Cemeteries and Dying in a Multi-religious and Multi-ethnic Village from the Danube Delta[1]

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the way the new post-socialist cosmology is restructuring religion and how it is shaping the religious mentalities of contemporary Romania. I am trying to investigate this by analyzing the ways the different local politics of ethnic and cultural identities shape the perspectives on after-life and burial practices. My research aims at analyzing the symbolic architecture of the discourse that surrounds and penetrates the dead body and of the way the cemetery is transformed into a micro-world that reflects the religious, ethnic and cultural struggles of the new post-socialist world.

On this purpose I am researching the multi-ethnic and multi-religious village of Sch., situated in the south-eastern part of Romania. Old-Orthodox Lipovenians (divided into two antagonistic religious communities, *popovtsi* and *bezopopovtsi*) and their eternal rivals, Orthodox Romanians, have to co-habit the village and share the local resources with the post-socialist emerged community of Lipovenian-Romanian Adventists. What seems even harder to do is share the after-life and cemetery space, where the borderlines between these four communities become even stronger. The instrumentalization of the symbolic architecture of after-life that penetrates the dead body and the fragmentation of the cemetery space that accompanied this process mirror the important transformations of the Romanian social system and the struggle to enact the different post-socialist politics of ethnic and cultural identities.

The many new religious movements that appeared in Romania after the fall of communism were the manifestation of a distinct form of social pluralism that in some segments of the society unleashed great tensions. I am trying to analyze how these tensions were reflected within the cemeteries and the distinct meanings of dying that were set in motion by them. Cemeteries by organizing these meanings of death and politics of after-life become micro-worlds that reflect the religious, ethnic and cultural struggles of the new post-socialist world.

By "politics of after-life" I understand those strategies employed by the traditional religious powers that manage to integrate the dead body, the intimate community of the deceased person and the death related practices into a meaningful complex. The politics of after life materializes itself in the re-organization of cemeteries as an adjustment to the existing social changes (Hallam – Hockey 2001; Field – Hockey 1997). The cemeteries are far from being quiet places of eternal-rest, they are theaters of what happens in the after-life that teaches us important lessons.

I try to further analyze how the category of the impure dead body is constructed, and what are the alternative cosmologies of after-life that the post-socialist religious movements articulate as a response to the traditional religious powers.

My research takes place in the town of S., situated in the south-eastern part of Romania in the Danube Delta. Here the Old-Orthodox Lipovenians (divided into two antagonistic religious communities, *Popovtsi* and *Bezopopovtsi*) and their eternal rivals, Orthodox Romanians, have to co-habit the village with the post-socialist emerged community of Lipovenian-Romanian Adventists. What seems even harder to do is to share the after-life and cemetery space, where the borderlines between these four communities become even stronger.

The town of *Sch.* is far from being a typical Romanian town, but its multi-ethnic and multi-religious community allows for the construction of an ideal-type (that is being reproduced at various degrees in other parts of rural Romania) of dealing with death and cemeteries.

As this will be easily seen, I subscribe to Verdery's program of studying post-socialism not as an economical-political transformation but as a dramatic change of the meaningful life-world (Verdery, 2006). In *The political life of death bodies* she is following this program but from the perspective of how the macro political discourses are structured by the post-socialist changes. In this sense Verdery's dead bodies are rather illustrative accessories of these political discourses. She is interested in how these accessories are able to lend themselves to a great spectrum of post-socialist political projects and therefore in how these dead bodies become

political instruments in the re-construction of the social-world. In doing this she has to select a specific type of dead body: someone that during his/her life-time achieved a great historical and cultural status. Therefore, these are not ordinary dead-bodies, but extra-ordinary ones that are able symbolically to crystallize wide-spread political meanings that can mobilize masses. Verdery's dead bodies are striped off their particular death and of the intimate community that experienced this death as a lost, and so as a threat to their meaningful world (the impact of death on the living). Because of this, the dead bodies are further striped off of a concrete cosmos in which the intimate community is projecting and constructing a strategy to deal with death and dying. I think of the cemetery as the embodiment of these strategies. The dead bodies I am concerned with are ordinary bodies, and the concrete strategies of dealing with the death of those close to the deceased are important insofar they can through a light on how the post-socialist life-world is changing. The cemetery is the social projection (Francis – Kellaher, 2005: 7) of all the discourses that surround these "ordinary" dead bodies and this way it can be read as a mirror of the transformation taking place in the post-socialist world.)

The Lipovenians arrived in *Sch.*[2] several centuries ago as a result of the religious persecution to which they were subjected by the political and religious leaders from Russia. Along the centuries they managed to maintain a strong ethnic identity that was backed up by their distinctive religious belonging and developed a closed community that was hard to assimilate by the surrounding ethnic majorities (these majorities changed over time with the change of political and military supremacy over Dobrogea[3]).

Religion played a special role in the formation of their ethnic and social identity; it was a persecution of their faith that forced them to migrate and search for a safe-haven where they could observe their specific religious practice. Their short settlements (always on the run from the Russian State that aimed at completely annihilating this religious movement) gave them the necessary respite to organize the entire community life around their religiosity.

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[2] S. is a town situated in south-east part of Romania, close to the Danube Delta; it has approximately 4000 inhabitants, almost 90 % of them being Lipovenians and 10% Romanians. Because the interviews often reveal very sensitive issues, both the name of the village and the name of the people that I have interviewed will not be disclosed in this paper.
[3] Dobrogea is an historical region of Romania situated between the lower Danube River and the Black Sea and is organized in two counties: Constanta and Tulcea. Over the time the region was alternatively under the rule of Bulgaria, Russia, Turkey and Romania.

The historical details of their arrival in *Sch.* and the nature of the religious persecution are very important for the contextualization of the issue at hand because the villagers constantly retell this story and employ this narrative as a legitimation of their life-style and of the particular conflicts that emerged within the community.

The narration of this foundation-story fulfills of course different functions and it has a heterogeneous meaning structure for the different local groups and agendas (the local Lipovenian intelligentsia and the defense of their ethnic distinctiveness in relation with the Romanians, the believers and the communist atheists that want to eradicate their alleged fundamentalism, the religious leaders and their struggles with the post-socialist heretics, etc.) but nevertheless it appears constantly to the surface, and old and young, educated and uneducated, religious and non-religious they all employ it presently somehow.

During my fieldwork I have heard bits of this story told many times in different contexts as part of different arguments, but this was especially brought to my attention because through this story they could contextualize the importance of dying in the religion in which they were born, the religion handed down to them by their ancestors. Their forefathers gave up their life to protect the pure faith and the true religion from its "diabolic enemies", a religion that was their banner over centuries and which still strongly impregnates the fabrics of their daily living. The cemetery is the sacred space of these heroic ancestors and it bridges the living community not only with its historical past and kinship ties but with the after-life and so with the eschatological fulfillment of their religiosity as well.

The Old Believers (Raskol, Staroveri) appeared as the result of a great schism in the Russian Orthodox Church in the 17th century caused by their refusal to accept the reforms introduced by patriarch Nikon. The Moscow patriarch Nikon embodied the dream of Tsar Alexis of transforming Moscow into the third Rome in which the Russian Church would play the most important role. The fall of Constantinople led to a growing popular belief that this was the result of God's Judgment on the Greek-Orthodox Church for trying to re-unite Eastern and Western Christianity and bring under one Church the Orthodox and the Catholic "heretics" (Hastings, 2003 :324).

