The Panoptic Performance of Masculinity for the Romanian Ethno-Nationalist Project: Disciplinary Intersections in Populist Radical Right Print Media

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Contemporary analyses and theories of intersectionality employ gender, ethnicity/ race, social class and sexual orientation as key categories in the examination of the intersecting systems of difference that constitute the multiple and shifting identity of the modern self.[1] This article focuses on the interplay between privilege and oppression in the performance of masculinities in the context of contemporary developments in Central and Eastern Europe. More precisely, it addresses the print media's role in ascribing particular performances of masculinity as indispensable for the ethno-nationalist project, concentrating on populist radical right media in Romania. The study's point of departure is the particularity of the Romanian polity, which resonates with similar developments in the region and elsewhere across Europe, and is characterised by the intertwined process of strengthening nationalist manifestations and the growing visibility of religion in politics.

In order to explore how a specific issue is represented in the media I draw on media framing. This means I look at how a topic of interest is given meaning and how it is described in media discourse (Entman, 1993, p. 52; Sternadori, 2014, p. 302). In this light, the media's framing of what it means to be a "normal" Romanian man with the help of Orthodox Christianity, the religion of a majority of the population in Romania, does not innocently describe what a Romanian man "really is". On the contrary, I maintain that Romanian male identity is the consequence of a performative process by which a specific set of experiences are presented as "natural", with the intention to coalesce support for the ethno-nationalist project. That project draws on

a mythical common origin and a pure genealogy within the national borders to defend the idea of ethnic homogeneity.

My analysis focuses on the weekly Greater Romania Magazine (*Revista România Mare*, henceforth RRM), which was the main print media outlet of the populist radical right Greater Romania Party (*Partidul România Mare*, henceforth PRM). The RRM had a unique position in the contemporary Romanian media landscape. It successfully consolidated a significant readership since its founding, which in turn reflected positively in the electoral support for the PRM and in the overall influence the newspaper exerted over Romanian media discourse.[2] Indicative of the newspaper's importance, the PRM front-figure and chairman, late Corneliu Vadim Tudor,[3] kept his position as RRM's editor-in-chief even when he temporarily entrusted the party chairmanship to others. The RRM played a central role in escalating ethnic tensions and framing ethnic minorities as threats to the nationalist project of an ethnically homogeneous Romania. I explore how Tudor's RRM editorials between 2000 and 2012 have disciplined the performance of masculinities in Romania. By looking at the overlap between escalating nationalism and an increasing influence and visibility of religion in politics from an intersectional perspective, I show how religious affiliation is employed as a marker of ethnic belonging and thus informs the performance of a normative masculinity. Media framing enables me to sketch the panopticon of masculinity performances in Tudor's editorials, and the disciplining endeavours these representations enable.

Theoretical Building Blocks: Intersectional Analysis of Ethno-Nationalist Masculinities

Intersectionality scholarship is concerned with the simultaneous and mutually shaping systems of difference and inequality on the basis of gender, ethnicity/race, social class, and sexual orientation. Working with these "classic categories" of difference has also led to the recognition of heteronormativity as an important element of most gender regimes. An important line of intersectionality scholarship concentrates on the intersection of various systems of difference and inequality to theorise the identity and oppression of disadvantaged subjects, with the identification of "black women as prototypical intersectional subjects" (Nash, 2008, p. 4). I focus on how the dominant group is traversed by several intersecting categories because I want to uncover the workings of masculine identity at the juncture between privilege and oppression (Nash, 2008, pp. 10-11; Walby, Armstrong & Strid, 2012, p. 230).

My understanding of gender is in line with Judith Butler's conceptualization of gender as implying a continuous process of one's performance of masculinity or femininity (Butler, 1995, 2004). One's own performance of masculinity is circumscribed

by the constitutive boundaries within which an individual becomes intelligible as male.[4] By combining recent work on normativity and gender performances with previous Foucauldian definitions of disciplining, we can arrive at a better understanding of how disciplining masculinity performances function. Foucault has made us see that disciplining aims to (re)produce a particular line of conduct; it is a mode of wielding power and crafting docile political subjects by means of an updated instrument of selection, separation and exclusion (Foucault, 1995, pp. 135-138). Concerning the disciplining of gender performances, queer theory has exposed the means through which some performances of masculinity are privileged as authentically masculine and invested with normative power (Bersani, 1996, p. 81; Butler, 1995, pp. 135-138, 2004, p. 48). The disciplining of masculinity performances entails a complex process through which certain performances are selected as desirable and are given a normative status, such as that of the father. These performances are in turn separated from other performances of masculinity that are deemed abnormal and foreign, such as homosexual masculinity and the masculinity of the ethnic Other, which are consequently excluded on grounds of their constitutive abnormality.

