

EXTREMIST MANIPULATIONS OF APOCALYPTIC FEARS: A Case Study of de-Christianisation and Islamisation Dis- courses on the Romanian New Right Blog

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ABSTRACT: This paper illustrates how extremist manipulations of collective and individual emotions can construct a world that is feared to come to an end. The case study of the blog of the Romanian New Right, blog.nouadreaapta.org, has revealed discursively strong apocalyptic scenarios concerning Europe, through qualitative content analysis. The recurrent themes on the blog—the Islamisation and the de-Christianisation of Europe—signal the perception of an irreversible cultural process, never before experienced, and terrifying in its thoroughness. This analysis suggests, then, that attention should be paid to expressions of religious anxiety, in a world where the sentiments toward one's identity and group have spread over spaces by new means of media and communication. When social identity is no longer dependent on territories and spaces, categories overlap and the need to belong becomes violent, a dynamic apparent through the description, illustration and interpretation of extremist apocalyptic constructions.

KEYWORDS: apocalypse, New Right, internet, narratives, content analysis

INTRODUCTION

Apocalyptic anxieties and dystopian scenarios might seem unsuitable for the reader's of this study day-to-day experience. Apocalypticism tends to be perceived as an extreme religious mentality centred on disastrous and catastrophic ends (Hubbes, 2010). This paper develops an interpretative content analysis on empirical evidence of anxieties, as embodied in visual and textual narratives that reconstruct the world as under imminent threat of extinction. These apocalyptic narratives, developed on the blog of the Romanian New Right,¹ an extreme-rightist organisation from Eastern Europe, might be interpreted as signs revealed to the chosen few, to some knowledgeable individuals or groups that have been granted clear vision (Borchardt, 1990). As pieces from recent literature prove, apocalypticism and the end-of-the-world anxieties pervade the social imaginary of our times (Hubbes, 2010, Kuntsman and Ferreday, 2011, Wohl et al., 2010), rendering a clear vision of the potential future into a social

¹<http://blog.nouadreaapta.org>

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practice or mediated social discourse.² In the following pages, I will examine elements of social affects that, framed by social uncertainties, foment apocalyptic thought and persuasion in our times. I will use these conceptual notes to interpret the dystopian vision of the New Right, in which the known white Christian Europe is constructed and viewed as imminently disappearing and transforming into its perceived opposite, an Islamic entity.

A CASE FOR THE CASE STUDY

The scholarly debate on terms such as radical right, ultra-right or extreme right acknowledges, if not a common and general accepted definition, then at least that these terms are often times used interchangeably. There seems to be disagreement on how the radical or extreme right should be defined, ranging from murderous and genocidal regimes to the restoration of national rights in the spirit of the French Revolution (Ramet, 1999). Richard Stöss describes right-wing extremism as exaggerated and hostile nationalism, denial of equal rights to all people and denial of inherent human worth, rejection of multi-party political systems and an ethnocentric view focused on the folk (Ramet, 1999). The Romanian New Right, the case under study, closely relates to each of Stöss's dimensions. At the time of this study, the slogan for the Romanian New Right's virtual journal was 'a nationalist and politically incorrect blog'.³ Their overt hostility toward the Hungarians, their strong opposition against sexual, religious, ethnic minorities, which they target with dehumanising discourses, their criticism and scepticism toward the Romanian politics and toward the European Union are combined into a pessimistic view of a mythical folk, which is perceived to be now under greater threat than ever. To these perspectives, it is necessary to add the historical roots of the organisation. The New Right in Romania declares its origins in the inter-war fascist movement of the Legion of Archangel Michael (1927–1941) and its paramilitary political branch, the Iron Guard. Among several spiritual leaders of today's extreme-rightist views in Romania is Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, the leader and founder of the Legion.

Particularly regarding the online presence of the New Right organisation in Romania, the blog they produce with dedication is empirical proof of what scholars and practitioners have labelled cyber-hate: violence against, separation of, defamation, disappointment or hostility toward others based on race, religion, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation expressed on the Internet (Franklin, 2010).

