

## Growing Old in Europe

### Antonio Tabucchi's "Bucharest Hasn't Changed a Bit"

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Antonio Tabucchi's short story "Bucharest Hasn't Changed a Bit" is a perfect gem when one is interested in finding out what it means to think about aging and old age in Europe at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It is one of the really short stories in Antonio Tabucchi's (1943-2012) late collection *Time Ages in a Hurry* published in Italian in 2009<sup>1</sup>. "Bucharest Hasn't Changed a Bit" is the story of an old man living in a nursing home in Tel Aviv. The story begins with the visit of his son, who teaches linguistics in Rome. A long conversation between the two continues over the major part of this story (about eight pages). In the end, two more pages give a short description of the return of the son some time later. The narrator of this story is hardly visible, and there are hardly any descriptions of the outer appearance of the characters or the place they are staying in. The few descriptions the narrator does give, create a typical, if not stereotypical setting of a nursing home in what may be a well-to-do industrialized country. When the narrator describes the old man, he only mentions his gestures, how he is "staring blankly" or gazing at a photograph of a young couple dressed in pre-war fashion standing on a side table, how he is caressing his knees as if pressing the creases of his pants. The narrator tells us for example that the old man is lighting a cigarette he hides under some napkins in a drawer where he keeps his medicine, but then the narrator disappears and allows the old man himself to point out that the window needs to be opened afterwards so that the nurse will not find out that he has been smoking.

Although there are only a few direct descriptions offered by the narrator, the reader has the impression of witnessing a very realistic scenario of a meeting between father and son in a nursing home. The old father is garrulous to an extent that tires out his son, who is more often than not at a loss for words and unsure about how to react to the statements of his father. The old man repeatedly stresses how happy he is in the nursing home, how he is being cared for and how he likes his little room with the balcony. But he seems to sound almost irritated, "the way old people sometimes do,

and his son didn't dare contradict him"<sup>2</sup>. His talk is sometimes more like a soliloquy with casual repetitions of topics he cannot let go off. The old man talks a lot about the past, and it looks as if he remembers very well what happened, eager to tell about his experience and opinion to the people around him. But when he recalls the time just before he entered the nursing home, when he still stayed at home with a social worker looking after him, he complains that she was Ukrainian and had a habit of speaking Ukrainian to him, a language he did not know. The son feels like correcting him because he knows that the social worker was not speaking Ukrainian, but Hebrew to him, and that his father did not understand her because he and his wife had already passed 40 when they came to Israel, and he had not bothered to learn the language of his new home properly. But the son decides not to say anything. Instead he tells his father, that the doctors know that he is spitting out his medicine, and that he should not do so. He explains that the doctors only want to help him in his old age, that their diagnosis is encouraging because there is no serious pathology, his father's problems were only due to his "attitude", "a purely psychological fact", which can be controlled with a "very light psychoactive drug, nothing much"<sup>3</sup>. But his father does not look as if he is taken in by such explanations. Towards the end of their conversation the father grows quieter, speaks in a lower voice, and sometimes closes his eyes as if falling asleep. At parting time, the old man becomes very practical and when he tells his son not to waste his money on travelling from Rome to Tel Aviv just to visit him in his nursing home, the son teases him not to act like a stereotypical Jewish miser, but his father declares decidedly that he is exactly that, "a cheap old Jewish man"<sup>4</sup>.

Although this story consists primarily of dialog, Tabucchi does not put any quotation marks, nor does he use paragraphs to divide the utterances according to speaker. This and the fact that he also uses free indirect discourse make it sometimes difficult to understand who is uttering the sentences. In addition to that, there is another confusing problem at the beginning: there is no introduction of the two characters at all. The story starts *in medias res*, in the middle of a conversation. Only gradually the readers understand, what the story is about, who the two main characters are and where it is taking place. The story is contrived so intricately, that the readers are stumbling along, trying to guess what is going on. Here are the opening lines of this story:

Not to mention, he was doing well there – too well. Was he exaggerating? No,

he wasn't exaggerating in the least. I feel better here than at home, he said, my meals served, the bed made, sheets changed once a week, and a room all to myself, there's even a small balcony [...] Dad, he murmured, don't get worked up, I know you're doing well here, I realize that. You don't know anything, mumbled the old man, what do you know, you're just saying that to make me happy, you had the good luck to be born in this country, when your mother and I were finally able to leave [...] <sup>5</sup>.

Unfortunately, the English translation here and in some other places swerves a little bit from the Italian original, which is not as confusing as this English beginning of the story. Therefore, whenever necessary, I will give the wording of the original in the accompanying footnote. But for both versions it is true that, at the very beginning of this story, it is unclear who is talking (a first-person narrator or a character) and what the situation is (a conversation or a soliloquy). From the sentences following the passage quoted above we learn that the old man is staying in some kind of nursing home, hospital, hospice, asylum or the like, and that the two interlocutors are indeed father and son. The country the son was so lucky to be born in is ...? Judging by the story's title it should be Romania, the capital of which is Bucharest. But the next page informs us that this is the country the old man left with his wife. The following page makes the question of location not exactly easier:

[...] anyhow, you, where are you teaching now, Rome? Don't forget that racial laws were invented right there, in this beautiful country where we made sure you were born, some sinister types, real fascists, are making official appearances, are being received with every honor, everything upside down [...] <sup>6</sup>

The old man does not seem to be completely sure where his son is teaching at the time. He suggests Rome, but needs some confirmation. With only the separation of a comma, the text then moves on from the place where "racial laws were invented" to the highly ironic remark "this beautiful country where we made sure you were born, some sinister types, real fascists, are making official appearances", still not offering the name of a country. It takes two more pages until the readers finally learn that the beautiful country the son was born in and where "real fascists" make their appearances

is actually the State of Israel<sup>7</sup>.

Antonio Tabucchi has created a very elaborate text which serves two purposes: On the one hand, the scarce information and round-about way of talking forces the readers to pay much attention to what is being said by the old man. This not only attracts their focus, but may also entice the readers to sympathize with the person whose story they are following so carefully. Some of the episodic information, like smoking on the sly and cheating with medication, also has some comical effect. And so have some repetitive statements and misapprehensions by the old man; these, too, make a favorable, albeit sometimes also pity inviting impression. On the other hand, with such scarce and scattered information the readers are groping, step by step advancing into the story, looking for suitable information to piece together the puzzle of the old man's identity, history and political beliefs. In order to understand the text, the readers need to constantly select, discard and rearrange pieces of information, yet nevertheless uncertainties do remain. This state of lack of information, this feeling of being only half-informed puts the readers into a position in which it is difficult to feel superior and condemn others for their lack of knowledge or mastery. In fact, if truthful to themselves, the readers will have to admit that their historical knowledge is not enough to fully apprehend every detail of the story in front of them. Tabucchi is famous for this technique that leaves readers only half-informed until the very end of a story, forcing them to look up for themselves the information lacking in the text if they want to find out the appropriate facts not only about the fictitious protagonist but also about the historical events referred to<sup>8</sup>.