An intersectional perspective brings to light how disciplining masculinity performances are entangled with other identity markers; marital status is taken as an indication of the heterosexual norm and religion is understood as cue for ethnic belonging. Previous research has drawn attention to the complex hierarchy that consolidates at the intersection between ethnicity, masculinity and heteronormativity in Central and Eastern Europe, whereby power – manifest either through physical prowess and/or violent dominance of other men – and heterosexual virility are constitutive of the proper performance of masculinity (Norocel, 2013; Zarkov, 2011). The imperatives of the ethno-nationalist project, that of reproducing the nation and containing and excluding extraneous and dangerous influences, rest on heteronormative conceptions of the nation, portrayed as an enlarged family under the guidance of a man (Norocel, 2013, p. 180). Consequently, in the absence of "either power or heterosexual virility, men are not seen as 'proper men'" (Zarkov, 2011, p. 109).

The Context of Romania: Religion, Politics and the Ethno-National Project

To a certain extent the interplay between religion and politics in Romania reflects a larger regional trend in the aftermath of state-socialism, one that actively employs religious appeals to construct and consolidate the new political order, despite the claimed secular character of the state (Stan & Turcescu, 2007, p. 43). This also unveils the gendered character of these developments, as "state-building, nation-

alism and democracy-building have been closely intertwined during the consolidation of a fraternal, masculine public political sphere in the wake of [state-socialism]" (Chiva, 2005, p. 81).

In the Romanian context, however, the various religious denominations exert an uneven influence in politics. In the past 25 years the Romanian Orthodox Church, which claims the allegiance of over 85 percent of the population, has proved a significant element in shaping the electoral agenda of most political parties in search of a large electoral support. It is worth noting that the division between the Orthodox majority and the other religious denominations (be they the other Christian denominations, or the Jewish and Islamic faiths) runs parallel to the ethnic cleavage between the Romanian majority and the various ethnic minorities in the country, among which the Hungarians and Roma are numerically the most significant (Stan, 2010, p. 38). Religious affiliation is in other words a cue for ethnic belonging, and as such a key ingredient in coalescing solidarity for the ethno-nationalist project.

The Orthodox Church has been vocal on two issues of interest here. First, in order to deflect accusations of collaboration with the Ceauşescu dictatorship, the Orthodox Church has constantly underscored "the link between Orthodoxy and Romanianism, along with the importance of preserving Romanian national identity in the face of growing modernization, globalization, secularization, European Union integration, and religious competition" (Stan & Turcescu, 2007, p. 51). Second, the Orthodox Church has taken a staunchly conservative stand on defining the acceptable sexual behaviour, on such matters as abortion rights, prostitution, and non-normative sexual lifestyles (homosexuality). Consequently, it has vehemently opposed the timid efforts at the decriminalization of homosexuality in 2000 – making Romania among the last countries in the region to do so – and even demanded a referendum on the matter, as the country attempted to join the European Union. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the most vociferous allies of the Orthodox Church came from the radical ethno-nationalist quarters, wherein the PRM was the most important parliamentary political force (Norocel, 2013, p. 117; Turcescu & Stan, 2005, pp. 292-298).

The visible interference of the Orthodox Church on legislative matters, defining homosexuality as a sin not only against religious values, but also against the traditional family and a threat to the Romanian society (Turcescu & Stan, 2005, p. 297), and the unambiguous position of the PRM in this context shed light on the constitutive role played by religion in the ethno-nationalist project. Indeed, when mapping the PRM's key ideological tenets, the continuation of the ideological hybrid of nationalism-fuelled state-socialism of the late Ceauşescu regime comes forth: virulent ethno-nationalist populism under the guise of Orthodox mysticism, on matters of identity and culture, whilst left-leaning paternalist and centralist on economic

issues (Norocel, 2011, p. 454). I focus on Tudor's editorials in RRM to explore how Orthodox religion and heterosexuality have been employed to generate and reify specific performances of respectable Romanian masculinity and to differentiate between these and the masculinity performances of the Others.