On the one hand, the New Right in Romania seems to be in direct contact, via the Internet, with various far-rightist and white supremacist organisations, of which the most important to mention is Stormfront.⁴ On the other hand, the blog itself is not an isolated form of expression. It is not peripheral and accidental; rather, it exemplifies a value defined by its liminal relationship (ranging from consistent and meaningful contact to punctual intersections) with a wide range of media outlets. The content of the blog has two main sources: it is either written by members of the New Right, or republished from various other websites. A closer look at these websites leads to the conclusion that the Romanian New Right uses, in almost unaltered form, mediated content from mainstream media, independent media, alternative media, Christian Orthodox media and the blogosphere (Fofiu, 2011). The blog places itself in a rightist virtual rhizome - a network without core which has the infinite ability to expand through each of its threads (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, in Karatzogianni, 2006) - through which apocalypticising anxiety and fear circulate, grow and emotionally touch the readers. This publishing strategy

² Consider, for instance, the survivalist or preppers' movement in the United States and the coverage they receive in specialised media programmes, such as National Geographic Channel, or the recurrent apocalyptic theme that Hollywood frequently reiterates in film productions.

³ "Blog naționalist și incorect politic."

⁴ <http://www.stormfront.org/forum>

and the chosen alarmist topics have determined the growth of the blog's readership⁵ throughout the last several years, which is unsurprising, given the recent rise of the far right across Europe.⁶

This study's objectives are to describe and interpret the apocalyptic discourses on the blog of the Romanian New Right that address identity and spirituality aspects, and to analyse how events in the secular realm are incorporated into the apocalyptic argument.

APOCALYPTICISM AND THE POLITICS OF EMOTION

Arguing for apocalypticism as a particular political rhetoric, O'Leary positioned political action not in contradiction with religious doctrine, but rather as its fulfilment (1998). Numerous social, technological and economic factors have contributed to the crystallisation of apocalyptic politics in the last half-century. In the case of this extremist view from Eastern Europe, it is interesting to identify its means of appropriating external social and political events in apocalyptic(-ising) discourses. In a similar analysis, O'Leary argues that politics in the United States of the 1980s can be seen as apocalyptic due to the way in which political actors identified and defined threats. He states: 'On the right, politicians and preachers invoked the spectre of a world Communist dictatorship that would threaten America with either enslavement or apocalyptic destruction if we did not invest in new weapons systems' (O'Leary, 1998, p. 173). The apocalypse becomes, then, a frame for viewing and interpreting current events. In our globalised times, the apocalypse has gained a new dimension, which gives new meanings to how threat is perceived and reacted to. The apocalypse has been 'transferred into the realm of ethnicity and politics, where, in lack of theology, adopted peculiar nationalistic, social or economic teleology' (Hubbes, 2010, 180). This modern apocalypticism is iterated through a pattern of diffused expectation (O'Leary, 1998). As stated earlier, apocalyptic warnings have traditionally been described as apparent only to knowledgeable, chosen ones (Borchardt, 1990), meaning those chosen by higher forces or gods. But in a secularised civilisation, the apocalypse can appear to virtually anyone who is attentive to the tensions and uncertainties brought about by globalisation. The explosive potential of a dystopian scenario does not reside only in the pessimism that future is regarded with, but also in the intense feeling attached to it (Borchardt, 1990).

In Borchardt's rhetorical analysis on doomsday speculation (1990), the apocalypse has various expressions, from floods and earthquakes to the reversal of everything familiar and to the world turned upside down. After the apocalypse, nothing will be the same. In this view, the apocalypse is not a termination of something; rather, it is an extreme change of everything known. A central question is 'what made the present what it is?' — the present when 'we' are fearful and 'they' are threatening. In this sense, the present is reduced to a sign, and the apocalypse becomes reflexive and self-fulfilling (Borchardt, 1990). The present as anticipation creates an uncertain certainty, closely related to Appadurai's theorising (2006): the end-of-all-things is certain. It will definitely happen, but there is no sign of the precise moment of the catastrophic event. This uncertain certainty builds on the self-nourishing anxiety of the present, which must be viewed, when studying an apocalyptic rhetoric, not as a setback, but as a moving emotional force that creates culture (Hubbes, 2010). In a cultural grid, apocalyptic events gain magical significance, in the sense that no event stands by itself; rather, it is closely related to other events, and meaning circulates among all of them (Borchardt, 1990). A dystopian scenario, thus, builds on persuasive, solid ground. The present is then contemptible. People are desperate when they perceive that they have reached an impasse, when prospects are bleak, terrifying or uncertain. An interesting twist in Borchardt's view is that the contemptible

