

Discursive Strategies of Traditional Mining Memory In Two Villages of The Apuseni Mountains*

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Abstract: The present paper proposes a qualitative analysis of the discursive strategies of traditional gold mining memory in two mining villages of the Apuseni Mountains. The three analyzed discourses were registered using as research method the “life story” interview. I followed the way the memory of traditional mining experience was objectified, a profession that disappeared with the nationalization; I also followed the way each of the three interlocutors made use of the period they experienced comparing it to their whole life. The discourses are nostalgic; they emphasize the disappearance of a work culture and the identification of certain survival strategies in a very short period of time. Thus, migration in the area increased a lot.

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The present paper proposes an exercise of memory recovery of a professional community, the gold miners in the Apuseni Mountains. I will try to bring some light on a few aspects regarding the work experience of the inhabitants of the villages Bucium Şasa and Roşia Montană shortly before 1948, when, through the *Nationalization Law*, the gold exploitation in private mines was forbidden, all the country’s mineral resources being transferred to state property. At the same time, this research follows the way the experience of readapting – after June 11th, 1948 – to another world is remembered and turned into discourse, a world in which the rules of the centralized economy were imposed, and in which other power relations and surviving rules appeared.

The researched villages are in the North-Western part of Romania, in Transylvania, and have access to the same mountain, rich in gold seams. The history of these villages is strongly connected with gold extraction, this being the main occupation of the inhabitants until the *Law no. 119 for the Nationalization of the Transport, Mining, Insurance, Banking and Industrial Enterprises*¹, from June 11th, 1948 was passed. This

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¹ Monitorul Oficial al României, no. 133 bis/11 June 1948.

law's consequences were direct and harsh on the Apuseni miners. With the nationalization of resources, the miners were forbidden to exploit the gold, were forced to wall up the mine entrances, and the traditional installations used for ore processing, called in Romanian *șteampuri*, which were water powered, were stopped shortly after. Moreover, all those who had gold were required to hand it over to the bank until a certain date, and after a while, those who were suspected to still have gold left or hidden were persecuted. The persecutions and even tortures experienced by some of them left, as we will see, deep marks in the social conscience.

The scientific motivation of this research is that it approaches an important subject for the cultural identity circumscribing to an occupational community, which, during the last half of century, passed through major changes, generated by the communist and post-communist political context. This anthropological reality does not yet have a study that would record the way this community relates to that period of time when it practiced the traditional mining, and the way this is reflected, through the memory's voice, in the subjects' discourses. The few studies about the Apuseni mining community focused on their spiritual culture or ethnographically analyzed the occupation of mining.

Thus, the present approach is justified when it explores, with methods specific to the qualitative research, an essential aspect of the Apuseni miners' lives, yet unstudied in the specialized literature; it emphasizes forms of thinking and activity which make something that has not yet been said, something unique, capable of being the object of an ethnographical approach, as Laplantine¹ said. The profound socio-economic and cultural changes experienced by the gold miners from the Apuseni Mountains, starting with 1948 until today, changed the face of these villages, and offered the villagers other perspectives. The octogenarian generation who lives in these communities still keeps alive the image of the villages as they were when several inhabitants from Bucium Șasa and Roșia Montană had traditional mining as their occupation. This study relies on the exploitation of the last confessions of a disappeared professional category that used to have an important role in the area, both from socio-economic and cultural point of view.

Research Methodology

The field information I used for this study was gathered during several field research campaigns at Bucium Șasa and Roșia Montană, during June 2011 and April 2012. My field experiences as anthropologist in the two villages were very different. I will start by talking about the field in Roșia Montană, where I started an anthropological research in August 2007. In Roșia Montană I found a delicate situation. The state mine built during communism was closed in 2006, a necessity for the transition from the centralized economy to capitalism in post-communist Romania. In these circumstances, a company with 80,46% shares owned by a corporation listed on the Toronto stock-exchange had proposed a project of intensive exploitation of gold and silver resources which still exist in the subsoil at Roșia Montană. The project includes the usage of a cyanides based

¹ François Laplantine, *La description ethnographique* (Paris: Nathan, 1996), 36-37.

technology in four open quarries during 16 years.¹ The implementation of the new mining project at Roșia Montana involves relocating a number of 974 residential properties, which affects other cultural facilities such as two churches, two houses of worship, six cemeteries,² and a part of the Roman galleries. The mining project threatens to destroy a rich cultural patrimony, due to the fact that the cultural heritage of Roșia Montana has a millennial age. The density of the archeological vestiges compared to their surface is very big³ at Alburnus Maior, and the archeological researches financed by the company (in order to obtain the archaeological discharge certificate) were made for a very small part of the whole surface that would be affected by the project. All these made the project become gradually extremely controversial in Romania and in the world, fact for which (November 2012) the evaluation process is still not finalized yet, with all the political support of the President of Romania, Traian Băsescu and of some government officials. When I arrived at Roșia Montană, the proposed mining exploitation project was subjected to public discussions, its evaluation process started.

When I started the anthropological research at Roșia Montană, the process of the inhabitants' benevolent moving to a new place had just begun and tensions had appeared within the community. The pressure put on some people to leave, the lack of jobs combined with the hope that the situation would improve once the project starts, as well as the presence in the area of company personnel and numerous journalists for whom the inhabitants and their words became subject of debates made the villagers suspicious and reserved. Their availability to discuss with me was small or even null most of the times. I got used to be refused to take an interview, especially if it meant to record it. It was very difficult to win their trust, and I won it in several stages, when they understood I was not a "journalist" and I would not write about them or about what they did not want me to, I was not the company's "employee" or a "spy". My interlocutors' attitude towards the idea of participation to an audio recorded interview remained reserved. In spite of all difficulties, I succeeded to record a few very good interviews. This study is based on these interviews, of which I will use, where necessary, fragments of transcriptions and of field notes. In any case, besides the low number of the recorded interview hours, the field experience at Roșia Montană was extremely interesting and full of meanings, but its description is not the object of the present study.

It was obvious, very often, that my interlocutors self-censored any dialogue with a stranger, especially when it came to gold. The way in which two interviews took place is worth to be described, in order to emphasize the self-censorship of the inhabitants regarding the gold. The first communication situation, in March 2012, cannot even be called an interview, because it took place atypically. One of my interlocutors, of about

¹ According to the document issued by RMGC, *Raport la studiul de evaluare a impactului asupra mediului*, (*Report on the Evaluation Study of the Impact on the Environment*) 1 (2006): 4, the mining activity will be carried on for a period of 16 years.

² The data was sourced from the *Relocation and Resettlement Action Plan* (February, 2006), http://www.rmhc.ro/sites/default/files/RRAP_MAIN%20VOL_Rom%202009%20ok%20180220_10_0.pdf (accessed September 14, 2010).

