ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF SOLITUDE: ROMANIAN IMMIGRANTS IN CANADA

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by Irina Culic

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IRINA CULIC

ABSTRACT*. This article investigates the migration of Romanians to Canada from its beginning at the turn of the twentieth century to its present dwindling numbers. It gives an account of the main waves of migration, through the lens of ethnicity. It shows how Romanian ethnicity was formed and continuously remade in Canada at different historical junctures and immigration regimes. The relational nature of ethnicity offers the possibility to investigate the work done by migration policies on individual subjectivity and social interaction.

Keywords: Immigration, Romanians, Canada, ethnicity, policy

Introduction

Romanian immigrants arrived for the first time to Canada at the end of the nineteenth century. They had been enticed by the promise of land, through a policy aimed to domesticate the country’s vast lands. Along the twentieth century and into the start of this century, Romanians have continued to come to Canada. Every lot of new immigrants carried the political conditions of their making into their new life, effecting distinct associations, perceptions, and subjectivities. They now form an ethnic population whose members often declare to be fractured, disunited, and suspicious. This article investigates the variable modes of immigrant Romanian ethnicity in Canada, in historical context.

It starts with an outlook of the Romanian ethnicity puzzle in Canada, as viewed from the church. Church exerts a centripetal force on the old and new Romanian Canadians, embodying the awareness of their ethnicity. The edifice of the church is metonymically related to their country of origin. Despite their considerably different experiences in and of Romania, and despite different

1 Faculty of Sociology and Social Work, Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania, e-mail: irina.culic@socasis.ubbcluj.ro

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regimes of exit and reception, the country of origin, as abstract object, stays central for Romanian Canadians' ethnic identity - both as a source of commonality, and as a constituting "other".

The article then continues with the account of the three main waves of migration, unfolded during more than a century. The first wave emerged at the end of the nineteenth century and stalled right after World War One (WWI). The second wave of migration set off with the upheaval brought by World War Two (WWII) and continued during the communist rule in Romania. The present wave of migration is related to the transformations that followed the fall of the communist bloc. The account examines the way immigration conjunctures - where political regimes, migration policies, international commitments, and discourses of human worth interact, shaped Romanian ethnicity in Canada. The article concludes by discussing ethnicity as effected in situations of migration and points to its contingency on distinct state governmentalities and local social relations.

The study is based on empirical work done between 2008-2011 in the cities of Toronto and Windsor in the province of Ontario. It comprised examination of legislation, legal records, white and green papers, official statistics, census data, and mass media reports; immigrant publications, archival documents, literature containing accounts of immigration from Romania and other regions in Central and Eastern Europe, and internet forums of Romanians in Canada; interviewing and participant observation in the Romanian communities of the two cities.

**Group Portrait of Romanian Canadians with Church**

On the Pentecost Sunday, St George's Romanian Orthodox cathedral in Windsor, Ontario barely contains the people gathered under its austere ceiling, reaching highest turnout of the year. More than two hundred people fill the pews, spilling out to the church's entrance. About twenty small children attend the Sunday school downstairs. The older children have joined their parents in the nave. Most of them arrived from Romania after the fall of the communist regime in December 1989. They still wear clothes brought from their country. The whole sense of their bearing is marked by tension, grown out of always being on guard as to what the proper ways of doing things are. They are the "new immigrants" to Canada.

Alongside this rather youthful congregation sit a set of persons in their sixties or seventies. Unlike the former, who have recently become landed immigrants or Canadian citizens, they have been Canadians for a long time already. They are successfully integrated, by demeanour, speech, and acquaintance with Canadian institutions. They left Romania in the nineteen seventies or the nineteen eighties, and some have never returned yet. The Romania of today, almost two and a half decades after the fall of the communist regime, has definitively departed from Romania they carry inside, constitutive to what they are. These are the "old new immigrants".
Among the crowd there are also several men and women of various age who do not speak Romanian and who seem both a bit aloof and a bit involved. They are the descendants of Romanian pioneer immigrants to Canada, the “old immigrants,” whose reunion group pictures in sepia adorn church’s main hall. Wonderfully foreign to recent Romanian immigrants, they are most familiar to the church. Set up back in 1914, the church’s present building was erected with their money. Through them, the long history of Romanian presence in Canada is embodied.

While the church only reaches high attendance on Easter day, the Pentecost, and the Christmas Eve, the congregation joins several times a year in communal lunches held in the social hall, to mark religious dates. On St. Elijah (Sf. Ilie), car owners and drivers park their cars with the front to the church’s entry, and open the doors and the hood wide to receive full blessing from the priest. In June, the church hosts the Romanian Village, Romanians’ “ethnic” contribution to Windsor’s Carousel of Nations, the all-city festival of Canadian multiculturalism. Dressed in standardized folkloric attire, they cook and sell “traditional” food, perform Romanian dances on the stage raised in the park lot in front of the church, exhibit various old artefacts brought to Canada across time, and hang around picking up news and gossips, job hints and well wishes.

The religious service is performed in both Romanian and English, a strange mix made even more so by the priest’s linguistic clumsiness and the format of the liturgy. The bilingual arrangement reveals the wish to cater for all immigrants, both the new ones, who can only imagine orthodoxy in Romanian, and the descendants of old Romanian Canadians, who have always known it in English. It also points to the divides among the different types of Romanians gathered in the church. They are temporal divides, exposing the work of different historical contexts and immigration regimes on people. Thus, common words have come to mean different things for immigrants who landed in Canada twenty years apart, or for immigrants of the past fifty years and the Romanian origin Canadian born.