Print Media, Populist Radical Right and Gendered Nationalism in Romania

Research that looks into the structures of oppression in and through print media in the Romanian context is a recent phenomenon.[5] It is in line with the incipient intersectional analyses across the wider Central and Eastern Europe dealing with the political construction of masculinities in the context of ethno-nationalist discourses.[6] From this work two main conclusions come forth. A first conclusion concerns the overall impact of media as "a source of images from which people gain models for personhood – masculinity and femininity – and around which they weave the details of their intimate lives, but even more as sites of political socialization and ideological conflict" (Gal & Kligman, 2000, p. 106). A second conclusion, though closely related to the first one, pertains to the rhetorical excesses of the populist radical right manifest in the region that provide an example of "gendered nationalism of a sort rarely found in contemporary Europe (the Balkans being a possible exception)" (Graff, 2009, p. 133).

In the context of Romanian print media landscape, the RRM weekly had a special place. The RRM was not only the most important print outlet for populist radical right ideology in Romania, it also crystallised political support for that ideology, which led to the founding of the PRM in November 1990. Consequently, Tudor became both editor-in-chief and chairman of the party. This allowed Tudor to use the RRM as the main means to propagate his political message to a relatively stable readership and voter base. Illustratively, in early-2000s the RRM self-reported a circulation of about 60,000 copies per week – or about 400,000 readers, a figure far larger than any other party-affiliated newspaper – only to see its numbers slowly decreasing to about 46,000 copies per week in self-reported sales (Stewart, 2008, pp. 412-414).

To a certain extent, the RRM's shifting readership mirrored the political fortunes of the party. More clearly, in the aftermath of the 2000 parliamentary elections, Tudor led the second largest party and main opposition force with 19.5 percent in the Chamber of Deputies (lower house) and 21 percent in the Senate (upper house). The 2004 parliamentary elections marked a loss of political leverage, the PRM polling some 13 percent for the Chamber, and 13.65 for the Senate. Despite this decline, Tudor managed a successful campaign for the 2009 European parliamentary elections, in which the party polled 8.6 percent of the votes, and became one of the

PRM's three MEPs. Tudor's and the PRM's political fortunes then dwindled, polling only 1.24 percent for the Chamber and 1.47 percent for the Senate in the 2012 national elections.

Despite the significant fluctuations in electoral support, Tudor and the party had played a significant role in shaping the contemporary political discourse in Romania (Cinpoeş, 2010, pp.166-171; Norocel, 2013, p. 133). The RRM had a key role in this context as it enabled Tudor to bypass the scrutiny of mainstream media, which was often critical of both the PRM and his personal political performance. With this in mind, I consider the collected editorials, which reflect Tudor's unmediated and unfiltered discursive articulation of populist radical right ideology and the consolidation of media frames, to be of particular interest here.

Media Frames: Panoptic Mechanism for Disciplining Masculinity Performances

By means of a qualitative framing analysis I want to provide thick descriptions of the disciplinary means at work in populist radical right media in Romania. Framing implies that one "*select[s] some aspects of a perceived reality and make[s] them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation* for the item described" (Entman, 1993, p. 52, italics in original). An important aspect underlined by previous research is that media framing can activate a specific interpretation of the communicated topic – consistent with, for example, stereotypes of masculinity performance, ethnic belonging, and/or sexual orientation – even when only some of the frame's constitutive elements are present in the analyzed communication (Dan & Iorgoveanu, 2013, p. 210; Sternadori, 2014, pp. 302-303). More explicitly, in this context, the fragmentary description of a "reliable" politician as a God-fearing family father is sufficient to indicate the media frame of a normative performance of masculinity: the image here is that of a Christian Orthodox man belonging to the Romanian ethnic majority in a legally sanctioned monogamous union with a Romanian woman that has led to the procreation of offspring.

