

The Discursive Construction of Post-communist Romanian Social Identities in Urban Spaces

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Abstract

Our interdisciplinary approach to the discursive production of social identities combines diachronic and synchronic perspectives to the purpose of outlining the hierarchical way of structuring Romanian urban social classes into specifically communist (Dumitru 1996) vs. post-communist types. In observing the way in which such types have emerged, evolved, altered or disappeared, we retrace different forms of social representation for two enduring socio-cultural types – the upstart/parvenu (Rom. "ciocoi") and the industrialist – and pin down positive vs. negative, individual or collective stereotypic attributes, which are being differently constructed, depending on the social context in which the individuals are being placed (Ellemers and van Knippenberg 1997).

Keywords: *social identity, social classes, urban context, types, stereotypes, discursive construction*

I. Conceptual framework

I.1. Social stratification and categorization

Starting from the idea of unequal distribution of resources in society, sociologists point at social stratification systems as essential elements in building social identity. For Parsons (1949: 166), *social stratification* is the "differential classification of individuals who compose a given social system and their labelling as superior or inferior in relation to others according to important social values." We accept this definition on account of the fact that value reference is absolutely necessary for any hierarchy. Norman Goodman considers

that the main social processes which contribute to maintaining a system of stratification are represented by co-optation, which implies integrating individuals in the system by attributing them a social role, and cumulative advantage, ensured by influential names and connections. One of the key components of stratification is represented by *the social class*, formed as a result of inequality and differentiation (Urse 2003: 11). The classic pattern for capitalist countries comprises 4 classes:

1. the upper class: families possessing riches for more generations and, at times, power;
2. the middle class, formed of individuals who made a reasonable fortune out of business and liberal professions as well as intellectuals, the so-called 'white collars' such as accountants, clerks, salespersons etc.;
3. the larger working/labouring class engaged in activities involving mostly physical work;
4. the lower class: jobless people who either live on public allowance or have no financial means.

The inclusion into a specific social class is favoured not only by economic criteria, but also by occupation, mentalities, lifestyle, personalized forms of expression, which lead to enhancing one's sense of belonging to a social group and to building *social identity*.

1.2. Social identity/ies and their representation

Erving Goffman (1963) made a significant contribution to defining social identity, referring to social categories to which an individual obviously belongs (generation, sex, class, etc.), while personal identity represents "the organic unit of each individual, established

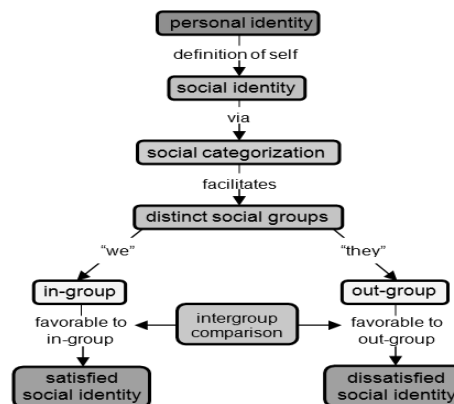


Fig. 1 Social identity (Tajfel, 1982)

by distinctive markers such as name and physical appearance and based on knowledge of the social features grouped around these identity markers" (Goffman 1963). Tajfel (1982) also developed a theory of social identity which is still applicable due to the fact that it explains how social context affects intergroup relations by referring to "individual-based perception of what defines the 'we' associated with any group internalised membership."

In order to understand how identity can be represented in a social context, we prefer to adopt a constructivist approach (Hall 2003: 57), which implies admitting that the language of identity has a social character and its meaning is not reflected or imposed, but constructed through mental (concepts) and linguistic (signs) representational systems.

1.3. Social types and stereotypes

Types are generally conceived as larger categories/groups of people dominated by common features and fulfilling specific social roles. The process of categorization has as a goal placing individuals into easily identifiable classes in which they can be compared "based on previous experience of things of the same, or similar, type."¹ Hence, in combining social criteria with human personality ones, there are some categories of individuals who are distinguished as follows:

- general human types which are representative of human and social categories encountered worldwide. As indicated by Suciu & Culea (2014: 54), these types are shaped by reference to their social class and status (the servant, the beggar, the careerist etc.), their activity, job (the enterpriser, the shopkeeper, the cook etc.), their dominant moral trait (the parvenu, the crook etc.) or their infirmities and vices (the drunkard, the gambler, etc.);
- national types (the French, the English, the Turkish etc.);
- social types are socially determined people who represent certain occupational categories (bankers, politicians,

¹ <http://tracesofthereal.com/2009/12/13/stereotyping-as-a-signifying-practice-stuart-hall-1997/>, accessed 12 July 2016.

industrialists) and hold moral positions (the gentleman, the tramp etc.);

- cultural types among which the artist, the writer, the priest, the journalist and the explorer are generally acknowledged represent “active contributors to cultural growth and progress outside the limits imposed by social standing” (Suciu & Culea, 2014: 54). More often, critics combine the last labels into socio-cultural types which account for a complex array of aspects of society and culture.

Stereotypes represent sets of traits attributed to members of a social group. In contrast with the practice of establishing types, classifying people according to stereotypes

[r]educes the person to those simplified and exaggerated characteristics, admits no possibility of change, and insists that these characteristics are natural. Any complexity is ignored and denied, and it is implied that everything that is necessary to know about the person can be known by referring to the traits of the stereotype.²

In this light, we stereotyping is seen as the “unchanged representation of the other” (Mosse 1996: 5) in a *positive* way, when it includes social features which are positively valued, or *negative*, if the features are negatively valued.

Ellemers and van Knippenberg (1997) indicate that these stereotypical features are differently activated depending on the social context of an individual, whereas Tajfel (1981) points at two types of functions fulfilled by stereotypes:

1. individual functions (stereotypes help with processing social information, especially under conditions of ambiguity or stress);
2. collective functions (linked to the group need of finding a motivation for relations between groups in society and for the place held by one’s group in the social structure).

² <http://tracesofthereal.com/2009/12/13/stereotyping-as-a-signifying-practice-stuart-hall-1997/>, accessed on 6 July 2016.

I.4. Discursive construction as a multidimensional phenomenon

Revolving around the concepts of social identity, types and stereotypes, our paper focuses on the discursive construction of sameness and difference/differentiation in Romanian society spanning across a period of more than a century.

