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**What is a 'revolution'? National commemoration, collective
memory and managing authenticity in the representation of a
political event**

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Abstract

This paper examines the production and management of an ideological representation of a specific political ‘event’: the Romanian ‘revolution’ of 1989. A critical discursive psychological approach to analyzing political discourse is used to examine commemorative addresses in the Romanian parliament. The analysis explores: a) issues of agency, entitlement, and working with regard to actual or possible alternatives, b) a pattern of recurring categorical incumbency shifts, c) managing the authenticity and the *true* nature of the ‘event’ through invoking category-bound knowledge and predicates commonsensically attachable to the notion of ‘revolution’, d) formulating and orienting to the ‘events of 1989’ as recognizable and accountable *as* ‘revolution’ and ‘foundational’ moment in national history. It is argued that the main ideological function of drawing on such resources is that of framing/reframing, controlling the various interpretations, public (re)formulations of the Romanian ‘revolution’, disconnecting it from its controversial particulars and delegitimizing criticism. For a political ‘event’ to acquire an ‘identity’, it needs to be cast into a *category* with associated characteristics or features. The *occasioned* ideological and political significance of a political ‘event’ lies also in its *consequentiality* in and for the social and ideological context in which it is invoked.

Key words: political event, collective memory, commemoration, Romanian revolution, discursive psychology, category memberships, category-bound knowledge, category-bound predicates

Introduction

After the fall of Communism in Eastern Europe, the relevance of history as collective remembering has acquired deeper and wider significance. The revolutionary fervor of 1989 Eastern Europe has marked the beginning of a process of reckoning with the Communist regime and thus attempting to coming to terms with the national past. Issues of collective memory and collective remembering in post-communist Eastern Europe have been the subject of numerous analyses including, among others, subjects such as the revival of far-right ideologies from the 30s (Shafir, 2000), historical revisionism and conspiracy traditions (Voicu, 2000; Byford and Billig, 2001), the crimes, terror and repression of Communism (Courtois, 1999), remembrance of victims of the Holocaust (Ioanid, 2000) and the Gulag (Todorov, 1999).

Despite the interest in collective memory and collective remembering from discursive psychologists (e.g., Billig, 1999; Middleton and Edwards, 1990; Middleton & Brown, 2005), cultural psychologists (e.g., White, 1997; Wertsch, 2002) and critical discourse analysts (e.g., de Cillia et al., 1999; Wodak and de Cillia, 2007), there have been few studies focusing on Eastern Europe and the discursive practices that nation-states use to understand history in 'official contexts involving public institutions and texts' (White, 1997, p. 64; but see Ahonen, 1997; Luczynski, 1997; Tulviste and Wertsch, 1994; Wertsch, 2002). Less attention has been paid to Eastern Europe, to ideologies of freedom, discourses of social change and local meanings associated with it.

It is fair to say that discursive and cultural psychological investigations of collective memory, in both Western and Eastern European contexts, have mainly 'approached their subject more as a site of active contestation and negotiation than as a

means for accurately representing the past' (Wertsch, 2002: 35). This paper situates itself in the context of the study of collective memory in Eastern Europe, and illustrates some of the ways in which discourse analytic work might shed light on the workings of collective memory and collective remembering production and dissemination. It starts from the assumption that 'instead of being some sort of steady-made attribute of individuals or groups, collective remembering turns out to involve an array of complex relationships between active agents and the narrative tools they employ' (Wertsch, 2002: 148). It also relies on the idea that 'cultures and groups celebrate their pasts by creating histories which simultaneously involve collective remembering and forgetting' (Billig, 1999: 170), as remembering and forgetting 'are tightly bound together as social practices' (ibid.,: 164)

Collective memory, transformation and change in Eastern European societies have been usually approached with a concern of mapping and explaining the 'macro' processes of change and transformation. Discourses of 'transition' and change have been placed within diverse explanatory historical and political frameworks, but not necessarily within (political) actors' own categorial constructions of change and collective remembrance of the (national) past.

In Eastern Europe, the concept of 'revolution' has been seen as constituting and being constitutive of the 'downfall' of totalitarian regimes and (re)birth of democracy. In theorizing the 'revolutions' in Eastern Europe (cf. *inter alia* Antohi and Tismăneanu, 2000; Banac, 1992; Tismăneanu, 1999) the main concern has been with interpreting the 'great transformation', focusing on social conditions and preconditions of change, causes, meanings and legacies of the 1989 'dramatic' transformation.

My interest in this paper is not to offer a critique of the psychological, sociological or political interpretation and theorizing of ‘revolution’(s) (with or without reference to Eastern Europe) or focusing on the general aspects of ‘revolution’(s). What I would like to do instead is to draw attention to the idea that a focus on processes of interpretation and definition of a political ‘event’ (like ‘revolution’) moves us away from the perspective of the social and political actors themselves.

The narrative and auto/biographical dimensions of transformation and change have not substantively figured among the main concerns of psychologists, sociologists (of change) or political scientists (but see e.g., Andrews, 2000; Konopasek and Andrews, 2000; Tismăneanu and Iliescu, 2006)¹. Representing a political ‘event’ is as much an *issue* for ‘members’ (social and political actors), as it is for academic discourse. It is suggested that, studying the representation of a political ‘event’ entails examining ‘how participants’ versions occur as *parts of* practices, rather than as reflections *on* them’ (Edwards, 1997: 76, italics in original). Examining social and political actors’ versions of political ‘events’, as constituting and being constitutive of dimensions of social and ideological practices, involves the studying of ‘the categories that members use by attempting to find them in the activities in which they’re employed’ (Sacks, 1995: 27). It also involves examining participants’ versions within a context of controversy, of justification and criticism, of contestation of ideological practices of the past and present, within a framework that takes seriously the idea that our representations and understandings of the past and of events in the past have strategic, political and ideological consequences.

National commemoration

In this paper I want to focus on a very specific ideological practice of transition in Eastern Europe, that of national commemoration. Although the ritualistic ‘Today we commemorate + event’ does not seem to be more than a reiteration of similar rituals performed earlier, commemoration can be seen as constantly testifying to the fact that ‘the event was a true event, with a true emotional impact and true importance’ (Frijda, 1997: 111). It places the event and interpretations of it above that of subjective interpretations, constituting it ‘as an objective fact in the world’ (ibid.:111). It also ‘testifies that it is a true historical event with a social significance and emotional implication of objectively large magnitude’ (ibid.: 111). At the same time, it constitutes and ‘authorizes’ a *version* of the past, as well as a version of *events* of the past. In terms of national commemoration, mainly coming from individuals with representative duties, one can identify an attempt to put forward a, sometimes, non-controversial ‘representative point of view, acceptable to the nation’ (Ensink, 1996: 211).