³ Volker Wollmann, "Monumente epigrafice și sculpturale din regiunea minieră Alburnus Maior – Apuleum" (Epigraphic and sculptural monuments in Alburnus Maior–Apuleum mining region), *Sargetia* XIV (1979): 191.

57 years old, after giving me the interview, offered to facilitate my access to a brother-in-law of his, older, of 72 years old, who knew more about working in the mine and nationalization. The moment we entered the yard of the man who was supposed to be my new interlocutor and I introduced myself, I understood I would not have a successful interview there. And yet I had a 7 minute dialogue, extremely interesting from the point of view of discursive self-censorship imposed by some of the informants from Roșia Montană. At the beginning, my interlocutor refused the interview, but then he accepted and showed interest for the reason I was there. I reproduce as follows a fragment of the conversation:

I. P.: *“But I don’t know and I don’t have time, I am busy...”*

C. B.: *“Could I come maybe on Sunday to tell me?”*

I. P.: *“Sundays are not for such things! But what are you interested in?”*

C. B.: *“I would like you to tell me how was the work in the mine back then, and how was it when the mines shut down, at nationalization...”*

I. P.: *“Nothing happened at nationalization, just that no one worked in his own mine anymore, they worked in the state mine”.*

C. B.: *“And how was the transition? Do you remember?”*

I. P.: *“Only that from that moment on, one worked for the state”.*

C. B.: *“But the gold, did they have to give it all?”*

I. P.: *“Those who had, we were poor, we didn’t have mills”.*

C. B.: *“Is it a well-known fact in the village that some of the villagers had been beaten to give the gold?”*

I. P.: *“That I don’t know, I don’t know about the gold!”¹*

Up to here, my interlocutor built his discourse according to an interiorized model he had learned to use – for dozens of years in which the communist terror persisted – when talking to a stranger; he has to use this model again now when the foreign company tries to convince him to sell his property and leave, something he does not accept. While he was saying he knew nothing about the gold, he did not look at me. He looked with certain superiority at the mountain on the left, smiling and suggesting he had a secret he would not yet reveal to me. Afterwards, a negotiation of our social positions followed. He asked me where I came from, what my profession was, why I came to Roșia Montană and other things. My answers somehow diminished his suspicions and he told me certain things about the way the communist authorities “persecuted them for gold”, emphasizing that the community people back then were not united either, but envious and divided, like today. The almost guileful attitude, built on the negation of a question or on a confession of his ignorance, lasted to the last second when, asked about his name and age (I promised not to make them known), he answered atypically, “It’s useless! I. P., 72 years old”.

The second interview – an example for my statement that, when talking about gold, the inhabitants of Roșia Montană have a discursive self-censorship – is taken on March 26th, 2012, with an interlocutor I knew and had visited several times before. Whenever we talked about gold, he would build an ambiguous discourse for someone who did not know very well the circumstances he was referring to. He constantly

¹ Field research information. Interlocutor: I. P., 72 years old, from Roșia Montană; interview taken at Roșia Montană on March 23rd 2012.

avoided to utter words or expressions like: *gold, to enter the gallery, to hide*. I reproduce as follows a significant fragment of this interview:

O. P. *"If it was nationalization, we didn't have the right...."*

C. B. *"Did it come like that... one day and they said you weren't allowed to enter the mine?"*

O. P. *"That was it! It was forbidden, if we went on or...we were in trouble".*

C. B. *"Trouble meant what? What would have happened to the one who had still worked?"*

O. P. *"They would have taken him to Câmpeni, to the police station. Especially those who still had...They would take them to the police station, in Câmpeni. They took a lot from here. They kind of beat them up...Others at the corner of the house.....they would bury it, 'cause it didn't anymore...they would beat them and...."*

C. B. *"They forced them to give the saved gold....."*

O. P. *"People tried so...but they searched for it, they kind of took it all!"¹*

My interlocutor spoke about the interdiction against miners to enter the mines in 1948 and then about the pressure put on the mine owners to give the whole quantity of the gold they still had. The strategy they used in order to keep their gold was to bury it at the corner of the house or at the roots of trees in the garden; but he never uttered the word *to bury* during the whole interview. He answered my questions, and since I was pretty familiar by now with the facts about which I interviewed him, I could recover what was not literally said. This interlocutor's interview took place without frustrations either on my behalf because I understood very well what I was transmitted, or on his behalf; he was making his discourse avoiding the words which were serious for him and was pleased I understood what he was conveying. Thus, a communication context was created, in which we established silently a convention, through the complicity of the one who asked the questions and the one who answered. If my interlocutor was building his discourse by avoiding the words considered some sort of linguistic *tabu* in the community, it was because he exercised this countless times. Everyone knew it was better to avoid the gold subject in discussions, in order not to have problems, not to be summoned by the police for declarations.

I had a few privileges for my field research at Bucium-Şasa. Firstly, I found a more balanced and serene community, which had not experienced lately any existential situations which would shake it violently. Secondly, the access to this community was facilitated by certain acquaintances of mine and I succeeded quite quickly to reach exceptional informants. They were persons who were familiar with all the aspects that define the traditional profession of a miner as well as the customs that were valid in the community during the period of time I was interested in. At the same time, the interviews used in this paper were taken from persons who experienced the nationalization and were good story tellers of their experiences, and, at the same time, willing to share them. The dialogues with them were natural, without any suspicions, animated by each interlocutor's joy to share his/her life experience. Unlike the inhabitants of Roşia Montană, my interlocutors from Bucium Şasa were never offered the chance to tell their stories outside their community. Moreover, the younger generations of the village, for whom the everyday priorities are different, do not show

¹ Field research information. Interlocutor: O. P., 78 years old, from Roşia Montană; interview taken at Roşia Montană on March 26th 2012.

interest for the elders' life experiences. Thus, the participation at the interviews was regarded as a privilege.

So, at Bucium Şasa the field experience was totally different, the communication being warmer, without tension or crises. Both the trust capital that the people from Bucium Şasa granted me because a person familiar to them helped me approach them, and the larger circumstances, very different, that defined the interrelation area helped the success of my field research. Regarding the self-censorship during communication, not only was this diminished in this situation, but my interlocutors spoke about the way the subject of gold was avoided in conversations during the communist period, even within the community. However, each of my interlocutors insisted on telling me that they or their families never had gold, giving as a reason, every time, the following situations: they had been either poor or had many children or had invested the money in something else. This could not be called discursive censorship but rather a defence strategy built during communism and still functional. They would not talk about their family members' personal experiences regarding the handing over of the gold; therefore, they would say that they or theirs never had gold. They knew stories about the way those suspected of having gold were persecuted but they seldom gave names. They would present the phenomenon in general, but when it came to very concrete things, they would rather withdraw in generalities.

The research methods for the field material gathering were the semi-directive and non-directive interview, as well as the "life story" interview.

