Names of Transylvanian hotels in the context of globalisation

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Abstract: The present paper aims at analysing names of hotels from a sociolinguistic perspective, emphasising the effects of globalisation on naming in this field in contemporary Transylvania, Romania. To be more precise, the study deals with hotel names as indices of group identity in the geographical area referred to, which is a socially and culturally complex space that – throughout its history – has always encouraged the coexistence of numerous ethnicities (Hungarian, Roma, Ukrainian, German, Russian, and so on) together with the Romanian majority. Belonging to a certain group has become a far more ambiguous issue with the dissemination of globalisation and the import of English (in particular) as a language of power, associated with the Western (i.e. American) social, cultural, political and economic supremacy. Thus, this article will look at the way in which names of hotels can be indicative of group identity on three levels: ethnic, national and international.

Keywords: onomastics, sociolinguistics, hotel names, group identity, globalisation.

1. Introduction

The research[1] deals with trade names in contemporary Romanian public space as statements of identity, both in relation to name givers (business owners or product makers) and to name users (customers or consumers). To be more precise, the study focuses on names of accommodation locations in Transylvania, a region in Romania whose borders have shifted several times throughout history and which is consequently defined by a mixture (far from being a fine blend) of ethnicities, cultures, languages and dialects. I chose to deal with names in tourism as this is an industry (and an onomastic sub-field) that is currently booming and trying to satisfy three of the country's socio-economic needs: (1) to export, to attract foreign customers either by expressing affiliation to values defended by globalisation, or by advertising local peculiarities (a feature of ecotourism, which in Romania developed in the shape of agritourism); (2) to import, to host subsidiaries of

international brand-businesses and to develop new businesses that follow their pattern; (3) to retain the native inhabitants' interest in local tourism (as an attempt to counterbalance their recent "holiday migration" to other countries, such as Hungary, Croatia, or Bulgaria).

The article proposes a qualitative rather than quantitative approach, as its aim is to underline and analyse the expression of identity by means of hotel names from Transylvanian counties where there are large communities of Hungarian or German minorities (for ethnic Hungarians: Harghita, Covasna – in these counties, the Hungarians represent the majority, adding up to about 75–80 per cent of the population; see the provisional results of the census of 2011 –, Mureş, Satu Mare, Bihor, Sălaj, Cluj, Arad, Braşov and Maramureş; for ethnic Germans: Sibiu, Satu Mare and Braşov). The study of the examples taken from specialised websites (*infoturism.ro*, *România Turistică*, *roTurims.com*, and *Turist Info.ro*) allowed for the observation (*a posteriori*) of the manifestation of identity in relation to the two aforementioned ethnic groups. Methodologically, my paper relies and employs the theoretical framework and concepts of postcolonial studies, sociolinguistics and onomastics.

2. Transylvania: a liminal place

Geographically, politically, economically and socioculturally, "Whether they identify themselves with the Balkans or with the more appealing space of Mitteleuropa, the Romanians still view their position in Europe as peripheral" (Oţoiu 2003: 92), as borderline. Thus, one does not err in saying that Transylvania, as a part of Romania, is situated at the point of intersection and, simultaneously, separation of the two European spaces, i.e. the almost utopian *Mitteleuropa*, Central Europe, and the sensuous Balkan world, just as mythical as the former yet seemingly functioning according to the reversed order of the carnival. This ambivalent, ambiguous arrangement is intrinsically linked to the intricate historical evolution of the region and, in more recent times, to the population displacements in the communist period, whose aim was "to dilute the non-Romanian component of this multi-ethnic province. To many of these ethnic groups in Transylvania, Romanian became the language of the oppressor[2]. After 1989, the adoption of alternative languages in public administration in Transylvania was met with hostility by the majority, which also regarded with suspicion the suggestion of a multicultural solution to the province's multi-ethnic mix" (Oţoiu 2003: 90). Since the Revolution of 1989, which marked the fall of the communist regime, Transylvania "has been perceived as both an island of stability not affected by the 'Balkan powder keg' syndrome, while it was also the scene of serious multi-ethnic trouble involving the Hungarian minority and the Roma population" (id.: 94). Therefore, diachronically and synchronically, Transylvania can be described with reference to the image of the threshold, the *liminal* space of ambiguity, hybridity and transition.