The Orthodox Church was itself an outcome of the Greek-Orthodox missionarism and was ecclesiastical organized by Greek-Orthodox monks and bishops (Hastings, 2003: 333). The emergent power of the state led to the rise of ethno-nationalistic feeling and therefore to a growing dissent towards the Greeks. The "apostasy" of the Greeks who tried to reconcile the

Eastern Church with the "heathen" Catholics, and the subsequent fall of Constantinople strengthen the popular view that the Russian Orthodoxy was the genuine Christian Religion and the Moscow Patriarch the right full heir of Christ and the leader of the entire Christian Church.

An important obstacle in realizing this was the cultic dissimilarities found across Russia that never went through a dogmatical and liturgical reformation in the sense of a canonical uniformization of faith. This is usually the byproduct of a centralization process and all previous attempts do to this led only to minor generalized profession of faith. Moreover all these variations were as well dissonant with the neighboring Orthodox Churches, and especially with the Greek Orthodox Church who was the spiritual birth-giver of the Ukrainian and Russian Church.

Nikon ecclesiastical apparatus managed to gather vast information on liturgical practice from across the Orthodox cultural area and proceeded to the reformation of liturgy in order to adjust it to the prevailing Orthodox practice. The Third Rome could not have a different religious practice than the provinces which was to lead.

The reformation might appear minor to a modern reader, but within a ritualistic religion that lacks the ethical rationalization through which Western religiosity underwent, (these changes were considered of great importance. Basically the liturgical reforms consisted of: a) the purification of the creeds of all non-orthodox forms (i.e. all the elements which did not correspond to the "original" religious practice of all Greek Orthodox Churches); b) the replacements of the cross sign done with two fingers (symbolizing the two equal natures of Christ: human and divine) with that done with three fingers (symbolizing the Trinity); c) the abolition of the re-baptize rule through full immersion of those that were baptized only by sprinkling (Hastings, 2003: 336).

Although these reforms were supported by the State and generalized by the high clerics, some could not accept it; especially low clerics (led by a handful of bishops) and regular believers to whom these changes appeared as affecting the core of their ritualistic religiosity. All previous attempts to operate such reforms ended up as heresies declared by legal synods as such and those advocating them put to death (Hastings, 2003: 336). The Reforms introduced by patriarch Nikon stood at odds with the entire Russian tradition and with all previous professions of faith. This is why popular piety regarded Nikon as a heretic that was running the Church, which later triggered a whole range of Antichrist symbolism and an apocalyptic belief that the end of the world was near.

Patriarch Nikon quickly eliminated all opposition (imprisonment, deportation, public execution) and pronounced an anathema on all those who would not accept the reforms. The cruelty of his reform attempts and the State conducted persecution of the malcontents created a great popular resistance and a stronger will to keep the old faith unchanged. Keeping the "true" Orthodoxy alive was considered the duty of a good Christian[4] and, in this time of apocalyptical apostasy, giving up your life as a martyr was what true faith required (Hastings, 2003: 336).

This led to an open conflict between the State Church and all the believers who would not give up their faith and to a long-lasting cruel persecution of all Old-Believers. The hunting down of these religious communities that wanted to stick to the old rituals was motivated by the expanding state power that needed a single unifying religious ideology. This persecution and harassment continued in one form or another up till the end of 19th century. It is in this context that the great migration of Old Believers started and reached Sweden, Australia, United Stated, Alaska, Romania, Poland, Bulgaria, Austria, Turkey, etc.

The State Church was very careful in eradicating the Old Believers bishops and priests so that its continuity could be threaten and this religious movement confronted itself therefore with a perpetual absence of clergy. The disappearance of all episcopates raised eventually the questions of how could the Old Believers constitute a Church and who had the right to ordain ministers and priests in the local parochies. This absence of priests led to different schisms within this religious movement and the absence of a clerical hierarchy allowed for the institutionalization of self-made popular rules of faith.

The many denominations that arose out of this popular piety (that has as a common root the allegiance to the Old Rituals) can be subsumed into two main branches: *bezopopovtsi* (without priests) and *popovtsi* (with priests).

The *Bezopopovtsi* was the most radical group of Old Believers and solved the issue of priesthood by allowing regular members to perform themselves the sacraments, making the clerical hierarchy unnecessary. This was legitimized by the generalized conviction that the time of Antichrist has come and that he corrupted the official State Church and the clerical hierarchy (this rhetoric bears a resemblance with Luther's admonishment of Papacy and the millenarist view of post-Lutheran religious movements that the Antichrist was running the official Church, but we cannot establish any internal connection between these religious ideas: no ethical

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[4] "It is the duty of all of us, as Orthodox Christians to die for a single A (in the liturgical texts)" Deacon Feodor, leader of the Raskol movement, quoted in (Hastings, 2003: 335).

rationalization and no religious disenchantment followed from the *Bezopopovtsi* abolition of ecclesial hierarchy).

The many *Bezopopovtsi* groups (*the Pomortsi, the Feodossejevtsi, the Philipovtsi, the Sirdnniski, the Netovtsi, etc.*) had different perspectives on the issue of celibacy, the necessity of re-baptizing of those abandoning the official Church and on the State imposed obligation to pray for the Tsar. Many of these religious groups gradually ceased to exist or other merged with the more popular groups. Today the *Bezopopovtsi* are scattered over the globe and their communities are on the verge of disappearance.

The *Popovtsi* on the other hand acknowledged the necessity of a clerical hierarchy and when the number of their priests decreased, they accepted the runaway Nikonian clerics (these priests were leaving the official Church not always for religious reasons) that would return to the Old Rituals and deny the apostasies of Nikon. For this reason the *Popovtsi* were named as well the *Beglopopovtsi* or the ones that accept fugitive priests. Because the good priests were a scarce resource, the religious community continued to exercise an important control over church matters. In the absence of the priests, members could assume the performance of the sacraments that later could be validated by a cleric.

They were following more lenient rules regarding the necessity of re-baptism, their attitude towards the State and the official Church and marriage. This group managed to organize itself and establish several episcopates. Not all of them recognized the different episcopates and this in turn led to a religious differentiation among them and therefore to the emergence of different *Popovtsi* denominations (we can classify them in regards to the hierarchy they belong: Belokrinitskaya hierarchy and the Novozybkovskaya hierarchy being the two dominant ones, all the other gradually disappeared).

The disputes regarding the ecclesial hierarchy within the Old Believers community needs to be understood as a most serious concern on behalf of the faithful with the issue of apostolic lineage and the transmission of grace through the priests ordained by the primary Church fathers. The *Popovtsi* continued to struggle with this issue everywhere they have settled.

In S. the first community of Old Believers is recorded around 1740 (Fenoghen 1998: 120) where they share the space with neighboring Tatars in a time when Dobrogea, controlled by the Ottoman Empire, acts as a buffer zone between the Turks and the Russians. Here they receive the right to organize themselves and keep their religion (a current practice in the Ottoman Empire) in exchange for participation alongside the Turks in military campaigns.

