The Clones: A New Phenomenon in the Literary Environment

A sociological approach

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Abstract

The article is an introduction to a rather recent phenomenon present in the Romanian literary environment: "the clones". They are somehow linked to pseudonyms and Pessoa's heteronyms but at the same time they bring something new in terms of identity, social status and role playing within a community. The sociological perspective in studying "the clones" shows, among others, what differentiates the young generation of writers in Romania ("Generation 2000") from others and how they have integrated the Internet into their literary lives.

Keywords
Writers, online communities, identity

Introduction

"Generation 2000" becomes an interesting phenomenon not only for literary critics or historians, but for sociologists as well – especially since it marks its presence through a fresh writing style inspired and hosted by the new socio-economical context that allows re-configurations of group dynamics.

An example in this respect is the so called "clones" phenomenon – meaning that a writer creates and adopts a new virtual identity, a new literary persona who either helps testing a new writing style by avoiding personal critics and focusing the attention on the text itself, or fulfills a personal mission. They mainly publish in virtual writing communities, such as www.poezie.ro or www.clubliterar.com, and they are growing in popularity – for example, in 2009 the Young Writers' Colloquium dedicated one session

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of discussion to this subject only. At the same time, there is a familiar pattern: some clones become a sort of VIPs, only to fade away once the author's/ architect's identity is discovered.

The current article merely peeks at the "clones phenomenon" through the sociologist' s lenses – the great potential of the topic comes together with difficulties in a thorough approach of several aspects. Consequently, please read this article as an introductory case study, with the promise that further research will be conducted in order to reach the full potential of this subject.

Research Approach and Methodology

The main subject of my paper is a newly established phenomenon within the literary environment in Romania. Therefore there are several barriers that prevent us from implementing a classical methodological approach of the topic.

To start with, writers per se are a difficult target to reach when using standardized research techniques. Even more, the topic itself is rather delicate, being related to one's activity that assumes a high level of confidentiality and consequently writers tend to mistrust almost everyone: from family to friends – not to mention researchers. Clone architects are reluctant to discuss or admit the topic, especially when their maternity or paternity is not "official", or when the clone disappeared as a consequence of intense and contradictory discussions with peers.

Still, an exploratory study is feasible and my paper is mainly based on unstructured participant observation (as active member of several literary online communities) and secondary data analysis (articles, texts, forum discussions). Out of the documents that have been analyzed I would especially mention the recordings of the discussion titled "Online identity – the clones, between PR strategy and "cheating" the system" moderated by Marius Ianus during the 2009 edition of "Young Writers' Colloquim". This debate can be considered the stepping stone in recognizing the connection between "the clones phenomenon" and "Generation 2000". Among the active participants in this discussion one can mention Vasile Leac, George Serediuc, Razvan Tupa, Oana Catalina Ninu or Claudiu Komartin, established young writers with intense online activity.

At the same time, three online interviews have been conducted with young established writers (all published at least one book, they are recognized as representative names of "Generation 2000", respondents 1 and 2 are actively present in the virtual literary communities while respondent 3 has limited contact with the online literary environment). The number of interviews is quite small and consequently the interpretation and conclusions cannot be generalized, yet they do shed some light on the topic.

The three online interviews have followed a rather different flow, meaning that they would be better defined as online semi structured depth interview. This means that the discussion has taken place online, via Yahoo Messenger, which allowed interaction to take place in a rather relaxed, friendly atmosphere. The respondents were informed

about the purpose of the interview and I had in mind at all times a list of topics that need to be touched during the discussion, yet without interrupting the natural flow of the chat. A face-to-face interview has several advantages as compared to the approach used in this case (such as the possibility to analyze both verbal and non-verbal expressions and being able to detect the respondent's level of involvement in the discussion), but at the same time it doesn't reproduce the online environment or provide the minimum amount of anonymity the latter does.

Taking the above into consideration, I admit the limits of my exploration and of course, further research is necessary. At the same time, I would like to stress out the introductory purpose of my paper and the fact that such phenomena benefit from a low level of visibility and awareness thus bringing up such topics might serve the greater purpose of raising interest towards "Generation 2000" and the structural consequences of its intense online activities.