An aspect belonging to the research methodology is the one that describes the way in which the fieldwork turned into written text, as well as into a scientific one. Tributary to the research methodology driven by the postmodernist orientation in the anthropological science, our study researched equally the strategies of discourse production about the miners' work and the ethnographical information these discourses include. The textualization of fieldwork meant to transform the discourse in which the communication situation is internal into an autonomous text, in Ricoeur's words, "separated from a specific utterance and authorial intention"¹, capable to become an object of interpretation. My interlocutors' discourses, turned into interviews' transcripts, together with the field happenings, transformed into field notes, will become an interpretative anthropologic text.² As James Clifford explains, "in analyzing this complex transformation one must bear in mind the fact that ethnography is from beginning to end enmeshed in writing. This writing includes, minimally, a translation of experience into textual form. The process is complicated by the action of multiple subjectivities and political constraints beyond the control of the writer. In response to these forces ethnographic writing enacts a specific strategy of authority. This has classically involved an unquestioned claim to appear as the purveyor of truth in the text"³. The truth is intrinsic to each personal narration, being given by the memory's voice and not being under any suspicion. There is no other truth about the world to which the discourses refer, outside the one supplied by themselves.

¹ Ricoeur, Apud: James Clifford, "On Ethnographic Authority", *Representations* 2 (Spring, 1983): 131, in the Journal Storage (JSTOR), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2928386> (accessed March 16, 2012).

² Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Culture* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 20.

³ James Clifford, "On Ethnographic Authority," 120.

For this paper three “life story” interviews were selected from the field work, with further selections of the fragments referring to the work experience from the period before nationalization, to the experiences with nationalization and the repercussions this had over the community. When I wrote the interviews, I eliminated the researcher’s questions as well as the interjections and digressions which would have made the reading more difficult. Thus, the discourses became coherent. When I transcribed these interviews, I respected the indications regarding the use of field information from “life story” interviews in the anthropological research, as described by Atkinson.¹

I will analyze as follows, each of the three discourses about work, as they are produced, like memory voices or instruments. Commenting on these interviews and filling in the ethnographical information when needed, I have tried to offer a cumulative, multiple and panoramic view on the approached subject.

The specific strategy of auctorial ethnographic authority used in this text combined several ways of ethnographical authority. According to James Clifford, the types of auctorial authority are: experiential, interpretative, dialogic and polyphonic.² The work strategy used for the present text’s draw-up required not only to describe the field experience but also to interpret it. In other words, three discourses were chosen, for whose interpretation I used the understanding of phenomena as it was shaped during the field research. The memory’s discursive strategy in the case of each interlocutor’s narration is constructed as a way of interpretation, based on the whole knowledge with which the author, i.e. the interpreter embraces this discursive text. The interpretative way of authority organizes the entire production of the present study.

The three interviews I have chosen as work documents are representative for the emphasis of the discursive strategies of the traditional mining memory. Produced in the above mentioned circumstances, these discourses confirm – beyond the anthropological reality they refer to – the reality of an encounter, of a listening, of dialogues. They are valuable through themselves, as subjective discursivizations of experience memories. The dialogue situation was a challenge for each interlocutor, a challenge that made vibrate a thin membrane of his/her memory. The remembrance often provoked sensibilities which the interlocutors often felt the need to explain and justify or, rather, to explain and justify them to themselves.

My interlocutors spent their childhood and youth before the nationalization, their adulthood during communism, and old age during post-communism. Their personal narrations are more than just perspectives on the dynamics of a specific way of existence (individual, familial, communitarian), they are the negotiation field of certain meanings, values, self-images.

The Analysis of a Discourse Constructed on the Nostalgia for the Lost Golden Age

The first discourse of our study belongs to the life story of an 82 year-old woman from Roşia Montană. Daughter of a mines and stamping mills owner, a diligent and enterprising man for whom the development of ore processing and gold extraction installations was a passion, J. M. has a fascinating discourse about that world in which,

¹ Robert Atkinson, *The Life Story Interview* (Thousand Oaks: Sage University Papers Series on Qualitative Research Methods, 44, 1998), 54-56.

² James Clifford, “On Ethnographic Authority”, 142.

mentally speaking, she still lives. I present as follows a large fragment from the “life story” interview which I recorded with her, leaving the explanations for the end. I thought it necessary to offer a larger fragment of this interview not only because it gave us a lot of extremely interesting information, but because the constructed discourse was really fascinating and deserved our whole attention.

I could have probably been the richest owner in Roşia Montană, my father had gold mines. He had mines here in Cârnic and up in Orlea and in Râşna. And we had nothing when we were children! He would build all the time and used all the money to make more. There were stamping mills back then that would function with water, with a wheel, like the mills. And my father had three wheels of stamping mills. Two with motors, he had. And it hadn't been easy... it needed a lot of work and money. Everything he earned at mills he would use there, to install motors, because, you see this water used now, this water would barely be enough for one wheel of stamping mill. And the water would last until June. And it would be enough until June because they would free the ponds, only the rain water was not enough for the mills. We weren't the only ones with stamping mills, all people capable of building them had. That's how we lived, on stamping mills, with the ore from here, from this mountain.

And when the Russians came, they won then – it was said they won the war – they (the neighbours) destroyed everything, they didn't allow us to have the stamping mills. And we had them from our forefathers, nobody expected, God! not to have these stamping mills anymore. It was like that from our forefathers. It worked like that, nobody would close the mines, a gold mine would cost very much. It cost a great deal to open a gold mine back then, and how difficult it was to open one! They had to work very hard to find gold; because if one's not familiar with the seam... it is thinner than the hair. You can go down to wherever, you cannot find it if you don't know it. And here, who knows the gold, has to be like a doctor, like a doctor who knows the human body and veins. So is the gold. You don't find it so easy, just enter the mine and hammer it. Oh, God forbid! And can you realize... more, less, with the money earned my father built stamping mills for his children. That's what they used to say, who has a gold mine, his children's children will live on it. Other people didn't have, if they earned some money, they would drink it and then would take sand from the bottom of the river and throw it into the stamping mills. But my father opened mines and built stamping mills, too. And they broke them, because they were envious.