Another aspect worth keeping in mind is that media framing not only indicates how readers are to understand masculinity performances, but that they also actively partake in reifying certain performances as the desirable norm. Inspired by studies concerned with the creation and governing of docile political subjects (Castel, 1991; Foucault, 1995), I argue that media framing engenders a panoptic mechanism, in the sense that it functions not simply as a hinge between the power mechanism of naturalizing a specific masculinity performance akin to the ethno-nationalist project, on the one hand, and the function of mediating it to media consumers and potential

voters, on the other. In fact, media framing is a means of "making power relations function in a function, and of making a function through these power relations" (Foucault, 1995, p. 207). Media framing may lead to men's voluntary submission to the panoptic mechanism by their performance of the masculinity thus ascribed. A caveat: in its panoptic function media framing exerts disciplinary power, but it is not engendering masculinity performances *per se*, nor is it free from contestation and opposition from alternative performances of masculinity (Kelsey & Bennett, 2014, pp. 41-43).

The panoptic role of media framing needs to be understood in the contemporary context of the *mediatization* of politics (Couldry & Hepp, 2013), whereby politicians interact less with their constituencies and instead rely more and more on the media for the dissemination of their ideological message. In turn, the media wields its own influence upon the political act, which consequently becomes dependent on this process of mediation. Among the various political actors struggling for the media's attention, the leaders of populist radical right parties tend to stand out by the use of a particularly rough language and emotional appeals (Bos, van der Brug & de Vreese, 2011, pp. 184-185; Dan & Iorgoveanu, 2013, p. 209; Norocel, 2013, pp. 22-23). More clearly, the media framing of populist radical right parties actively depicts and indicates which masculinity performances are constitutive to the ethno-nationalist project and distinguishes them from those deemed dangerous or foreign (Castel, 1991, p. 288; Dan & Iorgoveanu, 2013, p. 210; Sternadori, 2013, pp. 147-148).

Method and Data Selection

My qualitative analysis implies that I have identified the main frames in the selected data; I have taken into account both the causal connections the editorials seek to effect and their style (Sternadori, 2014, p. 305). Since the study is qualitative in nature, no coding manual was employed; instead, the data were analyzed in three steps. First the editorials were divided into phrases so as to enable an easier identification of frames. In the second step, the identified frames were put together and attention was paid to the phrasal context in which they occurred in order to avoid over-emphasizing the role of separate sentences. In the last step, based on evidence from editorials with the most consistent descriptions, the study zeroed in on the role of religion in distinguishing the ideals of Romanian masculinity performance from the Other masculinities, both sexually and ethnically Other. Previous research has evidenced that established media (both print and TV) may attempt to fence off the populist radical right party and its leader. Consequently, party media plays a crucial role in communicating the party's ideological stance, especially at election times (Bos et al., 2011, p. 183; Norocel, 2013, p. 23).

The data are structured in four clusters of editorials authored by Tudor, which mirror the PRM's political milestones in the past decades. The first one focuses on Tudor's RRM editorials around the 2000 Romanian parliamentary and presidential elections, which witnessed Tudor's unexpected run-off against the centre-left candidate. The second concentrates on his editorials at the occasion of the 2004 Romanian parliamentary and presidential election, which marked a significant dip in the PRM's political performance. The third cluster concerns the editorials authored by Tudor around the 2009 European parliamentary elections, in which the PRM secured three MEPs. The last cluster contains the RRM editorials towards the 2012 Romanian parliamentary elections, which witnessed the PRM's unsuccessful attempt to pass the electoral threshold.

From the 210 editorials published during the selected years, 65 were items collected bases on a meticulous search in each item for references to (Romanian) men, masculinity, religions, ethnic minorities, family and (homo-)sexuality. Simple listings were discarded (Sternadori, 2013, pp. 148-150). The cited data are the author's own translation if not stated otherwise. Two conceptual articulations were identified with the help of the chosen intersectional categories (masculinity, ethnicity and heteronormativity). In what follows I first deal with the idealised masculinity performance of Romanian men as underpinned by Orthodox Christianity and traditional family values, and closely mirroring Tudor's own political persona. Second, I discuss the (hyper-)sexualised masculinity of the ethnic Other. Set against the description of the Romanian man, this evidences ethnic and racial anxieties.