However, as Turner has noted, ‘commemoration includes public rituals of remembrance and individual acts of recollection’, but also ‘public debates over the meaning and significance of historical events’ (Turner, 2006: 206). As Turner writes, ‘the events commemorated in many cases stand for a larger, more complex and ambiguous set of events making up a decisive period in a nation’s history’ (Turner, 2006: 208). What seems to be at stake is not only the emotional significance of an event and its *true* nature, but also the meaning of what is commemorated. The meaning of what is commemorated might be placed within an argumentative context, a context of justification and criticism (Billig, 1996).

In a national commemorative context, an analysis of the struggle over the meaning assigned to past events has to take into account the various discursive processes of representing and engendering an (almost) 'mythical' version of a given political and historical episode of national importance. The perspective espoused in commemorative contexts is not necessarily that of the 'member' with representative duties, but rather *the* representative point of view, acceptable to the nation and expressed *in the name of* the nation. For the outsider, the meaning assigned to a particular political 'event', the *categorization* of the 'event' is not necessarily placed within a context of controversy (Billig, 1996). For example, according to Timothy Garton Ash, 'nobody hesitated to call what happened in Romania a revolution. After all, it really looked like one: angry crowds on the streets, tanks, government buildings in flames, the dictator put up against a wall and shot' (1990: 20)

The impact and the significance of the 'revolution(s)' in Eastern Europe seems to be intimately linked with commemoration moves (books are edited to re-discuss the phenomenon, presidents, prime ministers, politicians in national parliaments devote their times to the national historical and political significance of such an 'event' or series of 'events'). Following Pierre Nora, one could argue that this process is part of commemorative memory and ritual that 'can be viewed as framing, defining and even establishing a certain tension fundamental to the period in question' (1998: 610). As it has been the case in Western Europe, one is witnessing an unnoticed passage from the 'historical to the remembered and the remembered to the commemorative' (ibid.:626). In the context of Eastern Europe, commemorative discourses are central to discourses of transition. Moreover, in post-communist Eastern Europe, 'commemoration is not a

mere adjunct to nation-building, but central to it' (Turner, 2006: 208; see Bucur, 2001 for a Romanian example).

The device of commemoration is a 'socially organized means of directing public attention toward an event as somehow focal or formative in collective experience' (White, 1997: 71). As Pennebaker & Banasik have noted, 'the creation and maintenance of a collective or historical memory is a dynamic social and psychological process. It involves the ongoing talking and thinking about the event by the affected members of the society or culture' (Pennebaker & Banasik, 1997: 4). This process is 'critical to the organization of the event in the form of a collective narrative' (ibid, p. 4). One could argue that this process is also a political and ideological process, which may involve the posing of 'questions about the present, and what the past means in the present' (Hodgkin & Radstone, 2003: 1). It may not simply involve 'talking and thinking' about a particular event, for example, in terms of contradictory accounts of 'what actually happened' in the past, but may involve questions such as 'who or what is entitled to speak for that past in the present' (Hodgkin & Radstone, 2003: 1). As such, there may well be 'agreement as to the course of events, but not over how the truth of those events may be most fully represented, or what should be the explanatory and narrative context that would make sense of a given episode' (Hodgkin & Radstone, 2003: 1).

Commemorative political speeches

Images of the past and recollected knowledge of the (events of) past are conveyed and sustained within the ritual performance of commemorative speeches.

Commemorative political speeches are seen as being essential in bringing collective norms and values to a wider audience. The focus is on commemorative political speeches, commemorative addresses in particular. Such addresses are usually characterized as representative and epideictic (Schaffner, 1996; Sauer, 1996; Ensink, 1996; Ensink and Sauer, 1995). As critical discourse analysts have shown, commemorative addresses belong to a hybrid genre of the epideictic address, genre that combines the goals of persuasion and establishing consensus regarding norms and values in society (Sauer, 1996). Very often, these commemorative addresses are representative speeches at the same time – the speakers are mostly persons with representative duties, but not necessarily with political authority – a queen, a president (cf. Sauer, 1996).

One might argue that commemorative addresses do not have any special pragmatic purpose, for, in a way, nothing will be said that has not been said many times before. Nevertheless, they can also be used as opportunities to respond to criticism, to build (rebuild) positions of political legitimacy and representativeness, to ‘authorize’ a *preferred* version of specific events and history. The significance of a commemorative address might also depend not only on its own content and design, but also on being an integral part of specific ‘dialogical networks’ (Leudar & Nekvapil, 2004) and ‘community of agreement’ (Gergen, 2005) within the public sphere.

The case of Romania

Although this might be seen by some as an unfounded claim, there is no wider consensus as to ‘what really happened’ in December 1989 and what is the *name* that should be given to the political ‘event’ that, first in Timișoara, and after that in București, opened the way for democracy in Romania. The Romanian ‘revolution’ has been historically (and still remains) an issue of deep controversy among lay people, scholars and politicians – some authors have called it ‘quasi-revolution’ (Tismăneanu, 1993) or ‘unfinished revolution’ (Roper, 2000). Some authors argue that ‘the events of the December 1989 revolution left an ideological void, filled previously by the political imaginary of the Ceausescu regime’ (Adamson, 2000: 121).

There have been attempts to reconstruct the events (see for example Ramesh, 1991), as there has been an interest on issues around myth-making and the revolution (Deletant, 1994). Researchers have also focused on the impact of the revolution on Romanian politics and revolutionary changes elsewhere in Eastern Europe (Tismăneanu, 1999; Antohi and Tismăneanu, 2000). There has also been a concern with charting the diverse interpretations of the ‘revolution’ in the public sphere of the ‘elites’ (Cesereanu, 2004). The main interpretive dimensions that were identified dealt with the idea of a ‘pure’ revolution, the ‘plot’ hypothesis (internal/external) and the hybrid (revolution + coup d’état) (the terms are Cesereanu’s).

This paper focuses specifically on the Romanian 1989 revolution and its commemoration in the Romanian parliament. This is part of a wider project concerned with how official and, in most instances, controversial political imaginary, and histories of the communist/post-communist past are produced and accomplished in talk and text, including the various ways in which the ‘Revolution of 1989’ has been represented

by political leaders who have taken part in the events during several relatively recent commemorative addresses in the Romanian parliament. For the purposes of this paper, I shall focus on two commemorative addresses (21 Dec 2000 and 18 Dec 2003) of the former Romanian president, Ion Iliescu (Head of State at the time).²

Generally acknowledged as the leading political figure of post-1989 Romanian politics, Ion Iliescu has been a 'dissident' member of the Communist Party who has seized the opportunity to assume power in December 1989 and become the President of the first Romanian 'democratic' government, emerging, in a rather controversial fashion, from the revolutionary enthusiasm and fervor. His unexpected appearance in the studios of the Romanian television in December 1989 and the subsequent assuming of leadership of the National Salvation Front are only some aspects that made him a controversial figure of the Romanian 'revolution'. He has been described as being the archetypal communist 'new man' (cf. Cesereanu, 2004: 84). He has been elected President of Romania three times: 1990-1992, 1992-1996, and 2000-2004.