The branch of Old Believers that settled in Dobrogea was the *Beglopopovtsi* (the one that accept the fugitive priests) and here they managed to establish an important religious center. S. with its opening to the Black See became soon an operative base of the Old Believers and from here they further migrated to Bucovina (belonging to the Austrian Empire), Bulgaria, Turkey, etc. Not far from here at Slava Rusa they founded later an important Old Rite monastery.

Dobrogea being a buffer zone between the Ottoman Empire and Russia meant that the Old-Believers were easily exposed to the Russian military force that sometimes aimed especially at killing the Old Believers that settled in this territory (Fenoghen 1998: 133). During the Crimean war (1853-1856) the Russian Army imprisoned most of the Old-Orthodox hierarchs from Dobrogea and never released them as they did with all other prisoners, once the war was finished (Fenoghen 1998:141).

The religious communities managed to survive in spite of all this harassments by the Russian Orthodox State Church and the different documents record the existence of one wooden church in *Sch.* (that burned down in 1862). The different people that I have interviewed talk about the cemetery situated at the eastern part of the village as being the **first Old Believers cemetery**.

The cemetery looks now as a forsaken garden, only the recent graves are indicated by a cross sign. Their modesty and humbleness is expressed in the way they organize the mortuary space. An old priest from *Sch.* mentions that their tradition is "*not to have an outstanding burial place*" and that "*luxury is not permitted*" because "*we do not need a grave, what we need is a liturgical soul* (suflet de slujbă)". This cemetery contrasts with the usual Orthodox cemetery space and the modern ones where each grave is clearly delimited from others and where the burial grounds are strongly individualized.

It would be wrong to see this as a mass grave and even more wrong to think of this space as a homogenous piece of land that has no demarcations. As we will see, what seems a barren land is in fact crossed by many important borders and intricate conceptual schemes are projected over the almost waste land. Within the cemetery the coffins are placed sometimes on top of each other (they are accidently discovered when they dig the grave) which bothers no one because the entire space is the home of their ancestors. When a precious icon becomes out of use, it gets buried as well here; the icon is not only a distinctive sacred symbol of faith but is the expression of a kinship tie as well. As the home of ancestors and icons, the cemetery must express the humbleness of the living and their pure spirituality as well.

An important historical figure that is constantly brought up in our discussions and interviews is Ambrosie, and this always in a vivid manner and sometimes colorfully characterized by my interlocutors; this almost gives you the impression that he lived a few years ago among them and that they are talking about someone they knew well. Ambrosie is the reason of a deep schism within the community of *Sch.* and of the emergence of **the second cemetery**, located at the western end of the village. This schism dates more than 150 years back, but for my informants it is as it happened yesterday.

The different attempts of *Popovtsi* to establish a hierarchy of their own and to find bishops that were part of the apostolic line of succession and were willing to embrace their cause and faith led them to a Bosnian metropolitan from Sarajevo, named Ambrosie. He is secretly brought to Dobrogea and according to local traditions he visits *Sch.* as well. Some dislike him because he is a Greek and does not speak Russian (Fenoghen 1998:144). The new eparchy is established at the Balta Alba monastery, in Bucovina that was back then under the jurisdiction of the Austrian Empire (who gave the Old Believers the right to freely follow their faith and to establish a religious order) and today is part of Ukraine and close to the Romanian border.

The Old Believers from Dobrogea meet in 1846 not very far from *Sch.* at the Slava Rusa monastery to decide whether or not they will accept the newly established hierarchy at Balta Alba (Belokrinitskaya hierarchy). The villagers from *Sch.* tell a lot of anecdotes regarding this meeting and how some got drunk on the way and never made it to the local synod. Upset by this they would refuse to accept Ambrosie as their bishop. People from the other camp refer today to Ambrosie as being a fugitive priest with a dubious past that made their forefathers decide against him. This would lead to a great and painful schism in *Sch.* and later to the emergence of two different churches.

The Belokrinitskaya hierarchy founded in 1846 would later become the largest *Popovtsi* group with its headquarter in Balta Alba (Ukraine) and incorporates now the Old Ritualist Orthodox of Romania who are led by a metropolitan from Braila (Romania) (Melton, 2002:965)[5]. The second largest hierarchy, the one from Novozybkovskaya, would be established more than a century later in 1963. The communist period would make hard an affiliation to a Russian hierarchy so the other people from *Sch.* that did not follow Ambrosie would wait until the post-

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[5] This means that presently those that embrace this hierarchy in *Sch.* have their religion recognized by the state as a cult and that the local church receives financial assistance from the Romanian state. This relationship with the State is perceived by the other side as a sign of loss of faith,

socialist period to be integrated into an ecclesiastical hierarchy[6]. Until then they will continue to accept fugitive priests from Russia, while the other part of the village will have a steady priest ordained by the newly established hierarchy.

Locally, the groups will refer to each other as *Popovtsi* (those that accepted the Belokrinitskaya hierarchy) and the *Bezopopovtsi* (those that refused it)[7] and for more than fifteen years they would alternatively share the one wooden church. Not without any troubles, because in 1857 a judge from Silistra (in present-day Bulgaria) would rule that the two religious communities in *Sch.* should not exert any pressure on the believers and that they should freely decide to which of the two religions they want to belong (Fenoghen 1998:145).

It is superfluous to mention that no liturgical or dogmatical difference exists between these two Old Believers communities and that they are perpetuating the same tradition, have the same history, speak the same language and that they are related to each other through blood ties. But the acceptance of a particular hierarchy was considered a departure from the faith of their ancestors and this meant an unacceptable difference.

Soon they became two hostile communities that even today mock and openly despise each other. There are specific rules stating that you cannot marry a person from the other religious community, and if this happen a re-consecration or sometimes, according to the interviewed villagers, a re-baptize of the bride or groom must follow (inter-religious marriage happens a lot because there is a strong prohibition not to marry people belonging up to the forth generation of relatives, the god-fathers become after the baptizing of the children blood-kin, to which the forth generation rule applies as well; this of course limits drastically the marriage options).

What is of particular significance is that this internal schism eventually would lead in 1862 to the appearance of two different church buildings (the two churches that still exist today)

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[6] They are recognized by the state as a religious association and not as a cult so they do not receive any financial aid and their clergy has to live of the freely contribution of their members.

[7] There is strong shift of meaning in this terminology that occurred in *Sch.. Popovtsi (with priests)* will refer now **not** to those accepting fugitive priest, **but** to those that belonged to an Old Believers ecclesiastical hierarchy. *Bezopopovtsi* (*without Priests*) will refer now **not** to the people refusing any kind of clergy and the performance of the sacraments solely by the believers **but** to those that would not accept the Belokrinitskaya hierarchy and accepted only Russian fugitive priests instead. This terminology, although inaccurate, is so strongly impregnated in the local usage from *Sch.* that even today when the *Bezopopovtsi*, affiliated themselves to the Novozybkovskaya hierarchy and became "with priests" they are still referred to by others and refer to themselves as "without Priests" *Bezopopovtsi*. **Because of this reason I will restrict the semantic usage of these two words to the one used by the villagers themselves**.

and two separate religious communities. Around this time we have to date the appearance of the second cemetery at the other end (western) of the village.