⁵ The available data on the blog's readership shows that between December 2009 and March 2011, the audience had a quite constant increase rate. After March 2011 until September 2011, the readership oscillated. <http://www.trafic.ro/statistici/blog.nouadreapta.org/afisari/2009-12-01.2011-09-30>

⁶ From Angela Merkel's statement that multi-kulti is dead, to the rising of the Golden Dawn in Greece.

present asks for repentance and responsibility. The victims of an impending disaster, of the apocalypse, are responsible for the evil to come, since they have sinned, they have mistaken, and they have allowed for the worse to happen. This repudiation, Borchardt states, makes sense for those who are aware of the injustices of the world, who believe their existence is threatened for ideological reasons or by an identifiable, palpable enemy. Nevertheless, even if the present is read as a sign of the apocalypse, Borchardt sustains that the victims need not intervene in the course of events, because correcting the present means postponing the apocalypse and prolonging the agony. Victims should continue to live in a world turned upside down only to speed up the apocalyptic process. Signs of the world turned upside down include disorder in nature and disorder in society; the last manifests itself in sins, general vices and the destruction of the moral order (Borchardt, 1990).

In a recent essay analysing regional and global crises that multiculturalism and globalisation created, Appadurai (2006) sustains that the social uncertainties—or disorder in society—created by the global flows are efficient to the point that they penetrate existing breaches in the nation-states, thus affecting communities and nations. First, census uncertainty—that the national majority can never really know, in a globalised context, how many people of a certain sort exist—creates a sense of insecurity and fuzzy competition. Second, unclear definitions of identities are generated by the effect of the globalised society, in which the inclusion of some does not imply any more the exclusion of others and social identities overlap. The multicultural trend brought the common cultural traits to the fore: they should be acknowledged and appreciated, even though doing so can create uncertainty in the process of inclusion and exclusion. Appadurai's analysis is particularly interesting for the Eastern European social and historical heritage. In this area, I can see at least two 'types' of multiculturalism: the historical multi-ethnic and multi-religious landscape (Romania's in particular), and the more recent informational and economic multiculturalism brought about by globalisation.⁷ These cultural mixes are quite often characterised as potential sources of conflict and disharmony, and nationalism—even with its exaggerated manifestations—is endemic to this area, a natural reaction to uncertainty (Sfikas, 1999).

Majority cultures, not necessarily in number, but in status, develop offensive and hateful, although invisible, strategies in order to protect themselves from the minorities perceived as threatening. This adds to Appadurai's view of social tensions (2006), as majorities develop fear of minorities, of small numbers that cannot be contained and which are always difficult to define. Both fear and anger are emotional reactions to external threats. Threat is an expression of an intention to inflict pain, injury, evil, or punishment; an indication of impending danger or harm; one that is regarded as a possible danger or menace (Ritchie, 2004).

The social theory of emotions (Turner, 2007) is based on the idea that a theory should not only identify what emotions are elicited in specific social and cultural contexts, but also with what intensity and persistence those emotions would be directed and toward what targets. In this sense, if Appadurai (2006) is concerned with fear and anger in the context of globalisation, Turner's theory should help to understand the intensity of these affects, their persistence and their target (minorities or small numbers). Turner theorises a bottom-up dynamic of emotions that have the potential of restructuring the society and of promoting social change. Referring to racism, Turner demonstrates that emotional arousals to racist ideologies or racist individual attitudes and beliefs (at the micro-level) can lead to the formation of organisations and movements (at the mezzo-level) that exert pressure on political systems and, if the pressure is successful, political decision may lead to social and cultural change (at the macro-level). This

⁷ Prior to the unification of the Romanian provinces into a nation state, the Romanian identity has been heavily influenced by the Slavic culture in the Northeast, by the Austro-Hungarians in the West, and by the Ottomans in the South. The political pressure on the Romanian geography has forged a complex Romanian identity, which has had to reinforce itself throughout the history. Thus, the Romanian identity process has intimately known ethnic and religious diversity, the social hygiene of the inter-war period, the internationalism and then nationalism of the communist era, and the free moving information of the global village.

scenario was the case with the civil rights movement in the 1960s United States, and Turner pledges for increased attention toward current micro-level emotional dynamics, consistent with Appadurai's concern with anger and fear. A close look at the New Right's blog gains validity when the expectation of its interpretation is to lead the way toward potential models of conflict and disharmony in a progressively complex political setting.