In order to indicate the means by which social identity is discursively constructed, we start from two basic assumptions:

1. social identities and types are “discursively produced, reproduced, transformed and destructed” together with the “construction of difference/distinctiveness and uniqueness” (De Cillia, Reisigl and Wodak 1999: 153-154);
2. different identities and types are “discursively constructed according to the context (the social field, the situational setting of the discursive act) and the topic being discussed.” (Idem, p. 154)

II. A discourse-historical approach to social stratification in Romania

Whenever researchers aim at outlining the historical dimension of discursive acts, they may either

[i]ntegrate all available information on the historical background and the original sources in which discursive ‘events’ are embedded or explore the ways in which particular types and genres of discourse are subject to diachronic change (Wodak et al. 1990, 1994).

Given the purpose of our study, we prefer to insist on specific types of discourses about social classes/strata presented diachronically.

II.1. The discursive construction of pre-communist social strata

The first ‘stopover’ on the way to mapping the social structure of Romanian urban society is the pre-communist period. Characterised by apparently binary oppositions imposed by the way in which (political and financial) power was distributed, the system of social stratification places the ruling class in opposition with the ruled class. Despite sporadic clashes caused by oppression and disrespect

for human rights, throughout time, the dominant classes, the capitalist/industrialist and the working class in towns, just like the boyar and the peasant in rural areas, managed to develop a mutually beneficial relationship in which submissiveness and acceptance of class privileges ensures the ones who are not in a position of power the basic means of subsistence for themselves and their families.

The discourse about “old money” (old bourgeoisie) vs. newly rich (parvenus, upstarts) is definitely critical of the latter for their mercantilism, opportunism and lack of morality. Therefore, the parvenu, a self-centred subversive type that started developing ever since feudal times, is systematically presented derogatorily through its negative features. Nicolae Filimon is best-known for his novel *Ciocoii vechi și noi*³ [The old and the new parvenus], in which he brilliantly depicts the struggle to climb the social ladder and gain social approval of the parvenu type.

The hothouse in which these enemies of honour and of all social virtues are growing is almost always a rich man's house, especially of a newly rich. It is here that the humble parvenu comes to ask the boyar for a loaf of bread, a room to stay in and clothing to protect himself against the harsh cold.

Throughout the first years in service, these two-legged vixens, surpassing in hypocrisy and slyness the four-legged ones from Esop and La Fontaine, spend time with the old servants, study them so carefully that, by the age of 20, they already know how to steal the hen that is egg-hatching without a squawk.

We all know that, among the servants in any social occupation, there is a certain hierarchy. Thus, the upstart begins sometimes his career from the position of groom or footman at the back of the boyar's carriage; he slowly becomes a bailiff and then a boyar himself; and even if some derisively call him a newly-made boyar, his children become boyars and sons of boyars.⁴

³ All English versions of the Romanian texts illustrated in the paper are our translation.

⁴ „Pepiniera în care cresc acești inamici ai onoarei și ai tuturor virtuților cetățenești este mai totdeauna casa bogatului și mai cu seamă a bogatului parvenit. Aci vine ciocoiiul, umilit, și cere a servi pe boierul pentru o bucată

The fascination with this type is paralleled by an ironic stance or a very harsh tone adopted against the high fliers who would stoop to almost anything to have access to wealth and a higher social position. We intend to deal with this type even more closely in the final chapter when discussing about various means of social selection.

There is no writer to show the parvenu to us as an obnoxious man because of his religious or political beliefs or for his social class exclusivism. The parvenu embraces any faith and any environment, on condition that he is allowed to hold the first place. He is the man who feels some kind of pleasure in exercising power, he is the embodiment of the lust for power.

Of these moral features, we get it that the parvenu has never been, along the history of our country, a keen reformer or a retrograde out of conviction, but always eager for honours and especially positions. The 1848 Revolution caught him with no political creed as he had never had one, anyway. The parvenu's creed has always resumed to one word: power. Leaders changed, states with an influence on our country changed, even the foundations of our culture changed; the parvenu approved of them all as he stayed in power. The indigenous boyars were working themselves to death through the sacrifice to defend certain beliefs. The parvenus, on the contrary, were getting fatter

de pâine, o cameră de dormit și un veștmânt ca să se apere de asprimea frigului. În anii dintâi, aceste vulpi cu două picioare, care întrec în ipocrizie și vicleșug pe cele cu patru picioare din fabulele lui Esop și La Fontaine, petrec împreună cu servitorii cei îmbătrâniți în păcate de tot felul, îi studiază cu cea mai mare atențiune, încât la etate de douăzeci de ani, ei știu foarte bine cum se fură cloșca de pe ouă fără să cârâie; cu alte cuvinte, știu cât să fure de la aprovizionarea din toate zilele, cât de la aprovizionările cele mari, cât de la arendarea moșiilor și alte mai multe tranzacțiuni ale casei boierești în care se află servind.

Știm cu toții că între slugi, ca în toate meseriile sociale, există o ierarhie oarecare. Ciocoiul, dar, își începe uneori cariera de la postul de rânduș, iar alteori de la lacheu ce se pune în coada trăsurii boierului; devine cu încetul vâtaf de curte, iar mai pe urmă se face și el boier; și cu toate că unii-alții îi zic în deriziune boier făcut, copiii lui însă devin boieri și fii de boieri."

– or so historians of the time say. They were the parasites of our political ruin, because the arbitrariness of power was increasing and, in it, the parvenu was at large.⁵

II.2. The social representation of identity in communist Romania

Apart from the ideological stereotypes by which this period is characterised, there are 5 specifically communist/socialist types identified by Dumitru (1996), shaped according to position and hierarchy of political power and the type of resources used in personal life strategies.

1. **the nomenclaturist**, the power holder at the top of the social pyramid, represents the political elite in charge with enforcing totalitarian control by imposing unconditioned obedience of individuals to the regime;
2. **the activist**, the interface between nomenclature and masses, was responsible with mass propaganda. Recruited from among the ones who did not have a clean (criminal) record in order to be more easily controllable, they were opportunists

⁵ „Nu este scriitor care să ni-l arate pe ciocoi ca pe un om nesuferit din cauza anumitelor sale credințe religioase ori politice sau pentru exclusivismul său de clasă socială. Ciocoiul se împacă cu orice credință și în orice mediu, numai cu condiția să-i fie lăsat lui primul loc. El este omul care simte un fel de voluptate în exercitarea puterii, este incarnarea dorinței de putere. (...)”

