‘Mea culpa’: the social production of public disclosure and reconciliation

Chapter 9

‘Mea Culpa’: The Social Production of Public Disclosure and Reconciliation with the Past

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1. Introduction

It can be sensibly argued that transformations of social, political and moral frameworks for constructing personal and political subjectivities have been taking place in a variety of forms and with different effects across a range of Eastern European contexts. In order to understand and describe individual experiences of social change researchers have usually been engaged in documenting the nature of these particular transformations of social, political and moral frameworks for constructing personal and political subjectivities. Although this is a very important research goal in its own right, it may not tell the whole story. Some questions still remain: How are these social, political and moral frameworks constructed by members of society through the use of various cultural and discursive resources to make sense of themselves and others? How are personal and political subjectivities actually constructed and reproduced, assumed or contested?

The transition from communism to democracy has been a period when possibilities of constructing and affirming (alternative) personal and political subjectivities/identities have been innumerable. At the same time, this period has also been one of re-evaluating and re-affirming personal/political biographies from under the sway of the Communist and post-communist recent past. This chapter is an attempt to capture individual experiences of social change through an example of 're-acquisition of biography' (Miller, 1999) and reconciliation with the past.

In common with many other East European countries, the end of the Communist era in Romania has seen the publication of documents which have been perceived as evidence of complicity between the *Securitate* (the Communist Secret Police) and certain public figures. The process of releasing and making public documents of the Communist Secret Police has been very slow and ridden with controversy. Investigations of the released documents have led to a series of allegations of 'collaboration' with the *Securitate* which, in turn, has led to a number of public statements (which I will refer to as 'public disclosures') from the subjects of those allegations: politicians, public intellectuals, clerics, and journalists, in a variety of forms (e.g. interviews with journalists, letters to newspapers etc). These texts can be seen as serving to account for their past actions and can be viewed through the lens of reconciliation with the past.

This chapter is concerned with the production and politics of public disclosure in relation to accounting for 'collaboration' with the Securitate. It examines, in detail, a 'confession' of 'being an informer' of a Romanian public intellectual in a letter sent to one of Romania's wide-circulation national newspapers. A discursive psychological

approach (Edwards and Potter, 2001) is used to consider how disclosure and reconciliation with the past are accomplished in the letter, where issues such as subjectivity, remembering, public accountability and biography become relevant. My analytic topic is the description and treatment of public disclosure and reconciliation with the past *by members of society*, not its 'objectivity' for me as researcher (cf. Eglin and Hester, 2003).

The specific focus will be on several inter-related dimensions: a) considering such issues as action-oriented and participants' accomplishments; b) taking into consideration how the text itself is 'organized so as to potentially persuade readers towards a specified set of relevances' (Watson, 1997, p. 89); and c) accounting for the social management of morality and self-presentation as complex, delicate and ambivalent operation. Whereas, previously, disclosure and reconciliation with the past has been seen as a case of reflecting on the personal, historical and political (Miller, 1999, 2003), here I wish to develop and suggest a conception of reconciliation with the past as a way of doing something in its production.

2. Context and Research

The context is that of the Romanian public sphere. There have been several attempts, mainly originating in Critical Discourse Analysis (see Preoteasa, 2002; Ietcu, 2006)[1], to consider, from a discursive perspective, the Romanian public sphere. These contributions have revealed some of the discursive and ideological dynamics of (democratic) dialogue in the Romanian public sphere (see also Fairclough, 2005 on

the contribution of critical discourse analysis to research on the process of 'transition' in Central and Eastern Europe, especially Romania).

Social change, transformation, narrative, auto/biography and memory have constituted recurrent themes in discursive/ narrative approaches to social change and transition (e.g., Andrews, 2000; Konopasek and Andrews, 2000). As Andrews has noted 'members of societies in acute social change are not only (and perhaps not even) experiencing a liberation of their memory; they are scrambling to construct new and acceptable identities for themselves, ones which will be compatible with the changed world in which they now live' (2000, p. 181). It has been argued that the stories which people tell about 'themselves and their pasts are a product of the present, as well as the past' (p. 181). Other authors have drawn attention to the theme of guilt and complicity and the impact of totalitarianism in terms of memory's revision of the past (Passerini, 2005).