Back then, in '48, the mines became the property of the state and the stamping mills... were forbidden, they sealed them. Seal on the door, and that was it. But they didn't break them. They only sealed, it wasn't allowed anymore. These people of ours, because of envy, they became high and mighty communists then. And those who were envious on our mills with motor came and hacked them down. Envious people! And the stamping mills my father had! ... as big as this building of Gold.¹

But how hard we worked back then! We, too, when we were that little (shows the height of the table) carried stones with the wheelbarrow and worked there to death. I worked with the horse, too. I used to bring stone with the wagon. I would bring it,

¹ The building of the Roşia Montană Gold Corporation is a big, multi-store one, built during the communist period.

hammer it to the size of eggs because we couldn't mill it if it was bigger; we had to feed the stamping mill. That was work¹, no joke! We had to stay at the stamping mill day and night; to wash the pyrite in the basin because the pyrite was taken to Zlatna, to the smelting house; the ore doesn't contain only gold but other metals, too. There is silver, mercury, copper, all kinds. And from the melting house all these were paid through the National Bank. The pyrite was taken to Zlatna, by wagon, with oxen or horse, 'cause it's very heavy. There was a big basin where the refuse was taken to. The refuse came from the stamping mill. And then the pyrite was washed in another basin. The pyrite doesn't float away, it's heavy and it remains there, only the refuse does. You pull it with the *crișna*²: one washes it with the scraper, the other one pulls it with the *crișna*. Very hard to do it! We used to work at the *hurcă*³. We would mill too. I was very young and used to mill during night. Oh, you should have met my father, he was so mean! I fell asleep once and he caught me and beat me. I thought I had been hit by a crushing-mill.

But I know the gold; even if it's thinner than the needle I know it. If I worked with it as a child, I know it. And how it's filtered, I know. And if I do it like that (shows the movement she used to do) in a small pan, I know the gold. The nationalization took place in '48 and I got married in '49 and my daughters don't know, they have never seen stamping mills anymore. I saw them enough. I milled by hand, too. The stamping mills didn't work in winter because the water was frozen. And in winter, we milled by hand. I would grind the ore until it became like rice, and it was a grinder like at the mill but the grind stone was smaller. And if I didn't grind, I don't know who did! Once it was before Easter:

- Father, I have no shoes!

- Well, I'll bring you some ore and you'll mill it and buy shoes.

I was older, of about 15 years old. There was a shop in Abrud called Dermata. And there were shoes made of linen with wooden soles. I ground for a whole week. My hands were full of blisters. And I bought myself a nice pair of shoes. The sole was of wood and the linen over the soles was blue. Anyway, very nice!

And they took them; and left us poor. My father lost his minds a little. He couldn't stay at home. He went up the mountain to Biharia for three years. The Russians opened a mine there. There was some quartz there. Their materials, what do I know? And he didn't come home for three years; he missed the stamping mills. And after he came, he would walk like crazy on the road during night. The stamping mills were as tall as the Gold's building. Big building! Repaired and painted them inside too. And how hard our entire family worked there! It was hard work there! And other people who waste their money came and destroy them? The Russians didn't destroy them, they did, because of envy; the Russians only sealed them.

After that there was the gold. There were these communists too who wrote everybody down and told on them, those who had gold. People saved something for

¹ Cf. Ilie Popa, "Mineritul de aur din Roșia-Montana" (Gold mining at Roșia Montana), *Analele minelor din România* 9 (Sept. 1936): 416-419.

² *Crișna* is a small tool, like a short shovel, used by the miners in the separation process of pyrite from the refuse.

³ *Hurcă* is, in traditional mining, a slope from which the refuse was washed away in the gold separation process.

when they got old, not everybody worked for the government to have pension. Gold was like a pension. Gold is always valuable. And then they caught them and beat them heavily. They beat one of my uncles' soles so hard he couldn't put on his shoes; he had to cut his shoes, so hard was he beaten! They would beat the people to tell whether they had gold. And they brought home my uncle (he had a young daughter) and told my aunt, "He didn't give the gold, he said you had gold, you saved gold for your daughter! If you don't tell us now, you'll tell tonight!" They brought her husband to see how beaten up he was and said, "You'll look the same if you don't give the gold". But my aunt said, "I cried so much then and I told them to ask anyone if we had gold, they should shoot us all 'cause we didn't have gold!" She couldn't have had, my uncle was an alcoholic he couldn't keep the gold for his family.

They took my father too, but he said he didn't have gold 'cause he built a lot. He used all the money to build, he didn't have gold saved.

They beat up almost all the miners here in Roșia Montană for gold. The women, the widows too were taken and beaten for gold. You only saw the van! They used to take the people at night. Only because these were told on! That's how the inhabitants from Roșia Montană were tortured for this mountain they don't want to give now. Some of here don't want to give. They don't want to give it and that's it! Someone from Cluj sustains those. I don't know who from Cluj. Why should we allow the government to own this mountain? Why should it own the mountain? Our bread was there. If God let us there and let the miners there and gave us this bread, why shouldn't we exploit the mines, 'cause the ground is enough, there is enough ground downwards. A few people don't want it. They are well-paid and don't care these have no jobs. They say people die because of cyanides, but people died before too, and they have to die of something anyway. Those cyanides aren't like that, all the people die suddenly of it!¹

My interlocutor's personal memory is focused on the nostalgia of the times when although she worked a lot, she had a privileged social status, being the daughter of a mine owner. Her childhood, for her, as a daughter of a miner, mine and stamping mills owner, is equivalent to the lost paradise from where her entire family was banned. She understands nationalization as a phenomenon that ruined an ancient social order. It was the absolute evil, about which no one in the community could have thought. For her family, the consequences were disastrous: she saw her father watching helplessly the destruction of the investment that absorbed all his work, energy and hopes of a lifetime, then leaving in search for work. So deep was her father's grief that it was impossible for him to come home for three years. She may be talking here about the so-called rehabilitation period for those who were considered *chiaburi*² by the new regime. Several miners worked at Băița Bihor bearing this status for three years, during which they did not receive but food, clothes and a modest sleeping place. But for this woman, the fact that her father did not come home for three years meant he could not see the changes of the place where he projected his and his family's future, a place from where

¹ Field research information. Interlocutor: J. M., 82 years old, from Roșia Montană; interview taken at Roșia Montană on April 1st 2012.

² *Chiabur/chiaburi* is a pejorative word used in Romania at the beginning of the communist period, for those who were rich or had any assets. The communist regime believed these exploited people by using paid labour force.

he and his family were totally banned. That is how she remembers that experience. In her memory, her father's image is of a man who, for the rest of his life, could not find his place in the new world to which he obeyed but never understood and in which he could never fit.

This discourse combines prefabricated elements, clichés with concrete facts, which give colour and specificity to the discourse. The prefabricated constructions are used when she talks about the difficulty of working in mine and about her family's perseverance in this work, as well as in her father's stamping mill building. At the same time, the comparison of her family's mills with an imposing building that can be seen in the village today is a prefabricated discursive construction that was used several times in the discourse.

Being from Roşia Montană, this woman has a life influenced by the mining project proposed by the company that came in the village for gold exploitation. Within this context, the project being controversial, the villagers adhered, according to their preferences, interests and convictions, to one or the other party, accepting or rejecting the project. Both the ones and the others used, most often, prefabricated linguistic constructions when they oppose or support the project. The person we are talking about sold her house to the mining company, but she was allowed to live there for a period. She became, thus, a supporter of the project. When she turns against those who oppose the new project at Roşia Montană she uses a prefabricated linguistic tool box. Defining the mountain as "the villagers' bread" which was left by God as a providential gift, she believes that it should be exploited to offer jobs. For her, the perception of the environment risks does not exist, and the fact that the project proposes a temporary solution, the resource depleting in 16 years, is a thing impossible to understand and evaluate, because her universe was the one in which previous generations entered in an open mine and took as much gold from there as they needed for their everyday living.