The separation of the living had to be followed by the separation of the dead people. They had to make sure that those dying will be buried only next to people of the same faith. The cemetery in *Sch.* not only sustains the social memory of the community (Kellehear 2007:215), functioning as emotional valve to receive closure in the grief for the departed, but organizes actively the after-life of the deceased in the sense that the priests and the family recurrently come to the grave to spiritually sustain and pray for the departed soul.

Because of these "after-life strategies" that are embodied in the cemetery, two different spaces emerged that allowed an autonomous control over the dead people (and more important over those to die). The cemeteries contributed to the objectivation of religious differentiations by allowing them to reverberate into eternity (an eternity which was of course projected here on earth: the cemetery being transformed into an open map of what was going on in the after-life).

Twenty years later when Dobrogea became part of the Romanian Old Kingdom the emigration of Turks, Mongols and Tatars followed and soon the region became the object of a Romanian colonization process organized by the State. The lands in Dobrogea were given to Romanian veterans of war and part of the land from *Sch.* to 76 families recruited from all over Romania (Fenoghen). Only 16 families decided to accept the offer and it would take twenty more years (1905) until a small Romanian community would be established here (Fenoghen 1998:159). The Romanians that I have interviewed still remember the stories told by their forefathers regarding their arrival.

They have settled in the western part of the village where they would build the third church of the village: a Romanian Orthodox one. Because they regarded the *Bezopopovtsi* (without priests) as more friendly and spiritual than the *Popovtsi* (with priests) they decided, so my informants tell me, to have their cemetery next to the cemetery of this religious community, in the opposite side of the village.

This symbolized a closer relationship between the two ethno-religious communities (confirmed by the *Bezopopovtsi* as well) but the two cemeteries (Romanian Orthodox and Russian Bezopopovtsi) were still separated by a fence and were functioning as two total separate spaces with its own rules and practices. The religious demarcation of cemeteries would still prevail, this being not complicated by the ethnic factor and by inter-ethnic marriage: under the

rule one-family-one-religion-in-each-household, the three Churches could easily divide the flock and manage the death and living.

This religious effervescence was abruptly put to an end in the early 50´s with the instauration of the communist regime. The forced collectivization and the proletarization of the labor force were accompanied by the new atheistic ideology: some priests from *Sch.* were imprisoned and the religious life was strongly regulated. During the communist regime the religious life of the village was persecuted, the churches were shut down for a while; they could not sound the church bells and were allowed to celebrate only a specific number of religious holidays. Specific religious practices around which the social life of the Old Believers gravitated were forbidden. The communist wanted to modernize the social structure of the people from *Sch.* and disenchant the overall religious-magical orientation toward life. The school played an important role and people I have interviewed recall how teachers would offer them chocolate during the feasting time so that they would sin and that they were taught by them "*that not God is the one giving us rain*".

Communist atheism managed to impose secularism as a political medium so that it was able to transcend the different practices of the self that were articulated through religion, but this secularism operated only through the beaurocratic networks and acted as an official ideology. It tried to institute a humanist discourse that regarded the Old-Believers religious practice as fundamentalist and obscure, a minor discourse that can be still heard today within the community.

The *Bezopopovtsi* could not receive Russian fugitive priests anymore and this meant several decades without priests. This religious community gradually decreased, a lot of the believers being attracted by the other *Popovtsi* church that had a hierarchy and could function within the restriction imposed by the local authorities.

The post-socialist period brought important changes in the community especially the gradual organization of Lipovenians as an ethnic minority, the political conquering of local institution and the revitalization of religious life. **This period marks the establishment of two further cemeteries in the village of *Sch.*.**

The early nineties brought something unheard among Old Believers: the forsaking of the ancestors religion and the conversion to Neo-Protestants sects. The religious pluralism to which they were exposed until now, and which was still very hard to handle, was all a variation of a basic ritualistic religiosity that was comprehendible through the predominant inter-religious correspondents (religious practice, icons, calendar, saints, liturgy, dogma, rituals, etc). Adventism,

Baptism and Pentecostalism were "alien" new religions and when they claimed the loyalty of their own relatives this unleashed great troubles. The new religious converts were expulsed in the **fourth cemetery** of the village, especially created for them, which again had its own rules of functioning and was materializing a distinct social meaning. This was the advent of the "dark side" of social pluralism and a new unimaginable "corruption of the faith" that exceeded that "danger" of the now vanished atheism.

The fifth cemetery of the village was created with great beaurocratic struggles by the decreasing Romanian community that was loosing gradually the control of the public space and the local institutions. The Romanian Orthodox priest, who officiates here every other two week, recalls that this was strongly willed by the Romanians who wanted to have their cemetery much closer to them. The Romanians explained me in our discussions that it was important for them that the cemetery was in reach of where they live and because of this the cemetery was established in the Church yard. This was an unusual thing to do because the Romanian Orthodox Church is located in the center of the town (initially, at the beginning of the 19th Century, it was at the western end, but the village expanded) and some people from the village were not comfortable with having a cemetery so close to the economical and administrative center of the town district.

The creation of this cemetery in downtown of *Sch.* in spite of the many beaurocratic paperwork and approvals, sanitary dangers and liturgical difficulties[8] underlies the post-socialist trend of re-affirming the community through specific inclusion and exclusion rules (Verdery 2006:171) and the re-ordering of worlds.

The cemetery reflects these arrangements and, especially for ethnic minorities in Romania whose cultural and social identity is strongly re-structured in the early nineties, it acts as an important instrument of reshaping the past and the social memory. The ethnic post-socialist struggles in Romania involved the cemeteries as well, which reveals that the death ancestors are closer to us than we think and that their eternal peace is often troubled by their offspring's earthly struggles. The cemetery, as all the other existing spaces, is part of the new emerging epistemic scheme that institutes new rules for the social production of space: this can be easily seen in

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[8] The Romanian Orthodox priest that does not live here and pastors other churches from the neighboring villages of *Sch.* tells me that this is not very convenient for him as well because the funeral rituals that have to be canonically performed take long time. The road form the Church to the cemetery gave him the proper time to perform them, but now that the cemetery is in the Church yard this means that he has to shorten the ceremony and speed up the ritual performance.

Transylvania were the Hungarians are the ethnic minority, here in *Sch.* this is the role played by the Romanians.

Usually this process does not lead to a relocation of the cemetery or to the creation of new ones. The new ethnic politics of meanings have as their object existing cemeteries. These old spaces undergo a process of social consecration and are crossed by new imaginary, but painful real borderlines. The fifth cemetery from *Sch.* is in this sense a statistical anomaly, but which is nevertheless part of a wider ethnic enclavisation of cemeteries and of the post-socialist cultural identity management.

It is the fourth cemetery from *Sch.* (the Adventist one) that constitutes a specific mark of the post-socialist period. A wide spread of religious conversions followed after the fall of communism and this led to the appearance of new religious communities and soon to the appearance of new cemeteries everywhere in Romania.

These new cemeteries do not constitute at all the expressed wish of these "sectarian" neo-protestant movements to signal a distinct religious identity by creating a pure ground were the few chosen would wait for the Final Judgment. This space does not come into existence as a materialization of a distinct politic of after-life and as an objectivation of a specific ideology that entitles the Church authorities to exert a social control over the mortuary spaces that embody official meanings of death and dying. The Pentecostals, Baptists, Adventists, Evangelical Christians, Jehovah Witness etc. institute a de-ritualized, de-spatialized religion in which the exterior signs of salvation are of small importance and the post-"life" of the dead body of utterly non-significance. The soul of the living is the one that becomes the object of religious power and discourse, the body of the dead is of very little value and so is the cemetery.