Biographical, narrative and life story research have attempted to describe and explain the changes of individuals' biographies and identities brought about by disclosures and attempts at reconciliation. A relevant example is research conducted by Barbara Miller (1999). In her book on Stasi informers, Barbara Miller analyses 'narratives of guilt and compliance' in East Germany attempting to construct a socio- psychological framework of 'reconciliation with the past'. Narratives of guilt and compliance are interpreted through the use of psychological categories and theories (e.g. cognitive dissonance and selective memory) and by developing explanations in terms of socialization, double morality, double standards, and the acceptance of political lies.

However, whilst valid within their own terms, such phenomena can be examined by seeing displays of disclosure and reconciliation and of regret or remorse as accomplishments of participants in the management of public accountability. What seems to be missing is a focus away from how participants retroactively 'interpret' their past and present selves (Miller, 2003) towards how the past/present selves, the private/public, the personal/political unfold and become entangled in a space of public visibility and accountability.

3. Confession and the Active Text

1) 'He has got it off his chest'[2]

2) 'I cannot quite pull myself together'

3) 'Now he is a free person'

4) 'Repentance does not have moral significance'

5) 'This action should be saluted'

6) 'I am amazed and aggrieved'

7) 'This case is another argument for condemning communism'

These are just some of the press headlines summarising the public comments made by a range of Romanian public intellectuals as a reaction to a 'confession' of a fellow public intellectual (and friend) of being an 'informer' for the Securitate. Others have refused to comment. These statements constitute various ways to 'activate or animate' (Watson, 1997, p. 88) the confession as an 'active text' (Smith, 1990a; Watson, 1997), actively organizing reconciliation with the past as a significant social action. The letter is inspected for how it 'actively makes sense' (p. 85) of confessing having been an informer for the Securitate.

The act of confessing can be seen as furnishing the visible display of public accountability through which an audience can assess the confessor's character (cf. Lynch and Bogen, 1996). It is a sort of 'obligatory act of speech which … breaks the bonds of discretion and forgetfulness' (Foucault, 1978, p. 62). What might be of interest to researchers of communism and post-communism, but also to psychologists, sociologists, ethnographers of transition, is the production of public disclosure and reconciliation with the past as intimately linked to the 'hermeneutic of the self' (to use Foucault's terminology) and 'community' that it engenders.

The focus of this chapter is on illustrating the subtle ways in which disclosure and reconciliation with the past are exercised as publicly accountable practices in the management of self-presentation and moral character. The aim is to consider an example of public disclosure (a confession) and viewing it as a site where public accountability is being managed (Lynch and Bogen, 1996). It is not my aim to chart the 'subjective' psychological world of public disclosure. Rather, I seek to understand

'the constitutional work that accomplishes an event or object' - such as a confession – 'in the process of its textual inscription' (Smith, 1990b, p. 216).

In communist (but also post-communist) times, 'the individual was formed as a category of knowledge through the accumulated case records (the file) which documented individual life histories within a particular institutional nexus' (Featherstone, 2006, p. 591-592). The *Securitate* was one of these institutions that not only constituted the individual as a category of knowledge through accumulated records, but did so in the service of a hegemonic political order, for the purposes of social control and oppression[3]. The production and control of the public record of politics, people and events by the *Securitate* has led to a kind of 'textually mediated' production of domination and coercion.

As Smith (1990b) has argued, 'the appearance of meaning as a text … detaches meaning from the lived processes of its transitory construction, made and remade at each moment of people's talk' (p. 210). It is worth noting that for diverse categories of researchers (historians of communism and post-communism, sociologists and psychologists of transition, ethnographers etc.), textual materials have been seen as sources of information on something else (historical, political 'realities'), rather than as phenomena in their own right. As Watson (1997) argues,

> 'texts are placed in the service of the examination of "other", separately conceived phenomena. From this standpoint, the text purportedly comprises a *resource* for accessing … phenomena existing "beyond" the text … where the

> text operates as an essentially unexamined conduit, a kind of neutral "window" or "channel" to them'
>
> (p. 81, italics in original).