In postcolonial theory, Homi K. Bhabha's *limen* is an interstice, a threshold: it refers to "'the in-between spaces' of cultural ambiguity where diasporic and migrant identities, hovering in the indecision of in-betweenness, are shaped" (Oţoiu 2003: 88). *Liminal* Transylvania is "the point of contact of two cultures" (majority – minority, mainstream – marginal, national – ethnic, global – local) and of "the equivocal identities it generates"

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[2]   Similarly, for the Romanians, the unrestricted use of their mother tongue became a taboo, as the only linguistic option was that of the so-called "wooden language".

(id.: 92). The contact of cultures is not produced in harmony, nor does it result in such a relationship; on the contrary, it generates differences, especially in the contemporary context of political and economic ambiguity, which, unfortunately, does nothing but replace another context of ambiguity that defined the Romanian space before 1989, during the soviet-communist period.

According to Bhabha (1994: 177), "the issue of cultural difference emerges at points of social crises, and the questions of identity that it raises are agonistic; identity is claimed either from a position of marginality or in an attempt at gaining the centre: in both senses, ex-centric". (And seldom can one come across a marginality that does not, at least at some point in its evolution, rivet and pursue a/the central position!) In other words, the contemporary Transylvanian public space is the result of a series of sociocultural crises, as the demise of communism did not bring about a climate of peace, but a succession of seasons of social unrest, in which the identity of ethnic minorities (in this case, Hungarian and German) has been expressed and defined – successively or simultaneously (but in a differentiating way) – in relation to one of the following group levels: (1) the ethnic group; (2) the nation state (i.e. Romania, particularly with reference to the concept of "Romanianness"); (3) the global village, which reveals that people have become more mobile and able to cross boundaries in the process of building their identity (Crystal 2010: 13). It is worth noting that this situation, albeit more conspicuous as regards minority groups, is not particular to them. This "hyphenated" identity also describes the majority, whose character is local (dialectal and/or sociolectal), national (referring to the concept of "Romanianness") and international (in the light of globalisation, chiefly Americanisation). Put differently, in the context of the current discussion, one could call this character "liminal".

One can account for Transylvania's being included in the global network by considering it a result of what Baudrillard (n.d.) called the "thawing of the countries of the East", a "thawing of freedom" in a province that is eager to follow in the steps of what it perceives as the prestige of the Occident. Nevertheless, Baudrillard (ibid.) argues, given the weathered acceptation of freedom and democracy in the Western world, "Thawed freedom may not be the most gainly sight. Might it turn out that all it has left is a haste to feverishly negotiate (the purchase and sales of) cars and electric appliances, indeed to turn psychotropic and pornographic, in other words, transform itself immediately into Western fluidity or, in yet other terms, to reverberate from one end of a history deepfreeze to a history of ultrafluidity and articulation at its polar extreme?" Despite this apocalyptic view, there is at least one positive aspect that comes about thanks to this East-West collision: communication is no longer established and developed in a centripetal manner; it follows a centrifugal course of expansion, crossing borders and identities (Baudrillard n.d.). It is precisely this sort of communicative behaviour that enables one to talk about the liminal construction of identity, a pattern that, as already mentioned, can also be recognised in Transylvania, a threshold-like world on several levels: geographical, political, ethnic, social, cultural and linguistic.

3. Trade names as indicators of *liminality*

Contemporary Transylvanian public space is a site "where identities are performed and contested" (Perloff 1998) as well as indicated by proper names in their capacity as

markers of various levels of individuality. This feature of proper names derives from their being linguistic signs that act as symbolic representations of identity, as they reflect differences and affiliations along the aforementioned levels that are diversely developed in the space of the threshold. One of the onomastic varieties that are illustrative in this respect consists of trade names, particularly names of accommodation locations (such as hotels, guesthouses, motels, inns, chalets/lodges and hostels). They are some of the trade names that have been most affected by the change of the sociopolitical regime in Romania, as they are related to an industry that was underdeveloped in the communist period. Moreover, they refer to an economic branch that Romania strives to improve, as it has the geographical potential that can be exploited thoroughly. Thus, given their advertising nature, accommodation names, just as all trade names, have a double function: to identify and to advertise (i.e. to trigger associations).