With a growing elderly population in many European countries, especially in Italy and Germany, it has become more and more acceptable in recent years to make an old or senile person who needs to be looked after the protagonist of a literary text and a nursing home for old people the setting of such a text. Not only do such topics depict an ever growing reality of European life, they also find an ever increasing clientele of readers who have entered the latter half of their lives. Yet, besides the realistic or stereotype description of the life of old people in nursing homes, Tabucchi's story offers another important motif connected to aging: memory. And while the old man is presenting lots of chunks of his memories of times long gone by, he is also contemplating the essence of memory and its intersubjective transfer. Although the question of memory is, of course, a general, all ages encompassing matter, it does have an impor-

tant and extraordinary meaning in respect to old age. Simone de Beauvoir focused in her definition of old age on the changes in the relative amount of past memories and future perspectives in a person growing older to an extent that she could conclude: the more memories and the fewer future perspectives, the older a person is<sup>9</sup>.

Though the fragments we learn from the old man's thoughts about memory remain scattered, he is in fact approaching the concept of memory and memory transfer from three separate perspectives and developing an outline for further philosophical investigations. First, there is the question of the possibility of passing on one's own memories to someone else:

You know, my son, he went on, you can go ahead and tell your memories to others, they're eager to listen to your account and perhaps they get everything, even the smallest nuances, but that memory will still be yours and yours alone, it doesn't become someone else's memory just because you've told it to others, memories are told but not transmitted.<sup>10</sup>

While at first sight the passage quoted above seems to deliver a commonplace statement, that is the fact, that telling one's own memories will not turn these memories into someone else's, it does in fact transform the matter of presenting memories into an act of telling and thereby evokes the relationship of memory and storytelling, which has indeed been a dominant thread since the very beginning of ancient Greek poetic theorization. But the old man's statement reflects on both perspectives: memory – Mnemosyne – is not only the source of storytelling and its guardian. Storytelling is in fact what creates, or put more carefully, what re-constructs memory. Memory's original contents therefore slips the act of reconstruction pretty much like the original dream contents slips the act of dream reconstruction in Sigmund Freud's conceptualization of the representability of dreams. In a second perspective then, the old man offers an understanding of memory that connects memory and storytelling and can function as a meta-poetic dimension of Tabucchi's short story: the old man's reconstructing of the pieces of his memory becomes the prototype and *raison d'être* of storytelling. The third perspective finally links memory, dream, feeling and emotion. It remains vague, but seems to be the most informed position since it alludes to Baruch de Spinoza's *Ethica, ordine geometrico demonstrata*, albeit in a rather ironic and critical way. The old man

describes a recurrent dream he has had for the most part of his younger life; it consists of one picture only:

[...] a beautiful white gate, thrown open onto a landscape that wasn't there, nothing other than that image, the dream was mostly what I felt while looking at that image my brain had photographed, because dreams aren't so much what happens as the emotion one feels while living what happens, and I wouldn't know how to tell you about the emotion I was feeling, because emotions aren't explainable, to be explained they have to transform into feelings, as Baruch knew, but a dream isn't the right place for transforming emotions into feelings [...]<sup>11</sup>

The comparison the old man is evoking is twofold: On the one hand, he connects memory and dream in their respective need for reconstruction or telling in the intersubjective, and even intro-subjective scenario, on the other hand, he creates a juxtaposition of memory and dream by explicitly mentioning the process of transformation from emotions to feelings, induced by Spinoza's rationalist approach to human experience. Yet, this time, leaving it to the reader to decide how memory and dream may be comparable on this level: If in the case of dreaming emotions need to be transformed into feelings, what does transform and how in the case of memory? In other words: what is memory? And what is told and what is left out when presenting one's own memories to someone else?

Tabucchi's story of an old man in an Israeli nursing home remembering his past is much more than the account of individual experience remembered, it includes also a generational and historical and ethical dimension, presented in a nutshell in the small episode of the photograph of a young couple embracing each other, which is standing on the side table:

It was an image of a young man and woman hugging each other, he had his right arm around her waist, she had a hand on his shoulder almost without touching it, as if she were embarrassed by having her picture taken, she had a ribbon in her fluffy hair, wore a modest dress in a style that made him think of certain movies from before the war, how strange, he'd always seen that picture

on the big bureau in his parent's bedroom, once when he was young he'd asked his mom who they were and she'd answered: no one you knew.<sup>12</sup>

This photograph is the embodiment of memory and of the impossibility of its transmission, the impossibility of sharing what was and is dearly loved: Obviously, the photograph shows a couple very important to the mother as well as the father, who later kept it on his side table even in the nursing home. When asked by the son about the identity of the couple, the mother rejects to answer. She thwarts the boy's curiosity by simply telling him that they are no one he knew. This answer at the same time acknowledges the impossibility of transmitting this memory – or any information available as sufficient for this couple – and cherishes the memorable treasure one cannot pass on to anybody else. Experience will make the readers believe that the couple are either the mother's or the father's parents who must have died before the birth of the son. One clue is the style of the young girl's dress "from before the war": the war this most likely refers to, is World War II. If the readers assume, that the old man is approximately in his 80s at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, this makes him born sometime around 1927 and the picture could well present his or his wife's parents in love shortly before he or his wife were born. But we need to read very carefully: the dress is of a style "that made him think of certain movies from before the war". The text does not clearly state that the dress is from before the war, it just reminds the son of dresses from before the war, and therefore the timeline could be quite different, and the readers are left with no sufficient knowledge to decide who really is shown in the photograph, because the mother protected their identity and their memory.

But why should she not tell her son that the couple are her or her husband's parents? Let's assume that this is the case. Ordinarily, people do explain photographs of their ancestors to their children. Given the location of the episode, Israel, and the heritage of the son's parents, Jewish, there remains no doubt, that this is a story about Holocaust survivors, who are so deprived by the loss of their loved ones, so shattered by the monstrous past, that they find it impossible to tell to their children the horrendous fate that had befallen them. Because the memory of this horror cannot be put into words, because the emotions cannot be transformed into feelings one can master and categorize.

Tabucchi's story "Bucharest Hasn't Changed a Bit" is not only about the last

phase of the aging process of an individual, it is also about the aging process of the last living surviving generation of Holocaust and World War II participants, who are now in their late 70s, if they were children in the days of war, or in their 80s and 90s, if they were teens and twens. The aging of this generation does not only mean the end of living memory in the near future, it also means the loss of this horrid experience to the following generations, if memories cannot be transmitted, but only told like stories. In this sense, Tabucchi's story is an endeavor to tell what cannot be told. It is written in such a way that the readers – especially the younger they are – have to search for information inside and outside of the text in order to understand the story and to reconstruct at least the historical data behind this old man's existence.

