

Life as an Alter Ego. Petrea Icoanei: Travesties¹ and Clandestinity in the Anticommunist Resistance Movement

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Abstract

The paper analyzes the historical and symbolic aspects of the image of an anticommunist fighter, Teodor Şuşman junior, preserved in collective memory. Teodor Şuşman junior, son of Teodor Şuşman senior, leader of the anticommunist resistance movement in the Apuseni Mountains disguised himself as an icon painter after his father committed suicide in order to protect the community he belonged to against the persecution of the Securitate. The analyses of the oral history interviews discuss Teodor Şuşman junior's travesty in the context of the history of clandestinity, of the marginal. They reveal that the community interpreted the two Şuşmans' life according to symbolic patterns deeply embedded in collective thinking, their death being considered a sacrificial death taken on for the sake of the community.

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Instead of the yet unwritten history of the armed anticommunist resistance groups, stories have gained a crucial place, since they produce and reproduce an immersed history-reality. Torn from historiography by the communist ideology, they were placed inherently in the keeping of collective and individual memory which also were turned into taboo and hidden by the propaganda of the repressive communist regime.

Sending a past reality to "forgetfulness" only turns it into a secret and the secret is always alluring, attractive and it is assigned to "talking in whispers" since there is no communication about it, but it is

¹ Throughout this paper we use the word *travesty* (and its derivatives) in the original sense of the word 'to disguise by changing costume'. (Translator's note)

kept in memory and in the “untold” stories. These *untold stories* belong to the inhibited communication of a hard, oppressive, declining age. Memory itself becomes clandestine and conspiratorial, giving birth, correspondingly, to a *secret oral history, untold or travestied*.

The personage Petrea Icoanei, member of the anticommunist resistance movement led by Teodor Șușman in the north of the Apuseni Mountains, can be placed into this anonym and common, but also polymorph and “protective” zone of travesty and conspiracy. The travestied person and the “untold”¹ stories originated from the same source belonging to the repressed and oppressive history-reality in the communist era. Insubordination, concealment and travesty coupled in a natural manner in the mechanisms and strategies of the anticommunist resistance; they also interact in collective memory, not activated so far by stories, by the provocation to talk launched by oral history. This ethics of discretion and *insubordination* also belongs to the *insubordination* to a closed, oppressive time, the age of communism. Because of this, the anticommunist resistance had a variety of manifestation and expression forms, so far not reconstructed and unknown.

The personage and his travesty belong to the same zone where oppressive history-reality and resistance to oppression came into interaction. They outline a territory of confrontation between *freedom and repression*, between *licit and illicit*, between *told and untold* and last but not least between *history and memory*. This armed anticommunist resistance as a taboo-theme of historical writings took refugee in, exiled itself to memory, travestied itself, as the personage, into an unwritten history, which, however, is told on the provocation of the oral historian. If there is no such provocation, the story is not told or communicated. The story, however, often assumes legendary transfigurations, fictional elements, travesties.

These discursive dualities extracted from history-reality are concentrated in an exemplary way in the personage Petrea Icoanei. Petrea Icoanei is the pseudonym of Teodor Șușman junior, son of Teodor Șușman from Răchițele who was the leader of the armed anticommunist resistance group in Huedin area. Teodor Șușman senior’s suicide in autumn 1951 was a moment which articulated the history of the Șușman Group, in the sense that the actions of the anticommunist fighters were

¹ Cf. Alessandro Portelli, *The Battle of Valle Giulia: Oral History and the Art of Dialogue*, The University of Wisconsin Press, 1997, pp. 3–39.

reorganized in the spirit of total concealment, as the Securitate increased the severity of its repressive actions.

On the other hand, Teodor Șușman senior's suicide was endowed with the characteristics of a *sacrificial death*, since massive repression would have been inflicted on the villages which had relationships with the persons who had run away to the mountains. From a mythological perspective, the death of Teodor Șușman, a personage from the outside of the community, excluded, "run away" and isolated in the armed anticommunist fight, was a redeeming death: "the death of the isolated appears somehow as a tribute which must be paid in order that collective life could go on. A single person dies and the solidarity of all the living is strengthened. The surrogate victim dies, it seems in order that the threatened community might die with him and that it might be born again to the fecundity of a new or renewed cultural order."¹

These mythological significations of Teodor Șușman senior's suicide, which was aimed at the salvation of the community from the persecution of the Securitate, are highlighted in the account of a man who participated in the resistance group: "the old man [Teodor Șușman, our note D. R.]..., in the autumn of 1951, shot himself. He went to the village and the people were so much terrorized that he could not bear any longer that people were terrorized for his sake. The entire village, I think, was beaten [by the Securitate, our note D. R.]. And then he went there to a family and entered a barn. He went to a deserted barn and shot himself; the boy went in the morning to feed the cows and Șușman gave the child some money to go and tell the Militia² that he was there. And when the Militia came he was shot." ("bătrânul..., în toamna anului 1951, s-a împușcat. S-a dus în sat și lumea era așa de terorizată, că el n-o mai suportat să mai fie lumea terorizată pentru el. Tot satul cred c-o fost bătut. Si-atunci s-a dus acolo, la o familie, și-o intrat în șură. S-a dus la o șură pustie și se împușcă; s-o dus băiatul dimineață, să deie la vite și i-o dat Șușman ceva bani la copil ca să se ducă și să spună la Miliție că-i acolo. Și pe când o venit Miliția, era împușcat")³

Secondly the sacrificial character of Șușman's death produced – beyond the constraints of clandestinity at a historical level – the travesty;

¹ René Girard, *Violența și sacrul* (Violence and the Sacred), Bucharest, Ed. Nemira, 1995, p. 277.

² Militia was the name of the police forces in communist Romania. (Translator's note, Á. K.)

³ The Archives of the Oral History Institute, Cluj-Napoca, Interview with Lucreția Jurj-Costescu.

the father's sacrifice transferred the act of resistance to the travestied son as an initiation. This aspect can be placed beside the so-called "*sacrificial substitution*".¹ Teodor Șuşman senior's "founder death" opened a reality – unbearable due to oppression – which was doubled in the travesty symbolized by his son. The travesty and clandestinity articulated as "founder" by Teodor Șuşman senior's death banished suffering, oppression and violence to an alternative, pseudonymous world. Thus limits were transgressed through sacrifice, through imitations and transfigurations which "protect the community from violence".²

In conformity with the mechanisms of heroology, exemplary characters become heroes in collective memory, they take over the burden and load of a declining age through their sacrifice which, thus articulated, produces an unloaded, liberating or founding burden. The episode of sacrificial death determines a *double transfer of significations*: on the one hand, the sacrificed person becomes a hero because "he fully lives his communal destiny. He risks everything, he sacrifices his life for a socio-cultural ideal, for an ethical message, as the exponent of the historical present in mankind's future."³ On the other hand, there is a shift from the hero's sacrificial death towards the founding of a new ethical code or towards his transfiguration or reincorporation in a personage who takes over paradigmatically, "*in absentia*", the ethical and mythical fortune. This type of transfer reproduces and perpetuates through a legendary and mythological relay "cultural paradigms and stereotypes" through the ages, from the Antiquity to the Middle Ages or even further in time.