Texts have not been treated 'as active social phenomena' (ibid., p. 84) and social products. But what happens when people turn themselves into 'socially organized biographical objects' (Plummer, 2001, p. 43)? One way to think about this is to see 'writing' (like 'saying') things as a way of doing something (cf. Watson, 1997). The question which then arises is what discursive resources do people use to 'do things' when they turn themselves into 'socially organized biographical objects'?

As Lepper (2000, p. 77) put it,

> writers and readers, no less than speakers and hearers, use categorical resources to debate, negotiate, conceal and impugn, and to act to gain the concurrence of other parties to the 'talk'. Through written, no less than through spoken interaction, the work of shared understanding is routinely accomplished according to observable procedures which can be formulated and verified

4. Method

In common with discursive psychology (Edwards, 1997; Edwards and Potter, 2001), drawing on insights from membership categorization analysis (Sacks, 1995) and ethnomethodology (Eglin and Hester, 2003; Lynch and Bogen, 1996; Smith, 1990a,

b) this chapter attempts to restore public disclosure and reconciliation to their situated, observable, visible nature, as accountable community practices. This involves a detailed examination of situated means of their production. Whereas, in other approaches, disclosure and reconciliation are considered to be 'psychological', here I see them as public, 'practical-textual accomplishments' (cf. Barthélémy, 2003). This entails treating instances of public disclosure (such as this confession letter) as performative and action-oriented, 'such that issues of sincerity, truth, honest confession, lies, errors, confabulations, and so on' (Edwards, 1997, p. 280) (as well as 'guilt', 'remorse' or 'regret') constitute matters that talk and text itself manage and accomplish 'in analyzable ways' (ibid., p. 280).

The question to ask is not why, but *how* a text 'is … written in just this way' (Livingston, 1995, p. 21). In the context of 'telling the truth' about the self (and the past), one can read accounts as a kind of 'apologia for who and what one has been' (Freeman, 1993, p. 20, *apud* Edwards, 1997). As Edwards suggests, it is for this particular reason that, as analysts,

> we have no business … reading *through* them to the life beyond, any more that we can read through discourse of any kind, to recover the world it purports to represent. Rather, they have to be read reflexively, in the ethnomethodological sense, as part of, as moves in, and as constituting the lives they are ostensibly "about"'
>
> (1997, p. 271, italics in original).

Thus I will refrain from speculating about the 'the real truth' of the biographical or political account and, instead, will focus on the complex matter of the *produced* unfinished business (cf. Lynch and Bogen, 1996) of public disclosure and reconciliation investigated in their local-historical circumstances. The focus is on the constitutive properties of text that help reveal how public disclosure and reconciliation are *produced* as 'matters for members, and therefore discoverable in their orientations to and treatments of them' (Eglin and Hester, 2003, p. 4). In an attempt to go beyond a 'linguistic analysis of texts' (Fairclough, 2003), this chapter engages with the practical methods, cultural and categorial resources through which public disclosure, moral justification, accountability, memory, apology, reconciliation are managed in text. The intention here is not to define an exclusive research endeavor, but to develop the capacity to investigate a series of phenomena that constitute (or might constitute) the concern of psychologists, sociologists, historians, ethnographers, anthropologists of communism and post-communism.

5. Analysis

The data for this chapter comes from the text of the confession itself as published in the online edition of a major central (wide-circulation) Romanian newspaper (see appendix for the excerpt from the original letter). It can be argued that what one is dealing with here is some sort of 'naturally-occurring life writing' (Stanley, 1993, p. 47) within a framework of public accountability. As Lynch and Bogen (1996) note, a pervasive feature of public avowals is that they are usually given 'for the record'.

They can be summarized, quoted and 'recycled' in news reports, newspapers and so on.

The newspaper headline introduces the article which contains the letter under the wider editorial heading 'Current affairs' (Actualitate) with the gist prefaced by the author's name: 'I have been an informer for the Securitate' (Am turnat la Securitate). The letter is described as a 'harrowing document' (document cutremurător). The two descriptions construct the account *as* an (unexpected) confession and predispose the reader towards a particular way of reading the account (see Lee, 1984 *apud* Watson, 1997). Disclosure is tied to the moral categories of 'informer' and 'Securitate' as an observable matter of 'fact' for the record.