Besides these prefabricated constructions, her discourse is completed with spontaneous elements, which are, though, less than the prefabricated ones. Each discussion I had with this interlocutor at different intervals of time included all the enumerated aspects, as being prefabricated elements. Their order differed, but they appeared, obligatory, with small variations. Another fact contributed, I believe, to the construction of this discourse: her status of elder woman, inhabitant of a village frequently visited by researchers and journalists, she herself being a person known in the community as an expert in the mining traditions and an excellent story teller. Without refusing anyone of those who visited her, J. M. admits she has been visited by dozens of visitors in Roşia Montană. Because she has to tell her story over and over again, she has a discourse for the public, made by exercise, a discourse she tells in a confident tone, interrupted from time to time by modulations of voice, which becomes warm, creating the atmosphere of a confession when she appeals to spontaneity. This is how she told me about the way she processed the ore to find gold which she took to the bank to get money for shoes or the episode in which her uncle's family was tortured to hand over the gold which the militia suspected they hid.

The discourse we are talking about is extremely interesting from the point of view of identity definition. Our interlocutor claims she belongs to the professional category, that of the miners; she organizes the discourse defining her identity like this. It is fascinating how she emphasized in her discourse the relationship between a miner,

mine gallery, respectively between miner and gold seam. A perfect symbiosis is suggested, which appears between the miner and his work environment. Expressing the perspicacity and skill¹ of the one who enters the mine, who has to possess all the sophisticated empiric knowledge in order to succeed in his gold search, the miner is compared to the doctor who has to know the internal parts of the human body in order to heal his patient. The nationalization represents in this woman's discourse the moment that broke an identity as a whole, consolidated in numerous fragments, a moment that coincides with the regress to a precarious social state, expressed in the discourse as "they left us poor". My interlocutor was a cook at a canteen of a mining enterprise. Activating her memory, she does not relate to any other identity but that of the poor person because of the closing of the mine. Her memory records a time syncope which coincides with quite a long period of time, from the nationalization to nowadays, which did not mean anything for her: it was a flat, eventless time. Her whole life is turned to value through the projection of her identity image in which she, somehow, remained blocked.

A discourse focussed on the remembrance of the atmosphere in the traditional mining village

The second discourse to be analyzed belongs to an 80 year-old woman too, who lives in Bucium Șasa. She does not come from a miner family. Her father was a carpenter, and his only experience of trying to obtain gold by working at a relative's mill made them understand that mining was an extremely hard work, and the ending was a real fiasco because they lost the grain of gold after they had brought it home. Her narrations are valuable within the context of the present study which proposes to valorize the memory of the experience lived in a community of gold searching miners, because it succeeds to catch the atmosphere from the village where she spent her childhood.

The discourse is melancholic, emotional, constructed on the idea of steadiness that led her life. The first sentence she told me when we started the interview and I asked her where she was born emphasized her fidelity for her birth place, expressed very suggestively:

*I was born here, I lived here, I die here! I was like a worm, I never wanted to leave. And when my husband didn't work here and we were like a separated family, me and my children here, he at Deva, and we discussed about my moving there, in the end, I still didn't leave.*²

The world configured by her discourse based on memory is idealized, bucolic and perfect. She projects herself in this world as an actor with a special sensitivity, capable to feel and register the created atmosphere.

¹ Cf. Szentkirályi Zsigmond, Apud: Ion Rusu Abrudeanu, *Aurul românesc. Istoria lui din vechime până azi* (The Romanian gold: its history since ancient times till today) (Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 1933; re-edition: Cluj-Napoca: Napoca Star, 2006), 245-246; Valer Butură, "Spălarea aurului din aluviuni și mineritul țărănesc din Munții Apuseni", (Gold wash in river deposits and peasants' mining in Apuseni Mountains), *Anuarul Muzeului Etnografic al Transilvaniei 1965-1967* (Cluj: 1969), 72.

² Field research information; interlocutor: T. D., 80 years old from Bucium Șasa; interview taken at Bucium Șasa on March 26th 2012.

I remember exactly the way it was when the stamping mills worked. I was in school at Baia de Arieș and I used to go to school sometimes over the hill. A 13 year-old child to go 8 hours by foot! There was a train too, but no one knew when it left. There was a timetable but it was not observed. And we would go over the hill, with the miners. When we returned, we would arrive in Bucium at night. They would finish their shift at around three o'clock and it was at night when I would arrive home because the miners came only to Bucium Muntari, a village before my own, and from there I would walk home alone for another couple of hours. And if not every house, but every second house had stamping mill. There was such music at night that I wasn't afraid to walk alone. I wouldn't walk alone now because there are villains, but back then, there weren't. Now, that I'm old, I wouldn't walk alone. But back then, I used to. I had such a pleasant company during night with the stamping mills, and such love for my native places, that I thought nowhere was more beautiful than here. The stamping mills made strong noise!¹ It was special music, you couldn't miss it. It was impossible to go from one stamping mill to the next and not to hear the noise.²

The strategy of her discourse focuses more on the village's reality and less on her private life, the latter being brought into conversation only through heroic moments, if it was the case. She keeps to herself her private aspects that belong strictly to her or her family; she prefers to speak about herself as a member of the community to which she belongs, and, thus, to speak, in general, about the village's life. The goal of her communication and sharing is to emphasize the diligence and capability of the villagers who, even if they sometimes would drink a lot, worked very hard. Speaking about the difficulty of the mine work, she often refers to the vulnerable categories, like women and children³, emphasizing the families' surviving techniques, trying to avoid the common elements and to find those aspects that could impress the listener/reader.

It is very hard work to obtain one gram of gold. For a gram of gold one works a lot. As shiny the gold, as hard it was to get. The children worked too, and everybody in the house. No matter how young a child was, he/she couldn't even load the baskets by him/herself, he/she worked with the horse, he/she would bring the ore. If the father worked in the mine, he would load the baskets with ore, and the child, poor soul, would lead the horse.⁴ And those who were poorer didn't have mines or stamping mills and worked for others for little money. Those worked for others because they got two-three lei and who doesn't like money? And the children, everybody! But it's very hard work! And the mines were sometimes good, sometimes bad. One couldn't find gold all the time. And the gold was exchanged for something. One didn't trade gold for bread but sold it,

¹ The *stamping mills* (ro. *șteampuri*) are traditional (rudimentary) installations for ore processing. Each installation has several huge arrow-like parts that are lifted, one by one, by the wheel, and then left to fall in the abacus. By their one-by-one falling, a specific rhythmic sound is created.