Historical literature, at the interference with mythology and hagiography, presents numerous cases of "miraculous transgressions", since "an age is born when another age dies, the passing one transmitting its power and virtue to the new."⁴ The values assumed by the sacrificed hero which concentrate the signified of a historical or legendary narrative subsist as a "residual image" in the exemplary person's successor or descendent.⁵ Therefore exemplary succession lines and imaginary

¹ René Girard, *op. cit.*, p. 291 et sqq.

² *Ibid.*, p. 293.

³ Romulus Vulcănescu, *Mitologia română* (Romanian Mythology), Bucharest, 1985, p. 577.

⁴ Gian Paolo Caprettini, *Semiologia povestirii* (The Semiology of the Story), s.l., Ed. Pontica, 2000, pp. 14–19.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

genealogies are constructed such as between Roland, Charlemagne and the antique heroes, or David and Goliath.¹

Teodor Șuşman senior's case, besides a direct filiation (between father and son), has similar meanings – preserving the proportions –, since, in the imponderability characteristic to historiographic deconstruction, the occurrence or coincidence in historical reality resuscitated or fertilized passages from the deep legendary and mythological narration retained in collective memory.

The residual elements of the legendary narration are refined at the level of the “residual signified”, supported by the events and occurrences of the history-reality. Changing its original sense – coincidence –, occurrence acquires the particular meaning of historical event. Occurrence as an event is what already happened before, which means, it emphasizes coincidences in the real and discursive flow of history. The historical events and occurrences animate and reactivate the great anonymous, legendary and imaginary story, *not passed* and *not surpassed* yet by any other type of discourse in the perspective of the motionless history, the long duration.

From the perspective of the long duration the anticommunist movement in the Apuseni Mountains, led by the two Teodor Șuşmans, father and son, is inscribed into a historical phenomenon which history writing connected with themes placed into the same semantic field: *the history of clandestinity, of marginals, of the illicit, of criminality*. These themes began to make a certain career in historiography at the beginning of the 1960s.

Separated from social history, more precisely from social margins and marginals, the historiographic discourse focusing on these themes is interested in the history situated on the borderline of normality, in normality fixed by Christian ethics and later on by the ethics of the modern state. Passing through the filter of legends, the illicit, violence, the marginal and criminality have been converted into “miraculous” actions and personages articulated by unlimited courage, by a “popular justicialism”, aspects which go beyond reality, a fact which places this historical phenomenon into the long duration.

Similarly, historiography dedicated to illicit themes and realities became attractive, as something forbidden it aroused interest, since the history of violence, criminality, brigandage, and clandestinity do not belong to the “academic” or respectable line of the historiographic

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 13–20.

discourse. A marginal reality receives only a marginal expression. Anyway, such a historiography began to discuss and decompress the historical writing of an age when the constraints of “class struggle” and of the “hard”, ideological, Marxist discourse frequently marked the historical writing not only in socialist countries, but in western states as well. The decompression of the historical writing is also a reaction to the self-imposed academic “respectability” in the discussion of the research themes of the past. Shaped by the pressures or constraints of the historiographical discourse, the history of clandestinity and criminality started to impose itself in the majority of the great European historical schools. We should not neglect the fact that the extraction of these problems from under the influence of the “hard discourse” also implies a shift toward the horizons of postmodernism.

Illicit and of clandestine history was elaborated, crystallized and introduced into historiographic discourse in the period between 1958 and 1979 – two chronological reference points which mark historiographical achievements worthy of consideration. In 1958 a book appeared in French historiography which highlights “the pathology of urban life”, centred on a subject of social history and entitled *Classes laborieuses, classes dangereuses*.¹ In 1977, the illicit history of violence and criminality had already been investigated for 20 years, a period presented in a volume entitled suggestively *Histoire et clandestinité*, which gives a general view on a problem and a historic phenomenon from the margins of social life.²

In the mid 1980s, the theme of marginality, clandestinity and criminality was represented in the historiographical discourse by B. Geremek, M. Foucault, P. Deyon’s works.³ The recovery of a tabooed historiographical discourse is also associated with an ethical reflection on the personages belonging to the marginal world of criminality, banditry, reflections inspired by the perception of these personages in the collective mentality and imaginary.

In these cultural horizons the outlaw, the bandit, the “lawless” is transformed into personages such as the “voyou” Mandrin in the 18th

¹ Louis Chevalier, *Classes laborieuses, classes dangereuses, à Paris, pendant la première moitié du XIX-siècle*, Paris, Plon, 1958.

² *Histoire et clandestinité du Moyen Age à la Première Guerre Mondiale. Coloque de Privas, mai 1977*, Ateliers Professionnels du l’ O.S.J., 1979.

³ Bronislaw Geremek, *Les marginaux parisiens au XIV^e et XV^e siècles*, Paris, Gallimard, 1976; Michel Foucault, *Surveiller et punir. Naissance de la prison*, Paris, Gallimard, 1975; Pierre Deyon, *Les temps de prison*, Lille, P.U.L., 1975.

century who was celebrated in folksongs as the personification of “courage, generosity, unhappiness”, he was the bandit “au grand coeur”, *justice maker* according to the deep strata of collective memory. Romantic nostalgia fertilized the positive image of the justice making bandit, of personages like Jean Valjean. Victor Hugo recalled that in Paris in his youth workers saluted a condemned man going to the gallows by “taking their hats off to him as to a king”.¹ This fact related by the French writer confirms and reconfirms the assertion that “each society chooses its heroes who correspond to its ethics”.²

The American researches and analyses of oral history dedicated to the cases of three 19–20th century outlaws, Jesse James, John Dillinger and Bonnie and Clyde³ can be placed on the same interpretative level. Situated at the interference between real and imaginary, oral history operates with a reconstructive and analytic instrumentarium aimed rather at the representation of the past through collective memory than at the “details” related to reality and the outlaws’ biography. Starting with the assumption that all “criminal acts are based on the social and political ideologies of their age”, oral history prefers to explore the mythological construction of the “outlaw”, highlighting concomitantly the recurrence of some themes centred on “social banditry as social justice”. On the other hand, trying to separate reality from fiction, oral history emphasizes the levels of the mythologization process by immersing into individual and collective memory. Besides the separation of reality and fiction in the accounts related to oral history, it is permanently attempted to contrast the story of the outlaws’ deeds and life preserved in popular memory with the “official” discourse “of jurisdiction, newspapers, governmental authorities” regarding the actions of those in conflict with the law.

Resorting to a real network of story-tellers, oral history has reconstructed Jesse James’ biography concentrically advancing from witnesses close to the outlaw’s family towards the larger, collective perception, the “secret sympathy” shown by the majority of witnesses

¹ Pierre Chaunu, *Le sacre du voyou*, in *Au coeur religieux de l’histoire*, Paris, Perrin, 1986, pp. 290–296.

² *Ibid.*

³ Homer Croy, *Jesse James was my Neighbour*, Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1997; Paul Maccabee, *John Dillinger slept here: A Crook’s Tour of Crime and Corruption in St. Paul, 1920–1936*, St. Paul Minnesota Historical Press, 1995; John Ned Phillips, *Running with Bonnie and Clyde*, Norman University of Oklahoma Press, 1996.

towards the outlaw being emphasized. More precisely, from the perspective of “social justice”, the gangsters’ crimes were justified by “the crimes committed by banks and other institutions” towards the citizens.

