THE NEED FOR FICTION

It would not be accurate to see Lucia Boia as a representative of some kind of 'new generation' or a new school of Romanian historiography—simply because no such coherent movement exists. What exists instead is a number of contemporary authors, who, by adopting a critical approach intended to deconstruct ideologically informed historiography, demonstrate certain common characteristics. However, the volumes written by them are individual works constituted in parallel which can hardly be perceived as manifestations or parts of a well-defined professional trend. True, the authors themselves—Lucian Boia, Sorin Mitu, Sorin Antohi, Alexandru Zub, and a few others—also have a number of similarities in their biographies. Although they are not members of the same generation in the chronological sense, but contemporaries of a number of political events, such shared experiences have certainly left their imprint on the decisive stages of their professional lives.

Beyond the shared characteristics of their parallel careers, one can also detect some deeper-lying commonalities in the works of these authors. However, the common features do not appear in their publications in any systematic way, and so the incidental occurrence of similar thoughts and arguments does not link the scholars in question as a 'generation' in the professional sense. The sole common feature which can be seen at first sight is precisely the abovementioned critical stance, targeting the ideologically informed sources of the national historiographical tradition. One can also identify a more or less systematically represented interdisciplinary perspective. A further underlying assumption which the writers in question share seems to be the idea that the reconstruction of facts and events in history, as well as in the social sciences in general, does have a tendency towards fiction. But none of these shared elements suffice to enable them to be considered as constituents of an elaborated strand of thought, and so by no means provide grounds upon which to present the authors of these loosely related works as founders of a coherent movement.
THE REPRESENTATION OF CRITICAL HISTORIOGRAPHY IN BOIA'S WORK

The concept of the 'mythical' occupies a central place in Boia's work. He describes it as acquiring different roles in the various sources of global historiography. By taking a look at the volumes Boia has published so far, one gets the impression that he does not treat the 'mythical' as an element of a particular national history. Instead, he explores the phenomenon as an ingredient of historical research in general, as something that is neither nation- nor author-specific. In the present volume, he elaborates on the Romanian case of the 'mythical'. A glimpse at a list of Boia's publications on the subject illustrates the non-national and non-regional character of the manner in which he explores this important component of historical thinking.1

Boia writes history in a way which also says something about how scholars are attracted to writing history. He describes an inclination towards the mythical as a persistent feature of the telling of history. As such, this phenomenon is presented as a universal one. It is not taken as something more characteristic of any particular national tradition of historiography than of another. Therefore, in writing a book on the history of the 'mythical' in Romanian historiography Boia is not addressing anything specifically Romanian, but rather the Romanian version of a general phenomenon.

Boia contends that there are two main aspects of history: first, there are the events themselves, and secondly, there is the way we talk about them. He argues that by tracing out the lines of a coherent story, the historian inevitably creates a kind of fiction from the material of the real. The tendency to look at events in a particular way is an inevitable meta-historical element in any historiography. Consequently, there is nothing like 'objective' history. One must renounce the claim to a god-like overview in historical reconstruction. Writing history and the act of remembering that precedes it are always subject to the impact of the cognitive patterns of a concrete social and political environment. Writing history and recalling the past cannot be isolated from the time and place in which they are performed. Moreover, each member of society contributes to the process of picturing historical time in a particular way. These unintended inter-subjective efforts to map past (and present) events also influence the historian. In this respect, everyday perceptions of reality are part of a constant re-writing and re-interpreting of history.

Boia defines myth as an imaginary construction, as something which is neither real nor unreal. He describes it as a structural disposition, as something that organizes events according to the preferred coordinates of the history-teller. Myth works as a hidden wish concerning how one would like things to have happened, rather than how things actually happened. Myths integrate and simplify. By talking about the past, the mythical framework hosts an attitude

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