The commemorative address of 2000 follows his re-election as President after facing the extreme right-wing candidate, Corneliu Vadim Tudor, in a second-round of voting, who saw the majority of Romanians voting against the extreme right-wing extremism of Vadim Tudor, and not necessarily for Iliescu. The commemorative address of 2003 has been his last public appearance as President of Romania commemorating and arguing for the 'authenticity' of the 'revolution'. In December 2004, he is no longer President as he loses to Traian Băsescu in the second-round of Presidential elections. Iliescu's case is conspicuous as he has been (and still is) a fervent supporter of the idea of 'pure revolution' (cf. Cesereanu, 2004: 73). These commemorative addresses can be considered excellent examples of his discourse on the

Romanian 'revolution'. The main aim of these commemorative discourses has been to producing a dominant version of the Romanian 'revolution' as 'authentic', foundational and turning point in the nation's history. As Cesereanu (2004) has noted, his discourse on the 'revolution' can mainly be seen as a reaction to accusations, levelled to him personally and his political team, of subverting and perverting the objectives and the 'real' ethos of the Romanian 'revolution'. One could argue that Iliescu has been using his presence as President in the commemorative sessions of the Romanian parliament as a political instrument, to critique the democratic political opposition. One of Iliescu's main accusations towards the democratic opposition is that it destabilises the young Romanian democracy (*apud* Cesereanu, 2004: 84).

My main concern is not with the 'facts of the matter' of the revolution (the factuality of an historical representation) or the wider political controversy, but how are the 'facts' described in order to 'authorize' a specific *perspective* of representing and explaining the 'events'. The argument is not only about 'how a given version is authorized as *that* version which can be treated by others as *what has happened*' (Smith, 1978: 33), but also who is 'allocated the privilege of definition and how other possible versions or sources of possible disjunctive information are ruled out' (*ibid.*: 33). I am also interested in describing some of the discursive procedures that are being used to ensure the publicly accomplished recognition of the Romanian 'revolution' as revolution, and therefore, as a true and meaningful 'object of commemoration'.

Analytic framework

This paper is concerned with the situated discursive accomplishment of democratic consensus and representativeness in an (hegemonic) attempt to produce, reproduce and ‘authorize’ a worldview that proposes that existing, *dominant* political and categorical formulations of national history and significant events (the Romanian ‘revolution’ of 1989) are the most appropriate in understanding the past and the future of the nation. What are the discursive processes involved in the ‘authorization’ of a *preferred* version and how this accomplishment may have the ideological function of framing/reframing, controlling the various interpretations, public (categorical) reformulations of events? A critical discursive analysis of political discourse based on ideological and rhetorical analysis (Billig, 2004), discursive psychology (Edwards & Potter, 2001) and membership categorization analysis (Sacks, 1995; Eglin and Hester, 2003) has been used. The main focus is on participants’ orientations, members’ categories in use, and the detailed analysis of descriptions with issues of category work, accountability, and entitlement at stake.

Analysis

Openings

(1)

- 1 Domnilor președinși ai Senatului și Camerei Deputaților
- 2 Doamnelor și domnilor senatori și deputați
- 3 Dragi prieteni din zilele și nopțile Revoluției din decembrie
- 4 Onorat asistență

- 1 Mr President of the Senate and Chamber of Deputies
- 2 Ladies and gentlemen senators and deputies
- 3 Dear friends from the days and nights of the December revolution
- 4 Esteemed audience

21 Dec 2000

(2)

- 1 Domnule președinte al Camerei Deputaților
- 2 Distinguiți membri ai Corpurilor legiuitoare
- 3 Distinguiți membri ai Guvernului
- 4 Doamnelor și domnilor reprezentanți ai Corpului diplomatic
- 5 Onorați invitați
- 6 Dragi prieteni revoluționari
- 7 Dragi compatrioți

- 1 Mr President of the Chamber of Deputies
- 2 Distinguished members of legislative bodies
- 3 Distinguished members of Government
- 4 Ladies and gentlemen representatives of diplomatic missions
- 5 Honourable guests
- 6 Dear revolutionary friends
- 7 Dear fellow countrymen

18 Dec 2003

Notice in examples (1) and (2) the way the speaker's use of formal forms of address indexes his institutional rather his personal identity (cf. Drew and Sorjonen, 1997). He is not only to be seen as acting as incumbent of an institutional role, but at the same time acting as incumbent of an institutional representative voice. At the same time, he also manages a positioning within the community of 'revolutionaries'³. The

categories ‘revolutionary friends’ (ex. 2, 1.6) and ‘friends from the days and nights of the December revolution’ (ex. 1, 1.3) are offered in such a way as to be relevant to the topic.

Note the use of ‘friends’ in both forms of address. The membership category ‘friends’ can be said to carry with it a set of category-bound activities and imply a ‘locus for rights and obligations’ (Lepper, 2000: 196). A particular (political) moral order is thus framed using categories such as ‘revolutionary friends’ and ‘friends from the days and nights of the December revolution’. The ‘friendship’ is defined *through* the event, through taking part in the event: friends *of* the Revolution.

The President is not only speaking from within the national community of which he is the *representative*, but also from within the community of revolutionaries, the community of the (active) participants in the ‘Revolution’. One could argue that this is not a simple rhetorical move of identifying with the audience (Billig, 1996), but a move of managing entitlement issues and framing a particular (political) moral framework in order to construct an ideological representation.

The categories ‘revolutionary’ and ‘revolution’ are produced as recognizable and available for category work. These ways of addressing the audience organize the categorical features of the address, and can be seen as preliminaries to the relevance of warrantability, entitlement and accountability issues. The official warrant (President of Romania) is seconded and embedded in a sense of (personal) solidarity, camaraderie with the community of the participants in the Revolution.

In so doing, the speaker lays claim to ‘an epistemological entitlement by virtue of category membership’ (Rapley, 1998: 331-332); he is not producing himself as merely a commemorator, a witness, but also as a participant: he is to be seen as claiming co-membership in the category ‘revolutionary’. This is a very strong move of warranting an

epistemological and speaking entitlement and a preface to offering and authorizing a specific version of the Romanian 'Revolution'.

One can see this as a strategic move of managing category membership that inform argumentative procedures and display the warrantability (legitimacy) or unwarrantability (illegitimacy) of what is being said within the commemorative context. As discursive psychologists have noted, this is one of the ways for the speaker to performing and managing various kinds of publicly sensitive business, including (his) motives and reasons for (doing) and saying things (cf. Edwards, 1997).