To a great extent, contemporary Romanian public space displays a classical bipartite system of semantic orientation of accommodation names, which hints at the negotiation of identity between national (i.e. Romanian) and international (particularly English) affiliations. Nonetheless, the area investigated on this occasion facilitates the delineation of several directions of associations encoded in accommodation names, starting from the language in which they are designed. Put differently, the construction of identity that accommodation names convey is based on negotiated meanings that follow five major linguistic (and implicitly sociocultural) influences:

(1) The languages of the minority groups are promoted, thereby mirroring the generally conservative mentality of communities that try to cultivate their own values. These communities are more significantly defined in geographically central counties like Sibiu and Braşov, for the German minority, or the counties of Covasna, Harghita and Cluj as well as borderland localities in the western part of the country, such as Carei, where the Hungarians are either the dominant population or exist in large groups. The expression of such ethnic affiliations is, on the one hand, a marketing tool employed to attract the attention of local or foreign tourists that belong to these ethnic groups. On the other hand, it draws on political and social grounds. To claim that one is Hungarian or German rather than Romanian is to state that one is Central European (in agreement with the aforementioned Mitteleuropa) rather than Eastern/No-/Threshold-European, which in the case of Romania has been frequently associated with negative connotations such as laziness, immorality, dishonesty, stupidity, ignorance and uncleanliness, to name just a few. In these cases, the (usually pre-modifying) appellative indicating the type of accommodation location (i.e. the categorial marker) can be found in the language of the ethnic minority (Hungarian or German), in Romanian or in English[3]. The specialised websites consulted on this occasion or the businesses' own web pages frequently offer all

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[3]   In the order of the frequency of their occurrence, the Romanian appellatives that identify the types of businesses are *hotel* (Hungarian and English *hotel*, German *das Hotel*), *pensiune* (Hungarian *panzió*, German *die Pension*, English *bed and breakfast*), *vilă* (English *villa*), *casă (de vacanţă)* (English *guesthouse*), *cabană* (English *chalet, lodge*), *motel* (Hungarian and English *motel*) and *han* (English *inn*). In Romanian, with the exception of *hotel*, all the other appellatives are used with the enclitic form of the definite article.

the three variants. However, the analysed names are used keeping the language structure they are registered with on the specialised websites from which they were selected:

(a) Hungarian names: *Cabana Istvana* (Rom. *cabană* 'chalet/lodge' + Hu. *Istvana*, Hungarian first name, the feminine version of the male given name *Istvan*, the counterpart of the Romanian male forename Ştefan, or *Stephen*, in English), *Casa de vacanţă Vadvirág* (Rom. *casa de vacanţă* 'guesthouse' + Hu. *vadvirág* 'wild flower'), *Motel Csillag* ('star'), *Napsugár* ('sunbeam'), *Palace Panzió* (Hu. *panzió* 'bed and breakfast'), *Pensiunea Baricz* (Rom. *pensiune* 'bed and breakfast' + Hungarian family name), *Pensiunea Bíborka* (female first name), *Pensiunea Boróka* ('juniper'), *Pensiunea Fatányéros* ('wooden plate'), *Pensiunea Gólyafészek* ('storks' nest'), *Pensiunea Hajnalcsillag* ('morning star'), *Pensiunea Hangya* ('ant'), *Pensiunea Hóvirág* ('snowdrop'), *Pensiunea Ilyes Panzió* (the categorial term is doubled in this example, with the two instances, the former in Romanian and the latter in Hungarian, situated at the extremities of the noun phrase: Rom. *pensiune* + Hungarian family name + Hu. *panzió*), *Pensiunea Kerek* ('round'), *Pensiunea Kishavas* ('a little snowy'), *Pensiunea Kovacs* (family name), *Pensiunea Napfény* ('the light of day'), *Pensiunea Súgó* ('whisperer'), *Pensiunea Tófalvi* (family name), *Pensiunea Tündérkert* ('fairies' garden'), *Pensiunea Út A Harghitara* ('the road to Harghita'), *Petőfi Panzió* (< Hungarian family name of the famous poet Petőfi Sandor).