This new post-socialist space is rather the product of the dominant religious groups and originates from a hegemonic relationship between them and the new religious minorities. The new cemetery is the byproduct of a power struggle and the material sign of exclusion instituted unilaterally by the dominant religious groups and the result of a spatial embodiment of a conceptual scheme that could express itself now unrestrained by an atheistic political medium.

The four other cemetery spaces of *Sch.* are perceived as normal manifestations of their day to day life. They do not trouble anyone, they simply exist and are there and their peaceful co-existence shows that the social projections behind the cemetery, the regulatory power forces that give "life" to these spaces have long accommodated themselves to each other. It is the Adventist

cemetery that people take issue with and this space would be represented on an intricate mental map as one of the most dark, evil, impure space that exists in *Sch.*.

An analysis of the production of these new cemetery spaces could reveal an important chapter of the post-socialist struggles with the pluralization of life-worlds and with the growing insecurity triggered by the emergence of new religious identities. The post-socialist religious pluralization and the religious conversion that are increasingly taking place in Romania led to the generalization of a new type of dead body: the heretic dead body. I will be looking now at how this impure dead body is constructed and at the cosmologies of after-life that are set in motion.

The dead body, the intimate community of the deceased person and the death related practices that are embodied in a cemetery are integrated into a meaningful complex. I would like to explore how this complex lends itself to the different post-socialist survival strategies in coping with social and religious change and finally with death. Cemeteries by organizing these meanings of death and politics of after-life become micro-worlds that reflect the religious, ethnic and cultural struggles of the new post-socialist world.

The religious freedom of the new post-socialist world led eventually in the early 90's to the emergence of a Neo-Protestant movement in *Sch.*. This clashed with the post-socialist revival of Old-Orthodoxy in the village and its claim of being the sole expression of the true religion of Lipovenians. A contribution to this was brought by the local NGO's as well that regarded the Old-Orthodox religion (an abstract denominator of the antagonistic *Popovtsi* and *Bezopopovtsi)* as an important mean to consolidate the distinctive ethnic claim of the Lipovenians.

The first family of Adventists appeared in the village in the early 90's and they all were important members of the Old-Believers churches. They were more than regular believers; they had specific responsibilities in the Church and took actively part in the religious service. The women (who are not allowed in the front part of the Church from where only the men can perform the liturgical roles) were helping out with the administrative issues (cooking, cleaning, etc). They were not non-believers or non-belonging believers (Davie, 2000), but very religious people that decided to leave the Old Faith. Soon more converts followed and gradually they managed to establish a religious community that had its own church.

The Adventist movement appealed to the villagers because it challenged the over-ritualized religion of both *Popovtsi* and *Bezopopovtsi* and the priesthood monopolization of the sacred. In the Old Believers church only the priests are allowed to read and interpret the bible and

the mass is still officiated in Slavonic, an old language that almost nobody understands today. The Lipovenian Adventists challenged this by institutionalizing a Romanian religious service and giving people access to Romanian and Russian bibles that led to the formation of genuine local religious counter-culture.

There is a Slavonic school in town which most of the children attend, but this is not enough for them to master the church language. Besides, a believer has to understand when and how to perform the rituals: the elaborate religious meanings and the theological justification of them is up to the priest to know. "*Every time when I went to the Church (Popovtsi) I saw this man painted on the walls that was building a boat and was trying to escape from a danger. I always asked my self in my deep soul: did he manage to escape? After I became an Adventists and started reading the Bible I found out about Noah story and about the flood and how he escaped.* (A.P. women, 50 years old, one of the first converted to Adventism, wife of S.P.) "

For the Adventists the bible is the ultimate guidebook and because of this everything has to be filtered through the bible. This has strong implication for the outline of a religious ethic and the hermeneutical principle of the Word of God (that can be easily understood by the spiritual enlightened Adventist believer) clashes with the Tradition principle handed down through the Church from generation to generation "*In our tradition the Bible is not given to every pagan or unbeliever, it is given to priests and to the servants of God (...) that are called and chosen by God* (F.P. religious teacher, Bezopopovtsi)" "*we have taken the gold out of the bible and left the mud –* (Old Believer Popovtsi Priest referring to the tradition of the Church as quoted by an Adventist that was judged in the church for forsaking the faith.)

If a Lipovenian custom or holyday is not found in the Bible and it is not legitimized by it, they renounce it. This has a strong potential for contesting the traditional establishment and determines them to question all Lipovenian traditional knowledge, life-style, customs, habits, holidays and values. The Orthodox (Old and New) sense of time is strongly attuned to the rhythm of cyclic holydays, fasting, days of specific saints and social prescribed rituals. Because the New Testament Church has not practiced all these, the Adventists feel themselves compelled to renounce them. The Lord's Day is celebrated on Saturday (the Sabbatical day) and not on Sunday as in the Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant Christian traditions and each day has to be a uniform day of praying, searching and witnessing of Christ to the "heathen" Old Believers. To the Adventist all the rituals appear as cold forms without any spiritual content and "*Jesus Christ said*

not to do all these. He said that only the pagans are doing them (S.P. 50 years old, the first Adventist in *Sch.*, leader of the local Church)"

The specific religious Lipovenian dress codes are given up (*Have you not read the Scriptures? What did Jesus say? He says: Come to me **as you are**. –*S.P referring to why Adventist renounced all the specific popular costume and all other religious symbols: crosses, talismans, icons)

The renouncement of icons was particular troublesome to the Old Believers. One reason of their persecution in Russia was their icons depicting the sign of cross done with two fingers. The religious icon fulfills many important functions in the community of Old Believers and sometimes fulfils even the role of a spiritual alter-ego of the owner.

The icon is commissioned by parents for children and they (the icons) get moved with the person during his/her life-time. The icon can be easily recognized as an Old-Believers one and besides the main saint figure that appears on it, it contains sometimes as well on a small scale the saint of the person who commissioned the icon. These icons are very special treated by the believers; they are not just simple objects of worship. They mark a kinship tie in the sense that they were received from a blood-kin or from a god father (who becomes by this a blood-kin as well and falls under the prohibition of marriage rules) and are passed from one generation to another.

The two icons of the persons getting married are led in a procession to the Church ahead of the bride and groom (the icon of the groom enters always first in the Church to be blessed); an icon has to be present on site when a house is built, each house has to have a room with a rood screen orientated towards east and the main icon present; each other room should contain an icon (it is forbidden to have one in the bathroom); when the owner dies his icon can be placed in the Church: "*for the good sake of the deceased person* (L. the icon painter of *Sch.*)[9].

There are strict rules regarding the disposal of old icons and any damages inflicted involuntary to the icons have to be reported immediately. This is why all icons need to be painted on wood: "*this is a law for us – we do not paint an icon on glass, ceramic or anything that can break* (L. the icon painter of *Sch.*)". Every time the priests visit the house of a believer, he has to

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[9] It is interesting to see that the icon painter of the town and some of the priests talk about the generational shift that takes place in *Sch.* regarding the young Old Orthodox attitude towards icons. When they build houses (a lot of them after returning from the Western countries where they have worked) they do not assign the icon a central place, the icon is usually smaller and becomes a decorative object (from a religious one) among many other secular decorative objects.

re-consecrate the icon. Sometimes it looks like the icons have a life of their own and as *mana-laden* objects they come to an end in the cemetery as well.