² Field research information; interlocutor: T. D., 80 years old from Bucium Șasa; interview taken at Bucium Șasa on March 26th 2012.

³ The specialized literature often records the children's participation to mining activities. Cf. B. Roman, A. Sintimbreanu and V. Wollmann, *Aurarii din Munții Apuseni* (Gold miners in Apuseni Mountains) (Bucharest: Editura Sport-Turism, 1982), 83 and Valer Butură, "Spălarea aurului din aluviuni și mineritul țărănesc din Munții Apuseni", 82.

⁴ Cf. Ilie Popa, "Mineritul de aur din Roșia-Montana", 416.

took the money and bought bread and what one needed. Back then, we didn't have bread like now, ad lib. And there were many children. And the wheat was expensive; everybody would bake bread at home. We took only a litră of wheat for a gram of gold¹. And today one litră of wheat is 15 lei and a gram of gold is 180 lei. How much wheat can we get for a gram of gold?! But then it was like that. And it was very difficult to dig for that gold, I don't know if it was worth it. But people had to live on something. The gold was the everyday bread. Many ask why the people here don't have jewellery since they had so much gold. Nobody cared for jewellery; they needed the bread first, and then jewels. Few families had, 'cause the women were smarter a little and, maybe, they didn't have a large family, but the rest could not afford to save money for jewellery.

A lot of money was spent at Detunata Restaurant. The work of the villagers went to hell! They would enter Detunata on Monday morning and would leave on Tuesday afternoon.²

This interlocutor perceives nationalization as a moment of economic and identity blockage, strongly felt by the community, which overcame it by quickly adapting itself to the new political, economic and social conditions.

In '48 a law was passed, which stopped the mills, everything. It was as if someone cut their hands. They forced the people to give both the gold and the ore. People had ore saved in the stamping mills' end; they thought: when I need it, I mill it. And then they took everything. A policeman and an engineer came and took everything. They would draw up a report and the people didn't oppose, because if one opposed, they took one to the police station. Nobody said anything. Suffering was closed in people's souls. They didn't ask the people to break the stamping mills. Many stamping mills remained like that until rain destroyed them.

My father didn't work in the mine. He was engaged in timber work. He made planks; he built mills, too. But in '48, the sawmill was closed and then father worked with oxen. But nobody hired him because people couldn't pay, they didn't have money. And then, the villagers started to go and work on the country's construction sites. It was then that all hydro-electric stations, roads, railroads were built. It was back then that the mountains were penetrated to build the railroad connection between Banat and Oltenia. There are many tunnels, at Bumbesti-Livezeni. Once, I went there myself, too. I'm not nostalgic by nature but while I was passing through the tunnel I thought I saw, here and there, people from our village. When I hear them saying that our people cannot do anything else but mining,³ I die. What, are we handicapped? Who built so much in

¹ Cf. Valer Butură, "Spălarea aurului din aluviuni și mineritul țărănesc din Munții Apuseni", 70.

² Field research information; interlocutor: T. D., 80 years old from Bucium Șasa; interview taken at Bucium Șasa on March 26th, 2012.

³ My interlocutor refers to the communication strategy used by the foreign mining company that came in the neighbouring village, Roșia Montană. The company describes the miners in its media discourse as a specialized professional category that preserved the mining tradition from generation to generation and cannot find an alternative to survive, if the mining project is not implemented. This discourse is used to increase the benefits of the mining project and decrease the risks, with the hope to force the authorities to issue the exploiting permits and to obtain the indulgence of those who strongly opposed to the project, for environment protection and human health reasons, as well as for the reason of preserving the national historic patrimony of international importance existing at Roșia Montană.

*this country? People from here used to work everywhere in the country, on every construction site.*¹

This time, in order to offer an example of the fact that people looked for certain survival techniques, she speaks about her father. If the lumber installation was shut down, if nobody bought stamping mills or parts he produced, because all the installations had been shut down, he could have worked with his oxen for someone in the village; but because nobody had money to pay him, no one hired him. Then, she oversteps the boundary of the private life and speaks about her co-villagers, who got used with the new demand of labour force and got over the blockage. It is important here to emphasize that she refers to the diligence of the people, who accepted the alternatives and left, in search for a work place. The connection she makes in her mind between the important constructions of the Romanian infrastructure in the second half of the 20th century, and the image of her co-villagers, presented as heroes-constructors, is extremely powerful and impressively expressed. Her co-villagers represent for her the symbols of the progress made by Romania during the respective period. My interlocutor criticizes the exaggeration of the miner identity suggested by the media discourse built around the investment in mining in Roşia Montană during last years. Surely, it is about the appearance in advertisements of certain persons from the region who are, supposedly, the media image of the miners' community and who pretend to continue a mining tradition, without which one cannot live in the area. This can be the subject of a separate paper, but we'd like to state here that for this woman, the identity of the area's fit-to-work inhabitants cannot be reduced only to mining, but is characterized by their diligence and adaptability.

The Discourse Strategy Focused on the Miners' Community Customs And Socio-Professional Relationships

The third discourse we are referring to is produced within the context of a "life story" interview I took from a villager from Bucium Şasa, ex-miner, 80 years old. His discourse about the period before the nationalization focused, on the one hand, on the emphasis of the social and professional relationships within the miners' community, as well as on their customs; on the other hand, it focused on creating the atmosphere and suspense lived by the miners in search of gold. The information about his family's implication in mining is short and concise, turning slowly towards the community's actions, presented in general. He prefers not to make public what he considers to belong to his or his family's private life but to keep to himself. The passing from the objectivism of the lived experience to the generalization was done easily, at the level of discourse technique. At a certain point of the discourse, the marks indicating the first person singular or plural, or his father's person are replaced with the relative pronoun *someone*. Thus, he starts his discourse introducing himself as the son of a mine shareholder, owner of a few mine work places which he purchased. In this capacity, his father participated to the opening of a mine. This is the piece of information he offers about his father, only to talk then, in general, about such an endeavour:

Long time ago, father participated to a mine opening. When someone wanted to open a mine, he had to inform the director. He gave the document and then they would

¹ Field research information; interlocutor: T. D., 80 years old from Bucium Şasa; interview taken at Bucium Şasa on March 26th, 2012.

go to the owners. These had to sign if they participate or not to the opening. Some of them would sign, others wouldn't. And all those who wanted to open the mine had to contribute to all the expenses until they would reach the seam. And this was a matter of luck. One could or couldn't find the seam.

The expenses for the mine opening were kept in a book. And, at the end of a week, all the contributors would gather and see what was spent for: so much wood, so many people, this, that. They would share and each would pay his part. If he worked, he didn't have to pay a man, if he didn't work, then he had to pay a worker.