(b) German names: *Am Ring Hotel, Cabana Edelweiss, Hotel Traube* ('cluster of grapes'), *Hotel Weidner, Pensiunea Erlenpark* ('alder park'), *Pensiunea Hermannstadt* (the German name of the city of Sibiu), *Pensiunea Sonne* ('sun'), *Römischer Kaiser Hotel* ('Romans' Emperor,' according to http://hoteluri.infoturism.ro/sibiu/hotel-romischer-kaiser1-sibiu. However, the hotel's website offers the name in Romanian, *Împăratul Romanilor*, while the German version provided is *Der Kaiser der Römer*).

(2) At times, Romanian is used either because this language is indicative of a wider (i.e. national) context to which minorities want to belong, without identifying themselves with it, or because the business owners are Romanians (especially in the case of accommodation locations whose names derive from anthroponyms). There is a salient economic reason for such a display of identity: a Romanian name, hinting at a Romanian reality, whether of local or national importance, is meant to sound attractive to the native population, as well as to foreign tourists who wish to get a taste of Romanianness under its diverse facets:

– hospitality (names in this subclass can also be suggestive of various qualities of the services offered by the accommodation locations): *Hotel Confort* ('comfort'), *Hotel Paradis* ('paradise'), *Pensiunea Casa Moşului* ('the old man's house,' built upon a positive associative load that reminds one of the archetypal image of the village elders), *Pensiunea Căsuţa bunicii* ('grandmother's house'), *Pensiunea Căsuţa de vis* ('the little dream house'), *Pensiunea Căsuţa din pădure* ('the little house in the woods'), *Pensiunea Mama Cozonacilor* ('mother of cakes');

– landscape (the names consist of toponyms or appellative phrases that highlight the particular features that charge the bearers with prestige): *Casa Bazna* (the Bazna commune), *Hotel Carpaţi* ('the Carpathians'), *Hotel Mara* (a village and river in the Maramureş County), *Hotel Maramureş* (a county), *Hotel Perla Ciucaşului* ('the pearl of the Ciucaş Mountains'), *Pensiunea Bucuria Muntelui* ('the joy of the mountain [experience]'), *Pensiunea Inima Carpaţilor* ('the heart of the Carpathians'), *Pensiunea Lunca Sibielului* ('the meadow of Sibiel'), *Pensiunea Paradisul Naturii* ('the paradise of nature'), *Pensiunea Peştera*

('the cave'), *Pensiunea Regina Munţilor* ('the queen of the mountains'), *Pensiuna Roua Munţilor* ('the dew of the mountains'), *Pensiunea Sibiel*;

– manmade landmarks: *Podul Minciunilor* ('the bridge of lies', a famous object of the cityscape of Sibiu);

– representative fauna (*Hotel Pelicanul* 'the pelican', *Pensiunea Pui de Urs* 'bear cub', *Vila Cerbul Carpatin* 'the Carpathian Stag') and flora (*Pensiunea Arnica* 'arnica', *Pensiunea Bradul Argintiu* 'silver fir tree', *Pensiunea Floare de colţ* 'edelweiss', *Pensiunea Floarea Soarelui* 'sunflower', *Pensiunea Garofiţa Pietrei Craiului* 'the variety of "sweet William" found in the Piatra Craiului Mountains', *Pensiunea Stejarul* 'the oak');