When this old man's aging generation will have ceased to exist, Europeans will no longer have a memory – which is, according to this story, always a living memory – of the horrors of World War II and the Holocaust. They will tell stories about that distant time without any survivors to disagree or correct their retold versions. They may also simply forget. Again Tabucchi contrives his story carefully: In order to drive home this important point of telling memory, he uses an insider and outsider perspective: While the old man's history is rooted in Romanian Jewry, the first reference to the Holocaust is connected to Rome, the capital of Antonio Tabucchi's own people. He uses a very stunning phrase to make the readers aware of the problem of memory: “anyhow, you, where are you teaching now, Rome? Don't forget that racial laws were invented right there”<sup>13</sup>. The Italian original is even more definite: “a Roma?, non ti dimenticare che le leggi razziali le inventarono proprio lì”<sup>14</sup>, using the definite article in front of the “racial laws”.

Which reader would not be surprised at this: racial laws invented in Italy? Not just any, THE racial laws invented there. Weren't (the) racial laws invented by the notorious Nazis in Nuremberg? The first racial laws by the Nazis, the so-called “Nuremberg (Racial) Laws”, included the „Reichsbürgergesetz“, “Gesetz zum Schutze des deutschen Blutes und der deutschen Ehre”<sup>15</sup> from September 15<sup>th</sup>, 1935, with similar racial laws added in the following months and years. Who of Tabucchi's readers would know, that Italy invented “Le Leggi razziali” in the year 1938? The first of a series of antisemitic laws was created on November 17<sup>th</sup>, 1938, “legge 17 novembre 1938-XVI, n.1728, sulla difesa della razza italiana”: It stripped Jews of their civil rights and financial assets, excluded them from public office and higher education and banned



their books and paved the road to ghettoization and later deportation and extermination. These laws were preceded by a "Manifesto della razza" in the same year offering so-called scientific support for racial principles such as the superiority of the European over other races, Jewish and black<sup>16</sup>.

For a long time after World War II, Italian Fascists were depicted as rather merciful towards their Jewish population, so much so that the general argument was that Mussolini himself had had Jewish friends and was only creating such laws to appease the Nazi ally. But recent research publications suggest otherwise<sup>17</sup>. David Baum's overview of Italian and international research on the rise of antisemitism in Italy is one of the earliest contributions to this critical revision of Italian Fascism:

Federico Chabod, for example, argued that the racial Laws of 1938 were perceived by most Italians as a foreign import enacted to appease the Germans, and signaled the beginning of the waning of public support for the regime. This supposed breach between Mussolini and the broad middle classes envisioned by Chabod allowed for the eventual evolution of the revisionist "brava gente" school which sees Italians as essentially "nice people" dragged reluctantly by Mussolini into policies and eventually into a war they neither desired nor understood. Renzo de Felice, in his ground breaking work, *Storia degli ebrei italiani sotto il fascismo*, had argued something similar, that antisemitism was not a natural feature of Italian society and that the Racial Laws represented a Fascist innovation. Whatever Mussolini may have hoped by radicalizing Fascism in the late 1930's by attaching it to antisemitism, antisemitism itself was not an essential part of Fascism as it originally developed just after WWI. Ledeen, although sympathetic to certain of de Felice's views on Fascism, rejected this argument. For Ledeen, antisemitism was a fundamental element of Mussolini's thinking from the beginning of Fascism, and its ultimate form under the regime – how and when it was actually manifested – simply had to await unfolding of particular historical events. For Ledeen and for most of the scholars who followed him, the trigger for the rise of an official antisemitism was the invasion of Ethiopia in 1935.<sup>18</sup>

Baum's analysis has been supported by many researchers since: Susan Zuccotti's *The*

*Italians and the Holocaust: Persecution, Rescue, Survival* and Alexander Stille's *Benvolence and Betrayal: Five Italian Jewish Families under Fascism*<sup>19</sup> reflect this new interest of research in the fate of Italian Jewry. Zuccotti criticized earlier research as facile generalizations about Italian national character and the lack of careful analysis of historical data. She analyzed the period from November 1943 to February 1944 when Italian Fascists under Mussolini, without any pressure from their German allies, arrested and interned thousands of Jews. Mario Toscano tried to clarify the specific version of Italian antisemitism in a broad historical analysis of the relationship of Italians and Jews from the *Risorgimento* to the Italian Republic. He offers four reasons for the change in Mussolini's treatment of Jews in the 1930s:

There were at least four factors of varying significance that came together during this period to change the perspective of the regime and its attitude toward Jews: (1) its progressive rapprochement with Nazi Germany, (2) changes in Italy's political prospects in the Mediterranean, (3) the emergence of a racial problem in Africa following the conquest of Ethiopia, and (4) the Mussolinian myth of a new civilization and anxiety about creating a "new Italian"<sup>20</sup>.

It is fair to say that the fate of Italian Jewry was also decided by changes in the political situation of the Mediterranean to which Mussolini reacted not only on a geopolitical but also on an ideological level. Up to 1938, the Fascist Italian state changed its policies towards Great Britain. While Mussolini seemed to have felt earlier some sort of closeness to the Jewish nationalist cause of Zionism, which he considered comparable to the Fascist cause for a great Italy, he switched sides in his treatment of the Palestine problem after having made arrangements with the British mandate government and after the victory over Ethiopia and the following colonization. Britain and France recognized Italy's sovereignty over Ethiopia by treaties in 1938.

On the ideological level, at the beginning, the Italian version of racism was more "spiritual" than "biological", hailing the impressive long-standing history of the Roman empire. So-called "Mediterraneanism" claimed the cultural superiority of the Italian civilization especially over North and East African countries<sup>21</sup>.

The conquest of Ethiopia presented the problem of a relationship with indig-

enous peoples, in this case, blacks. As far as the Fascist regime was concerned, Italian civilian and military personnel in the colonies were not assuming a stance suitable to a colonizing power. It was necessary to prevent the growth of interracial marriage and to furnish the Italians with the mentality of conquerors, awareness of their racial dignity and superiority. To this end, Law 880 was enacted on April 19, 1937, prohibiting conjugal relationships between Italian citizens and subjects in Italian East Africa <sup>22</sup>.