The Adventist's "heresy" could not be expressed clearer than in his renouncement of icons and their complete removal from all private spaces. The icons are treated as false worshiping idols, as small gods that replace the true worship of the only living God: "*the Orthodox creed says that we believe in one God but when we enter the church there are so many Gods that we do not know anymore in front of which we should light up the candle* (S.P. Adventist)" Giving up the icon is the hardest part to do, Adventists tell me, and some people, although they "*receive the Word*", say that renouncing the icons is unthinkable: this is why they do not convert.

Because of this the Adventists are the worst of worse: "*there are no Lipovenians that do not have an icon in their homes. Even the alcoholics that sell their house still keep one icon for* themselves (F.T. priest from Bezopopovtsi Church)"

The Adventists sold their icons (which are rare and expensive items on the art market), which is a severe punished sin in the Old Believers church, and taught every one how sinful it is to worship them: "*During many centuries we were accustomed to icons (…) and now suddenly an semi-illiterate (referring to S.P. the leader of the local Adventist Church), please pardon the expression, mingles in the Church Dogma - which is none of our business, there are trained people for that – and dares to condemn the people that worship the icons. (…) This has upset many people. I wonder that their reaction to this was not much harsher. The Romanian Orthodox have reacted much harsher to the Greek-Catholics* (S.F, retired history teacher, an important local intellectual, attends the *Popovtsi* Church)."

A few years after the conversion, the Adventists decided to build a small gathering house where their religious meeting will take place (at the western end of the village not far from the Romanian Orthodox Church). They understand now that it is their duty to tell others about the true faith: "*I told to my brothers: Jesus Christ wants the light to shine in our village as well. We shouldn't hide the candlestick under the bushel. (S. P.).*" The religious service would be held in Romanian ("*God says this clearly: in the country in which you were born you should pray in that language and prays Him and preach in that language*") and attending both the Old Rituals and Adventist churches I could notice the differences between them.

The Slavonic liturgy and the performance of the repetitive rituals are replaced by Romanian songs that objectify important theological statements, community building, faith

encouragements etc; the Slavonic sermon (which a lot of the villagers, according to what they say, simply do not understand anymore, for the young this is a foreign language: "*what do we understand by going to church? Here in our village the religious service is in Slavonic and nobody understands it*. 20 year old female student, from the *Popovtsi* Church, talking about young people going to Church") is replaced by public bible studies (questions and answers) and motivational sermons.

The bible study represents a daily Christian obligation and a lot of Old Ritual believers admire them for their discursive biblical knowledge. (A fifty years old Adventist woman, with just four years of education, could very easily explain me, during the religious service, what the sophisticated concept of *theodicy* means and the different philosophical questions raised by non-believers. Besides this they quote by heart passages from the Bible, and employ them in their different arguments.).

There is a definite shift taking place in the religious field: a magical-ritual religion is replaced by a rationalized one and an ethic of conviction. Not the exterior religious events are the ones that count but the daily ethical actions, not the forms but the spiritual contents, not the different mediators (priests, saints, icons, etc.) but the individual religious redeemed conscience: "*God said that he is not dwelling in the houses made by the human hands, but in the souls of the people* (S. P.)"

In many ways the Adventists blur the traditional fixated gender roles existing in the Old Believers community. The socialization of these roles begins from birth (only boys are baptized in the altar, the girls are forbidden to enter this section of the church), during the religious service men sit in the front of the church and the women in the back; only men fulfill religious functions, etc. In the Adventist church they are all equal. Families can sit together, they study together the bible and the women can fulfill important religious functions (they cannot though become pastors).

The religious fellowship that they have leads to strong bonds between their members and therefore the feeling of a strong community in which all are equally part of. The emergent community is an egalitarian one where all status and kinship differences are leveled down: the new bonds are based on the emergence of a new self.

This new religious self (always in their testimonies a narrative of before and after the conversion is present and this explains how their life got transformed) is admired by some of the villagers. The puritan life that they practice draws a lot of attention and when this means loosing

their jobs (some jobs require working Saturdays which is forbidden) this is done with the conviction that following God commandments is much more important that this world. Some people secretly (the priests should not know) or openly admire their moral rectitude: "*They were all one and one. Before, they were degraded people. If this cult manages to change them, than this is a praiseworthy thing.* (Romanian from *Sch.* talking about some Adventists that were alcoholics before the conversion) "

This religious ethic is amplified by the church community that strongly regulates the life of their members. The church and their gatherings help them to institutionalize a specific social combatant identity for which telling others the Truth, persuading others to be saved, evangelizing them, etc. is of most importance.

This creates a new type of religious field that the Old-orthodox priests find very annoying: its dynamic discursive character contrasts with the self-implied, static religious truth of Old-Believers. We should not think of these Adventists as propaganda agents that try to increase the number of their sect members. The religious issues at hand are recognized by their opponents as well and their honesty and sincerity in "preaching the Word" is manifested in their attempt of creating a local new meaningful world-view capable of integrating their particular experience. "*Mother, this is not the Truth: going to the Church and tormenting yourself and performing the rituals. God wants us to love each other, to teach each other (the Scriptures)* (Adventist women that managed to convert her mother)"

This discursive religiosity leads to the formation of a Lipovenian religious counter-culture that questions the established Lipovenian tradition and the status-quo of the local leaders. The Adventists are convinced that the priests do not want their believers to know the truth and this is why they don't allow them to have access to bibles. "*The priests from here are like greedy dogs*" (Adventist referring to priests that charge a lot of money for the performance of the religious rituals*)*. Most of the Old-Believers that I have interviewed are dissatisfied with how easily the priests enriched themselves, which has in their opinions to do with the money they have to pay for the religious services. From now on all critiques toward them would be labeled by the clerics as having an Adventist origin and the implicit charge that they have talked to the Adventists, although this is forbidden.

Today a lot of people gradually learned to tolerate the new-post socialist religious diversity (some families converted in the mean time to Pentecostalism or Baptism) but in the early nineties this caused a lot of turmoil and was perceived by the entire community as a

shocking heretic movement. This, because it was religion that brought the Old Believers in *Sch.* in the first place, they fled away from Russia where they were religiously persecuted, and it was religion that kept their ethnic identity alive for centuries in midst of the sea of Romanians surrounding them. The forsaking of the ancestors religion was something unconceivable by the other three religious-ethnic communities. The collective memory of the Adventist community recalls the strong symbolic violence that they were subjected to and how everyone hated them.

The religious conversion meant sometimes that their own families would start to despise them ("*my own brothers and sisters started to hate me*", Adventist believer) and that the relatives, encouraged by the Old Believer priests, broke all relationships with them: *"My father told me that I should not come to his house anymore or touch the door handle because he would have to call the priests to re-sanctify it and this because I am a pagan now.* (S. P.)"