METHODOLOGY

To pursue the main objectives of this study—to describe and interpret the apocalyptic discourses on the blog of the Romanian New Right that address identity and spirituality aspects, and to analyse how events in the secular realm are incorporated into the apocalyptic argument—requires the interpretative approach of qualitative content analysis that aims to make inferences from the traits of the visual and textual items to the conveyors and creators of the content, positioning these inferences in a larger social-political setting. A quantitative methodology, oriented toward data and toward data validity, would not only fail to serve an interpretative aim, but would also focus resources and creativity on irrelevant proof for the processes herein considered. I executed a manual retrospective data collection⁸ during March 2011, and decided to stop collecting when I had exhausted the blog posts published between 31 March 2011 and 1 January 2010.⁹ When reading the blog content in the assigned period, I was not interested in the internal consistency of the data—a feature of quantitative positivist approaches—but in the consistency of the relationship between the terms that proved to be repeating and the interpretations readily available or latent within the chosen discourses. It is important, thus, to note that the approach was exploratory: I had no particular expectation of how the apocalypse should be developed by the Romanian New Right. Rather, I was interested in exploring the apocalyptic(-ising) imaginary of the Romanian far-rightist organisation in their own terms and concepts. In this sense, searching for the conceptual framework created by the people writing on the New Right blog and the particular meaning this framework had to them, turned this study into an emic account of apocalyptic discourses. The unit of analysis was a blog post and the selection of posts occurred on an ongoing basis, until the time frame was exhausted and until the specific terms used on the blog reached saturation and constituted a conceptual framework. Using a qualitative content analysis tool, MaxQDA, I then created codes and labels for structuring the content analysis. In the following sections, I will develop descriptive and interpretative accounts on the data in use and will also illustrate the identified frameworks with particular examples from the selected blog posts.

APOCALYPSE DESCRIBED

Alarmist attitudes and apocalypticising discourses are familiar to extreme-rightist ideologies (Berlet, 1999), and are sourced in a wide array of perceived threats toward the integrity of the in-group. In reading the blog of the New Right, I encountered an elaborate and intricate discourse on the loss of spirituality and religiosity that Europe experiences. This secularisation has occurred in European cultures in recent centuries of modernisation and economic progress. Interestingly, modernisation did not surpass eschatological fears, and extremist ideologies are still able to develop apocalyptic imaginaries and dystopian nationalist sentiments. In this sense, the Romanian New Right proves no different. Reading the selected blog posts, I have identified a series of articles that developed the de-Christianisation and Islamisation of Europe and Romania as impending disasters that reshape spirituality and religiosity across the old continent. Posts written by the New Right members come together with

⁸ I selected 290 blog posts on an ongoing basis, until saturation was reached and the time limits were reached.

⁹ In a numerical account, this is the period when, out of the entire online presence of the blog (2008 to the present), the readership had a constant growth, peaking in March 2011—a trend that, within some limits, contributed to the choice of this time frame. Please refer to note 5 for a comparison to the overall dynamic of the blog. <http://www.trafic.ro/statistici/blog.nouadreapta.org/afisari/2010-01-01.2011-03-30>

articles republished from websites such as Napoca News,¹⁰ Realitatea,¹¹ Lăcașuri Ortodoxe,¹² Cugetul,¹³ Ortodox Liber,¹⁴ Apologeticum,¹⁵ Creștin-Ortodox,¹⁶ Familia Ortodoxă,¹⁷ ProVita,¹⁸ Știri Creștine,¹⁹ Ziarul Lumina,²⁰ and others.