"The Clones' Attack" over "Generation 2000"

Before going further with the main topic of this article, it is important to first shed some light on what "Generation 2000" means. Even though the literary environment still considers the concept as controversial and not yet established per se, a sociologist may define it as the young generation of writers (born after 1975) who started to publish (either in print or online) around 2000 (meaning from 1995 to present).

In his article named "Generation 2000 – an introduction[2]", Claudiu Komartin stresses out the fact that "in order to state the existence of a generation, it obviously needs to show a real, strong presence and to start with – to challenge the past generation". This is actually the case of Generation 2000 – a generation that started its ascension in a post-revolutionary Romania, under socio-political trauma, in a society recently brought to life under a new capitalist order, in full process of globalization.

Stefan Bolea was stating in an editorial published in EgoPhobia (entitled "the journal of Generation 2000") that "leaving aside any hotsy-totsy that allows me to state under a dada mask some obvious things that we all know, I say here and now that Generation 2000's bet is its own self-referentiality. In other words, there's no need for us to wait the blessing of any critic in order to feel as great writers. When I say Generation 2000 I think of its global image with unpublished writers who might ruin the momentary friable hierarchies[3]."

In 2001 www.poezie.ro appears – the first virtual literary community in Romania. Here anybody can create an account and publish their poetry, give and receive comments on their work or others'. At the moment there are 12 access levels depending on one's involvement that allow authors to perform various activities (from organizing contests to downgrading other members): new member, regular member, community member, HTML member, noticed member, able to award texts member, contest organizer, columnist, witting critic, editor, super user and admin. Being unhappy with the system,

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[2] Komartin, Claudiu – "Generaţia 2000 – o introducere", http://clubliterar.com/text.php?tid=1825&aid=99
[3] Bolea, Stefan – "Generatia auto-referentiala", http://www.egophobia.ro/6/editorial.htm

later on, in 2003, a rather elitist wing comes off and sets the basis of www.clubliterar.com.

The newly established virtual writing community has different administrative functions: one becomes a member by invitation, recommendation and/or votes of other members. Those interested to become part of the community have to send a request along with texts that are to be voted/ commented by current members. Actually, this is one of the hot topics: in time, discussions and conflicts arose because of the subjective value-based admission system. Both communities have included in their rules specifications about penalties for those who don't respect the rules.

In time, other virtual literary communities appeared – some have survived their inner conflicts, others haven't. For example, http://hyperliteratura.reea.net/ has now on its front page a religious farewell message from its "creator" while the recent http://fdl.ro/ has as slogan: "start your mornings with a good poem". Nevertheless, poezie.ro and Clubliterar remain the main engines of the virtual literary environment with two very different means of functioning: poezie.ro is an open space for anyone willing to write, hierarchically organized and highly involved in offline activities as well (meetings, anthologies etc) while Clubliterar has an restricted access to membership based on "value" filters, low group cohesion but involved in promoting events of interest to its members.

Thus the virtual side of the literary environment in Romania has grown in presence and importance and it now completes the picture once dominated by literary circles, journals, festivals and other traditional groupings. The Internet is also the birth place and playground of what is now called "the underground" manifestations of a new literary generation.

Attention should be paid to the double sided role that the Internet plays in writers' lives: on one hand, it provides a wide pool of popularity, free and barely restricted access to readers and other audiences but at the same time it also loosens the admission criteria on the "writers' boat". In other words, "barriers to entry are formally lower; but savage competition for users' limited attention may erect new barriers based on investments in marketing and production[4]".

As pointed out by Wellman[5] "the Internet has contributed to a shift from group-based to a network based society that is decouplinig community and geographical propinquity and thus requiring new understandings and operationalizations of the former."

Basically, one of the elements that define and differentiate "Generation 2000" is its presence and development in the virtual environment – a place that has encouraged the discrete but certain change from old literary norms, habits and behaviors to a different organizational typology (in terms of co-habitation with both other writers and readers).