Din aceste însușiri sufletești, înțelegem pentru ce ciocoiul n-a fost niciodată, în trecutul țării noastre, un doritor de reforme, sau un reacționar convins, ci totdeauna un pofțitor de onoruri și mai ales de funcții. Revoluția de la 1848 l-a surprins fără nici un crez politic, și un asemenea crez el n-a avut niciodată. Crezul ciocoiului a fost rezumat totdeauna într-un singur cuvânt: puterea. Se schimbau Domnii; se schimbau statele care exercitau influență asupra țării noastre; se schimbau până și bazele culturii noastre; ciocoiul era cu toate de acord, întrucât el rămânea la putere. Boierii pământeni se istoveau prin sacrificiile făcute pentru anumite credințe. Ciocoi, dimpotrivă, se îngrășau – zic cronicarii vremii. Ei erau paraziții decrepitudinii noastre politice, fiindcă în urma acestei decrepitudini sporea arbitrarul puterii, și în arbitrarul puterii se găsea la largul său ciocoiul.” (Ioan Andoni, *Despre ciocoi* on ioanandoni.wordpress.com/2009/09/04/despre-ciocoi-ii/, accessed on 12 July 2015).

who ensured personal privileges as long as they were loyal and useful to the nomenclaturists.

3. **the dissident**, the fiercest opponent to the regime, was the only type which refused to be obedient to the regime and directly protested or practiced the subversion of power by any possible means: political gags, comic shows, caricature exhibitions.
4. **the specialist**, the professional elite of society, manifested passive opposition in order to fulfil his/her vocation and accepted to pay an ideological tribute by mimicking acceptance of official ideology;
5. **the speculator**, the most active social actor on the black market. Morally dubious, socially integrated and unscrupulous, he ruthlessly exploited the scarcity of resources to his advantage and became one of the beneficiaries/profiteers of the system, along with the nomenclaturist and the activist.

If the first three types are characterised in relation to the political sphere, the last two draw on the social-economic area. Moreover, individuals who belong to none of these categories were generically considered masses.

Due to the renewed interest in exposing the impact of communism on Romanian society, we benefit from the filmic representation of specific social types in a highly praised cinematic production entitled *Amintiri din Epoca de Aur* [Tales from the Golden Age] presented to the public in two parts: *Amintiri din Epoca de Aur 1: Tovarăși, frumoasă e viața!* and *Amintiri din Epoca de Aur 2: Dragoste în timpul liber* (2009). Both parts are set in the communist period called "the Golden Age" to present a reality that seems utterly absurd to the ones who were not part of it. The first omnibus film comprises five comic short stories followed by another 3 in part 2, all of them depicting urban legends of the 80s in order to recreate an atmosphere dominated by twisted logic, oppressive uncertainty, aggressive censorship, disarming absurdity and bureaucratic zeal. Three of the social types identified by Dumitru, the activists, the nomenclaturists and the speculators are vividly sketched in 4 of the episodes: the first two testify to the paroxistic insistence on formalism and officialdom as protagonists of *Legenda activistului în inspecție* [The legend of the

official visit] and *Legenda politrucului zelos* [The legend of the zealous activist], while the latter, the speculators, show some of the common scams meant to satisfy basic needs in the *Legenda vânzătorului de aer* (The legend of the air-seller) and *Legenda șoferului de găini* (The legend of the chicken-lorry driver).

The gallery of communist social types can be differently referred to by means of name labels, starting from the supreme name, the one of the Supreme Leader – Nicolae Ceausescu – which has lately become “of evil/sad memory”, followed by privileged and obedient names of nomenclaturists and activists (some of them recruited by the political police to rat their colleagues and bearing code names, later deconspired in the hunting of police informers), inflamed, censured and forbidden names of contestants of the regime (be they illegalists, dissidents, strikers) and resourceful names of speculators (all sorts of dealers). Listing or illustrating such names is beyond the scope of this study as we focus on types and not representatives.

III. Social stratification in post-communist Romania

III.1. Contemporary social types (enduring vs. emergent)

For more than two decades, most Romanians struggled to erase the memory of communist times and reinvent themselves by migrating into totally different social classes.

Under the influence of social transformations affecting all aspects of social life, concepts such as the one of social class have been revised. Thus, Manoiilescu (1993) defines it as a group lasting for generations and preserving certain economic, social and psychological features. One of the main prompters of a new structure in the old social classes and the formation of new ones was the change in the nature of property. This process led to significant shifts in social status and occupations in accordance with the trends on the labour market (Urse 2003: 13).

In the socio-economic context of de transition to democracy and market economy, there was a repositioning of individuals within the classes newly structured in the urban context (Urse 2003: 17-18):

1. with the systematic closing of factories and plants, the working class is much more reduced compared with the one from the communist period;

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2. the middle class is in the process of shaping itself based on traditional segments (linked to private initiative) and new ones, consisting of specialists, managers, bank clerks, sales representatives etc.;
3. the upper class is represented mainly by the new capitalists, the newly rich.

The social types of transition are not much different from the ones presented before. The opponents are represented by the strikers vehemently asking for his rights in any political regime and the activists defending and supporting partisan interests (a journalist derisively called them "juke box" playing the tunes selected by a "media mogul"). While the specialists/technocrats become the temporary solution "out of crisis" when political alliances fall apart, the speculators proliferate under surprising forms as second hand car dealers, football or modelling agents, loan sharks operating at the limit of legality or even crossing it to turn into tax dodgers, smugglers or pimps.

Emblematic for the surface changes that involved the transfer of power in the hands of neo-communists and of national wealth in the private property of former nomenclaturists was the emergence of the "local baron", a term commonly used for local politicians who use the prerogatives of their position and ostentatiously conduct dubious transactions and make a parade of their illicitly accumulated wealth. In opposition with them are the visionaries and reformers who are either absorbed and corrupted or excluded from the system.