Embellished by sympathy and nostalgia, the memoirs and stories about outlaws are organized gradually (individual, community, nation), a fact which confers a Protean dimension to the accounts about proscribed men, therefore a story generates other stories, and the myth of the outlaw is continuously constructed and reconstructed.¹

German historiography dedicated to criminality and clandestinity is dominated by a sociological approach. The social connection of criminality ought to be emphasized in the “opposition” put up “against the fiscal behaviour of state authority”.² “Social brigandage” is clearly delimited from “criminal brigandage”. The former is recruited from among peasants, and it is a “legitimate defence” originating from the confrontation between the two conceptions of law and justice: one “official, written” and the other belonging to the peasantry, or, in other words, the confrontation between juridical norm (state authority) and social norm (socio-cultural entity).³

In general, social criminality is due to the fact that the structural transformation of an agrarian society into a pre-industrial one failed and it is more and more accentuated by the “repressive” activity “of the modern state”.⁴ All “seditions, revolts and insurrections”, as they are called in the official discourse of the age, are the expression of the “social deficit” of the modernization process. In countless cases the border between victims and criminals, between law and justice is predominantly permeable and labile, depending on the ethical and normative perspective adopted in the historiographic and juridical analysis and reconstruction. This perspective is ambivalently overdetermined either by a *juridical rigor*, or by an *ethical relativism*. The “Edelweisspiraten” movement is a good example of this. This was a

¹ Cf. Joseph F. Spillane, “Myth, Memory and the American Outlaw”, in: *The Oral History Review*, no. 1, vol. 26, 1999, pp. 113–116.

² R. Koenig, „Stadtgeschichte und Kriminalsoziologie”, in: *Soziologie und Sozialgeschichte*, 1972, pp. 357–389.

³ Carsten Küther, *Räuber und Gauner im Deutschland. DasBandenwesen im 18 und frühen 19 Jahrhundert*, Göttingen, 1976, p. 146 et sqq.

⁴ Cf. Alf Lüdtke, “The Role of State Violence in the Period of Transition to Industrial Capitalism. The Example of Prussia from 1814 to 1848”, in: *Social History*, VI/1979, p. 2.

resistance organization of young people in a district of Köln, which was opposed – in a ludic manner in most cases – to the organizations of young Nazis. 30 of these anti Nazi young people were condemned and executed in November 1944. The posterity oscillates between considering them victims or criminals. Although their parents tried everything to demonstrate their martyrdom under the Nazi regime, they live even nowadays in collective memory as criminals.¹

The ethical place of outlaws is in a “counter-society” with its own rules and hierarchies, with codes copied from the codes of civil society, with “rites of initiation specific to corporations”. They constituted a “popular illegality” as it was formulated by the state authority.² The perception of the community, the popular ethical horizon, however, created exemplary biographies of justice making outlaws for the internal use of these “counter-societies”. The ethical placement oscillating between victims and criminals is suggestively formulated at the level of the historical discourse in the title of a volume dedicated to the reconstruction of the history of criminality in modern history: *Criminal Histories and Histories of Crime* published in 1996.³ The notions of “crime” and “criminality” do not mean only murder in the formulas mentioned above, but also the violation of the law and penal infractions.

This brief historiographic overview can contextualize the Romanian problems related to penal history, to the history of clandestinity and criminality. The Romanian historiographic project on this theme must be elaborated and imposed into the contemporary historiographic context.⁴ At present, the reconstruction of the phenomenon of criminality, penalty and clandestinity is based only on documents issued by official authorities (state, church). This naturally gives only a partial view on this phenomenon, delimited by legal and ethical orders, which are determined by state laws and by the ethical code promoted by the Church. Both state law and Christian law are under theocratic domination. Any deviation from this normative frame is implacably marked by punishments in the spirit of the Christian doctrine

¹ Cf. Detlev Peukert, „Edelweisspiraten, Meuten, Swing. Jugend sub-Kulturen im Dritten Reich”, in: *Sozialgeschichte der Freizeit*, Wuppertal, 1980, pp. 307–328.

² Carsten Küther, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

³ *Crime Histories and Histories of Crime. Studies in the Historiography of Crime and Criminal Justice in Modern History*, Westport, Greenwood Press, 1996.

⁴ Cf. V. Leu, *Lotrii Banatului* (The Robbers of Banat), in *Studii istorico-bănăţene*, Reşiţa et Banatica, 1997, pp.7–95.

and the biblical text: “there is nothing done in concealment that will not be revealed” (“nimic nu iaste făcut ascuns ca să nu iasă la arătare”).¹

The singularly oppressive historical context in which the armed anticommunist resistance movement took place in the 1950s and the 1960s pushes the phenomenon of the marginal, outlaws, anticommunist partisans into exclusion and clandestinity. The communists’ “new order” refused to coexist with the marginal and with the revolted. The marginal and the revolted left the eminently ethical discourse in which the society of the “new order” – similar to medieval society – would place and expose them as the objects of infamy, humiliation, stigmatization² and preferred to enter the general and wide perimeter of criminality. The ideology of class struggle was a discourse extracted from the “new ethics” of the communist regime, but it was especially the ideological basis for the war of class hatred which substituted the race hatred of the Nazi doctrine. The Nazi biological or bio-power war which produced death is substituted and curbed by the class struggle waged by the communists. This war was after all the transformation of biological racism into state racism.³

Under these conditions clandestinity and implicitly travesty became inevitable strategies in the anticommunist resistance movement. If the moment of travesty is symbolically articulated by Teodor Șuşman senior’s sacrificial death, the adoption of the travesty under the name Petrea Icoanei by Teodor Șuşman junior brings or reactivates another symbolical content. The conversion and travesty of the partisan and fighter Teodor Șuşman junior into an icon painter – he made icons which he sold to the villagers in exchange for food or other needs – follows a long and frequently used trajectory, the path from *violence to the sacred*.

Violence, crime, sacrificial death, each belonging to the same semantic field, were associated to a state which connotes the sacred namely, the icon painter, a man of the faith or associated to the act or the ritual of faith, of sacral practice. Similarly, the profession of arms substituted with the trade of icons pointed towards the interchangeability between violence (arms) and the sacred (icons) in the symbolic horizon. Teodor Șuşman junior’s travesty from fighter into icon painter preserved in the same symbolic horizon the traces of a shift from *knight* to *saint*,

¹ Quotation taken from the speeches and directives of laic and ecclesiastic authorities regarding robbery and published in V. Leu, *op. cit.*, pp. 61–95.

² Bronislaw Geremek, *op. cit.*, pp. 141–142.

³ Michel Foucault, *Trebuie să apărăm societatea* (Society Must Be Defended), Bucharest, Ed. Univers, 2000, pp. 253–256.

from history to hagiography, under the condition that the relationship knight–saint or saint–knight was pre-eminent “as a cultural model in the Middle Ages”.¹ This cultural model is recognizable in formulations such as “*militia Chriti*” and “*militia saeculi*”.²

According to the same medieval, Christian basis of a socio-cultural model subjected to the long duration the transformation from a fighter into an icon painter through the mechanism of travesty also meant a shift from the centre towards periphery, from the medieval social order towards the marginal, from the social structure or order “founded on the repartition of tasks between those who pray, those who fight and those who cultivate the land” towards marginal professions. Icon painters are “artists creating sacred images” a trade considered by Tertullian morally suspicious or even inadmissible, similarly to the profession of astrologists, pedagogues and tradesmen. They were “*vilia officia*”, insignificant, disdainful trades.³

These ethical antagonisms between functions and trades consecrated and focused on by the Christian discourse and the marginalized ones may refer to the deep layers pertaining to the symbolism of travesty and to symbolic imagination. Thus, travesty can be correlated with the euphemistic function characteristic to symbolical imagination, the “taming” or “domestication” of reality by means of symbolic practices. This *euphemistic* function assumed by the antagonism is realized either at the level of the antithesis, through the negation of or opposition to that which is real, or as an antiphrasis⁴ at the level of the discourse about itself. Both belong to the rhetoric of a dispute between the *visible* and the *invisible*, between the *diurnal* and the *nocturnal*. The existential space of the travesty and the marginal is a space of refuge and eccentricity. The travestied person lives between a social, diurnal space and a clandestine, nocturnal one. This is a space of refuge, represented by the woods, the desert, and the wild, an unexplored area, different from the cleared, assumed, civilized space. He lives in a space to which he has been exiled, therefore outside of the social, “communal” space.⁵

¹ Gian Paolo Caprettini, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

² Franco Cardini, *Le guerrier et le chevalier*, in *L'Homme Médiéval*, Paris, Ed. du Seuil, 1984, p. 102 et sq.