The offered 'title' of the letter: 'Political police or informed on-informer informed on-informed on' (Poliţie politică sau turnat-turnător turnat-turnat) can be seen as a way to generate a context of alternative categorizations and category work. 'Political police' is the (accusatory) label used by the National Council for the Study of the Securitate Archives (CNSAS) for people involved in 'political police activities'[4]. Note the 'twin' categories introduced in the title. The sequence of categorization (turnat-turnător; turnat-turnat) signals the existence of an alternative set of categorizations that might be commonsensically attached to the notion of 'political police'. The membership category 'informer' is being qualified through the introduction of a set of categories, implicative-relational pairs.

The letter is divided into two main sections. The 'Essence', the first part, is followed by the 'Existence'. The analysis in this chapter focuses on the 'Essence' and how this first part of the letter constitutes a set of 'reading' relevances.

Political police

Or

Informed on-informer informed on-informed on

The essence

I have signed an engagement of collaboration with the Securitate on 29th March 1976, when I was a pupil in my last high-school year (I was born on 20th Aug 1957), as a result of about three weeks of pressures. Approximately between 1976 and 1982, with irregular intermittences, of which one of over one year and a half, I provided the Securitate information notes under the conspirational name of "Valentin". I informed in writing the Securitate about some of [my] friends and some of my acquaintances, without warning them, without confessing to them *post-festum* until my writing of this text, without apologizing, without assuming publicly this shameful and painful past.

I informed on them sometimes, with death in my soul, but I never betrayed them: I have not been an agent provocateur; I have not received missions of any kind; I have not been promised and there have not been advantages created for me; none of my information notes has gone beyond generalities and information which I considered already known; during all this time, I remained hostile to the Securitate and the party-state; they responded

likewise. Between 1974 and 1989, the Securitate received information on me from other informers, and at specific junctures they opened "Information Surveillance Dossiers' (dosare de urmărire informativă - D.U.I).

So, for fifteen years, I went through the first and the last of the three situations in which a citizen of the RSR[5] could find himself in as far as the Securitate was concerned (if the individual was not a direct part of its apparatus): (1) informed on (2) informer (3) informer-informed on – this sketchy typology of the informer will be detailed as one goes along.

In these pages, I will briefly tell my story and I will reconstitute schematically several relevant episodes, relying on memory, personal notes from the time and of some archival documents hosted by the CNSAS and requested by me in August 2002. Until the present moment, after the more recent reception by the CNSAS of an enormous quantity of dossiers, these are the only available documents regarding me.

Ethically and morally, confession and repentance are coming too late: to the gravity of my deeds from 25-30 years ago, one can add the indefeasible gravity of silence, of life lived in lie and duplicity. Only psychologically and historically (from ego-history, through micro-history, to history) it is better *too* late than never.

The opening line of the letter goes to the heart of the matter: 'I have signed an engagement of collaboration with the Securitate'. The emphasis is on the actuality of the 'fact' of 'collaboration'. At this point, there is no mitigation. The account can be seen to stand 'on behalf of a reality which is separate from, and beyond the text itself' (Davies, 1993, p. 118). The reader is then provided with the date which is followed by an occupational stage-of-life category ('pupil'). At the same time, one gets a significant biographical detail (the date of birth) (lines 003-005). This is the first indication that this is to be read as a biographical account, as well as a confession of past 'wrongdoing'. At line 005, one can read a statement that deals with the implicit intentionality of the act: not *choosing* to collaborate with the Securitate, but doing so 'as a result of about three weeks of pressures'.

Lines 003-005 can be seen as an attempt to manage inferences about the moral identity, the disposition of the teller-as-character to act in a particular way (cf. Lynch and Bogen, 1996, p. 283; see also Sacks, 1995). The opening lines of the letter set the background for constructions of 'moral self-assessment' (Edwards, 2006) and moral character.