IV. Constructing social identity in and through the discourse of social selection

IV.1. The critique of the privileged classes

To the purpose of approaching a problem closely linked with social structure – "negative social selection" – Ion Ungureanu (1990) introduces the concept of "upper crust" as a negative social environment which does not allow the formation of values and promotes non-values: lying, flattering and viperish characters. An enduring form of negative social selection of values is represented by "pseudo-culture", a term used by C. Rădulescu Motru to explain chronic "diseases" in Romanian society: politicking, mercantilism and servility. Unfortunately, the plastic description made by Mihai

Eminescu in *Scrisoarea III* to his contemporary politicians and their classification into bedlamites and dastards is still painfully timely.⁶

IV.2. Class enemies vs. saviours

Negative stereotypical projections through the prism of power have manifested ever since the communist period. The focal point was represented by the class enemy, embodied for communists by former landlords and industrialists and all the ones who openly opposed to the system.

The class enemy, the bandit, the plotter, the detractor of socialist order were not externally addressed epithets but labels directly stuck to some fellow citizens. The ones who were guilty of a threat to national security were called Iuliu Maniu, Gheorghe Brătianu, Mircea Vulcănescu and others of the kind. In the 80s, Mircea Dinescu, Radu Filipescu or Doina Cornea were cast for the same part, after having been interpreted by Paul Goma, Dorin Tudoran, etc.⁷

It is hardly surprising that, in the discourse of former nomenclaturists who continued to hold the reins of power all along the post-Decembrist period, the label “class enemy” is still attributed

⁶ „panglicari în ale țării”; „uriciunea fără suflet, fără cuget, un izvor de șiretlicuri”; „quintesență de mizerii de la creștet până-n talpă”; „oameni vrednici ca să șază în zidirea sfintei Golii,/In cămeși cu mâneci lungi și pe capete scufie; spuma asta-nveninată, asta plebe, ast gunoi; tot ce e perfid și lacom, fonfii și flecarii, găgăuții și gușații,/ Bâlbâiți cu gura strâmbă; niște răi și niște fameni!; toți aceia care vorbe mari aruncă/Numai banul îl vânează și câștigul fără muncă.”

⁷ “Dușmanul de clasă, “banditul”, complotistul, detractorul orînduirii socialiste - nu erau calificative cu adresă externă, ci etichete puse pe spinarea unor compatrioți. Cei care se făceau vinovați de “atentat la siguranța națională” se numeau Iuliu Maniu, Gheorghe Brătianu, Mircea Vulcănescu și alții ca ei. În anii ‘80 același rol era distribuit lui Mircea Dinescu, lui Radu Filipescu sau Doinei Cornea, după ce, mai devreme, îl jucaseră Paul Goma, Dorin Tudoran etc.” (www.romaniantimes.org/.../195.+Editorial\$2C+Turnatorul\$2C+Cristian+Ioanide.pdf,, accessed on 12 October 2016).

to individuals and institutions (often unjustly) held responsible for all social failures.

The campaign speech delivered by former communist Traian Basescu is identical with the one of the former (nomenclaturist, marginalised before 1989) president Ion Iliescu in 1990. With the same proletarian anger, the latter was howling before the 1990 and 1992 elections that the bourgeois clique of Corneliu Coposu wants to sell the country to foreigners. Basescu is now using the same populist arguments, stigmatizing moguls and businessmen behind PNL (Vântu, Patriciu) who want to pass the Post Company and salt reserves into private hands. DP and Traian Basescu keep on the leftist electorate (social outsiders, workers affected by transition and economic crisis, the unemployed, fortuneless peasants) by pointing at a different class enemy: the Parliament and the parties controlled by interest groups and moguls.

The strategic movement of Traian Basescu implies two major evils, two 'main class enemies': one for the leftist and another for the rightist electorate: the Parliament and communism.⁸

On the part of the masses, the negative projection falls on former political police officers and informers qualified as 'ratters', suspected

⁸ "Discursul electoral din 2009 al fostului comunist Traian Băsescu este identic cu discursul fostului (nomenclaturist, marginaliat înainte de 1989) președinte Ion Iliescu din 1990. Cu aceeași mînie proletară Iliescu urla înaintea alegerilor din 1990 și din 1992 că burghezo-moșierimea lui Corneliu Coposu vrea să vîndă țara străinilor. Băsescu uzează acum de aceleași argumente populiste înfierînd mogulii și oamenii de afaceri din spatele PNL (Vântu, Patriciu) că doresc privatizarea Poștei, a resurselor de sare etc. PD și Traian Basescu își păstrează electoratul de stînga (marginalizații social, muncitorii afectați de tranziție și de criza economică, țărani fără avere, șomerii) prin identificarea unui alt dușman al poporului: Parlamentul și partidele controlate de grupuri de interese și de moguli. Mișcarea tactică a PDL și a lui Traian Basescu este identificarea a două rele majore, doi "dușmani fundamentali ai poporului". Unul pentru electoratul de stînga și celălalt pentru electoratul de dreapta: Parlamentul și comunismul. " (<http://www.antoniomomoc.com/ascensiunea-unui-nomenclaturist-cazul-%e2%80%9cfostului-comunist%e2%80%9d-traian-basescu/>, accessed on 12 July 2014).

even before 1989, later proven and deconspired by the association established between code names and notorious public figures.

Ctin. Bălăceanu-Stolnici ("Laurențiu"), Mona Muscă ("Dana"), Sorin Roșca Stănescu ("Deleanu" și "H15"), Johnny Răducanu ("Rică"), Ștefan Augustin Doinaș (Ion Popa); Augustin Buzura ("Gusti"); Alexandru Paleologu (code name "Alexandru"), Eugen Uricaru (code name "Udrea"), Dan Zamfirescu ("Neagoe"), Mircea Iorgulescu ("Dorin"), Andrei Petre Brezianu ("Dan") are among the best loved informers.⁹

IV.3. The world of nouveau-richism

Another lasting social type reinventing itself under the most surprising forms is the parvenu (Rom. "ciocoi"). The discursive construction of this type involves indicating both sameness and difference. Rodica Zafiu makes reference to the recurrence of the term "ciocoi" in contemporary lexis, a term which seemed archaic, outdated and even fallen out of use. Not surprisingly, its spectacular re-entry in Romanian public discourse was favoured by the fact that all the practices associated with the parvenu type are still in current use. The term had a peculiar semantic evolution before its turning into a political epithet. The Academy Dictionary (*DA – Dicționarul limbii române*, Litera C, 1940) registers an old, neutral meaning of "boyarly servant", "domestic", illustrated in V. A. Urechia: „Feciorul, un *ciocoi* înalt, în frac și mănuși albe de bumbac, îmi deschise ușa” [The boy, a tall servant in a tuxedo and white denim gloves opened the door to me. The same academic dictionary accurately advances a sociolinguistic explanation of its semantic change: initially used in Wallachia and Moldavia and unknown in Transylvania, it labelled an intermediary social class regarded scornfully by old bourgeoisie and adversely by poor people. Associated with the parvenu type, it became a social and moral label that attracted harsh criticism.