When one of the new immigrants, freshly returned from a visit to Romania, was asked after the service by an elderly lady, an old new immigrant: “How are they, the Romanians, doing?” she answered, clearly annoyed by the question: “How can they be doing? We are Romanians all, just like they are!” And the reply came: “Yes, but we are here now...” The “Romanians” she implied were still marked by the country’s post-war misfortunes, by communism, by backwardness. In fact, these immigrants very often depict Romanians and Romania just as they have left it, whether in the nineteen seventies or in the nineteen eighties. Moreover, they mobilize the discursive formations of the time, or, if updated, combined with the present hegemonic anti-communist discourse. When they finally get to visit Romania, they are perplexed. Very

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2 For this perspective see Șirbu and Polgár (2009) and the debates on the platforms criticatac.ro and protokoll.ro.
concretely, in their practical relationality with the people there, and apart of any abstract reflection upon the changes the society went through, they cannot confirm their representations. "I will never bring presents to my friends in Romania again," told me an old new immigrant lady, landed in Canada in 1987, when she returned from her third or fourth visit to Romania in twenty five years. "They have everything, and of much better quality than I can buy here in Canada. I felt ashamed with my gifts, they not needed them..." The phenomenon of city-sprawling, while taken for granted in Canada, has been an object of much debate for the case of Bucharest: "We had to take the car to get to the city centre. Fortunately, our host (who lived in a new villa outside the city limits of Bucharest) had two cars."

But temporal divides among Canadian Romanians are doubled by "temporal" divides within the Romanian Orthodox denomination. The cathedral in Windsor belongs to the Romanian Orthodox Archdiocese in the Americas (ROAA), the missionary diocese of the Church of Romania in North America. This is distinct from the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America (ROEA), since 1960 one of the three ethnic dioceses of the Orthodox Church in America (former Russian Orthodox Greek Catholic Church in America).

ROEA was the original episcopate set by the Church of Romania in America in 1929. The ascent of the communist rule after WWII brought increasing interference of the political in Church’s affairs. In 1947, the American episcopate rejected the new bishop elected and sent to the United States by the Holy Synod, after the bishop in function had been detained in Romania and prevented to return to his post. A period of struggles and confusion followed, shaped by interpretations, significations, and re-enactments of the old Statutes of the episcopate. In 1950, another body formed in the support of the claimant bishop, and associated as an ecclesiastical corporation in the state of Michigan. However, he continued to assert to represent the original episcopate, not the new one chartered in 1950. At the Congress held in Chicago in July 1951, the delegates elected a bishop co-adjutor to lead the episcopate until the return of its bishop still confined in Romania. The complete schism was achieved with the ordaining of the elected bishop co-adjutor by the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in the United States, and with the United States Court of Appeals’ decision that the episcopate be completely autonomous administratively and canonically from the Romanian Orthodox Patriarchate, and that the bishop sent by the Holy Synod "has not borne the burden of proof in showing that he has been elected or consecrated as bishop of the episcopate" (US Court of Appeals, 205 F.2d 107, 1953, paragraph 34).3

3 The United States Court of Appeals Sixth Circuit, 205 F.2d 107 of May 29, 1953 and amended on July 3, 1953, paragraph 34. See also the United States District Court N. D. Ohio, E. D., Civ. No. 27916, 20 F.Supp. 183 (1952), of July 8, 1952. For a detailed history of the struggles for the souls of Romanians in North America see Bobango (1979).
The religious landscape of Romanians in Canada is thus marbled by the division within the Romanian Orthodox denomination. Its pattern is however more complicated than that. Due to the Orthodox Church's protracted response to the requests of the first wave of immigrants for priests ordained in Romania, the first priests sent from the country to serve in the United States and Canada were Uniates (of Eastern rite Greek Catholic Church in Transylvania, dating from 1697). Romanian Uniates in Canada now attend Eastern rite Ukrainian Catholic or Western rite Roman Catholic parishes, as the Uniate Eparchy in North America does not have parishes in Canada. Finally, there are many neo-protestant churches attended by Romanians, some of them on an exclusive basis. A phenomenon manifested of late is that of small tight communities of Romanian immigrants, who decided to bring priests from Romania by themselves.4

Having experienced high levels of anxiety, hardship, and dislocation, and having lost trust in both the rest of the Romanian “community” and the representatives of the church, they practice a form of integration into the Canadian society through thoroughly controlled in-group solidarity.

Despite these multi-faceted temporal divides, there is no question that all the groups and categories of people portrayed here consider themselves Romanians, and are considered Romanians by all the other. Romanian ethnicity in Canada presents itself in a multitude of forms, but is undergirded by a number of elements: the common place of origin and the memory of it, mythified by the trauma of migration, irrespective of how wanted or expected or anticipated was the move; the constant relevance of language at first generation migrants, as a cultural element that permanently re-makes boundaries, whether from the inside or from the other side; and the patterns of sociality, such as commensality, that re-enacted in Canada become patterns of solidarity.

I use ethnicity as a relational concept, designating a reality that emerges out of human mobility and interaction. Groups become ethnic through contact with others perceived as “culturally” different (Eriksen, 1993: 11-12). The experience of alterity generates re-signification of everyday acts, re-orchestration of relations, and formation of a sense of distinction supported by a subjective commonality of feeling (Eriksen, 1993:12; Weber, 1997[1922]: 18). In this research, an ethnic group is one that has developed a “consciousness of kind” (Weber, 1997[1922]: 17), out of differences created through subjective meaning and practices into which they get embedded.

In both its practical and its symbolic dimensions, ethnicity is political. When ethnicity becomes the organisational principle of states, it manifests in two ways. As identity, it is essentialized and made “cultural”, expressed through language, phenotype, artefacts, symbols, and claim over a territory. As alterity, it

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4 One should note that the Romanian Patriarchate does not pay wages for its priests overseas. These initiatives belong both to Orthodox Romanians and to Romanians of other denominations.
is used as an instrument of exclusion, marking on, distancing, boundary-making. In situations of migration the relation of ethnicity subsumed by nationhood recasts otherness as *ethnic minority*. There is an asymmetry of power in the relation between nationals and immigrants, predicated through the state, which makes immigrants an object of possible acts of assimilation, integration, accommodation, and positive action. It is not a demographic asymmetry, but one of power relations, as manifested in the position of the *colonial*, the *subaltern*, the *racial*, or the *primitive other*.