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[4] DiMaggio et all, "Social Implications of the Internet", Annual Review of Sociology, vol 27 (2001), pp 307-336
[5] Wellman B. apud idem

The above described virtual literary communities are part of the change and host new and interesting group dynamics and individual manifestations such as the clones.

According to Oana Ninu, the clones' phenomenon has appeared in the Romanian literary circles "on www.clubliterar.com, during discussions about "Les Particules élémentaires""[6]

Thus, a writer with/ without an account in a virtual literary community creates another identity/ account and most times tries to expand in order to boost its credibility and impact. The clones are virtual identities invented by an author, another literary persona. The cloning process is, in fact, a new means of repression and at the same time a manifestation of the artistic plurality that marks the literary environment.

This topic is also discussed by Razvan Tupa and Adi Schiop in one of their articles published in Prezent: "A concept invented by literary websites is that of clone. Every now and then poems written by strangers are posted and then we find that they belong to members that changed their virtual identity.[…]The poet Claudiu Komartin created a clone, Ioana Lupescu. Under this name he published socialist poems, totally different from his usual style. [7]"

The pseudonym can be considered clones' ancestor, the analogy being based on the fact that the author uses a different name to publish his/her creations. Amongst others, the name is an indicator of one's identity which means that those who appropriate a new name start building a new identity – a formal, superficial one, without intervening on substantial elements of one's personality.

At the other end of the axis that starts with pseudonyms stand Pessoa's heteronyms, while clones could be considered a midpoint between the two. The Portuguese writer has written under about 72 heteronyms, out of which Alberto Cairo, Alvaro de Campos, Ricardo Reis and Bernardo Soares are the most notorious. The pseudonym is just a different name, but heteronyms are characters with their own personality, traits and life. What is really interesting in the Pessoa case is the fact that these heteronyms were contemporary and used to translate or criticize each other, even intervene in each others' lives or the author's. As Rodica Grigore explains, "if choosing a pseudonym – or more – is not something out of the ordinary in the literary of philosophical environment, the `heteronyms` experience, as Pessoa himself named it, represents fundamentally different artistic attitude, as long as each of the literary `voices` has a specific technique, an individual language, a style easy to identify connected to a well defined cultural tradition (that differs each time) and, as surprising as it may seem, having different complex biographies and being fully aware of the subtle influences system that comes to life in silence amongst them[8]".

The clones are somehow closer to the latter concept, the main differentiating factor being their birthplace: the virtual, online literary communities. Time will show if

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[6] "Online identity – the clones, between PR strategy and "cheating" the system" discussion, 2009, "Young Writers' Colloquim"

[7] Şchiop Adrian, Ţupa Răzvan - Cenaclurile virtuale domina piata literara, www.prezentonline.ro

[8] Grigore, Rodica. Fernando Pessoa Revisited, http://revistacultura.ro/nou/2009/12/fernando-pessoa-revisited/

clones' architect will change their current attitude towards recognizing the "maternity" / "paternity" of their creations.

Out of the most popular cases, I would bring up to your attention two cases: Leon Whal and Liviu Diamandi. The first still publishes his poems especially on www.clubliterar.com even though he is now known as a clone of a mainstream writer, while the latter has disappeared from the literary stage once his clone status has been revealed. As mentioned in the above quoted article from Prezent, "A special case is that of Liviu Diamandi. His texts led to the conclusion that their author is a 19 years old living in Brasov who failed an admission exam at cinema direction in Cluj. When an article about his poetry was published in Suplimentul de Cultura, he took out his texts and started to pretend that the "Liviu Diamandi" project is a group project[9]". Thus one interesting point in the discussions about clones is why or why not should a clone "die" once it has been disclosed as such.

The sociologist's interest in clones increases once new related phenomena appear first in virtual literary communities and then spread in real-life of young writers: "clones-hunting" is one. This means that any new writer that appears in an online literary community might be suspected to be a clone of someone else, especially if conflicts in comments arise.