The length of time of being an informer for the Securitate is given (lines 005-006): 'approximately between 1976 and 1982'. It is emphasised that this has not been a continuous commitment; it included 'irregular intermittences, of which one of over one year and a half' (lines 006-007). Reporting the frequency or prevalence of a practice can work to propose and substantiate the implicit rightness and wrongness of those practices. The activity is mentioned: providing 'information notes' under the name of 'Valentin' (lines 007-008).

The first two sentences (lines 003-008) can be seen as an attempt to inscribe factual and biographical information on the record and open the way for 'linking factual reality to psychological states, motives and dispositions' (Edwards, 2006, p. 477). One can see how the 'factual' (what happened and when) is tied to features of an organizational reality, that of the *Securitate*: the *conspirational name*, providing *information notes*. It is under this framework that accounts of actions, moral identity and accountability can be offered and defended (cf. Edwards, 2006). This also has relevance for what is already *on* the record (the Securitate 'file', the 'information notes', the public written accounts, the CNSAS investigations etc.) and what is *becoming* the public record (cf. Lynch and Bogen, 1996). To have a 'record', to have 'collaborated', to have a 'file' with the Securitate can be said to be linked to 'an organizational accomplishment creating a special character for whoever is located in the records' (Smith, 1990b, p. 213).

Further details are given at lines 008-012: 'I informed in writing the Securitate about some of [my] friends and some of my acquaintances'. Moral accountability and moral character are managed through the invocation of the membership categories 'friends' and 'acquaintances' that can be said to imply a set of category-bound activities and a 'locus for rights and obligations' (Lepper, 2000, p. 196). The invocation of these categories makes relevant the absence of moral courses of action such as the ones listed: 'without warning them', 'without confessing', 'without apologizing', 'without assuming publicly this shameful and painful past'. What one may call 'guilt', 'regret' 'remorse' and 'shame' is produced as a feature of *discourse* through the invocation of moral categories. Confessing and expressing regret is not simply a matter of *admitting*

having ‘collaborated’ with the Securitate, but displaying a repertoire of ‘moral discourse’ (Bergmann, 1998) that can constitute a ‘resource for the construction of moral actors and courses of moral action’ (p. 287).

Having ‘collaborated’ with the Securitate is not an issue of strict political accountability, but of public and moral accountability. Having been an ‘informer’ is, presumably, not necessarily linked to having supported an oppressive regime, but also to having been in a position to reveal the private details of the lives of others, ‘friends’ and ‘acquaintances’. The letter is not only addressed to the public, to a larger audience, but also to ‘friends’, people who might know the ‘author’ well and would not have necessarily expected such news.

Note at lines (012-013), ‘I informed on sometimes, with death in my soul, but I never betrayed them’. Through the use of ‘sometimes’, the metaphor ‘cu moartea în suflet’ and the extreme case formulation ‘never’ one is provided with a formulation of general disposition to act in a particular way. ‘Sometimes’ serves to portray the ‘relative’ character of the state of affairs, as well as the frequency of the practice. As Pomerantz (1986, p. 228) points out, ‘proportional measures reporting the frequency or prevalence or practices are used to propose and substantiate the rightness and wrongness of those practices’. ‘I never betrayed them’ is a way of normalizing actions and character (cf. Edwards, 2000, p. 348; see also Edwards, 1997). This is done through denying having been a member of morally reprehensible category (like ‘betraying your friends’). This works to suggest that the particular categories and actions being denied are ‘an instance of a general category of actions’ that the person ‘is not disposed to do’ (Edwards, 2006, p. 485).

The avowal of 'being an informer' is based on a denial of other 'available character types and membership categories' (Lynch and Bogen, 1996, p. 317): 'agent provocateur', receiving 'missions' etc. (lines 013-016). This categorial deploying is used to 'generate, manage and interpret the social order as a moral order' (Lepper, 2000, p. 39). Membership or identity categories such as 'being an informer', 'agent provocateur', and so on, can lend themselves 'to characteriological formulations of persons – their tendencies, dispositions, moral nature, desires and intentions' (Edwards, 2006, p. 498). One can note that there is a relationship between the deployment and accomplishment of morality and the invocation of membership or identity categories.