In the view of the New Right, the de-Christianisation of Europe is caused both by the loss of religious practice among Europeans and by the increased consumption of imported cultural symbols, which impinge on their cultural identity. Becoming de-Christianised, in turn, has a dual form in the New Right discourses: on one hand, Europeans and Romanians are de-spiritualised and unable to or uninterested in practising their inherited religion. This aspect that the New Right incorporates in their apocalyptic vision expands into an elaborated reconstructed universe where Europe and Romania are envisioned as spiritually numb, overly materialistic and morally corrupted. On the other hand, the spiritual void that de-Christianisation generates is an excellent opportunity for other, culturally competing religious doctrines and spiritual practices to expand on foreign territories. The New Right makes a case for Islam and the Muslim culture as invading the cradle of cultures, the old Europe, and transforming it into its opposite. There is, arguments on the blog sustain, a political conspiracy that acknowledges and accepts the Muslim immigration on European grounds sourced in the materialistic values of elites who are in constant search of voters, supporters and sympathisers. To continue, the Muslim threat is increased through demographic arguments. The number of Muslims in various European countries and the fertility dynamics for Muslim women compared to Christian women (three children per Muslim women natality rate, compared to around one child per Christian woman) make a particularly efficient rhetoric that builds upon social uncertainties in our globalised times: one is never able to know how many people of a certain sort there are (Appadurai, 2006). The Islamic culture is perceived as a pervading threat upon the Christian Europe particularly because, in the global flows of migration and horizontal movement, it is difficult to assess exactly how many Muslims—or Others—there are in the majority's territory

The discursive strategies of the New Right in constructing the de-Christianisation and Islamisation processes emerged as a repetition of the danger in various settings, through powerful visuals and strong expressions. Metonymy is a preferred strategy of persuasion. A metonymy is what Ahmed calls sticky words (2004), the joining of two opposite terms to the point that they end up replacing each other. Such is the case with the terms Muslim and terrorist—a metonymy that the New right uses on their blog (unsurprisingly, given the generalised anxiety after 9/11). Another textual strategy is the oxymoron, the joining of two opposite terms in a new, redefined term that recreates the reality. Such is the case with the term CrestIslam, which is developed in the illustrative section. The visual strategy relies on bridging two opposite images that represent cultural symbols: for instance, the direct comparison between the Christian cross and McDonald's M,(which the illustrative section develops), or the bridging

¹⁰ <http://www.napocanews.ro/>

¹¹ The Reality, <http://www.realitatea.net>

¹² Orthodox Churches, <http://stiri.lacasuriortodoxe.ro/>

¹³ The Conscience, <http://www.cugetul.ro>, suspended in mid-2010 due to lack of funding.

¹⁴ Free Orthodox, <http://ortodoxliber.wordpress.com/>

¹⁵ <http://apologeticum.wordpress.com/>

¹⁶ Christian Orthodox, <http://www.crestinortodox.ro>

¹⁷ The Orthodox Family, <http://www.familiaortodoxa.ro/>

¹⁸ <http://www.provitabucuresti.ro/>

¹⁹ Christian News, <http://stiricrestine.md/>

²⁰ The Light Newspaper, <http://www.ziarullumina.ro/>

between Brueghel's Tower of Babel and the main building of the European Union in Strasbourg, France. The Muslim threat is more violently depicted. Stereotype images of Muslims having their faces covered are associated with fire arms or protest banners with violent messages, as opposed to European urban landscapes or symbols that they simultaneously contrast and reclaim. In the following section, I illustrate the description above with examples from selected blog posts.

APOCALYPSE ILLUSTRATED

In one of its blog posts, *Simbolul McDonald's, mai cunoscut decât crucea creștină* / *McDonald's symbol, better known than the Christian cross*, the New Right contrasts the symbol of McDonald's to the Christian cross, arguing that the first is by far more easily recognisable across the world than is the second. A marketing symbol is, in this case, compared to a spiritual one. The ideological discourse of the New Right brings together communication mechanisms from two different spheres of the western world—economy and religion, or consumption and spirituality. A secular symbol threatens a spiritual symbol, and through their discursive construction as mutually exclusive, it is suggested that the secular influence leads to de-Christianisation. The article does not insist on how the two symbols are opposing. Instead, it develops the negative reputation of McDonald's, which could be interpreted as a strategy of persuasion that the marketing symbol is evil in its depths, particularly because it poses such a threat to the religious identity and practice of the Christians. The visual strategy in this article is not very elaborate, since the image attached to the text only mirrors the two symbols. Nevertheless, it is adjusted through the discursive strategy of defamation of the evil symbol, and omission of the good symbol, in a simple duality that is intended to be efficient in its simplicity.