The etymology of „ciocoi” is also unclear. DEX cautiously avoids advancing any explanation, whereas Cioranescu’s etymological

⁹ “Topul dezamagirilor: cei mai iubiți dintre informatori”, in *Cotidianul*, <http://www.cotidianul.ro/index.php?id=10406&art=27824&cHash=f8956d6190>, accessed on 12 July 2016.

dictionary relates it to the feminine *cioacă* (a species of crow) by an unconvincing explanation based on the voracity of the bird and of boyar servants, which does not correspond to the word history, whose deprecating meaning appeared much later. What we find more plausible is the suggestion of Turkish origins (Roesler, Gaster etc.) with reference to petty underclerks more plausible, but this is not accepted by modern dictionaries. It is Ioan C. Filitti (1932), in *Frământările politice și sociale în principatele române de la 1821 la 1828*, that adopts the idea of Turkish origin, considering that, initially, "ciocoi" was the lowest position among fiscal agents; the natural adversity and antipathy of fortuneless people towards them and the scorn of upper classes to underclerks must have led to its semantic evolution.

Its derogatory meaning was equally underpinned in old dictionary entries (the pamphlet in Laurian and Massim's *Glosarul*¹⁰ from 1871) and literary works, among which, Nicolae Filimon's novel¹¹ draws a masterful portrayal of this high flying social type.

¹⁰ "Ciocoiul e un om care unește în sine pre lingușitoriul cel mai vil și mai greșos față cu cei mai mari decât dînsul, dar care cătră cei mai mici ca el arată disprețul cel mai neomenos, trufia cea mai desfrînată și cruzimea cea mai brutală; care fără misericordie, fără frică de Dumnezeu, fără rușine de oameni și fără nici un sentiment de onoare și de demnitate omenească, stoarce și despoaie pre alții în folosul său (...) Ca să merite însă cineva acest nume, nu e de lipsă să unească în sine toate caracterele cîte noi am indicat și altele ce poate am scăpat din vedere: ajunge să fie în cineva unul sau două din caracterele tipului, ajunge să fie numai sau laș și bas lingușitoriu cu cei potenți, sau mîndru și tiran neomenos și neîmblînzit cu cei mici, sau răpitoriu și despoiatoriu, sau trîntor ce se nutrește din sudoarea altora" etc.

¹¹ „Nimic nu este mai periculos pentru un stat ce voiește a se reorganiza, decât a da frânele guvernului în mâinile parveniților, meniți din concepțiune a fi slugi și educați într-un mod cum să poată scoate lapte din piatră cu orice preț!...Platon a zis, cu două mii de ani înainte de a lua noi pana în mână ca să descriem pe ciocoi, că un om, ca să poată deveni cetățean onest, mai întâi de toate caută să fie născut bine, crescut în frica lui Dumnezeu, și din copilărie până la maturitate să trăiască înconjurat de oameni virtuoși și drepți. Ciocoiul este totdeauna și în orice țară un om venal, ipocrit, laș, orgolios, lacom, brutal până la barbarie și dotat de o ambițiune nemărginită, care eclată ca o bombă pe dată ce și-a ajuns ținta aspirațiunilor sale.[...] Ciocoiul sau puiul de ciocoi, ajuns om de stat, se deosebește de omul onest prin mai multe fapte, iar mai cu seamă prin

Nothing is more dangerous for a state which wants to reorganise than to leave the reins of power in the hands of parvenus, meant by nature to be servants and educated in such a way as to draw blood out of a stone at any cost!

Platon had stated, two thousand years before we held a pen in our hand to draw a portrait of the parvenu, that, for a man to become an honest citizen, one must make sure, first of all, that he is born well, raised in fear of God and living from childhood to adulthood among virtuous and righteous people.

The parvenu is always a venal, hypocritical, cowardly, vain, greedy, brutal to barbarism and endowed with an infinite ambition that explodes like a bomb once it has reached the target of its ambitions. The upstart or his offspring, becoming statesman, differs from the honest man through more deeds, and especially through his behaviour. He does not clearly adhere to any political doctrine, he is not a loyal follower of any party, not due to his just and fair spirit, but in order to be able to use simultaneously all doctrines and parties in his favour. [...] The love of country freedom, equality and devotion are the sacramental words of the boyars, proclaimed in public and at private meetings; but these virtues so pompously declaimed are nothing but the steps to the ladder by which he wants to ascend to power; and, sometimes, when they are not enough, he runs to foreigners and receives from them high positions in his country.

purtarea sa. El nu se pronunță definitiv pentru nici o doctrină politică, nu se face adept credincios al nici unui partid, nu doară că are spiritul drept și nepărtinitor, ci ca să poată exploata deodată toate doctrinele și partidele în folosul său.[...] Amorul de patrie, libertatea, egalitatea și devotamentul sunt vorbele sacramentale ale ciocoiului, pe care le rostește prin adunări publice și private; dar aceste virtuți cetățenești, de care face atâta pompă, nu sunt decât treptele scăării pe care voiește a se sui la putere; și uneori, când ele nu-i servă de ajuns, el aleargă la străini și primește de la dâșii posturi în țara sa.

Iată tipul ciocoiului din toate țările și mai cu seamă din țara noastră, unde lumina adevăratei civilizațiuni n-a risipit încă norii cei groși ai ignoranței și ai depravațiunii. Iată tipul ce ne propunem a urmări în deosebitele faze prin care el a trecut în secolul nostru, de la ciocoiul cu anterior și cu călămări la brâu al timpilor fanariotici, până la ciocoiul cu frac și cu mănuși albe din zilele noastre." (Nicolae Filimon, *Ciocoi vechi și noi*, Prolog).

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This is the type of the parvenu in all countries and ours in particular, where the light of true civilization has not yet dissipated the thick clouds of ignorance and the depravation. This is the type we propose to track at different stages through which he passed in our century, from the parvenus with surplice and ink pots of Phanariot times to those with tails and white gloves today.