One way to read the statement at lines 015-017, on the information given to the Securitate, is to see it as a move of 'relativisation' (see Miller, 1999) of past actions, in claiming that 'anything of consequence' (p. 108) has been reported. An alternative reading would see it as an attempt of constructing disposition and intention as a way to fend off possible implications of being seen as someone who would deliberately give information to the Securitate (note the extreme case formulation '*none of* my information notes…' and the direct avowal of having remained hostile to the Securitate and the party-state 'during all this time' - lines 016-017). This is an integral part of a move of managing 'moral self-assessment' (Edwards, 2006) and moral accountability, discursively producing disposition and moral character. One can see how issues such as public disclosure are intimately associated to moral self-assessment moves concerning what (type of person) one is and what (type of person)

one was. The repeated use of 'I' can perhaps be seen as a persuasive way to communicate sincerity (Wilson, 1990) and accomplish credibility.

At lines 018-020, one can note a subtle category shift: from 'informer' to having 'Information Surveillance Dossiers'. The situated production of moral character can be said to rely on a 'struggle over the production and control of the public record' (Lynch and Bogen, 1996, p. 179) of collaboration with the *Securitate*. It has been argued that *records* 'define the human beings to whom they refer in specific and particular ways. In so doing they call upon and activate a series of … membership categorisation devices' (Prior, 2004, p. 380). Membership categories such as 'informer' (and 'under surveillance') are underlined by means of the Securitate 'record' and procedures. In some circumstances, as Atkinson and Coffey (1997) note, the 'written record' can take 'precedence over members' own recollections and intentions' (p. 57). The Securitate 'records', the 'dossiers' mediate the constitution of an organizational relation between the person and an organizational course of action (collecting information on certain people, or placing people under surveillance, and so on). The category shift from 'informer' to 'informed on' is bound to an organizational accomplishment of accountability. Categories such as 'informer' and 'under surveillance' 'depend as a condition of their meaning on organizational process' (Smith, 1990a, p. 137). Public disclosure is legitimated through establishing a relationship with an organizational accomplishment of accountability.

Lines 022-026 are a sort of conclusive summary of the biographical and factual details previously offered. The personal 'story' is presented as unexceptional, certainly typical for a Romanian living under communism. Placing personal history

within the ordinariness of the situation in which 'a citizen of RSR could find himself' involves claiming membership in two out of the three categories mentioned: 'informed on' and 'informer informed on'. The previously used category, that of 'informer', is subverted and a 'new' implicative-relational category ('informer informed on) is proposed. The merging of the two categories, 'informer' (agent of the action 'providing information to Securitate' - active) and 'informed on' (recipient of the action 'providing information to Securitate' – passive) provides for the construction of a particular moral order and moral character. It also opens the way for particular accounts to be given that might justify moral character and conduct. The trajectory of the confession and (confessional) self is constituted and accounted for within the boundaries of these categories/identities.

At lines 028-033, the resources for telling the story ('my story') are mentioned: memory, personal notes and 'archival documents' from the CNSAS, personally requested. The reconstruction of the personal past is a process mediated by the 'textual traces' (Smith, 1990b, p. 220) contained in personal and 'official' records. As some authors have argued, 'archival and auto-archival work' (Lynch, 1999, p. 69) deeply influences the writing of personal history. There is also a sense that the 'official' archive is incomplete. As Lynch and Bogen note, 'implicit ownership of an order of contextual details', can provide the writer with 'a conventional right to corroborate or contest details of an event that may already be known by other means' (1996, p. 164).

The ending of the 'Essence' (lines 035-039) can be seen as an example of performative sincerity (Lynch and Bogen, 1996, p. 50) and a continuation of the

production of moral accountability and moral character. One could argue that the last lines display a shared cultural understanding of the meaning of 'saying sorry' (LeCouteur, 2001) in relation to the timely nature of the confession. This is a way to get moral emotions and moral character (a sense of morality) 'publicly available and publicly explainable' (Sacks, 1995, p. 195) to anonymous and non-anonymous parties. With the benefit of hindsight, the writer manages to open up a 'textual space' and moral universe in which to enact a discourse on the nature of private and public accountability (cf. Erben, 1993, p. 15). It is important not to ignore that when one is 'confessing', one is also expressing moral meanings, as 'it is the society's appreciation or disdain of an individual's (norm-conforming or norm-breaking) behaviour that may change [an] individual's moral standing' (Bergmann, 1998, p. 286).