The memory of the experience of migration, as accumulative and discursive practice, is constitutive to historical settlements of immigrants. They are also permanently recreated through administrative categories, classifications, regulations, procedures, operations and institutions used by the states to manage the presence of immigrants on their territories. Immigrants are thus made into nominal ethnic groups, for themselves and for the native-born. They all perform ethnicity through enactment of policies that take immigrants and relations with immigrants as their object.

The following sections give a historical account of Romanian immigration to Canada. I show how the interplay of different political regimes, migration policies, and localities of social relations produced specific modes of being ethnic Romanian in Canada.

**The first wave: promised land**

The first immigrants from Romanian lands arrived in Canada in 1898, from the village of Boian in Bukovina. They were Ichim Yurko (Ichim Jurcă) and Elie Ravliuk (Iliuță Rauliuc) with his wife and four year old daughter. They were soon joined by other thirtysome families from the same village. By January 1901, in the district of Boian, Alberta, named after their origin place, around one hundred Romanian families were settled (Popescu, 1986; Zawadiuk et al., 1998). Small communities of Romanians formed in the surrounding area, about 100 kilometers North-East of Edmonton; in Saskatchewan, North-East and South-West of Regina; and along the Saskatchewan-Manitoba border. Until 1921, about 30,000 Romanians settled in Canada’s prairie (Patterson, 1999). Most of them came from Bukovina, as well as Transylvania and Banat, parts of Austria-Hungary at the time; ten percent came from Bulgaria, Macedonia, Greece; only five percent came from the Kingdom of Romania (Patterson, 1977: 13; Patterson, 1999; Popescu, 1986).

Romanians were lured from their homes to Canada by the offer of 160 acres of land in exchange for building a home, breaking thirty acres of land, cultivating crops, and actual residence on the homestead.⁶

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⁵ This section follows closely Culic (2012).
⁶ *Dominion Lands Act*, 1872.
In 1897, Minister of Interior Clifford Sifton visited Bukovina and Galicia in a campaign intended to encourage peasants to come to Canada. Member of the recently formed Liberal government (1896) which had pledged to populate Canada’s West and transform it into the country’s granary, he had a clear depiction of the required immigrants:

When I speak of quality I have in mind, I think, something that is quite different from what is in the mind of the average writer or speaker upon the question of Immigration. I think a stalwart peasant in a sheep-skin coat, born on the soil, whose forefathers have been farmers for ten generations, with a stout wife and a half-dozen children, is good quality. (Sifton, 1922: 32)

Exactly such were the first immigrants from historical Romanian lands. Before WWI, more than 8,000 Romanians had come to Canada. By 1921, their number increased to almost 30,000 (Patterson, 1999). Most of them came from Bukovina, and together with Transylvania, the two provinces accounted for 85% of Romanian immigration to Canada up until the 1920 (Patterson, 1999). The typical passage of the peasants and their families had them set off in carts to borderland stations, from where they took the train to Hamburg or Bremen. Embarked on passenger steamships or cattle boats, they arrived in Halifax, and then crossed Canada by train to Winnipeg, whose Immigration Hall functioned as the gateway to the West. From there they travelled to their destination by whatever means available: trains, wagons, horses, or by foot.

While national legislation and police regulations generally made it difficult to advertise and recruit immigrants from most continental European countries, booking agents, motivated by the commissions from steamship companies and bonuses from the Canadian government, developed knowledge and skills to evade them (Petryshyn and Dzubak, 1985: 50-3; Petryshyn, 1997). State officials and their private enterprising associates in the origin lands used vigorous advertising, propaganda, and networking to organize groups of families for the passage. The Austrian administration helped through liberally issuing one-year temporary passports to young people, while entertaining hopes that the peasants would engage on a round-trip. Bankers deemed subsidizing immigrants more lucrative for the return of their investments through cash flows and remittances, than borrowing money for farm-improvement (Rasporich, 1982: 36). Through its agents operating in many European locations, the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) offered packages of passage over sea, work, and land at relatively low prices.

Fellow villagers already landed in Canada were the most efficient device of

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this complex assemblage in convincing peasants to embark in this adventure, whose reward was extensive land of their own.

Their historically specific experience of living in an imperial borderland made peasants from Bukovina, rather than from other regions of what was to become Greater Romania, embark to Canada. The changes in political administration, multiethnic cohabitation, complex class, ethnic, and political relationships, and intense contact between village and town shaped their availability for huge, life-changing projects (Barton, 1975: 1-90; Bobango, 1979: 3-4). The names of the first recorded Romanian immigrants to Canada, mentioned at the beginning of this section, are not Romanian, but Ukrainian. Many of the family names of those first pioneers from Bukovina, whose tombstones rest in the prairie cemeteries, sound Ukrainian: Hlopina, Holovaci, Moscaliu, Porojnic, Petriciuc, Romanko, Săvăliu, Semeniuc, Soprovici, Zaharichuk. Yet, their third and fourth generation descendants declare themselves of Romanian origin at present day Canadian census surveys, and work to promote their version of Romanianness through enactments of a collective memory of migration (Popescu, 1986; Asociația Română din Canada, http://www.arcanada.org; Canadian Romanian Society of Alberta, Edmonton-Boian, http://www.canadianromaniansocietyofalberta.org).

Ukrainians were the most numerous ethnic group in Bukovina at the beginning of the twentieth century. At the 1910 census, those who declared themselves Ukrainian represented 38.4 per cent of the population, followed by Romanians with 34.4 per cent, 12 per cent Jews, 9 per cent Germans, and others, including Poles and Hungarians (Livezeanu, 1995: 49). Moved to Bukovina from Galicia in great numbers in the second half of the nineteenth century, the majority of them were peasants, and were not recognized politically. By contrast, Romanians had historically enjoyed representation in the government of the duchy and cultural rights. But those who settled in the same districts and regions of Canada intermarried, whether Romanian or Ukrainian, and used the Romanian language to communicate. They experienced the same tough conditions of grim weather, arduous work in the fields, loneliness, and isolation. The need for cash and food forced them into schemes where the man worked at the CPR or in the cities for several months a year, while the wife lived in the homestead with the children, off a household – garden and sod house – strenuous to manage. (Popescu, 1986; Patterson, 1977). The shortage of Orthodox priests, and the bad quality of the monks sent to Canada by the Metropolitanate of Moldova, in Romania, made Romanians turn to the help of Ukrainians to build their churches and serve in them as priests (Bobango, 1979).