As a culturally motivated term, "ciocoi" was recurrent in the political discourse of the 19th century. In his *Memoirs* on the 1848 revolution (published in 1851), Heliade Rădulescu decided to use it as such, loaded with the connotations conferred by political debates: "ces semences de l'enfer, tous les ciocoi dont le nom est synonyme de bec de Belzébuth" etc.

In a modern version of Filimon's portrayal of upstarts, Dinu Săraru provides in *Ciocoi noi cu bodyguard* [The nouveaux riches with bodyguards] a satire of post-communist society in a novel populated by a prime-minister, revolutionary heroes, presidential advisers, MPs, recycled militia men, tycoons, etc. The newly rich own bullet-proof cars instead of carriages and employ bodyguards instead of grooms, all ironically depicted through their actions.

However hard critics tried to make the author admit to his having written a novel where characters impersonate important contemporary political figures, he denied it every time and claimed that this is simply "a Balzac-style novel with typical characters in typical circumstances"¹².

The most conspicuous identity markers for the newly raising class of opportunists are material in nature. Luxurious houses and cars, flashy outfits, exquisite adornments, opulent parties and lavish holidays are all part of 'the whole bag of tricks' that belong to these tricksters.

The Master was also wearing a bracelet on his left-hand wrist, but, as his hands looked like those of a logging worker, Dandu could not fail to notice that this piece of jewellery was matching them, a chain of gold links twisted in eight

¹² Our translation of „roman în stil balzacian cu personaje tipice în împrejurări tipice”

resembling a well chain. Barely had well-off men or newly enriching ones got into some new business that they started wearing gold and silver bracelets, gold necklaces, with smaller or heavier crosses, each obviously in line with their powers. It was the sign of a new class being ambitiously born and strengthening this ambition with every minute that had been passing since the end of that 1989 December and one of the most vainly displayed proofs of the will of this world to succeed at all costs. It was a token of force and wellbeing, of the power of money which, finally, mercilessly, held its mighty place and Bucharest jewellers could barely cope with orders: (...) buckles engraved with the name of the new conqueror, or instead of the buckle, the name itself was forged of thick gold letters.¹³

The striking incongruity between the power positions held by ex-activist or secret police agents and their physical or moral attributes is enhanced by the sarcastic portrait drawn to a political leader derisively called Coriolan Pomposu.

The man was not a midget for real, but he was not far from failing to qualify among the shorties; with all his hair standing on end like a belligerent cock-crest, had he been one or two centimetres shorter, his entering a room would have

¹³ „Jupînul purta și el la încheietura mîinii stîngi o brățară, însă, cum mîinile lui semănau cu ale unui țapinar, Dandu nu putuse să nu observe că și podoaba acestuia era pe măsură, o rostogolire de verigi de aur răsucite în opt care aminteau un lanț de fîntînă. Incepuse atunci să se poarte, de către bărbații cu stare sau care începeau să-și facă o stare cum apucau în mînă sforile unei afaceri, brățări de aur și de argint, dar și lanțuri la gît, acestea numai din aur, cu cruciulițe sau cruci mari, fiecare, firește, după puterile lui. Era ca un semn al unei clase noi care se năștea ambițios și se întărea în această ambiție a ei în fiecare clipă care se scurgea de la sfîrșitul celui decembrie al anului 1989 și una din dovezile cele mai orgolios înfățișate ale voinței acestei lumi de a birui cu orice preț. Era un semn al forței și bunăstării, al puterii banului care își intra în sfîrșit fără milă în drepturile lui atotputernice, și giuvaergii Bucureștilor nu mai pridideau cu comenzile: (...) paftale pe care scria numele cuceritorului noii lumi sau, ținînd loc de pafta, numele era alcătuit din litere groase, de aur. (Săraru 2008: pp. 26-27)

passed unnoticed; but, ambitious and vain as he was, the poor guy would not step anywhere without a whole posse which opened his way and called for all attention on him; and this is how people would discover him at about the bodyguards' waist level, and, as these were tall and lank as poplars and took pride in their build, Coriolan Pomposu seemed even shorter than he really was; and yet, he was strutting, parading chest ahead and flinging his head back in such a way that one would come to believe that the bantam was, nonetheless, able to look down on people.¹⁴

Another important character, Dandu Patricianul, is an unscrupulous businessman who benefited from privileged contracts in exchange for financial support to political parties. Thus, he can afford to live in the lap of luxury and even buy the favours of a starlet parodically called Erotida. He bluntly and unequivocally points to her that money is the key to forging whatever destiny for those like him:

I have finally entered the world in which money becomes essential and lies decisively at the basis of each destiny. With money, it's up to us what destiny we wish for. Dandu Patricianul is, princess, starting this very minute, at your service! It's your right to choose your destiny.¹⁵

¹⁴ „Omul nu era chiar pitic, însă nici mult nu mai lipsea ca să nu fie socotit nici măcar în rîndul firească al celor mărunți; un centimetru, doi să fi fost, poate, mai scurt, cu tot părul lui vîlvoi ca o creastă de cocoș, pregătit de luptă, și intrarea lui pe ușă n-ar fi fost băgată în seamă, dar, ambițios cum era și orgolios, nefericitul nu călca nicăieri neînsoțit de o poteră întreagă care se desfășura înainte și-i deschidea drumul chemînd parcă toate privirile să se îndrepte asupra lui și așa se făcea că lumea îl descoperea cam la înălțimea șoldurilor body-guarzilor și, cum aceștia, înalți fiind și deșirați ca plopii, se țineau mîndri de statura lor, Coriolan Pomposu părea și mai scurt decît era el, țănoș însă și fălos și cu pieptul scos înainte și cu capul dat nițel pe spate, încît ajungeai să crezi și tu că piticul e totuși în stare să se uite la lume de sus.” (Săraru 2008: 54)

¹⁵ „Am intrat, în sfîrșit, în lumea în care banul devine hotărîtor și se așază decisiv la temelia fiecărui destin. Cu bani, depinde numai de noi ce destin ne dorim. Dandu Patricianul, prințesă, e, din această clipă, la dispoziția

However, Dandu, is well aware that all those that belong to the political clientele have an Achilles heel as long as “everybody has everybody by the tail/on toast („toata lumea are pe toata lumea la mână”) and, with all his money, once he betrays his former protector, Coriolan Pomposu, he becomes vulnerable. The politicians, in their turn, know it too well that these “capitalists” are gaining immense power and their alliance is only based on mutual interest:

