Archimandrite George specifies that, since Lord Jesus was both man and God, He 'has two perfect natures: divine and human', which 'are joined "without change, without confusion, without separation, and without division" in the one person of Christ [...]' (*Theosis* 28). Then, he adds that 'because Christ is the eternal God-Man through the hypostatic union of the two natures in the person of Christ, human nature is irrevocably unified with the divine nature because Christ is eternally God-Man' (*Theosis* 28).

communist country in order to pursue an international academic career—with settlements in Stockholm and Monaco—, is an attempt at digesting her life's story by transposing it into literary accomplishments (Vianu, „Între Profesie ...⁄ Between Profession ..." 9–10).

Then, there comes the putting together of the Professor's words "You run away sometimes" with the author's thought-response "No. I did not run. I am here. *He* ran". Finally, the «never again» leitmotif is brought back by the author's remembrance of her feelings when she left the international conference with careful help and caressing gestures of the Professor, whom she metaphorically saw then as «the Wind»: "That moment of a Seagull flying in a dream, carried by the Wind over the blue sea", and her finding herself alone again: "That Seagull was and will never again be — me" (*Kaleidoscope* 454).

"That moment of a Seagull flying in a dream" may well signify a metaphoric expression of the foretaste of Heaven, of the lived-before-lived spiritual experience of the soul who has been permitted to enter Heaven. The sea was blue not for its normally perceived colour, but for the author's own perception of the blue colour, which she relates when she recounts her imagination with respect to the kaleidoscope crystal colours. She defines her spiritual perception of the colours she dreams about, and she pinpoints blue as the colour of flying: "Blue: fly" (*Kaleidoscope* 6).

Another significant blue moment is when the author describes the way she used to perceive the colours of the diamond on the ring worn by her mother's father the moment he "died in the street":

> I like looking at the many colours in which it reflects light. If I can see blue, my wish is sure to come true. I often make a wish before I look at its blinding triangular facets. *(Kaleidoscope* 314*)*

Blue also appears as if to strengthen the momentary feeling of certainty the author had when—seeing the Professor's hand waving to her with kind gestures when she was leaving the conference venue—she imagined herself as a seagull carried by a propitious wind over an endless sea. The blue colour of the sea must symbolise the fulfilment of the author's wish for a complete union of two mating souls—hers and the Professor's.

> Eighteenth of June 1969. Eighteen more days and I will be twenty-two.
> My body will continue the life that it has begun. This car is taking me home at midnight.
> But I will always be THERE... Where Den-Disco's eyes follow me. His waving hand has found my wings.

> Now I am dreaming about it. I soar. The endless sea is below me. There is no ending. The peace. The smile. The certainty. All blue.
> My wings. His wings.
> Two — flying — One. (*Kaleidoscope* 340)

All in all, the two had to take their proper roads in life. Daniel the Patriarch of Romania sees the road taken by a person in life as the result of the necessary three factors which determine the youth's early development in life. The youth should be raised spiritually in love, taught intellectually in truth, and practically educated to do good deeds. The first of these three factors can be further developed as not just a raising of the youth in love by the natural parents, but also by the spiritual parents—educators, teachers, confessors—as well as sisters, brothers, friends, and the Church, and the Homeland. The youth should not just be loved by all these factors; he should also be taught to love them in return. Only then is the youth fully raised spiritually in love (Daniel, "Tineretul" 1:40–3:41 [in Romanian], English translation).

Or, as for the Professor, we learn from his student that he had to make at least a choice between his love life and his life of work. In his letter sent to the author after they found each other again, long after communism in Romania was abolished, the Professor mentions the way he perceived his youthful choice at the time: "*Should I have cared enough to postpone defecting? Married you, maybe*?" (*Kaleidoscope* 404). But then he declared his hatred for the communist regime. With respect to the work aspect of his life, the Professor lacked at the very least the love for the country of his birth. It was all because of the political regime of the time when he decided to leave the country for good:

> Not with my intense hatred of the regime, although — Did you have any idea? No, you would not — I did everything to protect myself. I did not spare anyone who could harm me. But, shshsh... this is only for me to know. I can't tell you. Nobody can ever trust anyone. This is a tricky world. (*Kaleidoscope* 404)