Alongside “Romanian” and “Ukrainians”, other fellow adventurers arrived around the same period from Bukovinian lands. In 1882, a group of Volga Germans, relocated to Bukovina after 1871 for fear of drafting and dwindling privileges, came to work for the CPR and build their farms (Patterson, 1977: 8, 17). A report
to the Parliament of the Dominion of Canada from 1891 (House of Commons Canada, 1891: 97, 98) describing several German colonies in the West, around McLean, north of Balgonie Station, refers to Romanian speaking Germans, and to Russian or Romanian types of dwelling built by these pioneers. A number of Szeklers, a Hungarian people that lives overwhelmingly in three counties of present-day Romania, came from Bukovina to settle in the same areas of the prairie. Bukovinian Ashkenazi Jews have started to migrate to Canada's West in the 1870s and continued to come, joined by fellow Romanian Jews from Basarabia and the province of Moldova. Many of them spoke Romanian, and Romanian functioned as *lingua franca* in places like the Dysart region in Saskatchewan, where they all settled (Patterson, 1977: 18-19).

The commonality of practices and arrangements entailed by the terms of their cohabitation in Canada, and the commonality of political and economic regimes experienced in the country of origin, partly account for their formation into an ethnic group self-denominated as Romanian. It was initially prompted by their struggles with the Canadian authorities over the allocation of land sections, as they strived to settle in compact areas.8 The solidarity grown out of cooperation and dependence needed for sheer survival, and the shared language and memory of native land were the matter of the Romanian ethnicity formed on Canadian soil. This becoming as Romanians was also mediated by WWI, as a few men joined the Canadian Forces and celebrated postwar Greater Romania, enlarged with Bukovina, Bessarabia, Transylvania, Partium, and the Romanian Banat, as their homeland (see accounts in Popescu, 1986). The experience of the war and Romanian nationalism ignited through parts of North America by diplomats and Orthodox clerics triggered the transformation of “home”, which for most immigrants meant their street, village, or region, into the “homeland” or “vechea țară” (the Old Country).9 The narratives of Romanian identity, homeland, and ethnic origin, and the works that edify them, whether internal, such as the building of Romanian Orthodox churches, or external, through state-generated categories of ethnic origin, document Romanian ethnicity in Canada.

Most of the descendants of the first pioneers from Bukovina, while collecting the stories of their parents and grandparents, and while recollecting their own experiences as sons and daughters of tamers of Canada’s West, ground their narrative construction on a foundational error. They claim that the village of

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8 See the ethnic distribution on the quarter sections of the *Dominion Lands Survey*, e.g. in Luciuk & Hryniuk (1991), Popescu (1986), Rasporich (1982). “Galicians” were mentioned most often in discussions concerning the quality of immigrants and the location of their land entries. See for example *House of Commons Canada*, 1900: 10186-7.

9 See the successful political tour of Reverend and President of the “League for the Political Unity of all Romanians” as reflected, for example, in the newspaper *America*, issues of July-September 1917 and March 1918.
Boian, the hearth of the original Romanian immigration to Canada, now in Ukraine, belonged, at the genetic time of their arrival, to Romania. This slip of memory stands as an act of collective baptism. It aligns a specific awareness of cultural distinction historically contoured in a multinational empire, with a national project materialized in a “state of Romanians” - Greater Romania - which would incorporate their land as one of its own historical lands, and with an identity that had to be settled in the new country, to clear the lasting confusion of officials at entry points which had been recording them alternatively as Austrians, Germans, Romanians, Ukrainians, Ruthenians, Hungarians, or Russian (Popescu, 1986; Woodsworth, 1972).

This identity supported the life chances and the sense of self of migrants and their descendants by reflecting their increasingly well-placed position in a hierarchy of racialized ethnicities and nations. Until 1962, Canada practiced various immigration politics of exclusion based on racial, national, and cultural grounds (customs, habits, and modes of life), geographical area of origin, unsuitability with regard to the climate (euphemistic formulation for “race”), potential for assimilation, and others. The Immigration Act of 1906 aimed to prevent “undesirable immigrants” by adding restrictions and expanding categories of the “prohibited”, and by giving the government legal authority to deport immigrants within two years of landing for reasons including disease, becoming a public charge, or “moral turpitude”. The 1910 Immigration Act gave huge discretion to the government to regulate immigration through Orders in Council, and furthermore increased restrictions and grounds of deportation. Immigration fell dramatically during WWI. When in 1923, after the post-war period of economic low, Canada started again to encourage immigration, Romanians, as nationals of non-preferred countries, were admitted only as agriculturalists, farm labourers, domestics, and sponsored family members. From the few accounts of the early migration of Romanians to Canada, no hostility from the locals’ part or from “Canadians” themselves was shown toward them. In contrast, the more numerous histories, memoirs, and studies of the Ukrainian first immigration to Canada (mostly from Galicia and Bukovina) are marked by traumatic reports of negative reception as “non-preferred continentals” - dirty, garlic-smelling, filthy, drunken, penniless, ignorant, holding unintelligent methods of farming (e.g. Czumer, 1981; Woodworth, 1972). Romanians distinguished themselves expanding the boundary of whiteness and locality through hard work, industriousness, and self-improvement. These peasants which were “of exceptionally

10 The fact that the Greater Romania was a multinational state itself with almost one third of the population belonging to national minorities is effaced by Romanian nationalist ideology and by Romanian becoming unmarked for ethnic Romanians. The proportion of ethnic Romanians at the 1930 Census was 71.9. See Populaţia pe Neamuri, 1930: XXIV.

11 Subsequently three, respectively five years after landing.
fine physique” and “good quality” as fodder for the domestication of the great prairie stayed peasants, and many of their children became farmers, on increasingly larger holdings of land. Other of their children, and almost all of the following generations moved to the cities into liberal professions, business, services, or administration.

