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Guerrilla male libidos in Mircea Nedelciu's fiction: from *Gender* to *Genre* in Eastern European context

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Writing under Ceauşescu's communist regime, Romanian author Mircea Nedelciu seems to fictionally exploit the politically subversive potential of the male libido as emphasized by the imagery of the Western sexual revolution, through a gallery of male protagonists recurrently exhibiting unconventionally libertine and misogynistic erotic behaviours. However, his underlying ethical commentary regarding the issue actually generates a theoretical standpoint that might not only be significant for a regional (re)interpretation of "sexistentialism" as a (counter-)cultural topos *in the Eastern European literature of the 1980s, but an interesting contribution to the nowadays renewed debates concerning the cultural achievements of the Sixties' sexual liberation as well.*

Key-words: *hippie masculinity, sexual revolution, mysoginism, homophobia, Eastern European communism.*

1. Foreword: the Sexual Revolution and Masculinity as *Gender* Issue

A particular and rather controversial aspect of the present-day debates regarding *gender* is the critical perspective on the cultural achievements of the Sixties' sexual revolution and the limits of its underlying Reichian ideology. Describing this entire "revolutionary" *topos* as an implicitly phallocentric and mainly heteroerotic discourse on sexuality, as well as in the terms of a consumerist erotic politics of aggression and surveillance, French theorists Pascal Bruckner and Alain Finkielkraut already introduce in 1977 the concept of "genitalism" – a term primarily describing the reduction and confinement of the eroticised male and female body to an alienating, seemingly equalitarian symbolic imagery of the phallus and its simple, obvious functioning – in order to set forth their main objections to the libertarian pretentions of the phenomenon (Bruckner, Finkielkraut, 2005).

In the same line of thought, Bruckner and Finkielkraut argue that masculinity as *gender* actually attempts to avoid facing, by means of the new phallocentrism of the "genitalist" ideology, a new and rather difficult challenge: the anxiety of the

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Other – or the otherness of the feminine. According to them, the emergence of the feminine counterpart highlights masculinity's own limits and results in frustrating relativisations, from homoeroticism to the boundaries of its own potency and complexity. Questioning phallocentrism and masculinity as a site of power, the new political presence of the feminine brings about an untold, secret fear of emasculation, of manhood becoming a frailer, more feminine or seemingly "weaker" variant of its own self. In 2009, Bruckner enriches his initial viewpoint on the matter, by further critically analysing, among other things, the dissimulated negative potential of love-centred political discourses – such as Catholicism or communism – on the one hand, and of obscenity used as revolutionary weapon – as with Herbert Marcuse, for instance – on the other (Bruckner, 2011).

These critical perspectives of Bruckner and Finkielkraut on the rhetoric of the sexual revolution are obviously (neo-)Marxist takes on a (counter-) cultural phenomenon originally built on left-wing ideology itself, all having originated in Western, democratic and capitalist societies. However, I will make a dis-placed use of them here, handling the original theories and their critique(s) as a theoretical basis for a discussion regarding the Sixties' cultural and symbolic implications for Eastern, communist societies and their literary reflection. And this, mainly because – as well-known expert in Eastern-European communism Vladimir Tismăneanu states (Tismăneanu, 2001) – the opposition to communist totalitarianism in Eastern Europe was mainly formulated in the essentially Marxist terms of the Frankfurt School, rather than in outright right-wing vocabulary; and in this sense, literary opposition or resistance – such as with Romanian writer of the 1980s Mircea Nedelciu, for instance – was no exception to the rule.

As the imagery of the Western Sixties Counterculture and (implicitly) the symbolic cultural profile of the *hippie* partially penetrated the societies placed on the east side of the Berlin Wall – especially during the attempted liberalisations of communist totalitarianisms in the 1960s and/or the 1970s – an Eastern, minor variant of this prototype (or human *genre*) timidly emerged especially during the 1970s and 1980s in communist Central and Eastern Europe.