I would conclude this introduction with a summarized discussion among some of www.clubliterar.com members at the basement of Dmitri Miticov's text "Andrusha" (published om 23.02.2007):

> Ruslan Carta: "…at least this text is a mix of Andrei gamart, hose and others rm's (author's note: from the Republic of Moldavia). But anyways, everything is allowed for klones ☺ ☺ ☺"
> Vlad Moldovan: "Ruslan, what are you saying, Dmitri is a clone? Dmitri, are you a clone?"
> Dmitri Miticov: "Ever since I came on the Internet I've been accused to be a clone. On poezie.ro they named me in all ways, but I was just writing poetry. This has been happening for half an year and I took it all. Same as here, the texts come second and people keep talking about something else. I am very sad…[…]…You don't want me to exist, but I will. With my Andrusha, with mum and dad and all the crap that I did and that I'm talking about. With my complicated life. With Olgulta, Elanna with the street beneath my window. I will write a book and Dmitri Miticov shall be written on its cover and then you will be convinced".
> ensign morituri : "Dmitri, if you're for real, you're a darling"
> Claudiu Komartin: "Dmitri, I would be very sad if you would still believe that this is a sort of trial. The clones story is a social game that was made possible by the internet. It's like the Venice balls where everybody would wear a mask and one could imagine that behind the "Butterfly" stands count R. When it could actually be anyone, even the abject marquis L. This is what I think. When we insinuated – or even spoke it out in the open – that you are someone else but Miticov we did not trivialize your texts, did not take them out of discussion but trying to set a context. To attach your texts –

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[9] Şchiop Adrian, Ţupa Răzvan - Cenaclurile virtuale domina piata literara, www.prezentonline.ro

that we all enjoyed – an image that we all knew before. Not to mention that we are encouraged in a sort of detective-like activity most of us enjoy. […]”

Empirical Findings

The three interviews conducted online have focused on gaining a deeper understanding of clones' architecture and reasons to exist. In spite of the limited amount of information collected (due to the small number of interviews as well as respondents' reluctance to providing too many details), one could sum up a series of relevant conclusions.

First of all, the Internet plays an acknowledged role in clones' appearance and development even if they sometimes do go beyond the virtual environment.

“Clones appear because the environment allows them to. We are on the internet and the net is playful, by definition.[…] Clones are in fact extensions of the anonymity that is guaranteed by the Internet.” – respondent 2

Some consider that their organic linkage to the online environment is a limitation:

“They go as far as they can, meaning until physical presence is needed. If this is not necessary, you can publish in magazines or do whatever. It depends on the clone. It doesn't die, it transforms itself. Or dies” – respondent [1]

Yet things can happen differently from time to time. For example, during edition XXXII of “Poeticile Cotidianului” Diana Geacar read poems of Liviu Diamandi in his place. On a summary page of what was done in 2009 at “Poeticile Cotidianului” the event is described as follows:

“XXXII 15 June Diana Geacar spoke for Liviu Diamandi
Liviu Diamandi was probably the most successful clone that appeared in the online literary environment. Although different assumptions have been made, it's no longer important who wrote the mainly shocking but always surprising and warm poems posted online under Diamandi's signature.
Diana Geacar read in Club A a prose signed by Liviu Diamandi and watched a video message from the author who insisted in remaining unknown.[10]”

In one of his articles on FDL (“Fabrica de Literatura” meaning “the literary factory”), Andrei Ruse states that:

“there's something interesting happening with clones. They rarely get over this condition, I've never seen books published by clones. Because this would eventually be the end result, right? […]. I think that clones' value is zero outside online communities. When the paper is printed, if it ever does, the ego asks for a name.[11]“

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[10] http://poetica.rocultura.ro/?page_id=5
[11] Ruse, Andrei – “clone vs scriitori”, http://fdl.ro/clone-vs-scriitori/

Basically, this draws attention to clones' limitations – they cannot end the process, meaning that their chances to publish their work are slim. Clones are rather instruments than actual authors in this perspective, once they served their purpose their work is either wasted (the clone simply disappears from the literary environment) or transferred to their architect's account (if the clone succeeds in convincing the public, the writer behind it comes out to take credit and can even publish the work under his/her name).