In hindsight, the Second Italian-Ethiopian War from October 1935 to May 1936 (also called the Second Italian-Abyssinian War) was the peak of Italian colonial and war-time atrocities committed in Northern and Eastern Africa. Not only bombing of civilian population and the creation of concentration camps, but also water poisoning and gas attacks contributed to the cruelty of the fighting in Abyssinia. While numbers concerning the killed and murdered Ethiopians vary between Italian and Ethiopian assessments, there has so far not been the slightest acknowledgement of guilt by Italy nor any retribution to the victimized country. Yet crimes of war were also committed by the Ethiopian side. This war was preceded by the First Italian-Ethiopian War fought from 1895 to 1896. Similar atrocities were committed during the Italian-Turkish War in 1911 and during Fascist Italian colonial rule until their defeat in WWII. The racial laws enacted in 1937 were triggered off by acts of friendly relationship between Italian citizens and the colonized Africans abhorred by the Fascists in power.

Yet the more one delves into research and analysis of racial policies, law enactments and propaganda, the more one realizes how every earlier incident is still preceded by another earlier incident reaching far into the early days of European colonization and far beyond into archaic times of world history. Tabucchi's "endless" stories, challenging common knowledge instead of offering final words on historical developments, inspire the readers to dig deeper and deeper into so-called facts and to experience the depth of archeological inquiry into shades of so-called collective memory. While the existence of Italian racial laws may come as a shock to some of his readers, namely to those Italian readers who do not ask about their own history, Romania as the origin of his protagonist may pose serious problems to those readers who are not well-informed about the historical and contemporary European periphery in the south-east of the continent.

Romania had a colorful history in World War II as an ally and opponent of the Nazi aggressors. Again, Antonio Tabucchi compels the readers to find out about this history during and after the war and especially about the fate of Romanian Jews. Again, he is only offering a few challenging fragments of a possible history of Romanian Jewry:

To ask the Lord, his Lord of course, why He was absent, why He wasn't there, and where He was. What on earth kind of questions were those? *Gott mit uns*, my son, that's where He was, He was with them, He was there, next to the sentries guarding the barbed wire, in case any of us got the idea to escape, even if we could barely stand.<sup>23</sup>

The above quotation from Tabucchi's "Bucharest Hasn't Changed a Bit" hints at German-led concentration camps. The phrase "Gott mit uns" was written on the German army serviceman's belt buckle. It translates "God with us" and triggers off the questions about the absence of the Mosaic God at the time of the most horrific endurance of his Jewish people in the quotation: "He was with them" – with the Nazis, as evoked by the writing. Yet a second quotation hints at the relationship of Ukrainians and Romanian Jews. Although a misconception, as we have learned from the story, the old man is shocked that the State of Israel is employing a Ukrainian social worker to look after him, because of the harm his wife's family received at the hands of Ukrainians:

[...] and then giving people like us – I'm thinking of your mother's family now, after all they had to go through in Ukraine – giving people like that a Ukrainian as a social worker.<sup>24</sup>

The anecdotic information of this quotation evokes the complex relationship between middle-eastern European countries in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. There was intense rivalry between these middle-sized countries well reflected in their diverse allegiances and changing border lines. After World War I so-called "Greater Romania" gained its biggest extent with the annexation of Bukovina from Austria, Banat and Transylvania from Hungary and Bessarabia from Russia. In World War II, Romania again tried to stay neutral, but wedged between the early allies, Nazi Germany and Communist

Soviet Union, it was pushed into an obsequious position towards the closer of the two menaces: Bessarabia and northern Bukovina were ceded in order to avoid war with the Soviet Union, later southern Dobruja was ceded to Bulgaria and northern Transylvania to Hungary. The king was replaced by general Ion Antonescu as prime minister. When Nazi Germany and Soviet Union became enemies, Romania contributed enormously to the fight of the German Army: in 1944, the Romanian Army contingent of 1.2 million servicemen was second in number only to the German Army on the Axis side. It also provided Germany with the necessary oil for its troops and became a target of intense Allied bombing. Romania switched sides in view of the advancement of the Red Army. After World War II, Bessarabia and parts of present-day Moldova were again ceded to the Soviet Union, southern Dobruja returned to Bulgaria, and only northern Transylvania was not returned to Hungary.

It is obvious how difficult it is to come by trustworthy figures on what happened in that part of the European war theater. The numbers reported below should just be considered an invitation to further investigation by the readers. And it goes without saying that these figures can only hint at what really happened in history and at the memories of everybody involved. According to the Wiesel Commission Report <sup>25</sup> released by the Romanian government in 2004, between 280,000 and 380,000 Jews and approximately 11,000 Roma were murdered in various forms on Romanian soil and in the Romanian (and German) controlled war zones of Bessarabia, Bukovina and the *Transnistria Governorate*. While most Romanians in 2004 still denied knowledge of the fact that their country participated actively in the Holocaust, Romania today acknowledges its guilt and the atrocities in museums and school education. According to the Wiesel Commission, the number of victims on Romanian held territory makes Romania responsible "for the deaths of more Jews than any country other than Germany itself" in the Axis coalition <sup>26</sup>. As early as October 1940, Antonescu's "Iron Guard" started a massive terror regime against Romanian Jews consisting of looting, torturing and even early whole-scale pogroms <sup>27</sup>. In the wake of the German-led *Operation Barbarossa* according to Romanian authorities, in July 1941 alone 13,266 Jews were killed. Antonescu also ordered the "deportation" of 130,000 to 145,000 Jews from Bessarabia and Bukovina to Transnistria, who were killed before, during and after these so-called deportations in the east of the Romanian-governed territory and neighboring Ukraine. The relationships and alliances between Romanians, Ukrainians and

many minorities were complicated and fluctuating. Romanian Jews were also killed at the hands of collaborating Ukrainian nationalists who wanted to shake off Russian hegemony. Over 100,000 Jews were killed in massacres organized in such places as Odessa, Bogdanovka, Akmećetka in 1941 and 1942. In Odessa for example, a Ukrainian city with a Jewish population of approximately 180,000, that is 30% of the city's total population before the war, acts of mass-murder of these Jews occurred. In the years 1941 and 1942, massacres occurred in many places in occupied Ukraine: According to one source, 25,000 to 34,000 Jews were shot or burned in Odessa in October 1941, and more than 100,000 Ukrainian Jews in the towns and the areas between the Dniester and Bug rivers along with approximately 15,000 Roma. Half of the estimated 270,000 to 320,000 Romanian Jews living mostly in Bessarabia and Bukovina were murdered between summer 1941 and spring 1944. Those who were not killed in pogroms moved from ghettos to concentration camps partly built and run by Romanian soldiers who worked together with the German *Einsatzkommandos*. The Jews from Northern Transylvania, an estimated 120,000, on the other hand were deported to the extermination camp of Auschwitz by the Hungarian government. The number of Romanian Jews who survived the Holocaust varies according to sources: The Wiesel Commission counts "at least 290,000 Romanian Jews", while the famous American scholar for Jewish History Howard M. Sachar estimates some 360,000 Romanian Jewish survivors at the end of World War II.