When compared to its Western, major model, the communist *hippie* exhibits predictable differences as well as superficial common, general features; the *gender* implications of the model follow this same pattern of similarity and difference combined. In what concerns the Eastern *hippie* "sexistentialism" (Demeter 2012, 95-106) as artistic and literary material, its major, primary function is that of a language of political subversion than a genuine preoccupation for *gender* and sexuality issues, more often than not gaining a mechanical, machine-like aspect and functioning.

Sensitive to social change and to the apparition of new, different human *genres*, some of the literary works written during the 1980s (i.e. the ones that actually risked to display implicit subversive content) reflected and inexplicitly exploited the local echoes of this Western cultural turn against communist

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totalitarianism. Such is the case of today internationally acclaimed 1980s writers such as Sergei Dovlatov or Péter Esterházy; or that of nationally praised Mircea Nedelciu, whose particular *mise en scène* comprehends both insightful social observation and a very up-to-date critical position regarding machinist or "genitalist" sexuality (very much resembling that of Bruckner and Finkielkraut). The Romanian writer thus proposes an original literary standpoint providing a unique and extremely comprehensive perspective upon the (Eastern) "sexistentialist" *topos* as *gender* issue and its corresponding human *genre*, by means of a fictional discourse including the display of an entire category of protagonists illustrating the *genre* and through subtle theoretical self-reflexive commentary on regional cultural and identity issues debating *gender* politics.

2. Mircea Nedelciu's Communist *Hippies* as Human *Genre* and Eastern "Sexistentialism" as Ethical Standpoint

Norman Mailer's well-known and controversial metaphorical concept of the *hippy* as "white negro" (Mailer, 1957) is one referring in principal to two main features of this new urban human genre, namely: his socially marginal and transgressive identity status and respectively, the vital, excessive masculinity of his profile. This is why Romanian researcher Oana Demeter, following the feminist criticism of Mailer's perspective (starting with Kate Millett's observation about the "intensive sexual hostility" of his view) talks about "*hip* existentialism" as "sexistentialism" in a sense that meets Bruckner and Finkielkraut's concept of "genitalism" with respect to the (re)new(ed) phallocentric essence of the phenomenon (Demeter 2012, 95-106). However, some differences between this Western model of the *hippie* and the Eastern variant of the communist "white negro" exist and they can be spotted in the literary reflections of this socio-cultural category, such as with Mircea Nedelciu's typical protagonists.

Before taking a closer look at their specific profile, one must note that the majority of the Romanian writer's *hip*-like heroes (just as with all such eastern literary representations) are never overtly called *hippies* or *hipsters*, nor identified as such – for obvious reasons: during the end of the 1970s and in the 1980s, the totalitarian regimes of Eastern Europe took notice of the danger lurking behind the surface of the anti-capitalist discourse(s) of the Sixties, i.e. the counter-cultural dimension of the phenomenon (its essential plea for human rights, liberalisation and freedom of thought and action), and thus consequently interdicted and tried to supress any such cultural influence, from blue jeans and long hair to incoming artistic or intellectual production. In opposition, the dominant, central imagery of the communist regimes forcefully returned in the 1980s towards rather traditional identity models of conformity very much resembling those of the American "golden 50s". In terms of sexual politics, the neo-traditionalist turn mainly resulted in the

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refusal of the internationalist ideal of sexual emancipation and the re-enacting of traditional couple and family models doubled by aggressive (often catastrophically) conservative sexual policies such as the interdiction of abortion in Romania in 1966.

Of course, social practice did find alternatives to interdiction, from acquiring *hip* accessories from foreign tourists or students and wearing mid-long hair to the subterranean trafficking of Western books, musical and cinematographic productions. However, the traditionalist ultra-normative back-step reflected in Romania, for instance, in in the annual anthologies of Romanian Communist Party "documents", presented to the public as quasi-legal discourses. Operating with a given set of political symbolic representations (such as those of the communist woman as both mother and activist, the negative representations of social "parasitism", the heroic imagery of nationalist propaganda etc.), the influence of this rhetoric was rather subtle and managed to polarise Romanian society, especially creating a particular type of *generation gap* between the first and the second generation of communists (i.e. the "parents", the so-called "50s generation", and the "youngsters", mainly manifesting in the 1970s and 1980s).