– historical and mythical/folkloric elements or figures, or items contextually invested with positive associations: *Cabana Moţilor* ('the chalet/lodge of the *moţi*', the Romanians who live in the Apuseni Mountains), *Hanul Dragonului* ('dragon's inn'), *Hotel Crama Haiducilor* ('outlaws' tavern'), *Hotel Fântâniţa Haiducului* ('the outlaw's small well'), *Pensiunea Castelul Prinţului Vânător* ('the castle of the hunter-prince'), *Pensiunea Coliba lui Zamolxe* ('Zamolxis's hut'), *Pensiunea Coroana de Aur* ('the gold crown'), *Pensiunea Coroana Reginei* ('the queen's crown'), *Pensiunea Domeniul Regilor* ('the monarchs' land'), *Pensiunea Ţepeş* (named after Vlad Ţepeş, or "the Impaler", a Prince of Wallachia in the mid-fifteenth century);

– typical behavioural features of the Romanian people (*Hotel La Taifas* 'chitchat');

– ecological lifestyle (agritouristic guesthouses): *Casa Ciobănească* ('shepherds' house'), *Casa Ţărănească* ('the rural/rustic house'), *Casa de vacanţă La sat* ('in the countryside').

Some names can be indicative of architectural characteristics: *Vila Trapez* (the building is trapezoidal). There are also designations that are based on the owners' first names (e.g., female names: *Casa Mia* – a hypocoristic form of *Maria, Hotel Miruna, Motel Liliana, Pensiunea Adela, Pensiunea Ana, Pensiunea Andra, Pensiunea La Ancuţa* 'at Ancuţa's,' *Pensiunea Laura, Pensiunea Maria, Pensiunea Paula, Pensiunea Sonia, Pensiunea Veronica Gabriela, Vila Bianca*; male names: *Hotel Claudiu, Pensiunea Daniel, Vila Cristian*), family names (e.g., *Casa Morar, Pensiunea Brici* – it might also be based on the association with the Romanian slang word meaning 'of very good quality, smooth/smoothly', *Pensiunea Giurgiuman*) or full names (e.g., *Pensiunea Preda Nicoleta*). It is worth noting that the *bed and breakfast* type of accommodation locations (Ro. *pensiune*) whose designations derive from family names and female first names predominate, as these are especially meant for families. The first associations that owners wish their potential clients to make based on the names of their businesses refer to hospitality, warmth, familiarity and nurturing, all of these being stereotypically feminine attributes (Teutsch 2008: 263).

(3) Latin and Greek names develop two directions of associations. On the one hand, some Latin names may evoke the prestige of Romanianness, as they refer to the origins of the Romanian people and therefore convey a timeless tradition: *Hotel Napoca* (an ancient Roman settlement in Dacia, from which the city of Cluj-Napoca developed), *Hotel Porolissum* (an ancient Roman city in Dacia), *Hotel Potaissa* (the town of Turda, in the Cluj County), *Hotel Rivulus* (< *Rivulus Dominarum*, 'the ladies' river', the name under which the town of Baia Mare was first mentioned). It is worth noting that many of these features, which name givers aim to encode in various types of trade names as manifestations of

Romanianness, were not discovered in the post–1989 period. On the other hand, Latin and Greek names are exotic and indicative of high class, even when adapted (i.e. translated): *Hotel Agape, Hotel Phoenix, Hotel Poesis, Pensiunea Artemis, Pensiunea Atena, Pensiunea Cupidon, Pensiunea Kalypso, Hotel Pax*. Some originally Latin or Greek names are used with their Romanian equivalents: *Hotel Olimp*. Others are meant to convey similar connotations simply by being Latin/Greek-sounding: *Hotel Aquaris*. Most of these names refer to hotels that often try to compensate through their designations what they lack in matter of standards and rating.