The narrative about an earlier Romanian ethnicity in Canada is built on the stories of adversity of the first pioneers.

When my father arrived there [to his allotted land section, in Southern Saskatchewan] there was nothing, nothing. Only the sky and the ground [...] They were all given a square mile for ten dollars. But the weeds were this deep [she shows the length of her arm], the rocks were this big [she shows the height of her thigh], the mothers all went to pick the rocks, put them on the stone boat, and dug the weeds, and plough was two oxen. (Filmed interview from 2005 with Dorothy Nicholson, born in Canada in 1915 to a father who immigrated in 1907)\(^\text{12}\)

During the great depression, and in the following years, hardships multiplied, as various natural disasters stroke parts of the prairie inhabited by Romanians. Storm, dust and wind, Russian thistle, and grasshoppers are mentioned by this interviewee for successive years between 1932 and 1937. Many Romanians from Alberta and Saskatchewan moved to Montréal, Toronto, Hamilton, Kitchener, or Windsor to survive economic bankruptcy and draught. The Canadian government paid relief to those who remained on the land ($32 per month for a family of twelve, and piles of flour and beans). WWII however produced greatest dislocations. Most Romanian men joined the army, while women took employment in factories in the cities. Very few returned to the farms, and when they did, they went back as university graduates, utilizing modern means of agriculture.

The narrative was thus fixed by a final departure from an early experience of farming in the prairie. In the late 1980s and 1990s the third and fourth generation of Romanians have started to collect, talk, write, and perform accounts of a Romanian identity and ethnicity in Canada. While the (otherwise antiquated and dialectal) language was lost to English, and Romanians assimilated to an urban Canadian society, the narrative became separated from their actual ongoing experiences, cemented into a myth, and started an autonomous existence of its own. Memories of Greater Romania, to which Bukovina belonged between the wars, and of communist Romania never visited, grew on a Romanian identity sported on particular occasions, linked mostly

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\(^{12}\) Courtesy Cristina Stamate from YMCA/ Immigration services, Windsor, Ontario. See also the tens of accounts collected by Ion Longin Popescu in 1983 from survivors of the first Romanian immigrants to Canada (Popescu, 1986).
with the Canadian state and the policy of multiculturalism. It was activated when now hyphenated Romanian-Canadians went to church, where the service, for convenience, was held in English. It was also activated in lucrative commercial ventures (opening an ethnic restaurant), or social gatherings (balls, social clubs, local events celebrating the Canadian mosaic). The myth and its narrative went hand in hand with the census administrative category of ethnic origin – one of the peculiar pillars of the evolving Canadian multiculturalism policy.\(^1\) It contributed to preserve the name of "Romanian" relevant in various contexts of identification, and to invest it with the positive impressions of these people's social achievement.

The early Romanian ethnicity in Canada evolved at the junction of Canada and Romania's state-building projects. Confederation Canada aimed to populate the immense lands it had acquired from CPR with "able-bodied men who are willing to work and can work" (Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier in Parliament, House of Commons Canada, 1900: 10187). This was part of a larger National Policy, whereby agriculture established by farmer immigrants would support and complement industry in the rest of country, helped by the newly completed Atlantic-Pacific railway and the tariffs policy. It consolidated a transcontinental nation, threatened by an ever-expanding United States of America. In Austria-Hungary and Romania, national struggles were shaped by modernisation forces acting in contradictory ways. Many immigrants who left for Canada were not poor and destitute, as the story would tell it, but socially mobile, in possession of land and implements, open to commercial ventures with the city, and holding multiple cultural ties. Their passage was part of larger plans made possible by the transformations in social and economic relations, citizenship regimes, and types of subjectivity. Unable to return due to costs of travel, the start of WWI, and the definitive establishment on Canadian soil through the toils of the first years on their granted land, their relationship with Greater Romania remained mythical and emotional.

The first layer of Romanian ethnicity in Canada, formed out of the original wave of immigration, is now woven into a larger setting, as illustrated by the Pentecost opening scene. The following waves of Romanian immigration to Canada grafted new objects, practices and meanings onto the original field of Romanian ethnicity. The following two sections present briefly the distinct cultural forms inflected upon Romanian ethnicity in Canada by the second and third waves of immigration.

\(^1\) For the use and consequences of census ethnic categories, single and hyphenated, see Howard-Hassmann, 1999; Boyd and Norris, 2001. For criticism of Canada's multiculturalism policy see Bibby, 1990; Bissoondath, 1994. For a critical analysis of Canada's politics of citizenship, nationhood and multiculturalism see Thobani, 2007.
The second wave: the oppressed, the communists, and the unbearable lightness of being

The Canadian Immigration Act of 1952 allowed large administrative discretion, giving the Governor in Council the power to make regulations that could restrict or limit access based on a multitude of criteria: literacy, non-continuous journey to Canada, ethnicity, nationality, class, occupation, peculiar customs, habits, modes of life or methods of holding property, unsuitability to the climatic, economic, social, industrial, educational, labour, health or other conditions in Canada or country of origin, probable inability to become readily assimilated. “Visible minority” immigrant admissions were very limited or averted altogether, while independent skilled immigrants from non-preferred nationalities (most of the South European, Central and South American countries) were sidelined by limiting access to sponsored relatives. By the end of the 1950s, the immigration officials’ acknowledgment that sustained immigration benefited the economy and society of Canada even through sheer population growth clashed with Department of Labour’s short-term interest in filling the skilled labour needs of a dynamic economy and its worries about the big influx of unskilled persons generated by "family class” sponsorship (Kelley and Trebilcock, 1998: 329; Green and Green, 2004; Hawkins, 1972: 102-6). At the same time, Canada’s self-identification as a progressive liberal democracy embracing the rule of law, and its position within an international normative setting observant of human rights, found its immigration policy increasingly slated for its racial inequality and discrimination (Triadafilopoulos, 2010).