The Adventists were declared as religiously impure and the social interaction with them as a religious taboo. Sometimes families were completely separated (parents refused to talk with their converted children and to receive them into their homes) and where this was not possible, as in the case of married couples, the priest visited regularly their house to de-purify and re-sanctify the entire house and the Orthodox members of the family.

There was a local church council that had the clear intention of sounding the church bells and throwing the family forever outside the village. When they started to spread the Gospel around and attract young people to their church there were even complains addressed to the mayor and to the police officers, but they could do nothing because of the legal rights the Adventists had to share their beliefs and contest the existing religious order.

The main problem actually appeared when one of the Adventist believers died. *"They did not think that they will die as well"* says the mayor in office at that time. Because before the conversion the dead person was an important member of the Old-Orthodox (*Popovtsi*) community, his family though it was natural to have the right to bury their death into one of the two cemeteries where all the Lipovenians where buried.

They were surprised to find out that this could not happen because they had forsaken the ancestor's religion and it was regarded as inappropriate to bury their dead next to them. The Adventist dead body would defile and spiritually pollute the entire cemetery and this way the after-life of ancestors would be put into danger.

A strong resistance of the Old-orthodox community followed to protect their cemeteries from the Adventist "heretics". I have made several interviews with people involved in this

process (Old-orthodox priests, important leaders of the religious community, local political authorities, family of the deceased, etc.) in order to re-construct the symbolic architecture of the discourse regarding dead bodies, their appropriate place within the graveyard and the specific religious narratives and cosmology that stipulates the social implications of after-life.

For the Old Believers priest that had to deal with this issue things were very clear right from the start and no ambiguities could hinder him to do what he knew it was right: *"if they did not come to our church, how could they be buried with **our** Christians?"* (M. R. Popovtsi retired priest). He was reading the Adventists and knew what their intentions were. They were "*trying to create a path there; more Adventist would follow him (in the cemetery"* (M. R.). The Old Believers Priest understands the stake of this *first* burial and the social consequences of it, long before the Adventists do.

For the Adventist burying their death is a practical issue: the corpse needs to be buried (and four day will pass until this could finally happen – that will create a big scandal because of the sanitary issues involved) and the natural thing is to do this in the cemetery where the relatives (grandparents, parents, brothers and sisters) of the deceased rest. Besides, there is not other cemetery available. The three existing cemeteries (the second Romanian Orthodox cemetery will be created much later) have each a distinct cultural fingerprint: Romanian, Popovtsi Lipovenian and Bezopopovtsi Lipovenian and the Adventist would want to see the cemeteries not as religious categories but as cultural ones. For them there was not doubt that they were Lipovenians that had a natural right to be in that cemetery.

To prevent any surprises the priest decides to implement some safety measures: *"I have set up a committee and organized a watch guard that should not allow them to dig in the cemetery"* (M.R.) He is not doing this because he wants to take a revenge on them: it is an issue of who is ours and who's not, but most of all it is a serious spiritual issue involved that could defile the entire cemetery.

Because of that the Old-Believers priests mobilize the other priests from the neighboring Lipovenian village and the attempts of the Adventists to burry the dead body in another village fails. Soon they will find out that not only are they not welcomed in the local Popovtsi cemetery but they are not welcomed in the Bezopopovtsi cemetery as well. The rivalries between these two Old Believers denominations fade in front of the common danger of a new type of religiosity. The question of the Adventists ethnicity is raised now because the ethnicity and religion structures are fused and they imply each other. The Lipovenians do not want them anymore.

The cemeteries in *Sch.* are not just spaces of grief that marks the end of a life and the passing into non-existence. Deepening my research I came across a very strong symbolic representation of dying and of the burial place. Dying is a very complicating thing in *Sch.*. You would say that when you die, you strip of your life-history and become a decaying body. In fact the opposite is true. The dead body is just emerging as symbolic object of religious, social and cultural representation that is penetrated by the different politics of after-life. The cemetery becomes this way the stage of many different discourses: the religious being the dominant one.

The old-orthodox community (both *Popovtsi* and *Bezopopovtsi*) makes a very clear distinction between several types of burial grounds: burial grounds that lie in the **sun** and burial grounds that lie in the **shadow**. In order to make a difference between those two, at mid day you have to notice those places that are covered by shadow. They are usually close to a fence, or to a natural elevation, behind a building or near anything that shadows the ground. The cemetery space is clearly marked off and the existence of different types of burial plots is part of the general stock of knowledge. There is no one that seems not to be aware of them.

The burial thumbs that lay in the shadow are the one most feared by the believers. Here are buried a quite large category of people that were not good friends of the Church: those that did not attend the church, those that live in concubinage (a sin for which the parents of the couple can get excommunicated as well from the church for not fulfilling their duty as spiritual parents), those that commit suicide, those that die in mysterious circumstances (as naked while taking a bath, or drunken) or in situations that are not very clear and where there is the slightest doubt of suicide. If this happens the priest is not giving to the grieving family the church stretchers to carry the dead body, the flags, nor is he officially taking part at the funeral. The church assigns a shadow plot in the cemetery where that person has to be buried.

For smaller sins and wrongdoings, like for example not saying their confession for the past seven years, the Church is allowing the dead body to be buried next to the others in the sun, but no religious service is held and the flags and the church stretchers are not given by the priests. This is an intermediary category, but it fulfills the same function as the first one: the trajectory of the soul in after-life is clear from what is done (or more exactly not done) to the dead body. The priests refuse the performance of any other rituals and the dead people buried here just like the one buried in the shadow are treated the same: their names is not entered in the church books (which means no future praying for them). One of the interviewed priests expressed this very

clear: "*if no religious service is held he remains forever like that, so everyone forgets about him, and it appears as he never existed* (M. R.)."

The last category is that of those that are buried in the light and these are all the religious people that followed during their lifetime the church's teachings. The cemetery does not appear to be social stratified, the light and shadow is everywhere the same. Some say thought, that the priests receive special plots, close to the entrance of the cemetery (the people that commit suicide are not allowed to be brought in the cemetery through the entrance gates, but have to be carried over the fence of the cemetery).

In the last decade the conceptual scheme that enforces these rules is increasingly relativized by those that object to this unmerciful treatment. This is a minor voice but the more "free" the society gets (as the priests express this; this is correlated by them with the Cable TV, modern life style, the West), the voice is increasingly heard. Because of that the shadow places are reserved more and more to the "big sinners", those that have sexual intercourse and live unmarried together ("God *forbid that a boy and a girl have sexual relationships before marriage*", I.V. *Popovtsi* priest) and those that commit suicide. All the other sinners are buried in the light, but this is just a tricky compromise, because everyone knows (or not?) what happens to these dead bodies and to their souls. For people that are very persuasive a further compromise can be reached and the priests can give them the church stretchers and the flags. But again this is not followed by any spiritual and ritual consequences and these dead bodies are treated just like the ones buried in shadow. This is only away to save the appearances.

"*For the person that has no fear of God, it would've been much better for him not to be born at all.*" (I. V. -Bezopopovtsi priest) For most of the religious people from *Sch.* these conceptual schemes that assign to the dead body a plot in the cemetery and to the plot a specific ritual, that decades from now on will be performed, make a lot of sense. The priests have no doubt regarding what the after-life trajectory of each dead body is. Talking about a recent female artist that has died in car accident together with her unmarried partner and was expecting a child the priests say: "*the majority of the artists live in concubinage, and God is punishing them for this. People say that they will be in heaven and the Orthodox priest on TV said that only God knows what will happen to them in after-life, but according to what we know they will never be in heaven because they were not married and have lived together*" (Popovtsi priests in a collective interview).