A Panoptic Inventory of the Performance of Romanian Masculinity

Orthodox Christianity and Traditional Family Values

From the analysis of media framing at work in Tudor's editorials, the performance of masculinity that is ascribed authenticity as "truly" Romanian and invested with normative power is one intimately connected to Orthodoxy. Tudor even makes use of the specificity of Romanian language, which has a grammar structure allowing gendered declensions, to refer to the Romanian people in masculine terms. In this context, being Orthodox becomes a certificate for ethnic "purity" and moral superiority whereby the ethnic Romanian men thus identified are crowning a hierarchy of ethnic belonging. Indeed, the masculinity performances described in this manner display moral superiority based on their uncorrupted innocence "because they have a genetic heritage similar to that of the first Christians – selflessly helping others – but certainly not suicidal and not inclined to love out of interest" (Tudor, 2000f, p. 14). A case in point is Tudor's vicious opposition to the decriminalization of homosexu-

ality in 2000, a year described in mystical terms as "the very year when we celebrate two thousand years from the birth of Our Lord Jesus Christ". While saluting the official opposition of the highest prelate in the Orthodox Church, Tudor left no room for ambiguity on the matter, not only condemning homosexuality but also assimilating it to disease, paedophilia and immorality:

> We are offended by the daring attitude of these sick individuals, who call their fetid stinking mud love. […] We use this occasion to remind everyone that the Romanian People is Christian and has healthy morals. And we also want to remind everyone that it is among the homosexuals that the killer paedophiles are recruited […] To set free and encourage these behavioural extravagances represents a deathly danger to the Country's youth […When] a man is on all fours and uses his mouth and other orifices for disgusting means, he has no moral right to preach to others (Tudor, 2000a, p. 14).

Such a hierarchical ordering resting on Orthodox religion also enforces a differentiation between the "real", "strong", "healthy" and "normal", on the one hand, and the "foreign", "weak", "diseased" and even "abnormal", on the other. Tudor often employed this hierarchy to describe himself as a "martyr", "Christian warrior" and a politician of unblemished morals entrusted the Messianic mission of building Romania anew. His masculinity performance was often portrayed in stark contrast to his political opponents, who were depicted as "a corrupt Mafia", "vulgar", "alcoholic", "unholy" and even "effeminate" or displaying "abhorrent" homosexual tendencies (Tudor, 2000c, p. 1; 2000d, p. 14; 2000e, p. 15; 2004a, p. 13; 2004c, p. 12; 2004d, p. 12; 2004e, p. 1; 2009a, p. 12; 2012a, p. 9). The piously Orthodox Romanian man was a performance carefully monitored; any lapses were promptly sanctioned with the help of an apocalyptic vocabulary; those few public supporters for decriminalizing homosexuality and later on for equal rights before the law were labelled "chevaliers of Apocalypse" avenging a "disqualifiable attack against the Family and the Christian Church" (Tudor, 2000a, p. 14, 2004b, p. 12, 2009b, p. 13, 2012b, p. 23).

The (Hyper-)Sexualised Masculinity of the Ethnic Other

The disciplinary intentions concerning the masculinity performance of the ethnic Other reveal in turn the paternalist preoccupation with the danger of "pollution", of irremediable damage of the purity of the Romanian national fabric at the hands of a supposedly hypersexual albeit inferior masculine Other. Among the various ethnic minorities that attract Tudor's editorial attention, the Roma minority (described in Tudor's editorials exclusively in a derogatory manner as "Țigani" – in English,

"Gypsies") occupies centre stage. The masculinity performance of the Roma is described as a menacing uncontrollable hypersexual masculinity. The Roma men are described to be continuously travelling "in packs" like wolves across the country terrorizing and raping the Romanian women who happen to come on their way. At the same time, these men fathered a numerous offspring with their overly fertile Roma women (Tudor, 2000b, p. 14, 2000e, p. 15, 2000g, pp. 14-15). The editorials contour a "demographic race" scenario (Yuval-Davis, 1997, pp. 26-27): the task of the morally superior Romanian masculinity performance to civilise and eventually assimilate minorities into the Romanian national body was at a risk of being over-turned by the unrestrained sexuality of the Roma men that threatened to corrupt the genetic heritage of Romanians.