³ Bronislaw Geremek, *op. cit.*, p. 400.

⁴ Gilbert Durand, *Aventurile imaginii* (The Adventures of the Image), Bucharest, Nemira, 1999, pp. 108–110.

⁵ Bronislaw Geremek, *op. cit.*, p. 388.

This space of exile is the place of unceasing migration, movement, and pursuit; it is the space of “deterritorialization”, the space of the eternal wanderer and nomad. It is opposed to the domesticated and state controlled social space. Between the two spaces there is an antagonism also in what regards the trajectories of movement, the routes followed by the *wanderer* and *marginal*, respectively the person who is not expatriated, who, on the contrary, is a *citizen*. The trajectory in the first case is *itinerant*, following watercourses, the paths of the steppes and woods, being a free and unlimited route. In the second case, the trajectory is “*iterative*”, repetitive, and reproductive and belongs to fixed, regularized roads, which always lead “towards the palace or the temple”. The wanderer, the nomad, the marginal does not know any structures, centre or borders, he lives in conformity with the pathos, unlike the communal, townsman, the citizen who is dominated by the logos and mythos.¹

The travestied fighter Petrea Icoanei, participant of the anticommunist resistance movement in the Apuseni Mountains moved in such a space. The anticommunist fighter of the mountains was generally considered a “runaway” in this period (1948–1950), who had left the social space and lived in a process of “*desocialization*”. The adoption of travesty expressed the unacknowledged tendency of temporary “*demarginalization*”. The tension between *desocialization* and *demarginalization* confer the particularities characteristic to clandestinity. Travesty does not only reveal the anticommunist fighter’s implied tendency to re-enter society, but it is also a strategy of resistance and clandestinity.

In the deep and at the same time well defined area of Christian ethics accepted by Teodor Șuşman junior as well, the state or trade of the icon maker adopted and practised by him as a travesty can signify a *gesture of expiation* for the violent acts and killings he committed in the armed struggle. Therefore the travestied personage Petrea Icoanei can be placed and analyzed in a complete symbolic system which introduces a historical event, strictly circumscribed in time and space, with its personages and participants into the perspective of the long duration.

Teodor Șuşman junior’s travesty into the personage Petrea Icoanei, therefore, was the result of a certain accident or event, namely his father’s sacrificial death, since, as the succeeding leader of the group,

¹ Cf. Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, *Mille plateaux*, Paris, Minuit, 1980, apud S. Alexandrescu, “Nomadologia” (Nomadology), in *Dilema* (Dilemma), year II, 1988, 5 March.

he had to operate in clandestinity to ensure his own safety and the survival of the group he led. As the leader of the partisan group he took over his father's entire ethical and social heritage as well as the prestige his parent acquired throughout his life.

This taking over or transfer of prestige naturally implied that he had also to assume Teodor Șuşman senior's highly visible public status in the Moț¹ communities and settlements in the northern part of the Apuseni Mountains. This exposure attracted the inherent risks determined by the fact that the partisans were permanently pursued, followed by the repressive machinery of the communist regime. Teodor Șuşman junior was, therefore, subjected to an ineluctable constraint caused, on the one hand, by his father's prestigious inheritance and high visibility, and, on the other hand, by his position as the leader of a group pursued by the Securitate. Burdened by the prestige taken over as a legacy from his father and by his commitment as the leader of the partisans, he adopted travesty as an oscillation between the licit and illicit, between the centre and the marginal, between a public and a private, anonymous identity. Essentially, these can be reduced to the tension between *prestige* and *travesty*.

The analysis and deconstruction of Șuşman's travesty, of the seemingly mysterious personage, Petrea Icoanei, is implicitly aimed at the exploration of the travesty's source – beyond the imperatives of a clandestinity strategy –, the pressure of the inherited prestige. On the basis of the same tensions and antagonisms subsistent and presented above one can analyze the *prestigious foundation of the travesty*.

The prestige is interrelated with the themes of honour and *honourability*. This theme is completed naturally by the theme of *sociability* since they reciprocally determine and support each other. They can be emphasized in critical situations, in case of deviant behaviour and they are sometimes regulated by violent acts, implicitly by criminal trials.² In case of Teodor Șuşman junior's travesty the immanent tension of the personage Petrea Icoanei is, consequently, motivated also by the disequilibrium caused by the disappearance of the sociability pole from the relationship mentioned above, as the result of his family's choice to wage a clandestine armed fight against communism. The social foundation of prestige and honour started from the evident reality of

¹ A group of Romanians living in the Apuseni Mountains. (Translator's note)

² Cf. Yves Castan, *Honnêteté et relations sociales en Languedoc. 1715-1780*, Paris, Plon, 1974.

traditional communities that it was mostly built on esteem.¹ Most civil offences were committed when honour and esteem were violated, as family honour was not only an element of individual happiness, a discrete and private good, but, rather a patrimony of esteem, a fundamental element of social rank.²

Communism violated the code of honour and social prestige on the strength of an ideology which promoted social equality, the suspension of traditional social and material hierarchies, the inversion of traditional ethical norms, in favour of class hatred and the vendetta extracted from the fervours of the lumpen-proletariat. For this reason the Şuşman family's participation in the armed anticommunist fight entails not a *political*, ideological conflict, but rather an *ethical* one. In the collective memory this war on communism is justified by the exceptional prestige of the family: "...for they were an elite family, an exceptional family and communism hit them" („...pentru că ei o fost o familie de elită, o familie mai deosebită şi comunismul în ei o lovit”).³ The bases of the Şuşman family's prestige can be detected in precise moments of Teodor Şuşman senior's biography and the socio-cultural status of the family.

In the year 1925 Teodor Şuşman together with Amos Frâncu and Aurel Munteanu, the Orthodox archpriest of Huedin went to an audience with King Ferdinand I to ask that the woods and pastures which had belonged to great landowners before 1918 to be distributed among the Moşs. This step, as well as the Moşs' other demands he supported, shaped him in collective memory as an exemplary personality with an unequalled prestige: "...then Şuşman went to Bucharest and spoke for the defence of Moş rights. He spoke 45 minutes to the King. He was a very good man" („...atunci Şuşman a mers la Bucureşti şi a vorbit pentru apărarea dreptului moşilor. A vorbit 45 de minute la Rege. Era un om foarte bun"); "...he was really a great man. He was called *Father of the Mountains* and *Father of the Moşs*... For only the old Şuşman gained the

¹ Cf. Yves Marie-Bercé, Les aspects clandestines de deviances d'après des sources judiciaires aquitaines du XVII^e siècle, in *Histoire et clandestinité*, ...pp. 89–96.