Managing controversy

(3)

50 Prin profunzimea și amploarea schimbărilor din decembrie 1989
51 evenimentele respective nu au fost nici lovitură de stat și cu atât mai
52 puțin echivalentul român al perestroicii sovietice care nu urmăreau o
53 schimbare de sistem ci doar o adaptare a sa.

50 Through the extent and depth of the changes from December 1989
51 the events in question have not been a state coup and even less
52 the Romanian equivalent of the soviet perestroika, which were not after a
53 change of system but only its adaptation

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(4)

65 Toate fabulașile politicianiste, cu care ne reîntâlnim și care se repetă
66 an de an din 1990 încoace, nu numai că nu au
67 suport, ci exprimă lipsă de cultură politică în cazul unora
68 precum și interese obscure în cazul altora, totuși însă
69 ignorând voit realitățile și faptele

65 All the politicianist confabulations, which one rehearses and which repeat
66 themselves year after year, from 1990 onwards, not only that they don't
67 stand scrutiny, but they are the expression of a lack of political culture, for
68 some, as well as obscure interests for some others, all of them, nonetheless,
69 ignoring willingly the realities and the facts.

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And then he continues:

(5)

70 $\square$ i mai absurd $\square$ este aser $\square$ iunea conform c $\square$ reia Revolu $\square$ ia s-a sfâr $\square$ it
71 odat $\square$ cu fuga lui Ceau $\square$ escu, dup $\square$ care ar fi urmat confiscarea acesteia.
72 A $\square$ adar, Revolu $\square$ ia s-ar fi sfâr $\square$ it atunci când ea înc $\square$ nu începuse. Prin
73 Revolu $\square$ ie se în $\square$ elege un proces radical de schimb $\square$ ri structurale ale
74 societ $\square$ $\square$ ii. Indiferent de modul în care se s $\square$ vâr $\square$ e $\square$ te, violent sau
75 pa $\square$ nic, lovitori de palat, de stat sau comploturi de orice fel, pot contribui la
76 declan $\square$ area unei revolu $\square$ ii, dar nu se pot substitui acesteia. O posibil $\square$
77 lovitur $\square$ de stat sau complot care s $\square$ -l fi anihilat pe Ceau $\square$ escu ar fi fost
78 un lucru benefic $\square$ i ar fi f $\square$ cut posibil $\square$ evitarea v $\square$ rs $\square$ rilor de sânge, dar
79 nu
am avut aceast $\square$ $\square$ ans $\square$.

70 Even more absurd is the idea that the Revolution finished
71 once Ceau $\square$ escu fled, thereafter being confiscated.
72 Thus, the Revolution would have finished before it even started. When one
73 says Revolution one understands a radical process of structural changes in
74 society. Independent of the way in which it takes place, violent or peaceful,
75 coups de palais, coups d'etat or plots of any sort, they can contribute to the
76 beginning of a revolution, but they cannot replace it. A possible coup d'etat
77 or plot that would have annihilated Ceau $\square$ escu would have been a good
78 thing and would have made possible avoiding the bloodshed, but we did not
79 have this chance

18 Dec 2003

In examples (3), (4) and (5), the context is that of justification and criticism

(Billig, 1996). It is about what the appropriate claims about the 'event'(s) should be.

One strategy used for defending the object of commemoration (and implicitly the act of

commemoration) and ‘authorizing’ a specific version of events is constructing the views of the critics as ‘absurd’.

The critical references to the alternative versions of interpretation of the ‘event’(s) are brought off as rooted in objective elements such as ‘lack of political culture’ (ex. 4, l.67) or ‘obscure’ political ‘interests’ (l.68). The irrationality and absurdity of opposing perspectives is also brought off through recourse to ‘historical necessity’ and a ‘universal’ definition of revolution (ex. 5, l.72-76). In political language, ‘absurdity’ might not necessarily be used to protect a view (Antaki, 2003), but to authorize an ideological representation. By pointing to the absurdity of the critics’ points of view it invites taking seriously the (ideological) perspective that is put forward.

The alternative labels are mentioned: ‘A possible coup d’etat or plot...’ (ex. 5, l. 76-77) or ‘the Romanian equivalent of the soviet perestroika’ (ex. 3, l.52). On one hand, there is a sense of directness in criticising the alternative meanings assigned to the event(s). On the other hand, the denial of alternative labels is not direct⁴: ‘A possible coup d’etat or plot that would have annihilated Ceausescu would have been a good thing and would have made possible avoiding the bloodshed, but we didn’t have this chance’ (ex. 5, l. 76-79). Note the use of ‘would have been a good thing’ and ‘would have made possible avoiding the bloodshed’. This can be seen as a move of ‘making a version factually robust’ (Edwards, 2003) by playing off possibility against actuality, as well as appearance against reality (Edwards, 1997). One can see this as part of a concession move (Antaki & Wetherell, 1999). Once the contrasting views are on the record, the speaker can put forward his own (ideological) perspective, ‘without being accused of being blindly dogmatic’ (Antaki, 2003: 96).

But with ‘we did not have this chance’ the concession is explained away, ruling out alternative explanations (and implicitly working as to question alternative categorizations) within a framework of possibility vs actuality/appearance vs reality. At the same time, this works as a sort of inoculation against stake and interest (Edwards and Potter, 1992).

Another strategy is that of relying on category-bound knowledge and predicates as part of an ‘authorization’ move (Smith, 1978). One is provided with a preliminary set of instructions for how to read the phenomenon (cf. Smith, 1978): ‘When one says revolution one understands a radical process of structural changes in society’.

‘Revolution’ is produced as an historical fact, therefore an issue independent of particular networks of agency. It is a sort of theoretical legitimation that provides “explicit representations of ‘the way things are’” (van Leeuwen, 2007: 103). It is nevertheless an argumentative definition of ‘revolution’ that is mobilized against alternative ‘definitions’ of the ‘event’. The speaker can be likened to the social scientist, who, when offering a ‘definition of a commonly used term’ does not merely rely on ‘an elaboration of internal meanings’, but produces it as ‘an argument against other definitions’ (Billig, 1996: 178).

A specific ideological perspective on the Romanian ‘revolution’ is legitimized and authorized in terms of ready-made category-bound knowledge. A disembodied definition of ‘revolution’, appealing to a universal, reasonable audience (Billig, 1996) is presented as common-knowledge, what everyone purportedly knows.

The audience is instructed to ‘hear’ the definition as the *proper* definition, as *the* definition. The procedures used for establishing the definition as ‘objectively known’ (Smith, 1978: 35) are not made explicit: it is a ‘definition’ that relies on category-bound

knowledge and predicates. The ‘identity’ of the ‘event’ is constructed through a *categorical* reference, through the invocation of a *category* with associated characteristics and features. It is also based on the assumption that ‘revolution’ is the kind of category that ‘must be seen to appear in the same way to anyone’ (Smith, 1978:35).