Picture 1: Caption of the New Right blog, *Simbolul McDonald's, mai cunoscut decât crucea creștină*, <http://blog.nouadreaapta.org/2010/05/simbolul-mcdonald%E2%80%99s-mai-cunoscut-decat-crucea-crestina/>, taken 28 March 2012

A particular article, *Numărul real al musulmanilor din Franța / The real number of Muslims in France*, discusses the real number of Muslims in France (Picture 3). The post presents, in several paragraphs, how estimating the number of Muslims is a statistical challenge, taking into account various variables that would define the Muslim identity, and ends with a short paragraph stating that the main religion in France is Christian Catholicism. Given these two dimensions of the article, one might wonder how this piece is apocalypticising the cultural and spiritual future of France. A careful look at the visual strategy can offer a sufficient answer. The title is paired with an image of several women wearing the burka, with the Eiffel Tower in the background. Upon closer look, the picture is clearly photo-shopped. The lights and shadows on the Eiffel Tower and on the women wearing burka create a surreal and cinematic feeling. It could almost be said that the group of women is much larger than the picture shows, and is moving across the French territory. They have, nevertheless, already conquered the Eiffel Tower, a powerful cultural symbol of France. Similar to the strategy deployed in constructing the loss of Christianity, the New Right overlaps two cultural symbols in a visual construction of the perceived threat. Even if the article states the opposite—the main religion in France is Catholicism—the picture attached at the beginning of the text foretells a dystopian future, when the image of France is shaped drastically into an oppressive, veiled and hidden Muslim practice.



Picture 3: Caption of the New Right blog, *Numărul real al musulmanilor din Franța*, <http://blog.nouadreaapta.org/2011/03/numarul-real-al-musulmanilor-din-franta/>, taken 28 March 2012

The next article I wish to rest on brings Great Britain into attention: *Mohamed, cel mai răspândit nume dat băieților din Marea Britanie în 2009* / *Mohamed, the most popular boy name in Great Britain in 2009*. Sociologically, the name given to babies is a particularly strong indicator of change, and in this sense, the attention to it is a clever strategy of the New Right in shaping the apocalyptic threat to Europe. The text states that, statistically, Oliver was the most frequent first name, given that Mohamed has been registered under different spell outs—a strategic detail that, I could argue, elicits suspicion and increases anxiety and frustration toward the uncertainty of how many Others there are, since they are infiltrating themselves in our culture. This detail is also paired by the image attached to the article, in a powerful visual strategy: the most frequent first name in Great Britain being Muslim, freedom is over—a Muslim hidden under a veil holds a cardboard banner with the message ‘Freedom go to hell’. The visual strategy creates in here a metonymy—a strong association between the proofs of cultural change and the end of freedom—which suggests the pervasiveness of apocalyptic signs in the European landscape.



Picture 4: Caption of the New Right blog, *Mohamed, cel mai răspândit nume dat băieților din Marea Britanie în 2009*, <http://blog.nouadreaapta.org/2010/11/mohamed-cel-mai-raspadnit-nume-dat-baie%C8%9Bilor-din-marea-britanie-in-2009/>, taken 28 March 2012

Given the present demographic indicators of the presence of Islam in Europe, the alarmist discourse of the New Right gains powerful apocalypticising dimensions when it is directed toward the future. In this sense, close attention to the Muslim demographics is developed through arguments that by 2030, the Muslim population will double in Europe (Picture 5). A generous set of statistics on the Muslim population dynamics is offered in *Populația de musulmani se va dubla până în 2030* / *The Muslim population will double by 2030*, most of these showing that the numeric growth of the Muslim population is merely an effect of the overall growth of the population; however, this aspect is excluded from the argument. Rather, the growth in numbers of Islam is presented as an ideological discourse.



Picture 4: Caption of the New Right blog, Mohamed, cel mai răspândit nume dat băieților din Marea Britanie în 2009, <http://blog.nouadreapta.org/2010/11/mohamed-cel-mai-raspandit-nume-dat-baie%C8%9Bilor-din-marea-britanie-in-2009/>, taken 28 March 2012

A careful look at the visuals attached to the article shows that the demographic dynamic of the Other must not be accepted by Us: the image of suggested Muslims holding banners with violent messages ('Slay those who insult Islam', 'Butcher those who mock Islam', etc.) suggests that the growth in numbers is strengthened by an offensive cultural identity, since the Muslims not only plan their numeric growth, but will also use it to strengthen their culture and to take over non-Muslim (i.e., Christian) territories. In this discourse, the apocalypse as termination has a fixed date in time: the reader of the blog knows now that a cultural dystopia will happen in 2030. The uncertainty of the apocalypse, as to when and how it will happen, is drastically reduced, and the end is determined.