In this context of growing tension between traditional (almost pre-modern) and modern (or post-modern) Marxist discourses, any explicit literary representation of a counter-cultural, non-conformist human *genre* such as the *hippie* (or any such likeness) would have risked censorship and occasionally attracted the legal punishment of the author. However, some ingenious writers such as Mircea Nedelciu managed to dissimulate their representation of the eastern *hipster* and their real implied ethical message (by not explicitly relating it to its Western congener and/or by feigning meta-ethical criticism of his moral non-conformity etc.), while nonetheless managing to deliver it to the general (intended) public. Nedelciu's particular strategy consisted (among other techniques) of hints relating to the cultural and artistic "Sixties"-centred imagery and ideology circulating subterraneously and "illegally" as a common cultural secret language or hidden code.

In this sense, the large majority of Nedelciu's protagonists – constantly populating his fictional universe(s) from his literary debut in 1979 to his posthumous novel *Zodia scafandrului [Under the Diver's Sign]*[2], published in 2000 – are one of the most ingenious and obviously pro-occidental models of the eastern *hippie*. Generally charming, independent-thinking and nonconformist young men, perpetually seeking for themselves and constantly avoiding social realisation and adaptation (identified with moral compromise and contribution to the development of the totalitarian society), many of Nedelciu's significant and typical main characters are, as a general profile (or *genre*), among other things, great drifters and… great seducers. Just like Pascal Bruckner's "new hedonists" (Bruckner 2011, 164-168), most of them cynically refuse any intellectual dimension of eroticism and are

[2] All translations from Romanian of the titles and fragments of Mircea Nedelciu's works or other works publihed in Romanian that are quoted in the paper belong to the author of the article.

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uninterested in the uniqueness of the Other (in eroticism as cognitive experience); they ruthlessly avoid any possible conjugal or dependable erotic engagements – or, if they do marry, they usually turn to repeated extra-conjugal erotic stunts; and most of all, more often than not, sex is for them an utterly consumerist practice: they are statistic practitioners of the sexual act, of "fucking as conquest" in the process of realisation of the male ego – in Kate Millett's terms (Demeter 2012, 95) –, or "maniacs of classification", as Bruckner describes his „new dionysiacs" in *Le paradoxe amoureux* (Bruckner 2011, 167). In *Zodia scafandrului [Under the Diver's Sign]* for instance, two of his typical male protagonists (Diogene Sava and Dragoş Bogdan) – labelled "sexual-comical-alcoholic machines" (Nedelciu 2000, 68)[3] – go as far as starting a sexual competition the stake of which is not only purely quantitative (i.e. quantifiable by the greater number of erotic conquests), but it is also measured in… kilos of (feminine) flesh "ridden" (Nedelciu 2000, 72)[4].

Nedelciu skilfully points out the "genitalist"/ "sexistentialist"/ machinelike character of his heroes' practices by avoiding in-depth actual sexual descriptions of his heroes' erotic practices, generally preferring to refer to them (i.e. mention them) in a seemingly incidental (quantifying) manner. These "misogynistic" behavioural patterns (Nedelciu 2000, 68) of the new libertines usually appear as relevant elements of personal history determining the hero's identity. On the contrary, "love" as erotic revelation of the Other – or even the description of pleasure as self-expressive or self-defining practice, for that matter – tend to be neglected in Nedelciu's stories.

Regarding the sexual conduct of this proliferating type of central characters, that which actually interests the storyteller is the transgression of erotic normativity, of that which is what is expected of the 1980s Romanian communist individual. Apparently fairly irresponsible and immature young men, these Eastern drifters actually avoid long-term erotic relationships on the same basis as they refuse to professionally engage or to stay in one place, i.e. for fear of (moral) weakness and regimentation.

A most eloquent example of such (ever unspoken) conviction is, for instance (if we were to pick an example of Nedelciu's pre-1990 works), Pictoru's radical standpoint (and Gregor Vranca's silent moral approval of it) in the story *Efectul de ecou controlat [The Well-Controlled Echo Effect]*. Forced by his boss to write a note denunciating a member of the nomenclature, recently wed Gregor Vranca hesitates

[3] Original fragment: "Nici luptă, nici fugă, ci inhibiție și apoi dezinhibare, o dezinhibare printr-o fugă simbolică, prin fuga din pielea de om în aceea de mașină sexualo-comică-alcoolică".