(4) The construction of identity in Romanian public space is also determined by the changes brought about by globalisation. The effect of this phenomenon is salient especially at the level of language (in relation to the influence of English as the lingua franca of the global, borderless village) and of the sociocultural alignment with the American mindset that internationalisation actually promotes. Of all the accommodation names, the occurrence of English designations is comparable to that of Romanian ones (Wochele 2007: 325): *Best Western Plus Fusion Hotel* (part of the international *Best Western* chain), *Golden Tulip Ana Dome* (also part of an international chain), *Hilton Hotel Sibiu, Hotel Business, Hotel City Plaza, Hotel Classic Inn, Hotel Fitness, Hotel Fullton* (probably trying to create in the mind of potential customers the association with the world-renowned *Hilton* chain of hotels), *Hotel Palace, Hotel President, Hotel Prince, Hotel Queen, Hotel Secret Garden, Hotel Seven* (situated in a square that lies at the junction of seven streets), *Hotel West City, Melody Central, Pensiunea Bliss, Pensiunea Class, Pensiunea Crystal, Pensiunea Gallery, Pensiunea Happy Day, Pensiunea History, Pensiunea Holiday Camp, Pensiunea Look Inn, Pensiunea OK, Pensiunea Rock and Red, Pensiunea Templars Inn, Pensiunea White Horse, Retro Hostel, Royal Classic, Tulip Inn Sunny Hill, Vila Twins Apart*.

Sometimes, offering a boost of local prestige, names in English refer to (i.e. identify and/or describe) local or national realities: *Pensiunea Mountain King, Pensiunea Old City, Transylvania Hostel*.

Moreover, internationalisation is also noticeable in names in other languages, particularly French (*Hotel Grand, La Maison Française, Vila Etiquette, Pensiunea Isabelle*) and Italian (*Hotel Bocca del Rio* – which might also be a contamination with Spanish; see the semantic difference between the Italian appellatives *rio* 'rivulet, brook, stream' and *fiume* 'river' –, *Hotel La Dolce Vita, Pensiunea Il Rifugio, Pensiunea Riunione, Pensiunea Trattoria al Gallo, Villa Santa Maria*). The two languages are indicative of countries where Romanians emigrated starting with the 1990s. Names of this kind convey prestige (the common belief is that any name that is not Romanian is capable of conveying prestige, chiefly because it can be linked to a socio-economic international power).

(5) Cultural names relating to geography, mythology, music, films and literature can also be employed in the expression of identity. They are not included in names of accommodation locations due to the language of origin or in which they appear, but as a result of the association established by name givers and marketing agents between a business and its cultural patron. Names of this kind are highly accessible markers of prestige, as they can be understood beyond language restrictions: *Casa Luxemburg, Casa Salzburg, Centru de agrement Himalaya* ('recreation centre'), *Hotel Casablanca, Pensiunea Beethoven, Pensiunea Mont Blanc, Pensiunea Paris, Pensiunea Solaris, Pensiunea Tosca, Pensiunea Viena*.

At least two observations can be made based on the aforementioned classification:

(1) Names of accommodation locations such as the ones previously illustrated mirror the construction of a liminal social reality (Pateman 2001: 34), i.e. the one in Transylvania, and the social personality (Bowe and Martin 2009: 95) developed in this kind of multi-ethnic and multicultural contemporary public space. According to Bateson (in Bowe and Martin 2009: 103), "The naming system is indeed a theoretical image of the whole culture and in it every formulated aspect of culture is reflected. Conversely, we may say that the system has its branches in every aspect of the culture and gives its support to every cultural activity".

(2) Most of the aforementioned trade names and their being indicative of the three levels of identity draw on stereotypes related to name givers and consumers alike (Teutsch 2008: 255). Such stereotypes may act as borders, determining a customer's choice of a certain hotel to the detriment of another. Naturally, a well-built advertising campaign and marketing strategy can have a determining effect on a tourist's choice.

One can claim that there is a certain stereotypical load even in the choice of the language of a trade name, as it conveys a type of meaning that goes beyond the actual semantic, lexical and grammatical dimensions of the names (Sjöblom 2008: 362). As regards the Hungarian community, for instance, the continuity of their language is "a powerful cultural buttress" (Edwards 2001: 48). Likewise, the choice of English names relies on the fact that this language, in the current context, is able to cross linguistic and national boundaries, being "a powerful testimony that we live in *one* world" (Coulmas 2010: 220). Thus, language is also suggestive of a certain sociocultural context, well-established in the collective mentality (e.g. *Hilton Hotel*), or associatively established in more recent times (e.g. *Fullton Hotel* vs *Hilton Hotel*) (Apte 2001: 39). Similarly, some accommodation names are used without the categorial identifiers (i.e. *hotel, pensiune, motel, vila, hostel* and so on). Although these names are partially descriptive names (Soames 2002: 87) and demand the presence of a descriptive identifier, hotels that are established at the local (e.g. *Carpaţi*, in Baia Mare, Romania) or international level (e.g. *Hilton*) can and generally do occur without it (especially in use). Such presuppositions are also stereotypical and underline the fact that, all in all, stereotypes "have a self-confirming and reinforcing nature" (Coulmas 2010: 180).