6. Conclusion

Focusing on a public confession of 'collaboration' with the Securitate, this chapter has examined issues such as public disclosure and reconciliation with the past as action-oriented and participants' accomplishments. It has also offered an account of the social management of morality and self-presentation as complex, delicate and ambivalent operation. As one moves from the private to the public and from the personal to the political, the meaningfulness of public disclosure is not guaranteed by a possible identifiable essence (e.g. confession) nor is it achieved through a reliance on the description of a particular state of mind (e.g. guilt, regret, remorse etc.).

This chapter has considered the constitutive properties of a confessional text. It is suggested that this particular textual construction constitutes a set of 'reading'

relevances : 1) it precludes using ‘guilt’ or ‘remorse’ as the only interpretive procedure; the use of various membership categories and organizational knowledge ‘inhibits’ (Smith, 1990a, p. 142) the application of ‘guilt’ or ‘remorse’ as the sole interpretive schema; 2) it suggests an alternative interpretative schema: the temporal/biographical sequence of categorisation (informer, informed on) is intended as an alternative guide to ‘reading’. Following this ‘instruction’, the reader is able to connect the avowal not only to the ‘author’ of the letter, but also to the wider context (political and ideological).

One is running the risk of misreading public disclosure and attempts of reconciliation with the past if one treats them as accounts of actual, underlying psychological processes. Public disclosure and reconciliation with the past have no essential (psychological) meaning in themselves. Rather, their meaningfulness, as a matter for members of society, depends on them being seen as an integral part of a range of public, *accountable* practices, whether those of the individual or of the media. Arguably, there is no need of separating the ‘private’ and the ‘public’, the ‘personal’ and the ‘political’ in order to understand public disclosure and reconciliation (with the communist past). The ‘personal’ can be said to be “inextricably intertwined with the ‘public’ and the ‘political’” (Davies, 1993, p. 118) in constituting an ideological space for the affirmation of struggles of ‘re-acquisition of biography’ (Miller, 1999). The writer is ‘using oneself as an ethnographic exemplar’ (Gergen and Gergen, 2002, p. 14) in order to accomplish an auto-ethnography of the private/public, personal/political. As Edles (2002) has noted, “’the auto-ethnographer’ is *doubly* privileged … ethnographic authority rests on both being an ‘Insider’ *and* being the ‘Ethnographer’” (p. 157, emphasis in original; see also Plummer, 2001).

If personal/political 'history' can be said to be mediated by the 'archival', 'textual refiguring' (Featherstone, 2006) of the past, then public disclosure and reconciliation with the past can be seen as engagements in a struggle to recapture, re-possess and re-claim 'archontic' power (Derrida, 1997) -- to exercise some degree of control over the authorship, collection and interpretation of a body of writings on the self. This could be seen as a move from the 'official', political archontic power (that of the *Securitate* primarily, in this context) to a 'personal' (nonetheless political) one.

The moral accountability of public disclosure is rendered observable in the situated act of its production. Instead of considering disclosure and reconciliation as having something to do with the inner psychology of the individual, it is worth emphasizing their character as intertwined social practices that define a community. Their production (and consumption) is 'done in ways that are characteristic of a community', and their 'occurrence is part of what binds the community together and helps to constitute it as a community' (Lemke, 1995, p. 9). It is hoped that this chapter will help promote a different perception and practice of reconciliation with the past in the (Romanian) public sphere which will rely less on the internal psychology of the individuals and more on the resources that members of society use to make sense of their and others' practices.

These are not only issues of scholarly interest. It is contended that, it is precisely issues such as the ongoing management of subjectivity and morality and the intricate nature of the 'textual' mediation of the personal/public history that need to be understood by people actively engaged in the public accounting and framing of

‘coming to terms’ with the communist past (e.g., journalists, politicians, historians, political scientists). If it is true that the production and consumption of disclosure and reconciliation in the public arena enlists an ‘interpretive community’, then it may be worth paying attention to the various ways in which members of society display and treat the morality, sincerity, and 'character' of one another. The interest should be on how such psychological features are made public and available for everyone else to see.