But the tragedy of Romanian Jewry does not end here. Antisemitism remained rampant in post-World-War Romania: While in the first years after the war the Romanian government rather encouraged Jewish emigration, the following decades witnessed a bargaining similar to those in wartime German-occupied and allied territories. The "Jewish Agency" would fund Romanian economy or even bribe the government in order to get permits for Jews to leave the country. In exchange for oil drilling equipment and similar economic support by Israel the Romanian government issued about 100,000 exit visas for Jewish citizens. In 1951 about 115,000 Romanian Jews had emigrated to Israel. In 1965 the new president Nicolae Ceaușescu ended this trade-off to please allied Arab positions. However, in the late 60s until the end of his regime in 1989, he again tried to fund Romania's ailing industries with the use of Israeli financial help, ranging from security statements for international loans for the State of Romania to supplies for the Romanian Army. In addition, a per capita transaction was created: In

this way approximately 1,500 Jews per year were granted exit visas to Israel. The payments made by the Israeli government varied according to age, education, profession, employment, and family status of the emigrant. They ranged from a minimum price of \$2,000 per capita to \$25,000 for well-educated Jewish doctors and scientists. By 1987, the Romanian-Jewish communities had shrunk enormously: 50% of the 23,000 Jews left in Romania were over 65 years old.

The horrors of post-war Romanian antisemitism experienced by the disliked and persecuted Jewish minority is referred to in another episode in Tabucchi's short story. Again the narrator only hints at the historical background of Jewish hardship in post-war Romania and forces the readers to check the scarce information to understand what had happened to the old Jewish man, his wife and his brother and when it had happened:

[Y]ou can't even imagine when your mother and I were able to crawl out of that sewer, you can't imagine the place where I left my brother, after his illness, that was no nursing home, it was a *lager*, the *lager* of the great *conducător* of the Romanian people. I left him in a wheelchair in the hall, he tried to follow us to the exit but he didn't move a millimeter, the wheelchairs of the *conducător's* nursing homes were nailed down, and then he began praying out loud, he called after me, reciting the Talmud to make us stop, you understand? If your mother and I left, nobody else would go see him, take care of him, but in that moment, as I was crying and trying to hide my tears, with all those witches in white uniforms staring at me, all of them spies dressed up like nurses, I mean, in that moment, hey, a brother can't be treated like that, you, would you do that to a brother even if you don't have one? And then I turned and said clearly, so the spies in white uniforms could hear: we both managed to avoid the Codreanu camps, but this one, the great *conducător's*, I did all by myself, for five years, my dear brother, and since I've been reeducated, now I can leave, because sometimes they allow visas for reeducated people, and I'll preserve an entirely personal memory of my reeducation<sup>28</sup>.

Corneliu Zelea Codreanu (1899-1938) was the founder and charismatic leader of the Romanian fascist and fiercely antisemitic Iron Guard. As early as 1927 he called

for the extermination of the Jewish people, pogroms and destruction of synagogues<sup>29</sup>. Though he was already assassinated in 1938 – which led to a fervent personality cult in wartime and post-war Romania – his Iron Guard managed together with the Romanian Army the persecution, deportation, internment and extermination of Jews, Roma and other minorities during the Romanian Holocaust. Yet the term “Codreanu camps” in Tabucchi’s story is too short and vague for the readers to know exactly what camps this passage is referring to. Again, if the readers want to know more, they are forced to dig deep into Romanian Jewish history and antisemitic crimes against humanity, on which there have been ample publications in the last thirty years<sup>30</sup>. It needs to be pointed out in passing, that there is a slight mistranslation in the English passage quoted above, which might disturb careful readers: the two seemingly contradictory statements concerning concentration camps, the statement that the old man had witnessed *lager* sentinels wearing the German Army belt buckle while interned in a concentration camp and the statement made here that he and his brother avoided Codreanu’s camps are not contradictory in the Italian original, where the two of them escaped (i.e. “siamo scam-pati”) from those camps<sup>31</sup>.

Again, it is only one short scene that Tabucchi offers his readers to fathom the immense hardship and suffering of Romanian Jewry after World War II. Having survived the fascist concentration camps, he and his brother encounter a new terrible fate: He is sent to a reeducation camp under the communist regime for five years, while his sick brother is sent to a so-called nursing home that in reality seems to have been much closer to those asylums specializing in deportation and later euthanasia of impaired people established by fascists. It must have been in the years of Ceaușescu’s trade-off of individual Jews with the State of Israel. The good fortune of the protagonist and his wife to be selected for immigration to Israel is overshadowed by the misfortune of the sick brother left behind in the cruel hands of the camp’s guarding “nurses”. The protagonist’s last words to his brother reflect the ambiguity put into language when a speaker is forced to pronounce the most intimate feeling together with a camouflage obsequiousness towards his tormentors: “I’ll preserve an entirely personal memory of my reeducation” – a memory so dear and tormenting, it will not be transmittable to anybody else. Thinking of this episode, one realizes that there is also the possibility that the photo on the side table in the old man’s nursing home room may represent his brother with his girlfriend long before he was interned in the Romanian lager-like



nursing home. The reason the mother did not give an explanation about the couple may then have been brought about by deep regret and guilty conscience towards the relative left behind to die alone in the hostile antisemitic environment of post-war Romania.

In view of Romania's active participation in the Holocaust and its continuing post-war antisemitism, the title of Tabucchi's short story "Bucharest Hasn't Changed a Bit" is highly sarcastic. The story's protagonist, the old Jew, is vehement in his severe verdict on Romanian continuation of antisemitism, but also in his criticism of the questionable position of Israel in these trade-offs that forced the state to welcome Romanian diplomats on its soil in spite of Romanian continuing antisemitism and denial of active participation in the Holocaust. The "sinister types, real fascists" who "are making official appearances, are being received with every honor" are high-ranking Romanian diplomats welcomed on Israeli soil in order to keep them favorable to the Zionist and humane cause of human trafficking of Jewish people.