In 1962, Canada abandoned formally all white racist immigration policy, and in 1966 a task force was mandated to devise admission rules governed by the principle of universality, employing standard criteria of selection. The proposed system identified a set of factors determining a person’s capacity to successfully settle in Canada, which were operationally defined and ascribed specific weight through "assessment points". It provided immigration officers an instrument to judge applicants in a consistent way, eliminating racial bias. Missing a permanent place in the whole system and implemented only as a matter of emergency, the admission of refugees reinforced the notion of immigration as a tool for economic policy.

Wary of admission of refugees, Canada reluctantly started to accept them in the years following WWII, on an exceptional basis. Refugees were considered by economic, ethnic, and political criteria, and required to be in good condition.

health. A sentiment that Canada should approach admission and resettlement of refugees as a permanent commitment and active practice contoured after several successful resettlements of refugees from Hungary (1956-7) and Czechoslovakia (1968-9). On June 4, 1969 Canada acceded to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol. The Immigration Act of 1976 set the system in its present form, organized around three admission categories: independent (or economic) class, dominated by the Federal Skilled Worker category; Family class; and refugees (Protected Persons, and Humanitarian and Compassionate categories). The independent class represents the backbone of the whole system, and it is expected that its economic contribution will offset the costs incurred by the others.

This was the context that allowed most Romanian immigrants to come to Canada during the communist regime. Their arrival was furthermore supported by an interest-free Assisted Passage Loan Scheme (1951), aimed to assist financially immigrants from Europe whose services were urgently needed and who could not afford their own transportation; and by the creation of the designated class of East European Self-Exiled Persons (1979), which facilitated the resettlement to Canada of people who met the assessment criteria. About half of those who came to Canada during this time (see Table 1) enjoyed the status of protected persons (refugees). Almost similar numbers came under the Family class. The other half were admitted under the Federal Skilled Worker and Family classes, in roughly equal parts.

Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Romania</th>
<th>Country of Last Residence</th>
<th>Country of Citizenship</th>
<th>Country of Birth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1946-1955</td>
<td>6,049</td>
<td>8,780</td>
<td>13,143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956-1965</td>
<td>926</td>
<td>782</td>
<td>5,546</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966-1975</td>
<td>1,128</td>
<td>1,146</td>
<td>4,670</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976-1985</td>
<td>6,083</td>
<td>3,978</td>
<td>8,360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986-1989</td>
<td>5,865</td>
<td>4,565</td>
<td>6,418</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total 1946-89</td>
<td>20,051</td>
<td>19,251</td>
<td>38,137</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Canadian official data filed arrivals from an individual country in three of its instances, as country of birth, country of last residence, and country of nationality. For the first decade after the war, 1946-1955, the number of immigrants born in Romania was more than twice the number of immigrants whose country of last residence was Romania, and one and half the number of Romanian nationals. The figures for the next decade, 1956-1965, are sharper. While only 926 persons immigrated to Canada from Romania and even fewer, 782, held Romanian nationality, there were recorded 5,546 landed immigrants born in Romania. Historical records and ethnographic data indicate that the non-resident non-national Romanian born immigrants were denationalized Jews who managed to leave Romania and find shelter in another country or moved to the state of Israel, from where they submitted an immigration application under the regulations of the time; and former Romanian born citizens who lost their citizenship by fleeing the country, were received in detention camps in various states of Europe such as Austria, Germany, or Greece, and were recommended to be admitted as refugees and given protected persons status by the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (until 1947), the International Refugee Organization (until 1952), and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Very few Romanian nationals and Romanian residents came in the period of restrictionist, racist, and discriminatory legislation introduced in 1952, equally deterred by the restrictionist exit regime in their home country. They most likely arrived in Canada through the Family Sponsorship program and as privately sponsored refugees.

Figures remained very low in the decade of 1966-1975, with 4,670 immigrants born in Romania, 1,128 with Romania as last residence, and 1,146 Romanian nationals. A significant number of Romanians resettled to Canada under the East European Self-Exiled Persons designated class 1979-1989, doubling the figures of the previous decade. The last four years of the communist regime, 1986-1989, saw an influx of Romanian nationals, Romanian born, and residents of Romania. The majority of the immigrants arrived in the last decade of the communist rule in Romania were granted refugee status and were meticulously cared for by the authorities: they were transported within Canada, given accommodation, helped find jobs, and granted low interest credits. Unlike immigrants of earlier decades, who arrived after long years of liminality in foreign camps or transient in various passage countries, most of them had been embedded in the structures of the communist regime and a few of them had held privileged positions therein. This was a bitter rift to separate two different generations of Romanians, which came to broadly define themselves as “anti-communists resistors” and “communists”. As the social status of both suffered painful deterioration, the fact that one party was forced to emigrate, and had to struggle for themselves in a landscape indifferent to their arrival, while the other chose a convenient exit facilitated exactly by their position within the communist structure and were welcome and supported as political refugees, made all the difference in the (new) world.
IRINA CULIC

The brands of nostalgia traversing these immigrants left different inscriptions on them and contentious claims to authenticity, patriotism, and relation with their mother country. They were forbidden access to Romania during the communist regime and were stripped of Romanian citizenship. This loss justified, on the one hand, a resilience to maintain a purity of their ethnic identity as an objective property of the person, and the injunction to actively promote it in such propitious policy environment. Being Romanian meant to keep one's sense of distinction - where distinction also borne the honour diacritic. On the other hand, it acted as a permanent push to prove oneself, in order to make sense of a destiny one could no longer control. Being Romanian meant to succeed in the new country. While “resisters” exerted efforts to recreate bits of Romania in Canada reminiscent of the interwar autochtonism practiced by the Legionary Movement, such as the national celebrations associated with the Romanian Camp at Val David, ‘communists’ often maintained their claim to Romanianness by recasting their former power position as a location which had allowed them to influence political decision in a meaningful and good way.

They all integrated within the Canadian labour market, and their children readily assumed the hyphenated identity, becoming “Canadian first, then Romanian”. Their small numbers and subdued arrival, and the dual character of their position at the same time provisional and definitive, made the second wave of Romanians little inclined to associate or cultivate intense interaction, other than very localized. While serving opposed versions of political Romanianness, the authenticity of their ethnicity, in the sense of spontaneous and unquestioned recognition of the commonality of origin, was never doubted and was grounded in the common state of Romania and the common hope for its liberation from dictatorship.