And when they opened the mine in Rodu, there were several shareholders. And they were so poor that they had only one pair of trousers. And they kept digging and found a very good seam and got rich. But the villagers of Bucium couldn't keep their wealth, because they would party a lot in Abrud.¹

Shortly after the interview started, my interlocutor criticized his co-villagers for the way they spent their money obtained from selling the gold. These remarks are like a leit-motif of his entire discourse. After each opinion on the work for gold extraction, he re-iterates the observations regarding the careless money spending.² This is the idea that dominates his entire discourse and we'll try to emphasize the way it is expressed.

An important element of the way my interlocutor's discourse is constructed is that – when he speaks about the miners' strategies of gold searching – he tries to valorize the local mythology in terms of true-false. He explicitly states that there has never been *Vâlva Băii*³, but, still, the mines had a certain mystery. Even if *Vâlva Băii* – as a woman dressed in white that takes the miner to the place where he finds gold, or in black that takes him to his doom day – does not have a place in his imaginary, my interlocutor feels the need to say that there are still signs the miners follow, and he himself, while working in the mine⁴, witnessed two situations in which the seam discovery was preceded by certain signs:

When people entered the mine they had faith and looked for the signs. When I was a child I remember they would drill manually. With drills so long (shows approx. 70 cm). One hammered two-three holes here, another one two-three holes there, until they would surround the entire work front. When we hit that drill with the hammer, the sound was heard through the wall in the other room towards where we headed. And then people expected to find a good seam there. And they found a good seam.

In another part of the mine, there was a gallery of about 500 meters length and there were ramifications everywhere and a slope and a connection with a pool from

¹ Field research information; interlocutor: T. M., 80 years old, from Bucium Șasa; interview taken at Bucium Șasa, on March 28th, 2012.

² Cf. Teofil Frâncu and George Candrea, *Românii din Munții Apuseni. Moții* (Romanians from Apuseni Mountains. The "Moții") (București: Tipografia Modernă Gr. Luis, 1888), 34.

³ *Vâlva Băii* is a mythological creature that is believed to be the spirit patron of the gold mines and presents itself to the miners under various figures. It helps the poorer and punishes the greedy or dishonest people.

⁴ Cf. Ana Șoît, *Legende populare minerești* (Miners' folk legends) (Bucharest: Minerva, 1974); Maria Ioniță, *Cartea Vîlvelor. Legende din Apuseni* (Legends of Apuseni Mountains) (Cluj-Napoca: Dacia, 1982), Nicolae Both, "Vîlva Băilor – O reprezentare mitologică" (*Vîlva Băilor – a mythological representation*), in *Ceasuri de seară cu Ion Agârbiceanu* (Evening hours with Ion Agârbiceanu), ed. Mircea Zăciu (Cluj-Napoca: Dacia, 1882), 215-224.

*Rodu. And there, one could see like a horizon... like a horizon. And they dug a gallery there, and on that side they found some kind of clay, it's called kaolin. It was extremely rich in gold. There was half of a kilogram of gold in a wagon that would carry around 800 kilograms of clay. And the villagers here found much gold. But they drank a lot. You couldn't see a nice house belonging to a villager! They went to Detunata and drank; after one drinks, can one think?*¹

This time too, my interlocutor's conclusion regards the way of investing the money earned on gold, after – he believes – certain signs urged the miners to advance into the gallery towards the place where they discovered a rich seam of gold.

I asserted earlier that a consistent part of this interlocutor's discourse was focused on emphasizing the customs that functioned in the community. Regarding the way in which each miner or group of miners managed his/their mine he/they worked in, or the place where he/they found gold, his story touched an extremely subtle social reality, which he understood from inside, whose rules he abode by and which he remembered vividly. From this point of view, the world he evokes in his narration is a very familiar one to him. Thus, he suggests that every member had his/her own, well-established place in the community he lived in. All villagers knew everything about each and every member of their community, and when something changed in their standard of living, everybody knew that could be only because the respective neighbour found gold. But since the resource was not meant for someone in particular, anyone could have had access to it, had he found out about it. Therefore, the more skilful one was in following the social reality to detect any changes, the more careful the one who found gold had to be, so that the treasure would not be stolen from him. Observing the changes in a family's standard of living was usually the women's job:

A miner's wife worked very much. They wove and dressed the whole family, sewed, cooked, and sometimes even milled during night. And women did something else too. They were worse than Securitatea (Romanian Secret Services before 1989). They kept a careful watch on the people to see who went to the pub and drank, who bought from the market. They said, "He has to have a good seam somewhere!" And then everybody watched him closely. The women didn't go to bed at night, they watched the neighbour to see where he went, where he came with the gold from, how come he had everything. When one lived better, they saw he bought shoes for his children, they saw what he ate, and they spied him until they found out.² But the man knew. He couldn't afford to leave traces. He stepped on stones, he took care. And people entered the mine, but they weren't called "thieves", they said God gave the gold. They were called "holoangări", not thieves.³ We never used the word thief.⁴

The specialized literature often records the fact that the *holoangări* "were not considered ordinary thieves, but rather outlaws who helped the poor people."⁵ It was believed that gold was a providential gift that belonged to all the inhabitants. Therefore,

¹ Field research information; interlocutor: T. M., 80 years old from Bucium Șasa; interview taken at Bucium Șasa, on March 28th, 2012.

² Cf. Valer Butură, "Spălarea aurului din aluviuni și mineritul țărănesc din Munții Apuseni", 59.

³ Cf. Ion Iliescu, Introduction to Ana Șoit, *Legende populare minerești*, XV.

⁴ Field research information; interlocutor: T. M., 80 years old from Bucium Șasa; interview taken at Bucium Șasa, on March 28th, 2012.

⁵ Roman, Sîntimbreanu and Wollmann, *Aurarii din Munții Apuseni*, 100.

the miners' unwritten moral code does not punish the stealing of ore directly from the mine's work front, but condemns dishonesty and the desire to get rich.

T. M. remembers with delight the excesses of the gold miners who found much gold and wanted to show off their economic power. This information is taken from the local folklore of the area. A happening that roused the community's admiration or surprise was quickly spread and in a very short period of time was familiar to everybody. Besides, this was the reason for those excesses: because of the subject's desire to become well-known and respected within the community, his economic power being, thus, recognized. Almost every inhabitant from Abrud neighbourhood knows about the excesses of the villagers of Bucium and Roșia Montană who had money obtained from selling their gold. The desire to make themselves respected and show their economic power determined some of the miners to become extremely eccentric. I further reproduce a part of another interview that relates such excesses. Returning to my interlocutor, I have to mention that even when he speaks about the miners' excesses, his discourse focuses again on assessing the human character from the point of view of moderately spending the saved capital. This emphasizes an almost cynical situation: at nationalization, the authorities required people to hand over all the gold they possessed, which would then be paid back to them by The National Bank in a fixed quantum. Those, however, who had gold and did not hand over, suffered a lot. That was the moment of value overthrowing, when the ownership feeling was destroyed, and honest work was punished, if we are to evaluate this reality, using the thinking paradigm specific to the capitalist economy. Those who took the gold to the bank regularly and got money with which they covered the daily expenses and partied, too, or, sometimes made excesses did not suffer so much as those who were passionate in gold saving, as it was the case of a family who often did not have anything to eat and had over one kilogram of gold which they handed over after numerous tortures.