[4] Original fragment: "Lor nu le mai rămânea decât să înceapă răbojul pe tocul uşii. Bogdan Dragoş însă […] avu o idee şi mai originală: dimineața, când coborau cu mireasa de o noapte la micul dejun, mergeau cu ea în bucătăria localului şi o rugau să urce pe cântar. Răbojul era ținut în kilograme. În două luni depăşiseră tona, Bogdan Dragoş ajungând chiar foarte aproape de bara de două tone de poloneze călărite".

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about accepting; one of his greatest dilemmas links to the fear of retaliations implicating his wife and therefore goes to seek the council of his old friend, Pictoru [The Painter]. After greeting him in a manner that reproaches his regimentation, Pictoru serenely offers him this radical advice:

> "You should write, mister mouse, a letter to the fellow who asked you to do this, beginning this way: « Fuck you! » and ending with the same sentence. I find the phrase most proper for such occasions. Utterly beautiful, a demonstration of stylistic virtuosity, really!" (Nedelciu 2003, 241)[5].

"What about Cornelia [Gregor's wife, R.H.]?", the protagonist objects; "Ah, you're right, I had really forgotten all about her. Make that two copies of the letter and address one of them directly to her, you follow?"; an answer to which Gregor doesn't reply, but admits to himself that "for him [for Pictoru, R.H.] the issue seemed as simple as an egg" (Nedelciu 2003, 241)[6]. Even if they happen, traditional erotic practices as marriage thus often appear to the consciousness of these heroes as personal dead-ends and politically exploitable weak points of the individual's moral identity.

"Sexistentialist" practices, on the other hand, are usually associated with "covert passive resistance" (Buksinski 2011, 40), i.e. a non-explicit way of opposing totalitarian normativity and as a way of re-constructing personal identity. This underlying conception, present throughout Nedelciu's entire fictional project without being outspoken (again, for obvious reasons) with his most important, often recurring heroes – such as Ovid Petreanu, Maco(vei), Alexandru Daldea, Luca, Diogene Sava *et al* – finally becomes overt in *Zodia scafandrului*, Nedelciu's posthumously published unfinished third novel. In this sense, it is significant to mention that *Zodia…* also functions as a reading key and as an explicitation of the "unseen", "underwater" ethical dimension of Nedelciu's entire work. Diogene Sava (the protagonist) thus functions as an explanatory model for an entire category as well, his sexual behaviour and *gender* related conceptions included.

In that respect, the reader is this time literally told that for "Il Dio", "despising the being one possesses" (Nedelciu, 2000: 49)[7], i.e. his "misogynism" (Nedelciu 2000, 72), is The erotic rule, and that

[5] Original fragment: "«Scrie-i, domnule şoarece, o scrisoare lu' ăsta care ți-a cerut chestia asta şi începe aşa: «Te bag în mă-ta!» şi termini cu aceeaşi propoziție. Mi separeu o propoziție excelentă pentru cazuri d'astea. Frumoasă de-a dreptul, măiestrie în stil!» / «Şi Cornelia?» / «Ah, da, uitasem. O scrii în două exemplare şi una i-o adresezi direct ei, mă-nțelegi?» / Pentru el problema părea simplă ca un ou şi se apucase să spele ceştile de cafea".

[6] Original fragment: see above.

[7] Original sequence: "disprețul ființei posedate".

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> "ever since he was a child, Diogene had perceived the world's state of folly [i.e. the abnormality of totalitarianism, R.H.] as an aggression against his father's virility, carried out through impoverishment and humiliation, and therefore, it slowly began to feel as an attack on his own virility" (Nedelciu, 2000, 61-62)[8].

As a consequence of this realisation, Diogene sets up an alternative solution to the problem: "by means of intellectual performance had he restored his father's manhood and given him hope, by means of sexual performance was he to restore his own" (Nedelciu, 2000: 62)[9] – a two-folded fix again extremely common among Nedelciu's Eastern *hippies*.