The separation of ethnicity from the politics of nation materialized in yet another category of immigrants that came to Canada in the late 1980s. Petty speculators, failed fleers, unemployed individuals – the system’s “maladjusted” – were beaten up and then ejected by the communist state as political refugees in Canada (see also Patterson, 1985: 496). These immigrants, equally maladjusted in Canada, represented the otherness that all the more thickened the sense of commonality among the second wave Romanian immigrants. The interaction with the newly arrived after 1989, however, will push them back into the institutional and symbolic field of ethnicity.

The third wave: the loneliness of the long-distance immigrant

The two-decade post-communist history of Romania can perhaps be written as a story of mobility. The dislocation of economic and social structures provided massive occasion for people’s movement within reconfiguring social spaces. First, the crumbling of the state-run enterprises generated unprecedented workplace mobility and compelled individuals into private entrepreneurship and redundancy. Second, as various governments negotiated Romania’s integration
into European political structures, Romanians experienced increasingly fortified international migration regimes and tightening rules of exit. Third, with the country’s repositioning into the globalized world, inscriptions of evolving “scapes” made possible a particular imagery and possibility of the West and the larger world (Appadurai, 1996).

Local practices of communist times could be inflected at expanded scale, and international labour migration became the functional equivalent of commuting from village to town for work. One of my subjects, who immigrated to Canada, and then returned to Romania, expressed in striking words this rupture in scale: “We thought in Romania nothing worked. [...] We sold the apartment and left straight to Canada. Our mistake and others’ as well was that we did not think that we could try to find work someplace else in the country. [...] This is the mistake Romanians make: they do not know their country. They go directly to Canada, without knowing that in [city of Romania] there are cinemas, work places, bigger wages. They are called by overseas fantasies.” By mid nineteen nineties immigration to Canada had colonized the imaginary of many Romanians. They started to leave for Canada by thousands.

And Canada wanted them. A special report to Parliament presented by the Minister of Employment and Immigration in 1985 showed that fertility rates had fallen below the population replacement level. It also urged the government to lift the bar for applicants lacking arranged employment and increase the economic class component, though not at the expense of the other two classes. By 1992 Canada committed to stable annual inflows of about one percent of the existing population. In 1993 it increased it to 250,000 despite poor labour market. It thus marked a clear break with the “absorptive capacity” policy that had previously guided immigration levels. The switch from the model of occupation-demand micro-management to a broader “human capital” model materialised in the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA) of 2002.18 By changing the structure of the assessment points scheme, it aimed to approach in a dynamic way the labour market demands of a knowledge-based economy, by supplying immigrants who have flexible and transferable skills, and are flexible and transferable from job to job.

18 The Canadian immigration policy went through important changes since 2008. In brief, these are: economic immigration was refocused to short-term needs, by restricting and fast-tracking applications under the Federal Skilled Worker class to persons who have offers of arranged employment in Canada, or work experience in one of only thirty-eight occupations considered in demand; there was created a new fast-track Canadian Experience class to support those who have been legally residing in Canada for at least one year as temporary foreign workers or international students to settle as permanent residents; the Provincial Nominee Program was liberalized and diversified; the Temporary Foreign Worker Program was expanded to expedite employers’ supply of workers for difficult jobs.
This policy suited a certain category of young people - in their late twenties and thirties at landing, highly educated, moved by a deep urge of professional achievement, and a sense of adventure (Culic, 2010). They held a middle-class notion of well-being, accomplishment, and professional propriety, which encountered in the Canadian immigration policy a means to be achieved. If in 1990 the Federal Skilled Worker (FSW) class represented 17% of Romanian immigrants, with the rest distributed in the Refugee and Family classes, its weight rose dramatically in a few years, to reach 84% in 2004.19 Most of the third wave immigrants to Canada belong to this category of people, men and women, with their families. Those who came in the Family class, representing almost all of the rest of the immigrants, are their parents and spouses.

Getting selected for a FSW visa requires patient waiting. Due to the limited capacity of the Immigration Section of the Embassy of Canada in Bucharest, by mid two thousands the average FSW visa application processing time had raised to forty eight months. But migration starts earlier and lasts longer. From the moment the decision to immigrate is made to the actual landing in Canada, a whole course of transformations unfolds. Preparing the application file occasions a full examination of the self in order to make one’s biography legible by the Canadian bureaucratic rationality. Filling out forms, legalizing papers that document one’s life achievements, applying for security clearances, and assessing one’s financial worth have a perspectival effect. The applicant gets objectified through self-reconstruction as a desirable subject in terms of the Canadian immigration policy.

The indeterminate temporality of the waiting period creates a space of practices that comprises embassies and consulates, interview hotel rooms, cultural institutes and language centres, immigration firms and NGOs, doctors and hospitals, translators, and internet networks through which information and emotions flow. Applicants inscribe dispositions on their bodies and minds. They alter relationships with family, friends, and colleagues. They create themselves as subjects of the new state, through a form of anticipatory socialization with the Canadian space (Culic, 2010). Such remaking of the self effects a specific type of actual immigrant. Post-communist Romanian immigrants to Canada are inclined to refashion themselves as Canadians in all ways. Their children, both those born in Romania, and those born in Canada, speak mostly English. The conversational Romanian the children might eventually pick up, and then forget, is due to grandparents coming periodically from Romania to help with the household.