Table 1: summarized findings of the interviews

Topics	Quotes
Rationale – why do clones exist	"First, it's relaxing and relevand to give away your texts to be read by people who don't judge them depending on what they already know you've already written." – respondent 1 "When you need to be reassured, to be sure that it's your text and not your name that draws comments, shlap – a clone. When you want to pay avengefull checks to other writers shlap – a clone. […] There can be a milion reasons, depends on who makes them." – respondent 2 "I think it's another behaviour that the respective person experiments. Another psychology is tested" – respondent 3
Clones inventory	"Diamandi seemed more real than a lot of those who write with their own name" – respondent 1 "I know someone who says he/she won awards at highschool contests with a clone" – respondent 1 "Liviu Diamandi, Leon Whal and the basarabean whose name I forgot…Dmitri Miticov I think. These are the only names worth mentioning" – respondent 2 "Leon somehow, I think it was Gherman. At one moment Sociu invented a lady-poet. And so did Komartin, but as a joke. Ioana Lupescu I think. And Cosmin Perta might have tried as well." – respondent 3
Personal experience (respondents' own clones)	"I had a clone which helped me see what do people react to in their comments" – respondent 1 "I also had a couple of clones on www.poezie.ro but gave them up rapidly. […] People there were only interested in who's writing" – respondent 1 "I have a clone that has a blog and writes fiction, an autonomous character. […] It only lives on the blog and on it's email. […] For me it helps testing a style, the way I can lead a character." – respondent 2 "Well, I don't think I'd like to…I see no reason. I like my name" – respondent 3

When discussing the meaning of clones and the roles they fulfill it seems as if clones are a means of communication with the "pure reader" (either the plain reader only interested in the text itself or the reader within other writers). On one hand, the writer needs a confirmation that it's the texts that generate reactions and not necessarily his/her persona (what was previously written, said or done) and on the other side, there's the reader who needs to associate the writing to a reality, a writer's persona. A metaphoric comparison that might help in a better understanding could be based on real

life dating after online flirting cases (one can pretend to be anything he/she wants while chatting but when the two decide to meet, then the real persons need to come out and meet each other).

The above mentioned clones-hunting phenomenon is a sort of defense strategy against being experimented on. An example in this respect is the suite of comments that appeared on www.clubliterar.com when Sebastian Brei announced his intention to become a member:

Diana: "…these texts may be signed either by diamandi or by brei, there's no difference…"
Dan Sociu: "Then why not wait for diamandi himself, what's to do with a copy cat? or maybe he has others, more original"
Cosmina Morosan: "i like it. Born infantile. Or at least authentic. why do clones bother you?"
Cristina: "because we are bored (most of us) pretty fast. and because when they are cloned the originals themselves lose interest…[…] but Tenis is 100% diamandi"
Diana: "mda…for us clones are still something original"
Dmitri Miticov: "so that you know: Sebastian Brei is a copy cat but he comes from Diamandi and from Dmitri, the two poets he reads continuously. More Diamandi, and this is visibile…[…] it's funny to make a copy cat and don't even realise it."
Vlad Moldovan: "How self-referential should clones be? Do you know Dmitri?"
Dmitri Miticov: "I think you should ask a clone".

There are cases when clones are built up for a rather personal mission: to avenge something or to grow support of own ideas in a virtual community. Discussions about such cases appeared several times, here's just one example:

"I was saying about Europeea that it's a name that wants prestige. A name that wants to attract respect…But where I found some shocking behaviors: personal attack and excessive vulgarity. For a long while, on this website owned by professor Ion Corbu and his clone Emanuel Cristescu (I'm not sure who's the clone and who's the original) there's an individual with the nickname Ecsintescu Virtual which is willingly used as Pit Bull[12]"

Identity Theories in Clones' Analysis

The sociological tradition of identity theories is strongly related to symbolic interactionism and especially William James and George Herbert's contribution to the Self theory[13]. Later on, both Peter Berger and Erving Goffman[14] plead in favor of the idea that the socio-cultural context impacts and changes, shapes identity.