We also find with Diogene – as he despises his (allegedly) gay college teacher, or as he grows to hate and bully his homosexual roommate – the typical homophobic tendency of the original *weltanschauung* of the sexual revolution, a taboo during the Ceauşescu era Nedelciu also explores through Maco(vei), the main character in *Acţiunea (romanului) Black Money [The case of the (novel) Black Money]*. Just like with Dio's "misogynist" convictions, however, his intolerance to male homosexuality seems to have an underlying political justification as well: "[…] a sort of fear of being raped himself by this illogical force [i.e. the totalitarian power, R.H.] had sneaked into his heart. And fear of rape, while being a man, means homophobia, fear of homosexuality" (Nedelciu, 2000: 62)[10]. More such explanations follow:

> "the faceless demon that ruled all Romanians in those years [i.e. the regime, R.H.], […] seemed to be a demon who assumed, whoever you were, that you were a woman, that you were gay – to make a long story short, he assumed you couldn't possibly be a man. How else could it commit such abuse while still demanding to be admired, praised, adored, and applauded?" (Nedelciu 2000, 67)[11].

[8] Original fragment: "Pe scurt, încă de mic Diogene resimţise acea stare de raznă a lumii ca un atac asupra bărbăţiei tatălui lui pentru că-i impunea sărăcia şi umilinţa, şi deci, încet-încet, un atac asupra propriei bărbăţii".

[9] Original fragment: "Prin performanţe intelectuale îşi îmărbătase el tatăl şi-i redăduse speranţă, prin performanţă sexuală avea să se îmbărbăteze pe sine".

[10] Original fragment: "[…] un fel de spaimă de a nu fi el însuşi siluit de această forţă ilogică i se strecurase în suflet. Spaima de a nu fi siluit, când eşti bărbat, se traduce mai ales prin spaima de homosexualitate, prin homofobie."

[11] Original fragment: "[…] demonul fără chip, care-i domina în acei ani pe toţi românii, exercita deci o presiune asupra lor părea, să fie un demon care-şi închipuia despre tine, oricine ai fi fost, că eşti femeie, că eşti homosexual – pe scurt, că nu eşti bărbat. altfel cum şi-ar fi permis toate abuzurile pretinzând în acelaşi timp să fie admirat, lăudat adulat, aplaudat?".

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"Misogyninsm", homophobia and "sexual frenzy" (Nedelciu, 2000: 72) are plainly described and discussed in such politically allegoric vocabulary (with Diogene serving as a practical example), all over chapters *9* and *10*, with an emphasis on the deficiencies and failures of male identity under totalitarianism and on "genitalist" practices in general as strategies of inner, covert rebellion or resistance and alternative identity (re)construction. With Nedelciu, the Western "sexistentialist" model thus loses its hedonistic dimension, while its combative, belligerent side (imagined by Marcuse and critically described by Bruckner) indisputably prevails. The rhetoric of pleasure makes way to a rhetoric of combat – aimed at an oppressive and abnormal socio-political order. Sexuality thus seems to become a rather radical ethical standpoint, a revolutionary discourse of refusal and opposition, in a certain sense a guerrilla-like strategy or "a bat one can use to overthrow others" (Bruckner 2011, 168).

Nedelciu himself explains to his good friend and fellow writer Gheorghe Crăciun, in a letter from 1977, that "obscenity, as Marcuse has noticed some time ago, may have political potential too – but this feature has now become inefficient according to the same Marcuse", and adds a relevant personal commentary to this exposition: "however, that might still work in our case [as Romanian writers, R.H.]" and resumes his exposé on useful subversive artistic techniques to be considered (Nedelciu 1996, 92)[12]. Of course, in this early fragment of theoretical thinking, the young Romanian author seems to keep in line with Marcuse's ideas and barely hopes to be able to fictionally enact some of his reflections; but this preoccupation also anticipates on further complexities: as he finds particular and ingenious ways of fictionally representing such "guerrilla male libidos", this seemingly "emancipatory" erotic standpoint will soon reveal a "dark side" Nedelciu cannot (and will not) ignore. His (personal and) literary explorations lead him into finding that these reductive, radical and machine-like sexual behaviours and mental patterns have their own sore price, ultimately inducing (a different type of) alienation.