APOCALYPSE INTERPRETED

Apocalypse as political rhetoric: The potential transformation of Christianity into its opposite is particularly realistic and alarming, given that a transformation implies loss of identity and loss of heritage. The cultural and economic influence of the West is deeply acknowledged by the New Right throughout their blog. In O'Leary's terms (1998), by this acknowledgement the New Right embeds external social and political facts into an apocalyptic discourse. Furthermore, the West is held accountable for the transformations it imposes over the rest. Islamisation is not viewed as a resurrection of spiritual values and religious practices across Europe, but rather as a termination of Christianity, through its transformation into something else. The religious doctrine is fulfilled through a political and ideological discourse (O'Leary, 1998) that renders apocalypse credible and realistic. The demographic arguments and even the pictures attached to the articles illustrate how external events and information are appropriated into a dystopian rhetoric. The political discourses draw on modern apocalypticism and deploy it, through generating a diffused expectation (O'Leary, 1998) for the end to come.

Apocalypse as reserved for the chosen few: This diffused expectation is directed toward a larger audience, not only toward the enlightened (Borchardt, 1990). The New Right assumes a preaching role, a disseminating stance that alarms all Romanians and all Europeans that the end will come. Even the usage of mass media and the creation of mass mediated content, through the Internet and its specific form, the blog, is a proof of how this extreme-rightist organisation perceives and constructs the apocalypse. This alarmist discourse foresees indeed the religious apocalypse of Europe, both as termination and as transformation. All things might end in nothing; equally plausibly, things might end in something different. The apocalyptic threat is cast as a shadow upon the reader, a threat that denies the essence of Christianity through its merger with or through its opposition to Islam.

On a different note, Borchardt sustains that the victims need not intervene in the course of events, because correcting the present means postponing the apocalypse and prolonging the agony (1990). In this sense, the alarmist discourses of the New Right are both apocalyptic and apocalypticising. They are apocalyptic since they indicate immediate dangers and approximate the time by which it will have happened, but they are only apocalypticising since the discourse is meant to emotionally touch and mobilise the reader to confront the danger, to hate the Other, to be afraid of what will happen and to protect him/herself.

Apocalypse as emotional strain in uncertain times: Borchardt discusses disorder in society as an apocalyptic sign (1990), and Appadurai elaborates upon the concept of social uncertainties (2006). These two terms come together in the New Right discourses and nourish anxiety and other negative emotions toward the present and the future. As Hubbes states, apocalyptic discourses become a moving emotional force that creates culture (2010). The apocalyptic discourses on the blog herein analysed shape the imaginary of the reader and closely direct their emotions—fear toward the impending danger, anxiety caused by the uncertainty of the events, anger caused by the powerlessness toward the future—toward a looming spectre, the superimposing cultural influence of the Other. To return to Turner's view (2007), the apocalyptic(-ising) discourses of the New Right invite further investigation, beyond the blog and the virtual rhizome it belongs to, and beyond the online structures, in order to assess the apocalyptic rhetoric in globalised times at mezzo- and even macro-levels.

CONCLUSIONS

Overall, to return to the objectives of this study, the apocalyptic discourses identified on the blog of the Romanian New Right that address identity and spirituality aspects are the de-Christianisation and the Islamisation of Europe and Romania. The emic account herein developed pointed to an emerging conceptual framework that the New Right bloggers use to express themselves and to create diffused expectations among their readers. This framework reiterates concepts that describe identity and spirituality dimensions – from Christian to Islamic to Muslim, from Us to Them – and point to a series of strategies, textual and visual, that elaborate the apocalyptic signs into intricate discourses that aim to persuade. This led the way in understanding that events and information in the secular realm are incorporated into the apocalyptic argument of the New Right – a kernel of truth that turns the apocalypse into a political rhetoric, a prerogative of the chosen few now made accessible to the masses, and into an emotional strain that builds on the uncertainty and disorder of the times.

I argue, overall, that these narratives should not be ignored in the wider political setting of our globalised times. Identity anxiety and geographical anger – not to say territoriality – have proved throughout the history to be powerful in mobilising conflicts. The mobilising power of the internet should, moreover, be given careful attention. Close attention to apocalyptic mediated content in current times would possibly indicate toward a new paradigm in the media, the apocalyptic paradigm, sourced both in the recent cultural, economic, political and social crises, and in the advent of the dismal 2012.

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