The disciplining of masculinity performances also extends to the wider European context, whereby an appeal for a "Europe of Nations" and stark scepticism towards a more integrated EU are delivered embedded into a religious message, which thinly veils racist conceptions about the dangers of miscegenation. Indeed, Tudor proclaimed that

> We believe there is a true meaning for the existence of separate people left by God onto this earth. I do not believe in the mix of races, I do not believe that God wanted to mix Blacks and Whites, yellow [skins] and red skins, and so on […Although mixed marriages may exist] we cannot base our demographic policies on these few isolated occurrences. A return to the Tower of Babel is not desirable (Tudor, 2012c, p. 13).

In other words, multicultural accommodation policies are here dismissed because they bring about social dissolution and destruction of the European of nations, a clear violation of God's "true" intentions. This may be regarded as an appeal to a higher authority (the Christian God, in this case) to justify Tudor's endeavours to police racial and ethnic borders. It also exposes the deeply patriarchal conceptualization of the ethno-nationalist project, a trait shared with the populist radical right parties across Europe, one that reduces women to objects, valued for their wombs and their genetic and cultural reproductive ability.[7]

Disciplining Masculinity for the Ethno-Nationalist Project

With this article I have wanted to contribute to intersectional scholarship, both theo-retically and empirically. My theoretical contribution concerns the analysis of the dominant group from an intersectional perspective, in the context of strengthening ethno-nationalist manifestations and the growing visibility of religion in European politics.[8] I have unveiled the normative dynamic between masculinity, ethnicity and sexual orientation as categories of difference in the Central and Eastern European

context. With the help of media framing, then, my empirical contribution has evidenced the interplay between these categories of difference in disciplining masculinity performances that were deemed suitable for accomplishing the ethno-nationalist project, and narrowly ascribing religious piety and reproductive heterosexuality as cornerstones for safeguarding the purity of the Romanian nation. In Tudor's editorials, the media framing seem inherently connected to the tenet of charismatic leadership that populist radical right ideology hails (Bos et al., 2011; Norocel, 2013). The leader, conterminous with Tudor's political persona, displays a masculinity performance of providential nature and unsullied origins, entrusted with a Messianic task to (re)establish the Romanian polity built upon patriarchal values sourced on Orthodox moral precepts, to ensure a return to "truth" and "wisdom". Tudor's sudden death in the autumn 2015 opens up the question who would be stepping in to fill this position.

The disciplinary intersections of masculinity, ethnicity, religion and sexuality in the populist radical right media need to be understood, however, in the context of Romanian polity. Tudor's portrayal of masculinity performances involved in the Romanian ethno-national project, although grossly exaggerated, is not substantially different from the mainstream media framing at work in contemporary Romania. Although men may actively resist the panoptic mechanisms described above, the dominant framing in mainstream Romanian media seems engaged in presenting and enforcing masculinity performances that are built upon similar albeit more restrained forms of gendered nationalism – in which religion still plays a key role in articulating both a deeply traditional understanding of gender performances and in lending support to an exclusionary conception of the Romanian polity as being built by and for ethnic Romanians.[9] By explicitly focusing on the populist radical right media framing that depicts men's position in contemporary Romania, the present study has provided a means to conceptualise the overall workings of these panoptic mechanisms from an intersectional perspective.

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Notes

1. See for example Celis *et al.* 2014; Davis, 2008; Hancock, 2007; McCall, 2005; Walby *et al.* 2012, Zarkov 2011.

2. See: Cinpoeş, 2010; Norocel, 2011; 2013; Stewart, 2008.

3. Tudor passed away in mid-September 2015, when this article was under review. Tudor's death and the consequent discontinuation of RRM make this article a pertinent stepping stone for analyses of Tudor's political legacy.

4. See: Bereswill & Neuber, 2011; Hearn, 2011; Norocel, 2013; Zarkov, 2011.

5. See: Norocel, 2013; Oprea, 2005; Oxman-Martinez, Marinescu & Bohard, 2009; Woodcock, 2007.

6. See: Graff, 2009; True, 2004; Zarkov, 2007; 2011.

7. See: Norocel, 2011; Yuval-Davis, 1997; Zarkov, 2007.

8. See: Graff, 2009; True, 2004; Zarkov, 2011.

9. See: Chiva, 2005; Oprea, 2005; Norocel, 2013; Woodcock, 2007.