3. Nedelciu's Critique of "Sexistentialism" as *Gender* Politics

The use of newly-phallocentric *gender* discourses and the distortion of sexuality into "sexistentialism", i.e. from a libertarian rhetoric of pleasure to a guerrilla-like rhetoric of combat – and this, in an even stronger (or extreme) sense than the one detected by western thinkers such as Bruckner and Finkielkraut – doesn't remain intellectually unamended with Nedelciu either, not even in his first writings. The storyline never fails to show, in fact, that the unwanted result of this (in fact, quite

[12] Original fragment : "obscenitatea ar fi observat el, Marcuse, mai demult, că ar avea şi ea un potenţial politic, dar acesta a devenit între timp ineficient, constată tot el. la noi s-ar putea să fie în continuare actual" [sic].

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desperate) combat (or resistance) strategy is not personal accomplishment and an effective reconstruction of identity, not a victory but the failure of a tentative individual identity politics to stand against oppression. Successfully avoiding the externally-imposed alienation by conformity (with the exigencies of the totalitarian discourses of power), what these Eastern *hippie* libertines actually acquire is in fact… yet another form of alienation (this time both externally and internally generated) – or several.

Most of these characters remain emotionally unaccomplished and grow to suffer at one point or the other, consciously or not, because of this deficiency. Some try to change upon the realisation and search for meaningful relationships, but most of them fail in effectively relating to their partners, mainly because of the pressures laid on the couple by the traditionalist-totalitarian society. The sudden alienating conformity to predefined models of the couple and the self (as with Vasile and Elena Paicu in *Dansul cocoşului [The Dance of the Mountain Rooster]* or with Elena and Macovei in *Marie-France în Piața Libertății [Marie-France in Liberty Square]* versus *Voiajul chimic [The chemical voyage]* – where the feminine counterparts shift from an independent-thinking an liberal mentality to predetermined frames of thought as maternity emerges, causing the partner to restrain and seek the wanted model elsewhere) usually manage to submerge the young couples. So do the difficulties related to the pressures of simply leading a normal, common existence in an abnormal society: concerns related to the material/financial wellbeing of the couple or the family (as with Alexandru Daldea in *Amendament la instinctul proprietății [The property instinct amended]*, where the young husband searches illegal methods of gaining money and in the process, his affective attachment to his wife and children slowly decays, resulting – in a chronologically ulterior story entitled *La fața lucrului [On the sport]* – in adultery and the momentary adoration of the extremely liberal model of the paid prostitute); the (politically) endangered (and dangerous) status of authentic affective relationships (as with Gregor Vranca in *Efectul de ecou controlat*), or the concerns regarding the responsibility of procreation under a totalitarian regime (as with Zare Popescu or Diogene Sava in *Zodia scafandrului*, where no procreation at all is considered preferable by Zare, while the novel closes on the image of this same fear abstractly emerging in Diogene's mind) – all these pressures manage to deviate and ruin genuine erotic liaisons.

These examples and many others reflect in fact what Dan Țăranu would call the "bifocal marginality" of these heroes (Țăranu 2013, 245-260), which is to say that they fail to correspond to either one model (the Western model of the *hippy* or the traditional model of the family man), suffering the alienating consequences of both as they gravitate in confusion around them. In fact, the models themselves are not really in question as "good" or "bad" with Nedelciu, they are not "positive" or "negative" structures in themselves; the writer's goal is to illustrate in all complexity

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the impossibility of un-contradictory self-construction and self-realisation (including that of the male identity) in an oppressive socio-political context.

The last essential aspect regarding masculinity in Nedelciu's fiction is that (unlike feminity) it becomes a special and major theme not because feminine nature is considered more adaptable to (or less affected by) communism (as construction or realisation), i.e. not because the author is uninterested by feminine identity issues or seeks to minimise them (and indeed, representations of feminine sexual liberation tendencies are far from lacking); moreover, it even goes beyond the writer's subtle phenomenological social observation. Masculinity becomes central with Nedelciu (as he effectively demonstrates, in fact, in *Zodia…*) rather because on a symbolic level, the male individual's deprivation of his attributes of power is (still) commonly perceived as more expressive and dramatic. Or in other words, the struggle for power between the individual as a site of power and the power of the structure that tends to crush him is more easily legible when using male imagery.