² M. Claverie, "L'honneur: une société de défis au XIX^e siècle", *Annales E.S.C.*, juillet-août, 1979.

³ The testimony of Vasile Moldovan from Răchițele, apud C. Budeancă, C. Jurju, "Rezistența armată anticomunistă din zona Huedinului: grupul Şuşman" (Armed Anticommunist Resistance in the Area of Huedin: the Şuşman Group), in *A.I.O.*, III, Cluj-Napoca, 2002, p. 219.

Moș's rights. He hit with his fist the King's table to obtain rights for the Moșs, the right to exploit the woods and to have the freedom to pasture on roadsides when they travelled in their carts through the country as far as Dobrogea" („...a fost într-adevăr, un om mare. I se zicea *Tatăl Munților și Tatăl Moșilor*...Pentru că numai Șușman bătrânul a câștigat drepturile moșilor. A bătut cu pumnul în masa Regelui, de o căpătat drepturi pentru moși, să exploateze pădurile și s-aibă libertatea să pască marginile drumurilor, când plecau cu carele prin țară, până spre Dobrogea”).¹

Teodor Șușman senior obtained his prestige, therefore, as a consequence of some precise actions, taken over and maximized by collective memory at the level of some adjectives connected with the mythology formed around the tribunes of the Revolution of 1848 or Horea's rural “kingship”. In collective mentality a scholarly memory with a national pedagogy at its centre – both belonging to the paideic domain of books – is recombined with the natural perception, in the long duration, of providential characters.

Teodor Șușman senior's prestige is measured by the high rate of sociability this peasant leader of the Apuseni Mountains is situated at. His prestige consists of *material, cultural, ethical, social* and *competitive* components. He was “a small wood worker and timber merchant” owning two sawmills for cutting timber, 7-8 hectares of land, a village shop, an orchard, 290 bee colonies, etc.² His *cultural* and *intellectual* prestige is based on “his book-learning” turned into an “informational authority” at social level.³ He read books, listened to the radio, being well informed with what was happening in “the great history”. His readings discussed themes and domains which were related to the emergencies of the day, the communist threat. The witnesses who knew him relate in their memoirs this aspect which outlines more precisely both his cultural profile and his destiny: “my father could not suffer the communists' coming to power. Because he had read a book, *The Red Desert* where the whole situation of Russia was written down, from Emperor Nicholas, how his children were killed, how he was arrested... He said this was in store for him as well” („taică-meu nu putea suferi venirea comuniștilor la putere. Fiindcă el citise o carte, „Pustiul roșu”,

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 264.

² *Ibid.*, p. 216–217.

³ A. Țentea, “Aspecte de viață cotidiană în grupurile de rezistență din zona Huedin” (Aspects of Everyday Life in the Resistance Groups of Huedin Area), I, in *A.I.O.*, IV, Cluj-Napoca, 2003, p. 122.

unde scrie toată situația Rusiei, de la Nicolae Împărat, cum i-o omorât copiii, cum l-o arestat...El zicea că asta îl așteaptă și pe el”);¹ “...he never could swallow the communists. He read many books. He read books describing how things were in Russia and he read another such book, *The Red Desert*. And as he read he realized how much a threat it was. And he used to say to a man or another how things were with communism” („...el nu i-a înghițit niciodată pe comuniști. El citea multe cărți. Și-o citit cărți care descriau cum era în Rusia și-o mai citit o carte de-aiă, „Pustiul Roșu”. Și cum o citit mult, și-o dat seama că-i un pericol. Și mai spunea la câte un om cum îi cu comunismul”).²

The *ethical cover* of his prestige was expressed through acts and deeds serving the community he belonged to in the limited situations or social and economic crises that occurred. During the war Teodor Șuşman brought food to the people of Răchițele as the locality was isolated, difficult to reach, placed in a no man’s land at the border between Romania and the North-Western territory occupied by Horthist Hungary: “And when Transylvanian was given up to the Hungarians we were occupied by the Romanians and not the Hungarians, the border was at Călata. Șuşman brought cereals to Câmpeni. He went as far as the Old Kingdom. I do not know where he went and he brought wheat to Câmpeni and we went with carts... His money brought food, for here people died of starvation. He went and toiled and brought to Câmpeni cereals over these mountains, in the winter. He brought food on his money and in his sacks. For he did not let people to starve to death here. And he gave to everyone and lo, everyone turned their backs on him. They took his life” („Și când a fost Ardealul cedat la unguri, noi am fost ocupați de români, nu de unguri, granița a fost la Călata. Șuşman aducea la Câmpeni cereale. Mergea până-n Regat. Nu știu pe unde mergea și aducea grâu la Câmpeni și mergeam noi cu carele...Banul lui o adus mâncare, că aici murea lumea de foame. El o mârș și s-o trudit și o adus de la Câmpeni cereale, peste munții ăștia, iarna. Aducea bucate pe banii lui și cu sacii lui. Că nu lăsa lumea să moară de foame aici. Și dădea la lume și iată că toți dup-aiă s-o-ntors. I-o luat viața”).³

His attempts to regulate some behavioural deviations in the community he lived in, belong to this ethical component of his prestige: “everyone nearby in the village when hearing about Șuşman had respect for him. On Sunday people went to the Village Circle. People were not

¹ C. Budeancă, C. Jurju, *op. cit.* p. 216.

² A. Țentea, *op. cit.*, p. 121.

³ C. Budeancă, C. Jurju, *op. cit.*, p. 218.

able to preserve what they had gained, they went and drank all the money at the village pub; they were squanderers. The children in the village walked naked, unclothed, and hungry. Once, father began to demonstrate against those who drank and tried to convince them. In the end, even women came to drink. Father told them: «If I see you again at the pub you will catch it from me». And then the women ran away, they were afraid to come again” („toți din jurul satului, când auzeau de Șuşman, aveau un respect. Duminica, lumea se ducea la Cercul Satului. Oamenii nu ştiau să-şi păstreze ceea ce câştigau, se duceau şi-şi beau toţi banii la cârciuma din sat, erau risipitori. Copiii în sat umblau goi, dezbrăcaţi, flămânzi. Odată, tata a început să facă o manifestaţie împotriva celor ce beau şi căuta să-i convingă. Până la urmă, veneau şi femeile să bea. Tata le-a spus: << Dacă vă mai văd încă o dată aici la cârciumă, să ştiţi că cu mine aveţi de-a face>>. Şi-atunci femeile fugeau, le era frică să mai vină”).¹

His interventions in the regulation of social norms show a strong and authoritative character, which, retrospectively, exemplify the importance of the rural elite in the interwar period, the ordering hierarchies and the authorities of traditional communities. On the whole, they emphasize the power and the prestige of human models in the Romanian rural world implicated in the regulation of social deficiencies and deviations, and, consequently, they show the stringency of the elite in these communities.

The revaluation of the elite's position and role in the rural world brought about by the reconstruction of the anticommunist resistance movement in which this elite was engaged places this group ineluctably in the outposts of the rural world's self-consciousness. The absence of this elite, its annihilation by the equalizing communist regime created a social deficit and a lack in sociability with far-reaching consequences. The rural world of the communist era, lacking the elite positioned in an organically built community, was given over to a type of control which substituted the ethical regulations and auto-regulations structured on traditional values and performed by moral and prestigious authorities for the constraints and oppression strongly ideologized by an eminently alien political doctrine.