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19 Figures computed by author from electronic datasets available at the University of Toronto Data Library Service. 2004 is the most recent year for which data broken by country and immigration class are available.
There is a particular *habitus* of post-communist immigrants from Romania, supported by established structures of interaction and rituals of settlement. One of its blatant forms is buying a large house and cultivating a perfect turf in front of it as soon as some economic stability is obtained, even though it usually can't be afforded or objectively needed. There is a compulsory feeling that this is expected by the more or less imagined community of fellow middle-class minded immigrants. There is also a subjective injunction coming from family and friends at home, for whom the only sense of their departure resides in acquiring displayable prosperity in the shortest time. The trauma of immigration is soothed by a solid sense of achievement, which can only be maintained by freezing their representation of Romania at the moment their departure. Post-communist Romanian immigrants quickly develop a sense of distinction by adjudicating hierarchies of cultural, racial, and ethnic groups. The perplexity and shame derived from initial inept interaction are fended off by way of categorizing, facilitated by Canada's specific system of ethnic distinction and recognition. Their many encounters with "Canadian-Canadians" and members of "visible minorities", also "new immigrants", generate soothing geographies of social worth. To cope with the hardships of immigrant experience and the foreignness of the place, post-communist Romanian immigrants envisage their ethnic species as possessing an extra dimension which "Canadians" lack, and that has to do with the owning of a soul. They like to play the unruly while displaying propriety of behaviour in public, which they demand from the others as much as they impose on themselves. They develop narratives of how the Canadian state and society discipline the newcomers, by giving particular interpretations to work, social welfare, or housing regulations and policies.

In interaction with charter Canadians and new Canadians within the space of Canadian institutions, and in interaction with the many sorts of Romanians in Canada, the ethnicity of post-communist Romanian immigrants is refashioned as unquestionably hyphenated. This new identity bears tensions and ambiguities, and endures constant change, ever sensitive to the changes Romania undergoes. It involves reviewing the motivations to leave in relation to the achievements of their peers who stayed at home, and to the possibilities perceived to have been missing at their departure and are now present.\(^2\) It is

\(\text{\footnotesize \textsuperscript{2}}\) These are all the more salient since Romania's access into the European Union, and the recent changes in the Canadian immigration policy. The inflow of Romanian immigrants, which peaked in 2002 with 5,688, making Romania the top European sending country to Canada, ahead of traditional senders the United Kingdom and France, has started to decrease by 2005 (4,964). The figures for the following years up to date are: 2006 (4,393), 2007 (3,770), 2008 (2,754), 2009 (1,994), 2010 (1,845), 2011 (1,723). Figures collected from Citizenship and Immigration Canada. *Facts and Figures. Immigrant Overview. Permanent and Temporary Residents* (2000-2011).
also related to their own experience in the new country - the suffering, the trials, the loneliness, and the proving they have gone through; and to the life they have built in another place. This identity is marked by the sense of freedom gained through the immigration experience itself, at times hard to bear. At the same time it is imprinted by the sense of captivity surfaced by untold failure and nostalgia.

**Conclusion: Ethnicity at scale**

The account of historical Romanian immigration to Canada points to the way ethnicity morphs as a relevant aspect of interaction along the process. The individual decision to migrate and the actual act of migration take place in conjunctures that involve political regimes at origin and destination, policies of exit and access, international norms regarding human rights and mobility, global fields of power relations, and maps of labour circulation. Migrants interpret them, enact them, and perform them. Throughout all these, they reflect on themselves and on their relationships with others. They recreate themselves as subjects of policies and states, as categories of classifications, and as members of groups. Ethnicity emerges in processes of migration as the concept that enables understanding individual and collective action.

Ethnicity is the way subjectivity, interaction, and boundary making congeals into embeddedness in specific collectivities (see also Calhoun, 2003b: 559). Ethnicity is produced and produces effects in fields of power relations in which options and needs for solidarities are unequally distributed (Calhoun, 200a3: 537). In order to recognize ethnicity in migration, the analyst has to consider immigrants’ transforming subjectivities and patterns of relationships at origin, at destination, and along the way. She has to recognize their need to relate to a group as real and essential, for their sense of reality and of self, and to draw all sorts of boundaries between their group and the rest, again as a function of maintaining their own boundaries as beings.

Romanians in Canada came first as agricultural labour force to break the lands of the prairie. They were admitted as non-preferred nationals when the traditional, desired sources of immigration from Western Europe had started to dry out. The forms of cooperation, solidarity, and sociability determined by the harsh conditions of life on a homestead contoured a new Romanian ethnic identity. It anchored on several elements: a common spoken Romanian language in an area where several foreign languages were being spoken; memories of the homeland sublimated in the image of Greater Romania as external identity reference; solid material achievements, and the recognition for their hard work, making and keeping them “white”. The second wave of Romanian immigrants came to Canada as refugees, and maintained a discrete and private Romanian
THE temporal-historical divide between “anti-communist” and “communist” immigrants, based on the context of exit and the relationship with the regime, was compounded by the temporal-confessional divide between the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate declared autonomous from the Romanian Patriarchate, and the missionary archdiocese of the Orthodox Church of Romania, re-set after the ascent to rule of the communist party in Romania. The third wave of Romanian immigrants, arrived to Canada after the fall of the communist regime, belonged in great majority to FSW immigration category. They shared a strong social class component, and were formatted, through the anticipatory socialisation engendered by the process of selection, to fit into the Canadian society. They redefined themselves as hyphenated Canadians, and their children are "First Canadian, then Romanians", as one of my subjects put it.

Romanian ethnicity articulates at various scales of time and space, an outcome of historical structures, conjunctures, and events. It is recurrently remade through complex social processes and relations: of migration, expanding capitalism, labour relations, administration, or political oppositions; rewritten through a dialectics of remembering and forgetting; performed through complex interactions and ceremonial enactments. This articulated emphasized the social-historical and relational polymorphism of ethnicity, and pointed to the central role played by states. The national politics of a state, even if a state afar, may trigger claims of ethnic belonging and practices of ethnic identification. The existence of Greater Romania as a state, in conjunction with the social solidarity formed in isolation and adversity, and a linguistic practice that made Romanian salient, produced Romanians out of immigrants with multiple social allegiances. The post-war wave of immigrants came inscribed with a clear and strong ethnic identity, which was armed by an acute relation to the origin country and a concern for its fate. Finally, the ethnicity of the new “new” Romanians is shaped by the tensions encountered in Canada, on the one hand, and the tensions internally generated by the fact of not being able reconcile the loss of leaving Romania and its continuous promise.

REFERENCES