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[12] Caragea, Ionut – "Promiscuitatea poetica si sindromul dictaturii pe atelierele literare", http://nordlitera.ro/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=1885
[13] Dicţionarul de Sociologie Oxford, Editura Univers Enciclopedic, Bucureşti, 2003, pagina 276
[14] idem

The „self-categorization" theory brings arguments that support the idea that the personal identity pole becomes active when the individual performs inter-personal comparisons while the social identity pole is visible when the grup belonging interferes.

The topic of this paper is strongly related to social identity, even though the role of personal identity in day to day life cannot be ignored. Nevertheless, according to Richard Jenkis „individual identity – embodied in personality – is meaningless when isolated from the social world of other people. Maybe the most significant difference between individual and collective identity resides in the fact that the first focuses on difference while the latter on similarity[15]".

I consider the unitary personality model discussed by Richard Jenkins to be an useful instrument in analyzing the identity manifestations of writers. Therefore I will try to make a projection of Jenkins' model on the identity system of „Generation 2000".

The unitary personality model assumes that „a dialectic synthesis between the two definitions of personality – internal and external[16]" takes place. In other words, it's less important what others think about us compared to what we think of ourselves but, at the same time, stating an identity is not enough – it needs to be validated (or not) by those around us.

For example, an individual cannot simply declare him/herself a writer or member of a virtual literary community, his/her belonging needs to be confirmed by a third party. There are cases when even though an individual can technically be considered a „young writer" – meaning that he/she is 30 years old and has published a book – but this is not enough. There are cases when a young writer is considered extremely valuable without even having published a title, solely judged by his/her online activity or his/her presence in certain circles or activities. Let's also take the case of an established writer who already practices a well defined style – by changing this style he/she might risk negative reactions (or he/she simply lacks confidence) thus using a test-clone might shed some light on others' reactions, with no influence of the current persona. Marius Ianus[17] was saying "I'd like less of this mixture between text and biography" and this is the gap that clones can easily fill up: no connection with the real biography, just texts to open-mindedly read.

What Goffman described as "presentation of self" becomes extremely important throughout any interaction – even between writer-reader. Even though people take control of the signals they send to others, the end result, reception and interpretation, escape our supervision. This is why „impression management" ensures the interface between self image and public image and as mentioned by Jenkins: „impression management draws attention on the performance aspect of social identity as well as on to the extent to which it is circumscribed by social practice[18]".

In order to survive as long as possible – meaning that they need to extend the period until they are disclosed as being clones – their architects develop "impression

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[15] Jenkins, Richard – "Identitatea socială", Editura Univers, Bucureşti, 2000, p 30

[16] Idem p 32

[17] "Online identity – the clones, between PR strategy and "cheating" the system" discussion, 2009, "Young Writers' Colloquim"

[18] Idem p33

management" strategies such as the attached biography that needs to be in line with the clone's behavior. For example, Leon Wahl describes himself as a Romanian living in Chambue-sur-Olle, France and shows a picture of Picard on his author page on www.clubliterar.com. At the same time, depending on what the initial purpose of the clone is (test a new writing style, revenge etc), it follows an established pattern and it makes use of identity and behavioural elements specific to what is considered to be a similar successful model. Should an author be interested in building up a clone to test a new style, also wanting to make this clone witty and vain, then he/she will make the clone act like another person whom is considered by the author as such.

Coming back to the unitary personality model, when we identify ourselves in a certain way, the inner-exterior dialect "suggests that shaping an image of ourselves implies us identifying others and others identifying us[19]".

The sociology of deviance supports this interpretation, especially via Becker's development of the labeling theory, saying that "deviant behavior is what people label as such[20]". According to this theory, self defining (internal) and others' defining (external) interact, thus giving birth to an internalization process. It especially comes out when in an institutionalized social situation one is labeled with authority, supporting thus the internalization of the labeled identities. Yet, during our interaction with others, group identity goes beyond its borders and the balance between group identification and others' categorization is reached via a series of transactions that take place in the "border" area. Barth[21] distinguishes between "border" and "content" ("cultural material" that characterizes, for example, an ethnic group), which means that we can further differentiate between nominal and virtual identity.