The *social component* of his prestige is consolidated by his function as the mayor of the village Răchițele which office he occupied several times without joining any interwar political party. He was Mayor

¹ The Archives of the Oral History Institute, interview with Traian Șuşman.

in 1922–1928, 1930–1934 and 1939–1945. This pre-eminent position in the world of the village was validated by a competitive context in which the Șușman family was in relationship with other families from Răchițele. In the shadow of the competition won by Șușman, envy and rivalry sprouted which are always parts of communal life. One of these rival families was that of Suciu Pașca who tried to obtain leadership by a pact he made with the communist power; a pact directed against the Șușmans. Suciu Pașca became Mayor supported by the communists in 1945: “Suciu Pașca was all the misfortune of our family” („Suciu Pașca a fost toată nenorocirea familiei noastre”); “He began to report Teodor Șușman and his sons, Teodor Șușman junior, Traian Șușman, Visalon Șușman for plotting against the social order in the village. He reported true and untrue facts about Șușman” („Acesta începe prin a-l raporta pe Șușman Teodor și pe fiii săi, Șușman Teodor junior, Șușman Traian, Șușman Visalon, ca uneltitori contra ordinii sociale în stat. Raportează fapte adevărate și neadevărate despre Șușman”).¹

In the restoration of Teodor Șușman senior’s prestige one can also mark out aspects connected with events which reopen the discussion on the relationship between history and memory. Teodor Șușman’s prestige cannot get outside a lived and narrated history, “post hominem memoriam”. He remains a subject for the memory of the resistance for a certain time after the communists’ downfall. His prestige is not yet given to history, he remains “post acta” defined and redefined within lived history.

Teodor Șușman senior’s sacrifice places him in an exemplary singularity, which, however, also evoked resentment. This resentment was caused by the repression the community was subjected to for collaborating or being in complicity with the hero of the anticommunist struggle; his deeds were also resented by those who were not on his side in the resistance fight: “and now with all these troubles, how many things happened... how many children remained on the roads crying, how many were arrested and tortured and beaten. You do realize. I tell you that Traian Șușman and Todor Suciu were here at me and a citizen from here came and said: »Sir, you have no business in Răchițele anymore. My father was in prison for seven years for your parents and he came back mad from gaol. He came back mad and died«” („și acuma, cu neazurile astea, câte s-au întâmplat...și câți copii o rămas pe drumuri plângând, cât o fost arestați și schingiuiți și bătuți. Vă dați seama. Eu vă povestesc c-o

¹ C. Budeancă, C. Jurju, *op. cit.*, p. 219.

fost aicea la mine Șușman Traian și Suciu Todor și-o venit un cetățean de-aicea și zice: << Domnule, dumneata nu mai ai ce căuta în Răchițele. Tatăl meu o făcut șapte ani de închisoare pentru părinții voștri și-o venit nebuni din pușcărie. O venit nebuni și-o murit>>”); “he was, in my opinion, an irresponsible man, whose descendants pose today as the victims of communism... A man without mercy, he regarded only his interest... So he ran away not only because he wanted to play the anticommunist, thus, he ran away for personal motives” („era, după mine, un om iresponsabil, ai cărui urmași pozează azi în victime ale comunismului...Un om fără milă și-și vedea numa’ interesul lui...Deci ăsta o fugit nu numai pentru că o vrut să facă pe anticomunistul, așa, o fugit din niște motive personale”).¹

If the big history elaborated its conclusions regarding the failure of communism in December 1989, the memory of those who participated in and witnessed the resistance movement led by Teodor Șușman leaves open the file of this fighter’s prestige and exemplarity. In this case, memory remains behind history. Teodor Șușman is, however, a symbolic character of the anticommunist resistance with a file containing the usual data and constants of martyrdom, *unacknowledged sacrifice* and *ungrateful posterity*.

Memory is free to class and re-class the lived events. For this reason Teodor Șușman senior as a hero and the personification of prestige in a recently disappeared world has not yet been consummated, has not been placed into an archived history, it exists in a living collective memory. His prestige is yet quite powerful, since he still fills collective consciousness with *ethical tension*. The conclusions of the big history did not succeed in imposing the appropriate ethical conclusions which were to be assumed by collective consciousness. Precisely for this reason, a hero is alone by the singularity of his sacrificial destiny put to the service of a community and of the solidarity with his fellowmen. This ethical exceptionality makes him singular. The post-mortem heroes, because of this, in most cases, can only be unpopular and solitary.

From a symbolic perspective, Teodor Șușman junior’s travesty into an icon maker caused a series of significations presented above. From a phenomenological perspective, the travesty was the apparent and momentary hiding and covering of a prestigious human model, of a human type which constituted a real threat for communism.² However,

¹ A. Țentea, *op. cit.*, pp. 125–135.

² Cf. C. Budeancă, C. Jurju, *op. cit.*, pp. 217–218.

the evacuation of a human type or model from history and its transposition into a travestied state did not happen at the level of memory. History as a chronological stream of events could not exhaust or consume a past and personages who “have no past”, have not disappeared, who still exist in their temporal proximity, witnesses and participants still marked by the communist terror and oppression of the past decades. If “big history” became *free* with the downfall of communism, individual and collective psychology is, here and there, *ailing*, and memory, to some measure, *captive*. From this interpretative direction, *the travesty was collective*; it was a social phenomenon detectable in everyday life: not telling what you felt you should have told, not revealing natural attitudes, behaving as an opportunist. Entrenching a public identity lost or threatened by communism in travesty affects the entire community, it is a synecdoche present in the totalitarian discourse, as well as in its opposite, resistance and clandestinity.

Teodor Șușman junior’s travesty into the personage Petrea Icoanei is retained by collective memory in sequences and states of great diversity. The pressure of clandestinity originates answers and manifestations on the part of the travestied which outline a certain *physiology of travesty* and assemble a real dramatization of the narrative material preserved by memory.

The travestied Petrea of Icons revealed himself to public visibility at will. He met only those faithful to the cause of resistance or those who could not discover his travesty or who did not connect his travesty and his real person. The appearance of the travestied in the witnesses’ narrations or his introduction to the perception of the community refers indirectly to a *travesty in clothing*. It is known that clothing is the elementary or most convenient aspect of any travestied. The travesty in clothing was duplicated by a professional, occupational one; Teodor Șușman junior made icons which he exchanged for cloths. In this situation a symbolic travesty (icon maker) is superposed to the apparent travesty in clothing. The association of the two expressions of the travesty became a relevant narrative reference point in the narrations and testimonies about Petrea Icoanei: “In fact I did not know them... they came here, I sewed for them a coat... for one of them, for one, Șușman, I knew him as... Petrea of Icons, I did not know him. That Todor Șușman said he was Petre. And I sewed a coat for his icons. I, without knowing that he was a runaway... I met them in person, I knew them, maybe four or five years ago... Petrea came here and stayed in the

house” („eu propriu-zis nu i-am cunoscut...o vinit pe-aici, i-am cusut o haină...la unul dintre ei, la unu’, Şuşman, eu așa știam...Petrea Icoanelor, nu l-am știut eu. Todor Şuşman ăla zicea că-i Petre. Și i-am cusut o haină pentru icoanele sale. Eu fără să știu că el e fugar...în persoană i-am întâlnit, i-am cunoscut, poate cu vreo patru-cinci ani înainte...Petrea venea p-aici, stătea în casă”).¹