The implication is that critics seem to miss what is obvious to anyone else. This is not a matter of simply knowing ‘what a revolution is’, but realizing what are the category-bound predicates that can be used to *describe* a revolution (‘change of system’, ‘radical process of structural changes in society’ etc.). The speech appears to be ‘*designed* with regard to such matters’ (Edwards, 1997: 98, italics in original).

Predicates such as ‘change of system’ (ex. 3, l. 52-53), ‘radical process of structural changes’ (ex. 5, l.73) come from a collection of terms that are specifically and commonly used to characterize a ‘revolution’ (this is also evident in the academic literature on ‘revolutions’, see Calvert, 1990 for example) so as to say that a ‘revolution’ is what it usually taken to *be*. For instance, according to Calvert and theoreticians of ‘revolution’, ‘if nothing changes then it is not a revolution’ (1990, p. 16). For political actors, as well as for academics, this is not a simple issue of attribution preceding evidence: you categorize the event and that provides for how you interpret it (describe it). It is rather a case for: a) if the category is known, then its characteristics and features can be inferred; b) if the characteristics and features are known, then the category can be inferred. And this can be said to be an issue that relies on the *logic* of membership categorization analysis and the implicative relationship of category-bound knowledge and predicates and producing ‘identity’ (Sacks, 1995; Eglin and Hester, 2003)

The ‘revolution’ is “objectivated, represented as a generalized and intangible ‘phenomenon’ rather than as an action by specific actors” (van Leeuwen, 1995: 82). It comes to signify the natural process of historical change. The ‘revolution’ is an ‘unexamined and unexaminable given’ (ibid.:82). One can discern a dilemma of agentialization/de-agentialization (van Leeuwen, 1995). On one hand, the ‘revolution’ is represented as being brought about by people claiming membership in the category ‘revolutionary’, on the other hand, it is represented as ‘brought about ... in ways impermeable to human agency’ (ibid.:96). The speaker acts as the historian, political scientist, sociologist of change for which ‘language can serve as a perfectly transparent medium of representation... if one can only find the right language for describing events, the meaning of the events will *display itself* to consciousness’ (White, 1978: 130, italics in original).

Managing objectivity and authenticity

Consider the following examples

(6)

40 ... deformarea adevărilor cu privire la revoluție
 41 și a adevărului însuși care este revoluția a constituit o bună bucată
 42 de vreme apanajul celor care, probabil, tocmai au absentat de la un
 43 asemenea crucial eveniment ori și-au făcut calcule de profit politic și
 44 social de pe urma lui. Trebuie să spun că nicăieri în lume un asemenea
 45 fenomen, cu determinări complexe și obiective, cum este revoluția, nu a
 46 mai fost abordat în termeni discriminatori, de desconsiderare ori supus
 47 unui tratament fals justițiar.

40 ... the deformation of the truths regarding the revolution
41 and of the truth in itself that is the revolution has constituted for a good
42 while the appendage of those who, probably, have not been present in this
43 sort of crucial event or have made calculations of political and social profit.
44 I have to say that nowhere in the world such a phenomenon,
45 with complex and objective determinations, such as the revolution, has been
46 talked about in discriminatory terms, of inconsideration or subjected to a
47 false judiciary treatment

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(7)

60 Ca unul care, asemenea multora dintre cei prezenți sau nu
61 la această solemnitate, am participat direct la evenimente și am deținut
62 un anumit rol, am respins și resping categoric astfel de
63 judecăți, pe care nu le socotesc altceva decât ca pe o încercare de fraudare
64 a istoriei, a adevărului cu privire la valoarea și forța idealurilor
65 revoluției și, nu în ultimul rând, ca o tentativă de împiedicare a
66 împlinirii lor!

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60 As one of those who, like so many of those present or not present
61 at this solemn meeting, I have directly participated in the events and had a
62 certain role, I have been opposing and still categorically opposing such
63 comments, that are nothing other than an attempt to fraud
64 history, the truth regarding the values and the force of the ideals of the
65 revolution, and last, but not least, an attempt to stop
66 their fulfillment!

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In examples (6) and (7) one can notice a classic example of establishing authority through using personal experience. This move is accompanied by a direct reference to the actions of the critics: their 'attempt' to 'fraud history' (ex. 7, l.63-64), 'the truth regarding the values and the force of the ideals of the revolution' (l. 64-65) and 'to stop their fulfillment!' (l. 65-66). In the context of talking about 'revolution' they might even be categorized as counter-revolutionaries!

This voice is a 'warranting voice' (Gergen, 1989) that speaks from within the community of revolutionaries and thereby, explicitly claims, not only certain knowledge entitlements, but also certain criticism entitlements. Although not explicitly used, the category 'revolutionary' is taken for granted, it is not problematic. What is made problematic, even if not explicitly, are the 'critics' who, according to speaker, have no entitlement to claim membership in such a category.

One can notice a shift from the institutional role and representative voice to the personal, biographical element, of not only witnessing the event, but having directly participated and having 'had a certain role': a sort of autobiographical passage that has the effect of establishing authority within a more general move of identifying with the community of the 'revolutionaries'. One can also notice a theme of vested stake and interest on the part of those criticizing (calculations of political and social profit) (ex. 6).

Not taking part seems to equal not knowing. Taking part is established as the *sine qua non* reason for being entitled to talk about the 'event'. What I would like to argue is that this is not only a simple case of claiming 'I know cos' I was there' (Tusting et al., 2002) to mount an argument against the 'critics', but also a case of taking into account how the speaker produces itself as an incumbent of an omni-relevant category: 'revolutionary'. The speaker establishes a relationship to the 'event' by virtue of producing himself as an incumbent of a specific category (cf. Eglin and Hester, 2003).

There is a sense that it is important to making sure that the account given would not only be simply considered true and authentic in itself, but would be held in the *collective memory* of the nation as true and authentic. One gets a sense that the categorial framework of 'revolution' needs to be produced as 'something which endures, and is not tied to a particular time and place' (Davis, 1992: 216).

In (6), through the use of an extreme case formulation, the ‘hearably absurd’ (Antaki, 2003) nature of critics’ claims is constructed: ‘nowhere in the world such a phenomenon, with complex and objective determinations, as the revolution, has been talked about in discriminatory terms, of inconsideration or subjected to a false justiciary treatment’ (ex. 6, l.44-47). Denying ‘the truth in itself that is the revolution’ (l.41) is again produced as ‘hearably absurd’. This is a move of producing the Romanian ‘revolution’ as a non-controversial ‘event’ (implicitly, the category ‘revolution’ is produced as belonging to a non-controversial categorial realm), not anchored in specific historical/political particularities. The sense of objectivity and authenticity is not only achieved through reference to the national community, but also a wider, universal ‘community of agreement’ (Gergen, 2005: 108).