That would be the stage at which we are now: when Romanian capitalism needs the politician risen to power to consolidate its capital. There comes the time when you are going to be so strong that you’ll be the ones ordering politicians around, you’ll have them elected, you’ll appoint them and then call them to account...Now, for us, who are up front and original as it happens in history, there’s a condominium: we are getting shaped together. We serve you until you feather your nest. At the moment, we politicians are making the capitalists that we need and they support us when we ask for it, right?¹⁶

Sometimes, the dissimulated affability and subservience fails to be convincing and the politicians who developed good knowledge of all human types and their ways do not fall for it. Thus, the Leader directly exposes Ică Gorun:

You speak like a peasant who, as understanding as he is, despises some townspeople who are shooting his fowl, but he knows he will not be at a loss as the boyars know how to pay...says the Leader reading his mind. You have the

dumneavoastră! Dumneavoastră vă rămîne dreptul să vă alegeți destinul.” (Săraru 2008: 140)

¹⁶ „Cam asta ar fi faza în care ne aflăm: când capitalismul român are nevoie de politicianul ajuns la putere ca să-și întemeieze capitalul. Vine și faza când o să fii atât de puternici încât o să comandanți politicienilor, să-i inventezi chiar, o să-i alegeți, o să-i numiți în funcții și o să-i trageți la răspundere... Acum, la noi, care suntem la început, și originali, ca întotdeauna în istorie, e devalmasie: ne formăm împreună. Noi va servim până prindeți cheag. Ne facem noi, politicienii, deocamdata, capitaliștii de care avem nevoie și ei ne sprijină când le cerem, nu e așa?”

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makings of a peasant, he ironically continued, more exactly, you have perfectly digested the peasant's shrewdness when he humbly raises his hat to greet the bailiff while thinking to himself": 'To hell with you, upstart!'¹⁷

Adrian Neculau (2007) also points at the negative aspects of this type, in using strong labels for any unscrupulous parvenu interested exclusively in power and perks:

He is animated by power frenzy, lack of ideals and scorn for people. He has no stable occupation or job (he's not a specialist) and has no ideal to fight for.

His ambition to become rich is expressed through varied means. He flatters the ones who may prove useful to him, he is slavish with the ones in power, he is two-faced and shrewd, deceiving the gullible ones, and he dissimulates with the artistry of a connoisseur of the social scene.

He hasn't changed his ways to these days. He only refined them. If he is a public servant, he is a place hunter, he would stoop to anything to climb the career ladder, he takes advantage of any situation, he does not keep aloof from all dirty tricks, he is insistent and perfidious. He knows all the by-ways, he knows the right moment to act to his benefit and he unscrupulously puts the blame on others if he is caught red-handed.

If he is a business man, he makes capital out of his relations with public institutions, makes partners among officials, he knows when, how and how much to pay on favours. He does not hesitate to double cross his business partners; he earns their trust only to shark on them. If he is a politician, he suffers from the malady of society: he practices politicking; he is

¹⁷ „Vorbești parcă ai fi un țăran care disprețuiește, cu toată înțelegerea altfel, niște orașeni care îi împușcă găinile din curte și el știe că nu va rămîne în pagubă fiindcă boierii și ei știu să plătească... zise Liderul ghicindu-i gîndurile. Ai stofă de țăran, întări el ironia, mai exact ai digerat bine de tot viclenia țăranului, care atunci cînd ridică umil căciula ca să-l salute pe vechil, în gînd zice: „Dumnezeu' mamii tale de ciocoi.” (Săraru 2008: 395)

skilled at appealing to political rights to turn public institutions and services from means of attaining public interest into means of reaching personal goals.

There is one infallible criterion of identification: they are the individual who gained riches and positions only by trading on the state (contracts, property exchanges and others of this kind) or cheating on others, without building anything by themselves. If they are in lower positions, they practice sticking to the ones who are building, preying on their work. They left nothing behind them.¹⁸

During the communist period, the referent changed through the abusive labelling party opponents in the 20th century (*„în inimile lor creștea ura față de ciocoi”*, *Scînteia*, 21.12.1949 - in their hearts grew anger against parvenus). The violence of the solutions found to

¹⁸ „E animat de frenezia puterii, lipsa de ideal și disprețul pentru multime. N-are o ocupație sau o meserie sigură (nu-i un specialist) și nici n-are un ideal pentru care să lupte. Ambiția sa de a se îmbogăți se exprimă prin mijloace extrem de variate. El lingusește pe cei ce-i sînt utili, e servil cu cei ce au putere, e ipocrit și viclean, înșelînd credulii, disimulează cu o artă de bun cunoscător al scenei sociale. Nu și-a schimbat metodele, pînă astăzi. Doar le-a perfecționat. Dacă-i funcționar public, e arivist, face orice să avanseze, scoate profit din oricare situație, nu-i sînt straine nici un fel de mijloace necinstite, e insistent și perfid. Știe toate tertipurile, știe cînd e momentul să acționeze în folosul său și nu are scrupule să arunce vina pe alții, dacă e dezvăluit. Dacă-i „om de afaceri”, exploatează relațiile cu instituțiile statului, își ia aliați dintre slujbaşii publici, știe cînd, cum și cit să dea pentru servicii. Nu ezită să-și înșele tovarășii de afaceri, le cîștigă încrederea și-i jecmaneste. Dacă-i „om politic”, are „boala societății”: e „politicianist”, are „practicare meserieșugită” de a invoca drepturile politice pentru a transforma instituțiile și serviciile publice, din mijloace pentru realizarea binelui public, în mijloace pentru realizarea intereselor personale. (...)”

Există un criteriu sigur de identificare: sînt indivizii care au ajuns la poziție sau avere doar prin speculații cu statul (contracte, schimburi de terenuri și altele de acest fel) sau înșelînd pe alții, fără a construi ceva ei înșiși. Dacă-s în poziții mai joase, practica tehnica „lipirii” de cei ce construiesc, profita de munca altora, capusec. N-au lăsat în urma lor nimic.” (Neculau, Adrian, „Ciocoi și industriasi” în *Ziarul de Iași*, 12.12.2007, <http://www.ziaruldeiasi.ro/opinii/ciocoi-si-industriasi-ni4iu2>, accessed on 12 July 2016.