Having related a situational and anecdotic travesty, oral testimonies pass on, by means of a reflective passage, to a *historic travesty* or the historical extension of this individual travesty. In the witnesses’ perception this travesty is equivalent with the overthrow of values and hierarchies in traditional communities: “I found out later that his father was that Şuşman... he was a rich man, he had I do not know how many water sawmills for cutting boards. But you know that the communists wanted everybody to be poor. And then, only they were to share. For this was their programme. So if a man worked and owned things, he was a kulak. And they took him to the Canal,² that is they removed him from the village by any means” („eu am aflat mai târziu că tată-său a fost Şuşman ăla...a fost un om bogat, a avut nu știu eu câte joagăre d-astea de apă, de tăia scândură. Da’ știți dumneavoastră că comuniștii o vrut să fie sărac toată lumea. Si pe urmă, ei numai să împartă. C-așa a fost programul lor. Adică dacă un om a muncit și o avut, ăla o fost chibur. Și l-o dus la canal, adică l-o îndepărtat de sat pe orice cale”).³

This reflective passage delimits some interpretations belonging to this *sui generis* travesty imposed by communists on a traditional society in which work and the acquisition of fortune were highly valued. Equally, the historical extension of Teodor Şuşman junior’s travesty highlights the antagonisms and the contradictory structure communist ideology induced in the traditional Romanian world. Teodor Şuşman senior is an anti-character in the human project elaborated by the communist ideology. He is an individual character opposed to a collectivistic person because of his material status: individual (“rich”, “a man who worked”) versus collectivistic person (“everybody to be poor”). This antagonism caused other contradictions as well on a secondary level which undermined the traditional structure of the Romanian society: to

¹ The Archives of the Oral History Institute, interview with Gheorghe Pașcalău (born in 1924) – Traniș.

² Danube–Black Sea Canal, notorious as the site of labour camps for political prisoners in 1950s Communist Romania. (Translator’s note)

³ *Ibid.*

work versus to share, village versus the Canal, approaching versus removal. From this interpretative perspective, generically, travesty is a reaction, a *resistance form to communism*.

The trajectories of the travestied have a special place in the physiology of the travestied. He follows the special line of wanderers, of the expatriated, isolated roads and places, far from the beaten tracks, from the centre, but without betraying that he is in hiding: "he came here very often. Here the village was somewhat isolated, up in the mountains, and he came very often. He came here in broad daylight. Here I mean that only there [to Traniş where he was captured, our note, D. R.], to that relation [Florea Romulus]. He lived there, he was isolated. From the school one could see where he lives. No one else is there, only a small fence. There he was not conspicuous." („foarte des, venea în sat. Aici satul era un pic mai izolat, mai la munte, şi venea foarte des. Ea aici ziuă la amiază venea. Aici mă gândesc că numai acolo, la finu' ăla. Ăla sta acolo, era izolat. De la şcoală se vede acolo unde-i. Nu mai este acolo nimeni, numai un mic gărduleţ. Acolo nu era băcător la ochi")¹

Following the rules of travesty under the conditions of clandestinity, Petrea Icoanei moved about alone, the *entourage of the travestied* was as limited as possible. He was seldom seen with his brother: "he did not come accompanied by his brother, Visalon... Only once he came here with his brother. He said he was a friend from Călăţele. And I could not suspect it. For it was the middle of the day" („nu venea însoţit de fratele său, Visalon...Numai o singură dată a venit aici cu frate-său. O spus că-i un prieten din Călăţele. Şi nu am putut bănui deloc. Că era ziuă la amiază").²

It is remarkable *the perfection of the travesty*, in the sense that his behaviour, gestures, expressions did not betray he was a runaway under the disguise of another identity: "I must confess I never realized he was a runaway. According to his behaviour, according to the way... he did not look through the window to hide himself. For a runaway keeps looking out when the dog is barking. He was not... I could see nothing unusual in him" („eu, ca să fiu sincer, nu mi-am dat seama niciodată că el îi fugar. După comportament, după cum... nu era ca să se uite pe geam, să se ascundă. Doar unu' care-i fugar se uită ori nu când lătra câinele. Nu era... Nu vedeam nimic deosebit la el").³

¹ *Ibid.*

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

The fact that Petrea Icoanei adapted himself perfectly to the destiny of wanderers bound to no place or space – which would make his travesty vulnerable – is also the sign of a perfect travesty. It is known that the wanderer, the travestied has no place, *travesty is an atopia*. He has no well outlined and well known biography, being from nowhere. Having no place of his own, he has no time either, therefore he has no biography: “Well, that Toader, he was called Petrea, for we knew him by this name, he said he had some schooling and that he was always on the roads, and ‘You see, I go to and fro and I paint!’ and that he lives on the highway and that the man... it was this” („Ei, Toader ăla, îi spunea Petrea, c-aşa-l ştiam şi noi, zicea şi el că o făcut ceva şcoală şi îi tot pe drumuri, şi «Uite, umblu şi pictez!» şi că stă în calea ţării şi că omu’...asta era”).¹

“*To live on the highway*” is the unmistakable expression of the wanderer, the anonym who lives on the roads and who, consequently, eludes any definition and delimitation. Travesty, in this case, is more than a hidden identity, it is a general and imponderable selfhood.

Among the anecdotes connected to the travesty there are passages which transmit events taken from the sphere of the miraculous. Famous travestied persons, outlaws and partisans in the mountains, as well as in Banat, such as Petru Mantu travestied into a woman or Sfârloagă travestied into a policeman succeeded in escapes and actions which amazed people and assigned narrative material to miraculous tales through the legendary relay. This bunch of anecdotes containing miraculous elements are constructed as an appendix to a popular epic assigned to Romanian popular mythology expressed at the level of legends about valiant outlaws with “real historical or only historicized elements”. Thus, the outlaw, Miul Cobiul, travestied into a shepherd, defeated by cunning and force Ştefan Voivode, who planned to kill him; the outlaw Vâlcan, travestied into a monk, distinguished himself fighting with courage in the combat with the Janissaries.²

Teodor Şuşman junior or Petrea Icoanei was not without such events which remained imprinted in individual and collective memory: “he came here, he always hid from them. Until later I kept thinking how they always come here, because he said... he was called Colea Petru. And he showed his identity card. And I was here with them and I drank once with the Chief Inspector. He came here. But no one knew who he

¹ *Ibid.*

² R. Vulcănescu, *op. cit.*, pp. 592–598.

was.” („o venit aici, de ei tot s-a ascuns. Până mai târziu, io m-am tot gândit că cum tot vin pe-aici, că a spus...că-l cheamă Colea Petru. Și-o arătat buletinul. Și-aici am fost cu ei și-am băut odată cu șeful de post. O venit ăla. Da' n-a știut nimeni cine-i”).¹