(8)

80 Revoluția română a fost, deci, opera poporului român,
 81 ea îi aparține poporului român. Revoluția română nu a fost
 82 un act artificial, gândit în nu știu ce birouri, de nu știu ce
 83 organizații subversive. Revoluția română, ca toate revoluțiile
 84 în general, ca și în toate celelalte țări, în 1989, a fost
 85 rezultatul unei crize profunde, în care a intrat vechiul sistem, și al
 86 imposibilității guvernanților de a mai oferi soluții realiste și
 87 acceptabile problemelor cu care se confrunta societatea românească. De
 88 aceea am afirmat și afirm cu tărie faptul că Revoluția română este un
 89 moment de cotitură în istoria noastră națională, care a schimbat
 90 fizionomia societății românești, care a deschis calea unor transformări
 91 profunde în plan politic, economic și social. Așa ceva se întâmplă
 92 sau nu, nu se poate
 93 nici confisca, nici fura. Revoluția română a fost,
 94 totodată, cea mai radicală din întreg spațiul fost "socialist"
 din Europa.

80 So, the Romanian revolution was the achievement of the Romanian
81 people, it belongs to the Romanian people. The Romanian revolution
82 has not been an artificial act, decided in I don't know what offices, by I don't
83 know what subversive organisation. The Romanian revolution, like all
84 revolutions in general, like in all other countries, in 1989, has been the
85 result of a profound crisis of the old system and the
86 impossibility of government to offer realist and acceptable solutions
87 to the problems that the Romanian society was facing. That's why I have
88 said and emphasise again that the Romanian revolution is a cornerstone in
89 our national history, which has changed the physiognomy of the Romanian
90 society, which opened the way for profound political, economical and social
91 transformations. Something like this, is either accomplished or not, it can
92 be neither confiscated nor stolen. The Romanian revolution has been,
93 at the same time, the most radical in the formerly "socialist" space of
94 Europe.

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The building up of the authenticity and the *true* nature of the events is taken further in (8). Issues of stake, interest and entitlement in representing the 'event' are countered with a version of the 'event' as the 'achievement' of the action of the 'people', and therefore, 'belonging to' the 'people': 'Achievement of the Romanian people', 'it belongs to the Romanian people' (l.80-81).

The previously identified dilemma of agentialization/de-agentialization is still intact. The Romanian 'revolution' is said to be the achievement of the 'Romanian people', but also the result of the 'profound crisis of the old system' (l.85). There is a still a strong sense that although the 'revolution' 'belongs to the Romanian people', it is still to be seen as a 'result of an irresistible force rather than the outcome of specific deeds and events' (Arendt, 1965: 255-256). This is another opportunity for the speaker to formulate and orient (to) the 'events' as recognizable and accountable as 'revolution': 'Like all revolutions in general, like in all other countries in 1989' it [the Romanian revolution] was the result of 'a profound crisis of the old system and the impossibility of government to offering realist and acceptable solutions to the problems that the

Romanian society was facing' (l.83-87). What this description provides is that, in the last analysis, the Romanian 'revolution' is like the other 'revolutions of 1989'. The Romanian 'revolution' is placed within the historical 'order' and logic of the 1989 revolutions.

An attempt at argumentative closure is intercalated between two comments on the Romanian revolution: 'something like this happens or does not happen, it cannot be confiscated or stolen' (l.91-92). The earlier apparent reasonableness of taking into account alternative political labels for the 'event' is turned into a peremptory assertion that goes against the various alternative versions that are said to be implicating vested interest, 'implicating motive and intention' (Edwards, 1997: 98).

Although previously placed within the realm of argument and argumentative meaning, the specific version of events that is being produced is said to lie beyond argument. Whatever happened in Dec 1989 (the 'revolution') cannot be anything else than what is predicated by the speaker. Its 'rhetorical force is to *claim* for one's current argument the status of common knowledge, and thus render it hard to deny' (Edwards, 1997: 256, italics in original). The speaker is not only telling what the Romanian 'revolution' *is*, but what it should be taken *as*.

The 'exceptionality' of the Romanian revolution is emphasized. It is said to be the 'the most radical in the formerly socialist space of Europe' (l.93-94). The Romanian 'revolution' does not constitute thus a disconfirmation of the (historical) pattern of 'revolutions'; instead its special characteristics help confirm the genuineness of the historical pattern of revolutions in Eastern Europe.

(9)

90 Dacă, așa cum am mai avut prilejul să arăt, o revoluție schimbă
91 radical sistemul politic și social și consacra ireversibilitatea
92 schimbărilor fundamentale din societate, este de la sine înțelese că ea nu
93 rezolvă de la bun început și în mod definitiv toate problemele. Ea
94 deschide calea evoluției și asigură premisele soluțiilor lor.

90 If, as I had the opportunity to show, a revolution changes radically
91 the political and social system and consecrates the irreversibility of
92 fundamental changes in society, it goes by itself that it does not
93 resolve from the very beginning and definitively all the problems. It opens
94 the way to evolution and ensures the premises for offering solutions.

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As in the previous account, the ‘event’ is constructed as following a normative moral and historical order, that of ‘revolutions’. Again, the representation of the ‘event’ is produced and controlled via its categorial reference. There is a shift from ‘what a revolution *is*’ to ‘what a revolution *does*’: ‘changes radically the political and social system and consecrates the irreversibility of fundamental changes in society’ (l.90-92), ‘opens the way to evolution and ensures the premises for offering solutions’ (l.93-94). This shift is nevertheless based on the same invocation of category-bound knowledge and predicates.

The comments are introduced with the use of an if-then’ structure (Edwards, 1997). This is used as a discursive resource for telling an ideological story of ‘what is the case’. And ‘what is the case’ is predicated on the ‘definition’ of ‘what a revolution does’ offered by the speaker. ‘It goes by itself’ (l.92) nicely prefaces the comments on changes by reinforcing the previously offered example of ready-made category-bound knowledge.

Categorial reference to ‘what a revolution *does*’ is used to respond to an implicit criticism about changes in society. ‘What a revolution does’ is centered on the issue of change: and not any kind of change (radical and fundamental changes) and points to how the revolution ‘consecrates’ the ‘irreversibility of fundamental changes in society’. There is still a sense of the previously mentioned dilemma of agentialization/de-agentialization: changes are not brought about, but are ‘consecrated’ by the ‘revolution’. As in the previous examples, one can see how the ‘event’ is descriptively produced as ‘following ... some normative or expected order’ (Edwards, 1997: 144). The ‘event’ does not only ‘follow’ a normative order of ‘revolutions’, but also a normative order of fundamental ‘change’. The normative ‘identity’ of the ‘revolution’ is produced and predicated on the invocation of category-bound predicates such as ‘fundamental’ or ‘radical’ changes.