4. Conclusion

In the autumn of 2012, Columbia Pictures and Sony Pictures Animation released an animation feature called *Hotel Transylvania* ("*Hotel Transylvania*", web). The film marked the directing debut of Genndy Tartakovsky, who had previously worked on the animated TV series *Dexter's Laboratory, The Powerpuff Girls, Samurai Jack* and *Grim & Evil* (*The Grim Adventures of Billy & Mandy*), true "classics" for any Cartoon Network "graduate". Besides your average teen flick topics (centred on the coming of age of Mavis, Dracula's 118 year-old daughter), the film suggests a viewpoint in which many Romanians (in this case, Transylvanians in particular) might take offense (i.e. the myth of vampires as a representative aspect of Romanian culture), although it is probably a case of "lost in translation" and therefore not what the producers and director intended to convey.

Thus, Hotel Transylvania is a castle built by Dracula in Transylvania (which is why it greatly resembles the Bran Castle), as a safe haven for raising his beloved daughter. At the same time, as its name suggests, the place is also a resort where monsters can bring their families to spend vacations far from the dangerous, "madding crowd" of mankind. So far, so good. Nevertheless, for any connoisseur of Tartakovsky's creations, this fails to be yet another animation about monsters and falls into line with the director's multifarious takes on the periphery and its representatives, whether one we refers to the short and stout boy genius that speaks with a "funny accent", the elementary-school super-girls created from "sugar, spice and everything nice", the silent time-displaced samurai warrior called "Jack" (of all names!), or the two children who trick the Grim Reaper into being their friend and doing their every bidding. And now, one meets the whole happy lot of monsters who find refuge in the Hotel Transylvania, in Transylvania, Romania, thereby making a triple statement of peripheral identity: twice geographical (Romania > Transylvania) and once sociocultural (monsters – i.e. a melting pot of "ethnicities" gathered in Transylvania –, vs. humans, i.e. everybody else).

It is this context – of identities fractured between centres and margins, and by various types of borders – that constituted the leaving point for my research. Names of accommodation locations aim "to identify, differentiate, imitate, and guarantee" (Brandl 2007: 88), as well as to be attached inseparably to their referents (as in the case of *Hilton*), at least in advertising discourse (Laurent 2007: 40). They develop all the functions typical of company names: distinction, identification, protection and promotion, including the socioculturally integrative function, which implies that they (and their referents, naturally) are part of a given sociocultural environment (Bergien 2007: 263). In the case of the names analysed, the sociocultural environment is *liminal Transylvania*, a sort of margin understood "not necessarily a space in which people fail to meet the norms, but it can as well be seen as a space in which different but related norms are produced, responding […] to the local possibilities and limitations" (Blommaert 2011: 80).

In such a space, as the names illustrated above showed, meaning is construed "as a process negotiated between interactants rather than as something that exists within the individual or language structure" (Keating 2001: 5). Thus, identity itself is "a multi-layered dynamic process rather than an inborn trait that cannot be helped" (Coulmas 2010: 178); it is "neither categorical nor fixed" (Schiffrin in Coulmas 2010: 178). To return to the *limen*, accommodation names from Transylvania can be deemed truly suggestive of a place "where the strategies of identity are elaborated, […] 'the boundary [that] becomes the place from which something begins its presencing', or […] 'the *amniotic* structure of cultural spacing – a watery skin if ever there was one – a 'differance' that is at once liminal and fluid'" (Bhabha in Oțoiu 2003: 91–92).

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