And of course, this preference for male *hippie*-like protagonists also functions as a quiet expression of adhesion, authenticating the unspoken connivance between the writer and his intended reader: it has been noticed before that Nedelciu used to lend to his favourite protagonists different aspects of his own identity and biography in order to confer a peculiar authenticity to the writing pact.

Doubled up by the idea of identity quest, the alternative construction of masculinity and its specific issues under communism thus becomes a very specifically and knowingly treated political issue: it thus becomes a symbolic ethical standpoint including its own critique, i.e. an Eastern critique of "genitalism" (under the form of "mysoginism" and "homophobia") as viable identity reconstruction/ compensation strategies. The particular, Eastern human *genre* he depicts is thus not meant to (extra-literarily) function as a positive example of gender politics, but as a literary (and cultural) symbolic warning bell related to the serious, dramatic alienation issues the individual has to face under totalitarian regimes.

4. Closing Remarks: Nedelciu's Standpoint in the Context of the Eastern European Literature of the 1980s – on "Sexistentialism" as Literary *Genre*

Mircea Nedelciu's interest in "sexistentialism" as counter-culturalor alternative individual option is not a singular demarche in the Eastern European literature of the 1980s. Two examples of internationally acclaimed Eastern European writers of the same "generation" using (relatively) similar representations are those of Russian novelist Serghei Dovlatov and Hungarian author Peter Esterházy. With the first, the similarities consist in the illustration of a very similar human *genre* (e.g. in Dovlatov's novel *The Compromise*): the representation of the Russian "new libertine" (or erotic immoralist) very much resembles Nedelciu's portrayals of Romanian „sexual-comical-alcoholic machines". Similar behavioural patterns

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converging into a common intention to morally scandalise (not the *bourgeois*, but the communist middle class) reunite these protagonists under one symptomatic category: that of the "wannabe" Eastern *hippie*, with his "sexistentialist" erotic conduct forged into a (failing) counter-cultural war machine. Parenthetically, representations of the same human *genre* also appear with Eastern authors of the same generations who begin to publish after the fall of communism, such as – in order to give another internationally well-known example – with Polish writer Andrzej Stasiuk.

On the other hand, with Peter Esterházy Nedelciu resonates on another, subtler level. With the Hungarian writer (unlike with Nedelciu) the emphasis is on his licentious, seemingly pornographically explicit language and poetically set-up scenes (in *A Little Hungarian Pornography*), while character construction remains secondary – a literary device meant to describe political corruption and tyranny by means of eroticised puns. The intention to demystify the representations of Power is discretely present with Nedelciu and Dovlatov too, but by means of different fictional strategies (as the apparent "cynicism" and "je m'en fiche"-like attitudes of their heroes ludicrously manage to slightly irritate authority and its followers). However, what seems more important to our discussion is the use of sexually scandalous imagery as counter-cultural discourse and – most of all – the common idea of its representativeness, with all three writers (Esterházy, Nedelciu and Dovlatov). In this sense, an entire direction of the Eastern literary imagery produced in the communist era exhibits such predilection towards the transgressive/subversive possibilities of sexual discourse(s), through the depiction of (imaginarily or linguistically) crude, mechanical and often radically misogynist and pro-heteroerotic sexual content. At least metaphorically speaking, this commonness of perception and description not only institutes (and defines) a human *genre* with real, actual (if marginal) existence in communist societies, often containing a rather existentially-based critique of "genitalism" in synchronicity with similar western theoretical developments, but (maybe) it corresponds to a literary "*genre*" as well, recurrently using politico-sexual guerrilla-like strategies against totalitarian language(s) of intolerance. In this respect, Mircea Nedelciu's fictional constructions and metanarrative cultural commentaries encompass both human and literary *genre* issues, starting from a highly original symbolic (and aesthetically accomplished) viewpoint on masculinity as *gender*.

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