This account works to establishing that this is how these things called ‘revolutions’ happen and must happen - very similar move to the essentialist view in (8) - and what are their consequences. Again, this provides for ‘both the explanation of why things have happened and the determination of their appearance’ (Iniguez et al., 1997: 242).

The nation and the ‘revolution’

Not only is the ‘revolution’ in Romania constructed by exploiting category-bound knowledge and presented as part of a general historical pattern, but also as foundational moment and principle in national history. As such, to commemorate the ‘revolution’ is to narrate the nation and its future.

(10)

80 Nu pentru sărăcie, nu pentru umilință sau jaf și corupție
81 s-a murit în revoluție, ci pentru o viață demnă, normală, pentru o
82 societate cu adevărat democratică și un viitor care să aducă într-
83 adevăr prosperitatea. Ca act fondator al unei noi Români, revoluția a fost
84 un act
85 al responsabilității supreme. Cauzele și sentimentele acestei
responsabilități trebuie să ne domine pe toți.

80 It is not for poverty, or for humiliation or organized theft and corruption
81 that one has died in the revolution, but for a decent, normal life, for a
82 truly democratic society and a future that should undoubtedly bring
83 prosperity. As a foundational act of a new Romania, the revolution was an
84 act of supreme responsibility. The causes and the sentiment of this
85 responsibility have to dominate us all

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(11)

120 Este important să tragem toate concluziile care se impun din
121 judecata la care ne supune permanent națiunea română, să ne
122 orientăm toate acțiunile politice în funcție de acest reper care
123 înseamnă valorile, principiile și obiectivele Revoluției române și să
124 răspundem
125 nevoilor și așteptărilor cetățenilor în slujba cărora
ne aflăm toți cei aleși.

120 It is important that we draw all the conclusions that stem from the
121 incessant judgment of the Romanian nation, it is important that we orient
122 all our political actions in relation to this yardstick which are the values,
123 the principles and the objectives of the Romanian revolution and that we
124 respond to the needs and expectations of the citizens
125 which we, all elected, serve

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In example (10), one can see an instance of a particularized account of the Romanian 'revolution'. It seems to rely on a very Arendtian philosophy that contends

that what is 'crucial ... to any understanding of revolutions in the modern age is that the idea of freedom and the experience of a new beginning should coincide' (Arendt, 1965: 29). There is a sense that the 'event' is described as embodying 'enduring truths' and values, and that, 'it seems sensible ...[these] should not be lost in the past' (Davis, 1992: 215)

The category 'revolution' is made to work by constituting, through its situated use, a 'collectivity' morally organised with respect to specific ideas, values, commitments that could be said to be 'revolutionary' (freedom, social justice) (cf. Jayyusi, 1984: 52). The ascribed 'foundational' character of the 'revolution' constitutes a moral framework of 'national responsibility' and 'togetherness' (ex. 10 and 11) within reference to a time of hope in a future 'that should undoubtedly bring prosperity' (ex. 10, l.82-83). The 'values, the principles and the objectives of the Romanian revolution' (ex.11, l.122-123) are the ones that should guide those of the Romanian nation. In a move of re-contextualization, the moral framework is linked to the sacrifice of those who 'died in revolution' (ex. 10, l.81). This could also be read as another attempt to authorize the trueness and authenticity of the Romanian 'revolution' (there is an implied sense that one would not be entitled to call it a 'revolution' if the 'present' did not live up to the expectations of the 'foundational' moment).

Note the strategic use of a togetherness repertoire in ex. (10) and (11). This could be seen as a sort of wider mobilization discourse, one that goes beyond parliamentary acceptance (cf. Rapley, 1998). What this does, is to establish the reasonableness of the (representative) position - that is, thinking about the Romanian 'revolution' from a *particular* perspective - and also establishing the identity of the reasonable politician.

There is a sense that being the ‘commemorator’, witness of and active participant in the commemorated ‘event’, and reasonable politician are isomorphic (cf. Rapley, 1998). What this isomorphism allows is producing a togetherness and political consensus repertoire that entails going beyond criticism and responding ‘to the needs and expectations of the citizens which we, all elected, serve’ (ex. 11, l.124-125). This is a voice speaking from within the universal community of the ‘reasonable’ politician(s) serving the interests of the country. Consider ex. (12)

(12)

127 Trecutul și prezentul se împletesc pentru a prefigura viitorul.
 128 Revoluția română a fost evenimentul care a declanșat acele
 129 transformări profunde și de substanță, care ne permit să afirmăm,
 130 acum, că viitorul României nu poate fi imaginat în afara viitorului Europei
 131 unite. Până să ne atingem obiectivul strategic al aderării la Uniunea
 132 Europeană, ne-a mai rămas de parcurs un drum scurt, dar extrem de
 133 dificil și de solicitant pentru toți românii, indiferent de poziția lor în
 134 societate.
 135 De aceea consider că și în acest moment, în care cinștim memoria
 136 eroilor Revoluției române, trebuie să privim cu luciditate la ceea ce am
 137 realizat, dar mai ales la ceea ce nu am realizat și mai avem de
 făcut pentru a ne atinge obiectivele.

127 The past and the present interweave to prefigure the future.
 128 The Romanian revolution was the event which started those
 129 profound and substantial transformations which allow us to say, now, that
 130 the future of Romania cannot be imagined outside the future of a united
 131 Europe. We have a short way to go until we reach our strategic goal to join
 132 the European Union, but one extremely difficult
 133 and demanding for all Romanians, no matter of their position in society.
 134 That is why I consider that in this moment, when we pay tribute to the
 135 heroes of the Romanian revolution, we have to lucidly consider what we
 136 have achieved, but mostly what we have not achieved and what we have to
 137 do to attain our goals

In (12) one gets a clear sense that the time of transformations and change has been a progressive time. The ‘foundational’ time of the ‘revolution’ allows for considering achievements and preparing the future of the nation. This vision of progressive time is not divorced from commemorative *time* and context. On the contrary, the time of commemoration is *the time* for taking all those issues seriously: ‘in this moment, when we pay tribute to the heroes of the Romanian revolution, we have to lucidly consider what we have achieved, but mostly what we have not achieved and what we have to do to attain our goals’ (l.134-137).

The Romanian ‘revolution’ is constituted as an ‘event’ that embodies and heralds the values and goals that the nation aspires to. The ‘revolution’ is said to be at the same time the *foundation*, but also part and parcel of the political *project* of the nation. The ‘revolution’ is constitutive of ‘projecting the future’ concerning both ‘future action and future reality’ (Dunmire, 2005: 484).