Well aware of the intertwined and uninterrupted history of Romanian antisemitism, the old man plays on words showing his insight into and his defiance of both regimes, Fascist and Communist Romania: It is his use of the Romanian title "conducător" without any specification by an accompanying surname that serves as link and exposes the common brutality of both regimes. Though for the first time used by King Carol II, it was most famous as epithet for his successor the Romanian Prime Minister Marshal Ion Antonescu who called himself "conducător" (i.e. "leader") when assuming dictatorial powers in September 1940, mimicking the fascist heads of states "Caudillo", "Duce" and "Führer". Ironically, this title was later usurped and reintroduced by the communist president Nicolae Ceaușescu to boost his exaggerated personality cult. Thus, it is not only the parallelism of fascist and communist concentration camps in the above passage, but also this epithet that in every sentence uttered by the old Jew evokes the similarity of the communist and the fascist leader:

[D]id you ever think that if we hadn't made it out, you might've become some fervent kid with a red neckerchief, one of those boy scouts lining the street when the presidential car would go by, the magnificent couple inside, blessing the crowd? Do you know what you would've yelled, waving your little flag? Long live the Conducător who leads our people toward a radiant future. And you'd have grown up like that, forget all the languages you've learned here and

all your culture and linguistics, forget linguistics, they'd have sewn up your *lingua* if you weren't obedient to the ideals of the magnificent *conducatrix* couple who were conducting the people toward a radiant future<sup>32</sup>.

Nicolae Ceaușescu included his wife in his personality cult to an extent that the old man can refer to them as the “magnificent *conducatrix* couple”. Elena Ceaușescu had met her husband in the late 30s. They married shortly after World War II. In June 1973 she became a member of the Politburo of the Romanian Communist Party and became the second most important and influential person after Ceaușescu himself. She enjoyed being referred to as “The Mother of the Nation”. But much more interesting than that is her professional career as a chemist. After having been a research scientist at the “National Institute for Chemical Research”, she advanced quickly side by side with her husband's career. She became the director of the Bucharest “Central Institute of Chemical Research” when he became Secretary of the Communist Party in 1965. In the same year, she was elected member of the newly established “National Council of Scientific Research”, only to become its director shortly thereafter and receive the “Order of Scientific Merit First Class”. She was awarded many honorary awards for scientific achievement in the field of her specialty: polymer chemistry. However, critical investigations have cast doubt on her scientific achievements: They doubt that a girl leaving school at the age of 14 with mediocre marks can hand in a Ph.D. thesis in polymer chemistry not only ranking among the 100 top best scientists but also with the honor of *summa cum laude*. After the overthrow of the regime in 1989, there were claims that Elena Ceaușescu had forced scientists to write papers in her name and that the university had given her the honor of the doctorate solely because of her high political rank<sup>33</sup>. Tabucchi's protagonist muses on the success of the infamous couple not only at home but also abroad:

You know that atrocious couple was received everywhere with every honor right up till yesterday? [...] They kept giving her honorary degrees, the great scientist, he continued, she'd invented a magic potion, a rejuvenating gelatin that stopped time much better than the monkey's glands of that other charlatan, the Russian, a semolina flatbread, royal jelly, and sludge from the Black Sea, and for this wonderful discovery of hers, the heads of state in the countries

where you now spend your time welcomed her like a benefactress to mankind, tons of honorary degrees, in France in Italy in Germany, I can't remember, in your Europe [...]. [I]n the country where your mother and I were born, the fervent believers in the radiant future showed up instead, the fake scientist's eternal-youth gelatin is what attracted them, these old people like me who resisted aging, who planted themselves in a nice hotel on the Black Sea, feasted on lavish meals but every day, first thing, took two spoonfuls of the magic royal jelly, then shamelessly went down to the private beach, progressives and nudists, to check beneath their bellies to see if the treatment was having any effect. She was a nurse, she began her scientific career by sticking bedpans under old people's asses in places like this one, then she married the *conducător* of the people and became a scientist<sup>34</sup>.

While the old man's sketch of Elena Ceaușescu's biography, her rise to power and authority and her marriage with Nicolae Ceaușescu and their craving for international limelight is correct, he mixes her up with someone else in the detailed description of her research. Elena Ceaușescu's research was on polymer chemistry, not on some "rejuvenating" "magic potion". This time, Tabucchi's readers can really not believe what is said by the protagonist in this story, and they need to countercheck to find out what the historical facts are.

Here we are entering a new field related to the meaning of old age in 20<sup>th</sup> century Europe. So far we have dealt with three aspects of aging in Antonio Tabucchi's short story "Bucharest Hasn't Changed a Bit": (1) it contributes to the popularization of "old age" as a literary theme by creating a very old protagonist in a nursing-home setting and telling his story, present and past, (2) it creates an interrelatedness of individual aging and generational aging with explicit reference to the Holocaust generations, (3) it ponders the meaning of memory as an elementary category in the aging process. We now encounter a new aspect, i.e. (4) the dissatisfaction with the aging process in society and attempts to find cures for the deficiencies of old age and strategies and medicine to prolong healthy and beautiful conditions of younger years.

However, the scientist the old man is so closely describing is not Elena Ceaușescu but another very historic and fascinating figure deeply involved in the general fashion of everlasting youth and the scientific endeavor to find cures against the

aging process: Ana Aslan (1897-1988). Ana Aslan was a famous Romanian physician and biologist who was known for discovering the anti-aging effects of procaine. She developed out of procaine anti-aging drugs called Gerovital H3 and Aslavital which she marketed with an enormous success in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. She is also considered a pioneer in geriatrics and gerontology (some say she invented the latter term). She founded the “Geriatric Institute of Bucharest” in 1952, which was the first of its kind and recognized by the World Health Organization, and she organized the “Romanian Society for Gerontology and Geriatrics” in 1959. Gerovital H3 did impress other international scientists but also met with critical dispute leading eventually to its ban from some international markets and to its use as alternative medicine in others. However, Aslan marketed her drug very successfully as a “fountain of youth” in her Romanian institute<sup>35</sup>. Rumor has it that among her customers and patients were such famous and glamorous personalities as John F. Kennedy, Marlene Dietrich, Kirk Douglas and Salvador Dalí (source: Wikipedia), Nikita Khrushchev, Winston Churchill, Konrad Adenauer, Claudia Cardinale and Sylvester Stallone (source: Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk)<sup>36</sup>. Nicolae and Elena Ceaușescu were not only among her illustrious patients, they prospered as much as Aslan herself from the financial success and the international reputation of her “fountain of youth”. According to the broadcast on Ana Aslan in the German “Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk”, the Aslan Institute survived the Romanian revolution of 1989 and is now run by the Romanian Ministry of Health. It is said to be still in high demand in and outside of Romania, and elsewhere in Europe similar institutes based on the same drug have come into existence<sup>37</sup>.