Petrea Icoanei moved in a system of implicit or admitted *complicities of the travesty*. In the first category a collective complicity protecting mutually the anticommunist fighter is pre-eminent: “the villagers did not speak about him... only one who was in the valley said so tha, he spoke so that he sometimes watched a man, Achimaș Aurel. He had a brother in the Securitate in Huedin... He said he sometime watched people but not from here, no, even later I found out that many had known here. But no one uttered a word” („oamenii din sat nu discutau despre el...numa' unu' care-a fost în vale zicea așa că vorbea așa, că el cam urmărește, unul Achimaș Aurel. O avut el și-un frate pe la Securitate în Huedin... Zicea că el cam urmărește, dar nu oamenii de-aici, nu, chiar pe urmă am aflat c-o știut mulți de-aicea. Dar n-o scos nimeni un cuvânt”).² In the case of explicit and individual complicity one can observe that the travesty was maintained and reproduced with the support of some citizens. Thus, Leontina Moldovan from Brăișor, who sheltered the Șuşman brothers for five years, narrated: “while they stayed with us, they sat, they rested, and at some time we went to Cluj and brought them paints. Look, the icons [three icons, our note, D. R.] were made by Todor. He painted them in the house, in that room, and then he put them on the shelf to dry. I went to Cluj, I bought paint, I purchased glass. He made frames for the icons. These are things they made with their own hands while they stayed here. And he went during the night from here to Traniș, with icons, and he said he was Petrea from Călățele. And he went and sold them and made money. And he stayed another day in the woods to get tanned, not to be conspicuous, because here he stayed only hidden, and he was white, for the sun could not reach him. They used to go to Mărgău to some acquaintances, and they used to bring food. Once he brought two casks of cheese... They used to read books, to throw the dung out of the stable.” (: „cât timp au stat la noi, stăteau, se odihneau, și-ntr-un timp oarecare, ne-am dus la Cluj și le-am adus vopsele. Uitați-vă, icoanele, îs făcute de Todor. În casă, în camera aia, le picta și apoi le pune pe poliță să se usuce. Io m-am dus la Cluj, am cumpărat vopsele, am luat sticlă. O făcut rame la icoane. Astea-s lucruri făcute de mâna lor,

¹ The Archives of the Oral History Institute, interview with Ioan T. Florea (born in 1935), Traniș.

² The Archives of the Oral History Institute, interview with Gheorghe Pașcalău.

în timpul cât au stat aici. Și se ducea noaptea de-aici la Traniș, cu icoane, și zicea că-i Petrea de la Călățele. Și ducea și le vindea și făcea bani. Și mai stătea o zi la pădure, să-l mai bată soarele, să nu fie bătător la ochi, că aici stătea numai ascuns, și era alb, că nu-l bătea soarele. Ei mai mergeau pe la Mărgău, pe la cunoscuți, și mai aduceau mâncare. Odată a adus două putine de brânză... Mai citeau o carte, mai aruncau gunoi din poiată”).¹

An exceptional and at the same time relevant aspect for self-preservation in clandestinity is the *refuge of travesty in story telling*. Teodor Șuşman junior abandoning self-referentiality narrated the tragedy of his own family as an outsider. In this way, the central role as an actor of the event is exchanged for the position of the narrator. This autobiographical and authorial denegation or deflection can be explained with the danger that he could have been discovered to be Teodor Șuşman senior's son. This refuge of the travestied man in story telling is narrated with amazement in the interviews with the witnesses: “Now excuse me, I want to tell you something. When that Petrea came here, he told us about Șuşman, how he was caught, how he was shot and put... buried in a precipice. But we, I did not know in fact... but you see that in the end it was proved that he was his father, exactly his father” („Acum iertați-mă că vreau să vă spun un lucru. Când venea Petrea ăla pe-aici, el ne povestea de Șuşman, cum o fost prins, cum o fost împuşcat și băgat...îngropat într-o râpă. Da' noi, eu nu ştiam propriu-zis...da' vedeți că până la urmă, să se dovedească c-o fost tată-său, chiar tata lui”); “yes, Petrea was funny, and as he joked and told anecdotes... I was very much surprised when I found out, you know, that he was speaking about his father. He said that so, he laughed that they did well when they buried him in a precipice... How for God's sake did he tell such a thing about his father and he had no courage. He probably thought he would betray himself.” („da, era glumeţ Petrea, și cum glumea și spunea bancuri...eu numai atât de-aceea-mi era, după ce-am aflat, ştii, cum de el spunea despre tată-său. El zicea c-aşa, el râdea că bine-o făcut că l-o îngropat într-o râpă...Cum Dumnezeu el spunea despre tată-său așa ceva și n-avea curaj. Probabil se gândea că să demască el pe el”).²

This extension of the travesty to the sphere of the discourse reveals the complexity and difficulty of the travesty in the conditions when he could destroy himself easily in any moment being between life

¹ *Ibid.* Interview with Leontina Moldovan (born in 1931), Brăișor.

² A. Țentea, *op. cit.*, pp. 151–152.

and death. His detachment from his personal and familial biography by means of story telling subjected him, however, to a double coincidence, first a death similar to the father's, namely a death taking place in a barn (the father committed suicide in a barn, and his sons killed themselves and then they were burned in another barn in the village Traniș in 1951).

The detachment from his father's tragic death was not enough to save him. On the contrary, he met his end implacably in the same conditions and in a similar place as his father. The barn becomes in this case a *recurrent sacrificial place*. It is a place in the vicinity of the house, an equally domestic place, a shelter and refuge for the outcasts. It is an uncontrollable place, especially at night, and due to its placement near the household, it is a building vulnerable to fire, frequently set on fire. "To set fire to the barn" is often an act of revenge between families in feud with one another, since the harvest, food, etc. is placed here. Incontrollable and vulnerable, the barn is an intermediary place between licit and illicit or between the diurnal and the nocturnal. Other events which happened in barns and produced similar stories (for example, the anti-Bolshevik partisan teacher, Luță Popescu from Mehedinți area was captured in a barn in the village Ponoarele, then condemned and executed), in which reality and fiction coexist are to be discovered. Thus it could be included in the category of mythical places. It is certain, that the Șușmans' doubly sacrificial death, which happened in a barn, marked by coincidence, may also require a mythological interpretation.

The second coincidence which can be detected in the case of Teodor Șușman junior's travesty is that *travesty is ended by travesty*. Petrea Icoanei, as Teodor Șușman junior's travesty, met his end denounced by a Securitate member travestied in a gypsy: "He took refuge in Traniș a whole day. They were denounced. They spoke with a woman from Brăișor. She had some relations there and took them there. A Securitate member from Huedin dressed himself as a gypsy and she let him sleep at her. And I believe the Șușmans also came there at night. And he said 'Why did you let this gypsy here?'. He went to Huedin on the next day, they came and arrested the woman and then she said where they were" („În Traniș s-a tras o zi întreagă. O fost pârați. Ei vorbeau cu o nevastă din Brăișor. Asta o avut ceva neamuri acolo și i-o dus acolo. S-o îmbrăcat un securist de prin Huedin, s-o făcut țigan și ea l-a lăsat să doarmă la ea. Și cred că noaptea o vinit și Șușmanii acolo. Și o zis «De

ce l-ai lăsat pe ȋiganu' ăsta aici?»). El a doua zi s-o dus la Huedin, o venit și-o arestat-o pe nevastă și apoi o spus ea că unde-s").¹

The anticommunist resistance movement in the mountains of Romania, besides the aspects and particularities of a historical phenomenon, has a series of meanings, which – recovered by means of orality and collective memory – transpose periods of life lived under *exceptional conditions*, and which reformulate, at the level of a big and anonymous story, a relived history and a rediscovered past which is made present.

Translated by Ágnes Korondi

¹ C. Budeancă, C. Jurju, *op. cit.*, pp. 262–263.