Where do the Adventists come in this intricate scheme? "*It is much worse to become an Adventist than to commit suicide. They have left our church and gave up our faith* (M. F. Popovtsi priest)". Because of this, there is no place for them in the cemetery. Four days have passed and the mayor that regarded this as an inhuman treatment ("*I don't have anything with the church but I am upset with the priests*", Mayor in that period, Romanian Orthodox believer) called upon the government authorities and administratively solve the issues by creating a new cemetery in *Sch.*. This was located next to the Orthodox Romanian cemetery at the eastern end of the village where the Bezopopovtsi cemetery was located as well (because there is another cemetery between the Bezopopovtsi cemetery and Adventist one, the priests talk about a great distance that separates them although this is situated no more than 30-40 meters away.)

This cemetery ground is represented by most of the villagers as a very impure ground, symbolically polluted and they talk about it as a "forsaken garden". Almost all the people that were interviewed are talking about that piece of land as being located somewhere outside the border's cemetery, a place that is forgotten and where only weeds are growing.

This cosmology of after-life is not just a simple socially non-relevant scheme that some social marginalized priests believe in; it has a wide currency and structures the life of a lot of the members of the community. Some people have told me that they would like to visit the local Adventist Church to see how they worship God and this because they are very impressed by the lives of the people that got converted: they are very moral persons; they know the Scriptures very well. But they are afraid of doing this because if the priest finds out about this then this person will not receive a proper funeral. There are several ways to demean your self, but this one is the worst.

A lot of other people that are not religious are careful to visit the priests every year to say their confession so that later they could receive a proper burial. People tell me of atheists (not many known in the village) that on the dying bed are pursued by their family to accept the priest so that they would not be embarrassed by his death. The cemetery is this way transformed by the traditional religious power in an instrument of controlling the lives of the believers and unbelievers alike.

The cemetery becomes this way a micro-world that reflects the religious, ethnic and cultural struggles of the new post-socialist world. Each one of the dead bodies has a certain conceivable place within the graveyard. To each one of them there is a web of meanings attached

and each one becomes an object of different politics of afterlife that the different religious agents issue. Only the Adventists do not have any place in this symbolic universe.

In *Sch.* you can not go to church, break all relationships with the church even commit suicide; there is always a conceivable place for you in the afterlife. There is even one day a year when the priest is saying a common prayer for all people that are buried in the cemetery no matter if they are buried in the light or in the shadow, hoping that God will have mercy on all of them. But the same thing cannot be said about the Adventists. For them there is no chance left in after-life, they are buried somewhere outside the cemetery, in a place than can be hardly conceptualized. Dying as an Adventist, and since then a few of them died, is conceived as one of the worst way of dying and your body gets put in one of the lowest and impure grounds.

The presence of the Adventists in Old Believers cemeteries (Popovtsi or Bezopopovtsi) would have meant that the cemetery would not represent anymore a space that materializes a specific way of conceiving the after-life. Their presence there would've eventually had as a consequence the conceptualizing of the cemetery as neutral space that accommodates conflicting views of after-life. This way the topography of the religious space (light and shadow) would've been relative to the point of views of looking at the one and same cemetery.

This constitutes definitely a threat to the traditional religious power that wants to be the only sovereign power that regulates the ultimate meanings of life. Only by expulsing the Adventists out of the cemetery and classifying this space as a much more darker and impure area than even the spaces that lie in shadow, can this power safeguard its proper conditions of functioning.

After death the body has to undergo a specific trajectory that is strongly dependent on the traditional religious power and on its expertise and consecrating rituals. By negotiating the fluid cemetery categories the religious power obliges the submissive believers to acknowledge its supremacy. As we have seen, the minor humanistic discourse and the small anticlerical rebellions are easy to master. An institutionalized counter-religious discourse that challenges not an aspect or other of the traditional religion but its entire foundations is much harder to handle within the one cemetery (by assigning them a perpetual shadow section).

The Adventists manage to generalize a total different conception of dying that is not at all dependent on external markings and symbolic spaces. When a person dies, he is dead forever and at the end of times he will face the Great Judgment. A good death is a "death in Christ": a renouncement of the world and a death of the sinful nature followed by a spiritual rebirth that

takes place here on earth. You had a good death only if you had a good life, a spiritual imitation of Christ. The dead body is worth nothing and all the religious requiems performed by the priests and the family of the deceased cannot add a single thing to what will happen to the soul in the after-life.

For an Adventist the funeral has a strict emotional meaning (even this should not dominate the funeral, because desperation is a lack of faith that they will meet the deceased again in the after-life) and because of this all people are entitled to a good funeral. The cemetery can at best become a place of grief: it cannot be a theater of the after-life.

Because of all this, faced with the post-socialist pluralization of religion, the traditional religious power was forced to re-enchant the concept of the heretic dead-body and establish new borderlines within the cemeteries. I stumbled on the same manifestations of the traditional religious power while I was exploring the religious conversion of Gypsies to Pentecostalism. The social segregation of Gypsies is obvious as well when we look at how the cemetery space is organized in a village. The ethnic and religious boundaries are prolonged in the after-life and they are immortalized and portrayed as strong identity borders. This gives you the feeling that the Neo-Protestant Gypsies are twice marginalized: first as Gypsies and secondly as Neo-protestants. The graveyard of a Romanian village (the same applies to the villages where the Hungarians are the majority) is segregated according to ethnic criteria. Usually the Gypsies are buried in their own section of the graveyard and exactly as they are not allowed to build a house next to the house of a Romanian but only at the end of the village in a dedicated section, so the dead Gypsies are not allowed to be mixed with the dead Romanians and are buried in their own section.

But after the post-socialist religious pluralization and the massive religious conversion to Pentecostalism among Gypsies, a new type of section emerged in the cemetery. The Neo-Protestants Gypsies are buried as well in a special segregated sector within the Orthodox (Reformat in the Hungarian villages) section of the cemetery and are spatially segregated from the other Orthodox Gypsies. In one case, the Neo-protestant Gypsies that I have interviewed told me that in the section they received a few years ago when the first of their believers died, an un-baptized child has been previously buried. Usually when this happens it is a sign that that piece of land is symbolically polluted and lies outside the blessed graveyard. Assigning such type of land to the Gypsies is a social way of depicting religious conversion as a betrayal of the very ethos of the community. This is why they have to be buried outside the cemetery: because they should *de*

facto be perceived outside the community. This exclusion is objectified in the after-life as well, which enforces even more the current use of such identity-stereotypes.

The emergence of new cemeteries in *Sch.* and the re-affirming and re-mastering of the borderlines in the existing cemeteries depicts the social and cultural struggles triggered by the post-socialist pluralization of religion. For some this is the only right way to deal with the issue while others feel themselves brutalized by the enforcement of such violent exclusion. Others start to question their own conceptual schemes materialized by the cemeteries, as a Romanian Orthodox priest from *Sch.* sadly noticed: "*We can live together, eat together, drink together here in the village, but we have to die separately*."

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