Like the previous interlocutor's discourse, T. M. regards the nationalization as a desperation moment for the inhabitants who were forbidden to access their income source and were forced to give up a way of life without being given anything in return immediately. A transfer took place then, from the individual responsibility for the standard of life towards the state responsibility for providing jobs. It was the state that cut the resource and it was still the state that should repair the situation.

It was very difficult for a while, after the mines were closed, to find something to work, to earn money. Nobody had money anymore and we could not work. Nobody hired anyone. They cut it. Later on, they started with construction sites, with the mine from Roșia... it was all right. But it wasn't home anymore. To work on a construction site we went I don't know where in the country. But we went because we had to live on something. The mines weren't like before anymore, either. We got our salaries; whether there was or wasn't ore, the salary was the same. We didn't think any more about how to hammer, like this or like that. Geologists were there, we played safe.¹

He emphasizes here the fact that the miners, in their accommodation strategy, traversed a professional reorientation, becoming workers on construction sites or miners in a state mine, where industrialized mining was practiced and where they did not have

¹ Field research information; interlocutor: T. M., 80 years old from Bucium Șasa; interview taken at Bucium Șasa, on March 28th, 2012.

the responsibility of finding the seam. All three discourses I have analyzed lead to the idea that traditional mining disappeared with the nationalization. The 1948 nationalization brought an end to those times when there was solidarity¹ between the miner and the mine's gallery, the miner and the found seam or between the miner and the rock taken to the mills to extract gold.

After this moment, mining became industry in Romania. With the exception of a few cases of authorized gold diggers in the rivers' alluvial deposits, there was no other form of mining but the industrial one in Romania. As our interlocutor very well suggests, the difference between traditional and industrial mining lies in the fact that the mine worker, unlike the miner, is not present in the entire ore processing, though he is the one who can hold in his hands first the rock, and then the gold. The industrial gold mining has become a dull, repetitive work that brings less suffering but, at the same time, less joy.

Previous to this moment, the gold set the rules and power relationships at Bucium Șasa and Roșia Montană. Two things were left in the social memory about gold: on the one hand, the miners' excesses to prove their economic supremacy, and on the other hand, the tortures some of them had to endure under the communist regime when, after nationalization, they were asked to hand over the gold, and some of them did not agree with this. The inhabitants of a larger geographical area can tell about these aspects. Regarding the miners' excesses, there is a whole largely spread register of variants. This shows that the miners had a privileged position within the community; they had the economic power and enjoyed everybody's respect and admiration. I reproduce a fragment from an interview with an inhabitant from Ciuruleasa, who told me about the excesses of a miner from Roșia Montană:

They said about a man from Roșia, who organized the work at stamping mills, that he had more gold than his own weight. But he wasted it. He wasn't married, didn't have a family... They were three brothers, and they used to say that God had with only one leu more than them. So much money they had from gold! He said about one and another, "Well, they tortured that one, locked him up, beat him... did this and that to him, they didn't have anything to take from me!" He wasted it no one knows where. Handsome fellow he was! He wasn't bad looking. Once he went to a fair at Roșia, on a Saturday, and there were people who sold, like now, too, pots. He looked around but he was drunk. And looked at a pot and stepped in it with one boot – people wore boots like those back then – and told the pottery seller to find him another one of the same size. The seller found one for him. He stepped in this one, too and started to walk around and break the pots: zdru, zdrruu!. The seller: "Oh, God, my work, what am I to do now?" "So many of yours! You don't have so many pots I would like to break". He broke all those pots. But he said, "I paid so much for them that even if he had sold them he wouldn't have earned so much money".

He said he went to Cluj. And the mocănița (small train in the area) went only to Câmpia, from Câmpia one had to take a different train to Cluj. And there were shays instead of cars at the railway station; one after the other. "Hei mister, come to me, I have so many children, I haven't earned anything today, I don't have this, I don't have that! " Another one: "Come to me!" He says: "I had my walking stick and my briefcase

¹ Cf. Valer Butură, "Spălarea aurului din aluviuni și mineritul țărănesc din Munții Apuseni", 89.

with me”. The merchandise; he was taking the gold to the Jews. But he says: “What should I do? Wait a minute! I gave each of them one hundred lei, a lot of money back then! In the first shay I put my hat: «Don’t take anyone else!»“ In the second shay I put my walking stick. And in the last one it was me and my briefcase. And they took me where I told them to take me, I paid them even more”. He loved to give. Some character he was!¹

I have reproduced this interview fragment because the images constructed around the miners are highly suggestive for the power relations the gold supremacy established. When explaining the three brothers’ financial power, the human sphere is exceeded: the brothers were said to possess a financial capital with only one unit less than God Himself.

Conclusion

In its discourse strategy analysis, the present study focused not on the narrated fact but rather on the way it was narrated. The different ways the subjects’ personal memory was objectivized through discourse, with the advantages and limits that the call to memory can have are symptomatic for this type of research. The first analyzed discourse is constructed to emphasize the personal experience, without hesitating to underline intimate aspects of the family life, while the community experience takes a second place. The other two interviews approach a discourse strategy through which the intimate aspects belonging to “I” are merged with the communitarian experience that takes the first discourse level.

The fact that each of my interlocutors spent his/her childhood and youth before the nationalization, his/her adulthood during communism, and old age during post-communism allowed them to assess their traditional gold mining experience in accordance with all these different socio-political systems. All discourses have a melancholic sound. Each of the three interlocutors emphasizes, on the one hand, the difficulty of the work that traditional gold mining involves and, on the other hand, the unity and social harmony which existed in the village before the nationalization. The nationalization law brought traditional gold mining to an end. With it, the work culture disappeared, which involved a direct, unconditioned connection between the miner and the mountain from which he extracted the gold, a connection that filtered hopes, passions, desires and joy. This work connection settled power relationships and living rules; it was a means to transmit the miners’ beliefs and superstitions.

After the nationalization, the gold miners from Roşia and Bucium had to identify other surviving strategies. Thus, the social mobility and temporary and permanent migration to work increased a lot.

My interlocutors belong to a generation that, like many others before, tied their dreams and hopes to the gold of the neighbouring mountains. When, suddenly, their access to the gold resource was cut, they felt as if they had been banished from Paradise.

¹ Field research information; interlocutor: L. D., 76 years old from Ciuruleasa; interview taken at Câmpeni, on April 2nd, 2012.