By illustrating the subtle ways in which disclosure and reconciliation are exercised as publicly accountable practices, this chapter has hopefully provided a range of analytic insights that could be used to encourage both academic and non-academic parties to be more reflective about possibilities of studying social transformation, social change and transition.

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NOTES (Chapter 9)

1. The studies mentioned here focus on public intellectuals. After the 1989 Revolution one has witnessed the evolution and affirmation of a critical mass of intellectuals (most of them grouped around the Group of Social Dialogue (GDS) and the cultural magazine *22)* who were very influential in shaping cultural, societal and even political concerns.

2. 1) 'A scăpat de piatra din suflet'

2) 'Nu-mi prea vin în fire'

3) 'Acum e un om liber'

4) 'Pocăinţa nu are semnificaţie morală'

5) 'Gestul ar trebui salutat'

6) 'Sunt uluit şi îndurerat'

7) 'Cazul e un argument în plus pentru condamnarea comunismului'

(source : *Cotidianul*, online edition, 6 September 2006)

3. For more details on the *Securitate* see Deletant (1996), Oprea (2002)

4. According to the National Council for the Study of the Securitate Archives, 'political police' refers to all of the structures and activities of the Securitate, created for the instauration and maintenance of communist-totalitarian power, as well as for the suppression or restriction of the fundamental human rights and liberties.

5. Romanian Socialist Republic

Appendix

Excerpt original letter (Romanian)

(source : *Cotidianul*, online edition, 6 September 2006)

Poliţie politică

sau

Turnat-turnător turnat-turnat

Esenţa

Am semnat un angajament de colaborare cu Securitatea pe 29 martie 1976, pe cînd eram elev în ultima clasă de liceu (m-am născut pe 20 august 1957), la capătul a vreo trei săptămîni de presiuni. Aproximativ între 1976 şi 1982, cu intermitenţe neregulate, între care una de peste un an şi jumătate, am furnizat Securităţii note informative, sub numele conspirativ "Valentin". Am informat în scris Securitatea despre unii dintre prieteni şi pe unele dintre cunoştinţe, fără să-i previn, fără să le-o mărturisesc *post festum* pînă la scrierea acestui text, fără să-mi cer iertare, fără să-mi asum public acest trecut nedemn şi dureros. I-am turnat uneori, cu moartea în suflet, dar nu i-am trădat niciodată: nu am fost agent provocator; nu am primit misiuni de vreun fel; nu mi s-au promis şi nu mi s-au creat avantaje; niciuna din notele mele informative nu a trecut de generalităţi şi de informaţiile pe care le consideram deja cunoscute; în toată perioada, am rămas ostil Securităţii şi partidului-stat; mi s-a plătit cu aceeaşi monedă. Între 1974-1989, Securitatea a primit informaţii despre mine de la alţi informatori, iar în anumite etape mi-a deschis "dosare de urmărire informativă" (D.U.I.).

Astfel, timp de cincisprezece ani, am trecut prin prima şi ultima din cele trei situaţii în care se putea găsi un cetăţean al R.S.R. din punctul de vedere al Securităţii (dacă individul nu lucra direct în aparatul acesteia): (1) turnat, (2) turnător, (3) turnător turnat – această tipologie sumară a turnătorului se va detalia pe parcurs.

În paginile de faţă, îmi voi spune pe scurt povestea şi voi reconstitui schematic mai multe episoade relevante, pe baza memoriei, a unor însemnări personale din epocă şi a unor documente de arhivă păstrate la CNSAS şi solicitate de mine în august 2002. Pînă în momentul vorbirii, după primirea mai recentă de către CNSAS a unei enorme cantităţi de dosare, sînt singurele documente disponibile care mă privesc.

Din punct de vedere etic şi moral, mărturisirea şi căinţa vin prea tîrziu: gravităţii faptelor mele de acum 25-30 de ani i se adaugă gravitatea imprescriptibilă a tăcerii, a vieţii trăite în minciună şi duplicitate. Numai din punct de vedere psihologic şi istoric (de la egoistorie, prin microistorie, la istorie) e mai bine prea tîrziu decît niciodată.