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punish such dangerous social elements („*Ia pe ciocoi ca hreanul și dă-l pe răzătoare*”, which literally means ‘take the upstart and grate him like horseradish’) has charged this term with an embarrassing ideological load. This trend has continued to manifest to these days, as long as journalists and politicians use it for populist propaganda and paranoid defence against the so-called exploiters and enemies.¹⁹

Even if the 19th century rhetorics is much more honourable than the one of communist and post-communist propaganda, the persistence of “ciocoi” as a political term maintains the impression of inadequacy and anachronism. Old or new, the parvenu type preserves all the features from the portrayal made by Constantin Rădulescu-Motru in *Psihologia ciocoismului* (1911). Diagnosed as an infectious disease spread nationwide, “nouveau richism” in political life has not changed over time: it manifests by the same lust for power, lack of ideals and scornful attitude towards the masses. To these, we may add some other features of the parvenu cultural type, underlined by Radulescu Motru as identity markers:

- servility (*mândru cu cei mici, lingușitor și târător cu cei mari... p. 97* – haughty with the humble ones, bootlicking the grand ones);
- eagerness to climb, vanity and opportunism: *un adorator al puterii și al rangului, indiferent sau independent de scopul în care ar putea fi utilizate puterea și rangul* (p. 100), *un poftitor de onoruri și mai ales de funcții* (p. 101), *dornic să se distingă, să iasă din rândul celorlalți* (p. 97) – a worshipper of power and rank, irrespective of the purpose to which these may be used, eager for honours, positions and opportunities to come to the front);
- mimetism (“*el se robeste cu usurinta noului gen de viața, care-i exalta viciile sau relele sale deprinderi, imprumută "tiparele" statelor occidentale, dar nu și "sufletul" lor, adică respectul pentru norme, moralitatea angajamentului*”) – he easily complies with

¹⁹ „Războiul anti-ciocoi a început cu un succes” (partidul.poporului.ro); „Am eliberat 500 de localități de ciocoi” (declarație citată de hotnews.ro); „Vă rog să ne scuzați, domnilor ciocoi, că am câștigat noi” (ziare-pe-net.ro); „noii ciocoi de la CNAS” (discurs în Camera Deputaților, 14.02.2012 - <http://dilemaveche.ro/sectiune/tilc-show/articol/ciocoi>, accessed on 15 July 2016).

the new lifestyle, which exalts his vices and bad habits, borrows the "patterns" of western states, but not their spirit, respect for norm and morality of commitment";

- grossness and a smack of knowledge.

IV.4. Positive identity stereotypes

In contrast with the persistently negative representation of the parvenu, the industrialist is perceived as a constructive type, open to innovation and change, characterized by his willingness to invest energy, creativity and material resources to reach his goals.

In Radulescu Motru's *Psihologia industriașului* (1907), the industrialist's portrait reflects his intellectual curiosity and the vocation of institutional construction; therefore, he is attributed inherently positive features.

The industrialist type is easy to recognize at first sight amidst any society. The industrialist agitates, asks for information, is extremely inquisitive, loves all that is new and hates routine.

The industrialist fully lives in the present. His curiosity reaches all directions. Both his thought and action precede the thought and action of peers. The industrialist does not know those moments of distraction typical of scientists and artists. For him, everything seems to be of immediate interest.²⁰

The discursive construction of his stereotypical image is supported by contrast (as long as we can find positive examples of developers, investors, in the commercial and financial area):

²⁰ „Tipul industriașului este ușor de recunoscut în mijlocul unei societăți de la prima vedere. Industriașul se agită; cere informații; este de o extremă curiozitate; iubește tot ce este nou; urăște rutina.

Industriașul trăiește în deplină actualitate. Curiozitatea lui se îndreaptă în toate direcțiile. Gândul și fapta sa merg deopotrivă înaintea gândului și faptei celor dimprejur. Industriașul nu cunoaște momente de distracție atât de caracteristice în ținuta omului de știință și a artistului. Pentru el totul pare a avea un interes imediat.” (Rădulescu-Motru, C-tin, *Psihologia poporului român și alte studii de psihologie socială*, Ed. Paideia, București, 1998, p. 51)

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Today's upstart is similar to the one of Motru's: he changes masters on need, abandons his peers and betrays everyone's trust; he consumes his energy in speculations to his advantage; the industrialist is, by comparison, an insipid individual: all he has is the belief in well done work, he confides in people and team spirit, respects his word and does not know how to betray.²¹

Conclusions

The theoretical background of our paper revolves around the concepts of identity, social class, types and stereotypes as represented in the urban context of communist and post-communist Romanian society. Based on the general idea of representation as the production of meaning through language discourse and image, we restrained our area of reference to *social representation*, a concept introduced by Serge Moscovici ever since 1961 in order to theorize the "system of values and practices referring to objects, aspects and dimensions of the social environment which ensure the living space of individuals and groups, but equally an orientation instrument for the perception of the situation" (Moscovici 1995: 57).

The discourse-historical approach to social stratification in Romania enabled us to reflect the mechanisms of positive or negative social selection by means of some binary oppositions between the privileged (rich industrialists or mere parvenus, politically powerful nomenclaturists or activists) and the underprivileged (the powerless servants), the class enemies (the dissidents, the strikers) vs. the saviours, in both the communist and the post-communist times.

The literary or journalistic examples used to illustrate specific urban social types focused primarily on the parvenus, an enduring

²¹ Ciocoiul de azi e la fel ca cel al lui Motru: isi schimba stapinii dupa nevoi, isi abandoneaza tovarasii, inseala increderea tuturor; isi consuma energia in combinatii, toate spre folosul propriu; industriasiul e, prin comparatie, un individ anost: n-are decit crezul muncii si lucrului bine facut, crede in oameni si in spiritul de echipa, isi respecta cuvintul, nu stie sa tradeze. (Neculau, A., „Ciocoi si industriasi” in *Ziarul de Iasi*, 12.12.2007, <http://www.ziaruldeiasi.ro/opinii/ciocoi-si-industriasi-ni4iu2>, accessed on 15 July 2016).

category that was versatile enough to transgress the ages while preserving their workings. Their image is predominantly negatively constructed, in contrast with the one of the industrialists. However, when the two classes do not only co-exist but merge into one another, "the builders of Romanian capitalism" count in speculators, bargainees (Rom. „bișnițari”, „afaceriști”) and vendors with airs of potent business people, as well as upstarting local enterprisers with dreams to conquer the international markets.

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