Discussion

In this paper I have been examining issues around national commemoration, collective memory, managing authenticity and category memberships in the representation of a specific political ‘event’: the Romanian ‘revolution’ of 1989. As this paper has hopefully shown, the Romanian ‘revolution’ comes to being invested with a category-bound, ‘discursively constituted’ reality (Smith, 1999: 192).

The construction of an ‘ideological argument through a dramaturgy of objective description’ (Edelman, 1988: 115) has been explored. There has been a focus on issues of agency, entitlement, and working with regard to actual or possible alternatives (cf. Edwards, 1997), categorical incumbency shifts, managing the authenticity and the *true*

nature of the ‘event’ through invoking category-bound knowledge and predicates commonsensically attachable to the notion of ‘revolution’, formulating and orienting to the ‘events of 1989’ as recognizable and accountable *as* ‘revolution’ and ‘foundational’ moment in national history.

Although this kind of discourse seems explanatory, it is ideological in that it, paradoxically, ‘refuses explanations’ (Barthes, 1957/1993: 142). In this way, the order of commemoration and its ‘object’ are seen as ‘sufficient or ineffable’ (ibid.: 142). The notion of ‘revolution’ is given a ‘clarity which is not that of an explanation but that of a statement of fact’ (ibid.: 143). Paraphrasing Barthes, if one states the *fact* of the (Romanian) ‘revolution’ ‘without explaining it’, one is ‘very near to finding that it is natural and *goes without saying*’ (143, italics in original)⁵.

It is usually believed that the main objective of commemoration involves the construction of a ‘unitary and coherent version of the past’ (Misztal, 2003: 127). As Wertsch (2002: 125) has argued, a ‘dogmatic commitment to one – and only one – account of the past is a hallmark of collective memory, as opposed to history’. But nonetheless, there is a struggle over what is the *nature* of the ‘object of commemoration’ and the *meaning* that is ascribed to it *for* and *in the name* of the ‘nation’ and collective memory.

The commemorative ritual is part and parcel of instituting a political and historical ‘reality’. As Billig (1999) contends, ‘memory-stories ... can be suspected for being partial in their patterns of inclusion and omission’, but ‘it is not so much that the past is censored, but that the past is being recruited, indeed created, to serve present purposes’ (p. 170). But the meaning and emotional aspect of commemoration can be easily subverted. In the present instance, this is to be seen in the context of an attempt

of dominant, *representative* political actors ‘to project their assumptions and visions [of the past] and of the future as universal and grounded in common sense’ (Dunmire, 2005: 482). In a context of controversy, justification and criticism over the meaning that is to be assigned to a political ‘event’ of national importance, there is nevertheless a sense that there might be a ‘danger of the reinterpretation of critical political events’ (Teitel, 2000: 105). This could be seen as becoming more of a problem, as the ‘events’ are seen as constitutional, foundational of the (new) democracy and nation. There is a strong sense in these accounts that the identity of the Romanian ‘revolution’ is based on a historical and political ‘view for all time’. But, as Teitel has argued, ‘the attempt to entrench an identity based on a particular historical view for all time is itself an illiberal vision – no choice remains but plurality of narratives, instability and political dialectic’ (2000: 117).

The image of the ‘event’ is placed in a signifying, semiotic chain that generates determinate meaning and creates a specific ‘representation’ of the ‘event’. From a discursive social psychological perspective, the discursive power of a categorial conceptualization of an ‘event’ ties together a moment of (arbitrary) closure (Eagleton, 1991) and secures the meaning, in a normative and prescriptive way, involving ‘avoidance of further memory-work, which might disturb the sovereignty of the accepted account of the past’ (Billig, 1999: 170-171)

The ordinariness of the Romanian ‘revolution’ as ‘revolution’ is decreed by managing the designed accountability and its publicly accomplished recognition. The ‘event’ is constructed as following a normative moral and (historical) order, that of ‘revolutions’. But one should not stop at this observation. There is a sense of a clear political and ideological concern in the way that the ‘event’ is represented. An

ideological dimension is framed when it is implied that when one contests the label ‘revolution’, one is also contesting the predicates, values, life-forms *uniquely* bound to this category (Leudar and Nekvapil, 1998).

The significance of this particular *version* of the Romanian ‘revolution’ lies in it being produced via a categorial reference in political discourse. The political ‘event’ that is being commemorated acquires an ‘identity’ as it is cast into a *category* with associated characteristics or features. The *occasioned* ideological and political significance of a political ‘event’ having an ‘identity’ lies also in its *consequentiality* in and for the social and ideological context in which it is invoked. This version is made *co-substantial* with the *official* collective memory around the ‘events of 1989’. At the same time, the version offered is factually and rhetorically robust, as it subverts ‘what *might* be the case’, ‘in favour of a purportedly more insightful and adequate analysis’ (Edwards, 1997: 248)⁶.

The original events ‘are lifted out of their local historical contexts and reshaped to the relevancies established’ (Smith, 1999: 185) for a commemorative (political) discourse. These established relevancies of a commemorative political discourse allow for the fulfillment of the ideological function of framing/reframing, controlling the various interpretations, public (re)formulations of the ‘event’ (the Romanian ‘revolution’); allowing for the disconnecting of the ‘revolution’ from its controversial particulars, delegitimizing criticism, and alternative meanings attached to it.

Notes

1. See also attempts to consider the voice of the social and political actor in stories of social change in social movements research (cf. Davis, 2002; Polletta, 1998a, b; see also Tilly, 2002)
2. The analysis has been based on transcripts of the commemorative addresses retrieved from the Romanian Parliament's website at <http://www.cdep.ro/pls/steno/steno.home>
3. Taking account of the commemorative context, it might seem natural to acknowledge the 'revolutionaries' as part of the audience. This may even be seen as a legitimate move, as no ordinary people, but 'revolutionaries' are remembered on this occasion.
4. The account is carefully constructed, as the critics are not directly mentioned, as part of a move of de-personalizing of the referent (Montero and Rodriguez-Mora, 1998: 94).
5. This is a similar process as the one identified by Barthes (1957/1993: 143) when writing about 'myth'. One could argue that 'passing from history to nature', this specific representation of the Romanian 'revolution' 'abolishes the complexity of human acts ... gives them the simplicity of essences, it does away with all dialectics, with any going back beyond what is immediately visible, it organizes a world which is without depth, a world wide open and wallowing in the evident, it establishes a blissful clarity: things appear to mean something by themselves'.

6. One could also see this as a process of production of an 'empty signifier' that unifies 'a certain politico-ideological field' (cf. Laclau, 1993) of commemoration and public discourse, an attempt at constructing and legitimating post-communist democracy, representativeness, collective memory as integral part of a 'contested discursive terrain of political competition' (Adamson, 2000: 120)

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