According to the thoughts in the homily of Daniel the Patriarch, the Professor did not have the least inclination to do his best in terms of good deeds in a country where the regime was imposed forcefully (Daniel, "Tineretul" 1:40–3:41 [in Romanian], English translation). He had to choose a life in a country with a liberal regime. And he chose the Western Europe, where he finally established himself in the Monte Carlo part of Monaco, as we learn from the interview given by Lidia Vianu to Sorin Ivan („Între Profesie .../Between Profession ..." 9 –10) and also from the poem *Vântul şi Pescăruşul/ The Wind and the Seagull/ La Mouette et le Vent* .... In the latter, we find the Professor by the author's metaphorical name for him: «the Wind»:

> Once upon a time, there was a monks' city, on the top of Monte C, facing the sea. Once upon a time, there lived in this city a Wind [...] *(The Wind* 80*)*

We also learn about his passing away at long last on the very spot he had chosen for his life:

> 123 ∞ 7 breaths is what it took to climb the Monte. The harmony of Il Monaco's ascended soul, the pity for that breathing body, farther and farther away, till the drop of blood is the tunnel, into ∞ (*The Wind* 144*)*

It seems that the Parable of the Talents (Mat. 25:14–30) with its significance of the responsibility to increase the value of the talents received at birth, or, put differently, a place where the best good deeds in life could be done—as expected from a birth endowment—led the Professor to leave the country of his birth. In Christian terms, this is the most reasonable translation of the Professor's decision provided that he had envisioned a successful career in the liberal world—far away from the political regime in communism. However, the union the author of the novel *Καλειδοσκόπιο/ Kaleidoscope/ Caleidoscop* was expecting with the Professor was drastically severed by his defection.

As a redemption of equanimity, Lidia Vianu launched into a process of poiesis which led to her volumes of prose poetry—for there are several of her books related to this traumatic unfolding of events. Aiming at how people live together and perceive events differently—that is, subjectively, what connects to themselves, whereas, objectively, what every man partakes of others' lives according to their canvases, Arthur Schopenhauer distinguishes between objective and subjective perceptions of events and deftly connects subjective perception with poiesis—the creation of literary works, particularly poetry:

> [...] all the events in a man's life are connected in two fundamentally different ways; first in the objective causal connection of the course of nature, secondly in a subjective connection that exists only in reference to the individual who experiences them. It is as subjective as his own dreams, yet in him their succession and content are likewise necessarily determined, but in the manner in which the succession of the scenes of a drama is determined by the plan of the poet. (*Parerga and Paralipomena I* 220)

Lidia Vianu's prose poetry is thus a channel for purging unresolved issues, or, rather, for suppressing the reverberating recollections of the utterances of desires, unfolding over along almost half a century. Ultimately, they bear the stamp of unfulfilled Christian love on account of the political regime, and impact their reader as a «legacy» of Orthodox Christianity and the communist regime in the 20th century Romania, which persisted into the 21st century.

Conclusions

This paper aims at highlighting a palette of effects of the interconnectedness of Orthodox Christianity and the communist regime in Romania between the years 1947 and 1989. We should name the effects a palette since the effects range at various levels of value—from spirit to adaptation. The strict prohibition of open confession of the Christian faith during the communist period and the harsh conditions applied to those who dared to oppose the system led the system to allow the growth of holy individuals who have been canonised and entered the gallery of Orthodox Christian Saints—either as martyrs or as witnesses of Christ („Comunicat ..." [in Romanian], "Holy Synod ...").

Another effect of the interconnectedness between Orthodox Christianity and communism led Lidia Vianu to write an autobiographical fiction novel which deconstructs the pillars of education—high school and higher education—under communism and ends with a propaedeutic of bettering the readers' lives through the process of confession, which is single in its ability to lead to *metanoia* or changing of mind as a better condition of the human psyche. A final effect revealed in this paper is the poiesis which the author has approached in the literariness of the two bilingual books—*Καλειδοσκόπιο/ Kaleidoscope/ Caleidoscop* and *Vântul şi Pescăruşul/ The Wind and the Seagull/ La Mouette et le Vent* ...—written in English and Romanian—so as to digest the lack of fulfilment of her union with Professor George Constantin Săndulescu on account of the political regime in Romania of the time.

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