Tabucchi’s old Jew not only connects critically the two avid and suspicious scientists, Elena Ceaușescu and Ana Aslan, but also contrasts the corrupt feasting in the Romanian palaces reserved for the wealthy foreigners and their everlasting “valuta” with the starving and wasted Romanian population. He also offers a link from Aslan’s “magic potion” Gerovital H3 to today’s health-food and anti-aging craze as represented for example by advertising campaigns of “magic royal jelly”, showing how much the craving for eternal youth is still alive on the old European continent and elsewhere. And furthermore, he takes one more step back into the past and evokes the stunning experimental endeavors of European scientists in their battle against old age: “the monkey’s glands of that other charlatan, the Russian, a semolina flatbread, royal jelly, and sludge from the Black Sea” is a reference to the Russian surgeon Serge Abrahamovitch

Voronoff and his experimental activities in Paris in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> and in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Serge Abrahamovitch Voronoff (1866-1951) was renowned for his use of monkey's glands in experiments to rejuvenate patients at the Collège de France in Paris since 1885, where he founded his own research institute<sup>38</sup>. Voronoff transplanted hundreds of testicles from young to old animals in various domesticated species. After believing in his success, he transplanted monkey's glands into human beings from the 1920s onwards. On the 12<sup>th</sup> of June 1920 he implanted for the first time slices of a chimpanzee's gland into a human scrotum. His stunning book *Étude sur la vieillesse et le rajeunissement par la greffe*<sup>39</sup> reports on his experimental transplantations and his own declarations of success. At times, he undertook so many transplantations that his demand for chimpanzees and baboons could no longer be satisfied and he had to build his own monkey farm to harvest glands. In England, where vivisection was strictly forbidden, he worked with glands of human corpses. But his attempts to transplant ovaries to spare aging women the negative effects of menopause he declared himself unsuccessful. While the 1923 London "International Congress of Surgeons" still praised his success, long-term observation on his transplantation results showed the failure of his experiments and in later years Voronoff's name fell into oblivion.

The concocted description Tabucchi makes his old protagonist fabricate is not per chance, but most informative: It opens up three additional perspectives on the nexus of old age and memory. (1) The two stories about the two scientists, Aslan and Voronoff, exemplify the two extreme elements of memory: sheer oblivion and fabricated fame. The dying oldest generation of Europe, of which the protagonist is a part, will eventually face such fate too: oblivion or fabrication; all the more important, to tell their stories. (2) On another level, the level of narration and protagonist construction, the old man's confusion of Elena Ceaușescu and Ana Aslan, culminating in the concoction of "monkey's glands", "semolina flatbread", "royal jelly", and "sludge from the Black Sea", including even the much earlier scientist Voronoff, also evokes the negative effects of very old age: senility, i.e. the garrulousness, forgetfulness and confusion of an old inmate in a nursing home. (3) Moreover, this thematic combination of Jewish Holocaust and experiments on rejuvenation does indeed hint at another, more general explanation for the Nazi motivation to mass murder European Jewry, less outstanding than the common explanation of pure antisemitism. Nazism was obsessed

with cleansing of what it called the Arian race, which was identified with the “nation body”. Since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century everywhere in Europe, popular as well as philosophical imagery on Jewry depicted them as an “effeminate”, “weak”, and “ailing” race, too “old” and “ancient” to fit into modern life<sup>40</sup>. The most notorious philosopher and representative of Jewish “self-hatred” in this respect was the Viennese Otto Weininger with his highly-disputed treatise on *Geschlecht und Character* published in 1903<sup>41</sup>. The Nazis hated everything old, especially the old order, and cherished and adored youth. The youth cult they created culminated in the personal pride of the Nazi leaders to conquer the world and slay “unwertes Leben”, i.e. “invalid / unworthy life” before they all reached the age of 50.

Most of Tabucchi’s readers would most likely not know or remember any of this. Memory, as Tabucchi’s short story shows, cannot be transmitted, but needs to be told. And the reading human subject will have to investigate carefully what is being written and what is left out. In this sense Tabucchi’s little story is a perfect example of maieutic écriture: he gently entices the readers’ curiosity and inquisitiveness until they feel the urge to find out and learn for themselves.

The story’s title “Bucharest Hasn’t Changed a Bit” refers as well to the continuation of antisemitism in post-war Romania until recently as to the never-ending craving for eternal youthfulness and hatred of old age as displayed in the continuation of European experiments on rejuvenation from the 19<sup>th</sup> century up to our days. The final pages of the short story allude to the continuation of discrimination and racism even in Israel, where the Palestinian taxi driver is complaining about Israeli police harassment and bullying to the son of the old man, who remembers his own father’s ironic complaint that “Romanian Jews are the other Palestinians of Israel”<sup>42</sup>. But more than that, with this title Antonio Tabucchi also gives a humorous twist to the story and its reflections on the meaning of aging at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> century, when population indices tip more and more to the side of senescence: it is the old protagonist’s advancing disorientation that makes him mistake in the final scene the city of his Israeli nursing home for his Romanian hometown: it is not Bucharest that hasn’t changed a bit.

## Notes

- 1 Antonio Tabucchi: *Il tempo invecchia in fretta*, Milan (Giangiacomo Feltrinelli Editore) 2009. The title of the original story in Italian is “Bucarest non è cambiata per niente”.

English translation by Martha Cooley and Antonio Romani: Antonio Tabucchi: *Time Ages in a Hurry*, New York (Archipelago Books) 2015, pp. 115-126.

- 2 Antonio Tabucchi: *Time Ages in a Hurry*, op. cit., p. 115.
- 3 Ibid., p. 121.
- 4 Ibid., p. 124.
- 5 Ibid., pp. 115-116. Compare the Italian original: Antonio Tabucchi: *Il tempo invecchia in fretta*, op.cit., p. 139: "E poi in quel posto ci stava bene, anche troppo. Esagerava? No che non esagerava, ci sto meglio che a casa mia, diceva, i pasti pronti, il letto rifatto, le lenzuola cambiate una volta alla settimana, e una camera tutta per me, addirittura con un balconcino. [...] Papà, mormorava, non ti scaldare, lo so che qui stai bene, me ne rendo conto. Tu non sai niente, borbottava il vecchio, cosa vuoi sapere tu, lo dici per farmi contento, tu hai avuto la fortuna di nascere in questo paese, quando io e tua madre riuscimmo a partire [...]".
- 6 Antonio Tabucchi: *Time Ages in a Hurry*, op. cit., p. 117. Compare the Italian original: Antonio Tabucchi: *Il tempo invecchia in fretta*, op.cit., pp. 141-142: "[...] comunque, tu ora dove insegni, a Roma?, non ti dimenticare che le leggi razziali le inventarono proprio lì, in questo bel paese dove ti abbiamo fatto nascere stanno arrivando in visita dei personaggi sinistri, fascistoni, e sono ricevuti con tutti gli onori, tutto al rovescio [...]".
- 7 Not only because of history and heritage, Israel is very often considered "European", also because of its belligerent relationship with its Arab neighbors it is often included, e.g. in Eurovision or European sports contests as if it were a European nation.
- 8 Herrad Heselhaus: "From Thick to Quick Translation. The Narrator as Reader in Times of Globalization", in: Department of Literature and Linguistics, University of Tsukuba: *Studies in Literature and Linguistics* vol. 70, 2016, pp. 13-40.
- 9 Simone de Beauvoir: *La vieillesse*, Paris (Gallimard) 1970, passim.
- 10 Antonio Tabucchi: *Time Ages in a Hurry*, op. cit., p. 120.
- 11 Ibid., p. 122.
- 12 Ibid., pp. 116-117.
- 13 Ibid., p. 117.
- 14 Antonio Tabucchi: *Il tempo invecchia in fretta*, op. cit., pp. 141.
- 15 The English translation of these laws are "Reich Citizenship Law", "Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor". One should however not forget the contemporary infamous racial laws of the United States of America predating any of these fascist laws.
- 16 Cf. e.g. Mark Neocleous: *Fascism*. Minneapolis, Minnesota (UP) 1997, and David Baum: "Race, Antisemitism and the Renaissance in Fascist Italy" in: Ilana Zinguer et al.: *Hebraic Aspects of the Renaissance: Sources and Encounters*, Leiden (Brill) 2011.
- 17 Joshua D. Zimmerman: *Jews in Italy under Fascist and Nazi Rule 1922 - 1945*, Cambridge (UP) 2005.
- 18 David Baum, op. cit., p. 236. Cf. also: M.A. Ledeen, "The Evolution of Italian Fascist Antisemitism", in *Jewish Social Studies* 37, 1, 1975, pp. 3-17; F. Chabod: *L'Italia contemporanea (1918-1948)*, Turin (Einaudi) 1961; and: R. De Felice: *Storia degli ebrei italiani sotto il fascismo*, Turin (Einaudi) 1961.

- 19 Cf. Susan Zuccotti: *The Italians and the Holocaust: Persecution, Rescue, Survival*, Lincoln (University of Nebraska Press) 1996; and Alexander Stille: *Benevolence and Betrayal: Five Italian Jewish Families under Fascism*, New York (Summit Books) 1991.
- 20 Mario Toscano: "The Jews in Italy from the Risorgimento to the Republic", in: Vivian B. Mann (ed.): *Gardens and Ghettos: The Art of Jewish Life in Italy*, New York (Jewish Museum) 1989, p. 38.
- 21 David Baum, op. cit., p. 238.
- 22 Mario Toscano, op. cit., p. 39.
- 23 Antonio Tabucchi: *Time Ages in a Hurry*, op. cit., p. 118.
- 24 Ibid., p. 119.
- 25 Elie Wiesel et al.: "Report on the International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania": [www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/about/events/2004/romania/asp#english](http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/about/events/2004/romania/asp#english), retrieved 2016-08-07.
- 26 Ibid.
- 27 Apart from Elie Wiesel's report, the following argument is also based on: Howard M. Sachar: *Israel and Europe. An Appraisal in History*, New York (Vintage) 1998; Howard M. Sachar: *Dreamland: Europeans and Jews in the Aftermath of the Great War*, New York (Vintage) 2002; and Hildrun Glass: "Das Verschwinden einer Minderheit. Die Auswanderung der Juden aus Rumänien nach 1944", in: *Südosteuropa. Festschrift für Edgar Hösch*, Munich (Oldenbourg Verlag) 2005, pp. 383–408.
- 28 Antonio Tabucchi: *Time Ages in a Hurry*, op. cit., pp. 119–120.
- 29 William I. Brustein: *Roots of Hate: Anti-Semitism in Europe Before the Holocaust*, Cambridge (UP) 2003, p. 105 and passim. Cf. also: Ruth Benedict: "The History as It Appears to Rumanians", in Margaret Mead, Rhoda Bubeney Métraux (eds.): *The Study of Culture at a Distance*, New York (Berghahn Books) 2000, p. 449–459.
- 30 Howard M. Sachar, op. cit. passim.
- 31 Antonio Tabucchi: *Il tempo invecchia in fretta*, op. cit., p. 145.
- 32 Antonio Tabucchi: *Time Ages in a Hurry*, op. cit., p. 116.
- 33 Cf. Victor Sebestyen: *Revolution 1989. The Fall of the Soviet Empire*, New York (Pantheon Books) 2009.
- 34 Antonio Tabucchi: *Time Ages in a Hurry*, op. cit., pp. 117–118.
- 35 Cf. Erika Lang: *Das Lebenswerk der Ana Aslan*. (Ph.D. thesis at University of Cologne, 2005); and: Peter Udelhoven (ed.): *Ana Aslan. Sie ist älter als sie aussieht*. Cologne (WiGe) 1984.
- 36 Cf. "Ana Aslan" in Wikipedia: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ana\\_Aslan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ana_Aslan), retrieved 2016-08-07; and: "Ana-Aslan-Therapie, Rumänien" <http://www.mdr.de/heute-im-osten/alternativheilungsteuropa104.html>, retrieved 2016-08-07.
- 37 Ibid.
- 38 Alexander Bogdanov: "Teknologiya bor'by so starost'yu", in: Boris Groys and Michael Hagemester: *Die neue Menschheit. Biopolitische Utopien in Russland zu Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts*. Frankfurt (Suhrkamp) 2005, (Footnote by the editors), p. 511. See also: D. Schultheiss, J. Denil, U. Jonas: "Rejuvenation in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century", in: *Andrologia*. vol. 29,6 (1997), pp. 351–355; and A. Lellouch/A. Segal: "Contribution à l'histoire de



- la gérontologie et de l'endocrinologie du début du XXème siècle: le Docteur Voronoff (1866-1951) et ses essais de rajeunissement par les greffes animales", in: *Histoire des Sciences médicales*. vol. 35, 4, (2001), pp. 425-434.
- 39 Serge Abrahamovitch Voronoff: *Étude sur la vieillesse et le rajeunissement par la greffe*, Paris (Doin) 1926.
- 40 For the importance of hygienic strategies in political and cultural concepts in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, cf. Peter Sloterdijk: "Nur Krüppel werden überleben", in: Peter Sloterdijk: *Du mußt dein Leben ändern*, Frankfurt (Suhrkamp) 2009, pp. 69-99.
- 41 Cf. A.G. Gender-Killer: *Antisemitismus und Geschlecht. Von „effiminierten Juden“ und „maskulinisierten Jüdinnen“ und anderen Geschlechtsbildern*, Münster (Unrast Verlag) 2005; und Otto Weininger: *Geschlecht und Charakter. Eine prinzipielle Untersuchung*, Vienna (Wilhelm Braumüller) 1903.
- 42 Antonio Tabucchi: *Time Ages in a Hurry*, op. cit., p. 125.