According to Jenkins the first "is the name attributed to an identity and the latter its experience, what it means to have it. It's likely to have several individuals sharing the same nominal identity but in practice this translates into very different things for each of them, different consequences, perceptions[22]".

In completion to Jenkins' theory and to return to the "internalization" concept, I would like to mention Manuel Castells' perspective described in his work named „The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture", where an entire volume is dedicated to the study of identity. Castells defines identity as being "people's source of meaning and experience[23]" and specifies the fact that several identities may constitute a source of stress and contradiction that bursts out both in self representations and social activities as well.

Even if it can be imposed from top to bottom by ruling institutions, an identity becomes an identity in the real sense of the word only when "social actors internalize it and build a meaning around it". Internalization is one of the reasons why Castells considers that identity is a stronger source of meaning as compared to social roles,

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[19] Idem p34
[20] Dicţionarul de Sociologie Oxford, Editura Univers Enciclopedic, Bucureşti, 2003, pagina 219
[21] apud Jenkins, Richard – "Identitatea socială", Editura Univers, Bucureşti, 2000, pagina 36
[22] idem
[23] Castells, Manuel – "The Power of Identity", Blackwell Publishers, 1997

especially because "identity organizes meaning, while roles organize functions". It is important to mention that Castells invests a high importance in the concept of "meaning", defined as "symbolic identification of the scope of action performed by a social actor".

Building up identity takes place in environments marked by "power relationships" and there is a variety of building materials at one's disposal: "history, geography, biology, productive and reproductive institutions, collective memory, personal fantasies, religious revelations".

In Castells' perspective there are three types of identity:

1. Legitimizing identity – civil society or other society institutions impose it with the purpose of expanding and rationalizing its domination over social actors

2. Resistance identity – it is generated by people placed in stigmatized positions

3. Project identity – based on available cultural materials social actors build up a new identity that redefines their positioning within society and thus trying to change the current social structure

In this perspective, young writers' identity can be positioned somewhere between resistance and project identity. If the latter is associated to an individual effort, the first is a collective, community effort. When looking directly at the cloning phenomena taking place within "generation 2000" one can say that we are facing a process of building up a project identity. Following this idea, it's worth mentioning Oana Ninu's speech during the 2009 Young Writers Colloquim: "In order to be a clone, you need to already have an established name, otherwise it's just a pseudonym". In other words, clones are projects developed by writers that have imposed themselves accordingly (they are both internally and externally validated as such) in their struggle to separate the biography from the text in readers' minds.

Within the same context it is interesting to note the previous generations of writers' positioning, meaning that legitimizing tendencies are to be noticed. Formal institutions such as USR (Romanian Writers' Association) support these intercessions that aim at consolidating the pre-gained social position of writers in the Romanian space.

From Social to Professional Communities

Since clones' birth is strongly related to the online writers' communities, it's worth discussing the concept from a broader sociological perspective as well. Apparently strong within the sociological area, the concept of "community" remains debatable yet associated with a common understanding. In the lack of a commonly agreed definition I will further refer to Warren's perspective, which I consider most appropriate for the topic of this paper: "a combination of social units and systems that perform major social function with local relevance[24]". The function Warren refers to are production-distribution-consumption, socialization, social control, social participation and mutual

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[24] Apud Precupeţu, Iuliana. 2006. Strategii de dezvoltare comunitară. Iaşi: Editura Expert Projects, pagina 33

support. When applying the above definition in relation with the literary communities it's interesting to note how these functions interact and become manifest both within and amongst the composing "social units".

Equally relevant is also the idea of community as „ a particular set of social relations based on a common element amongst participants, most often a sense of shared identity[25]". In support of this perspective I would invoke Weber's note that communities are about culture and less about structure, meaning that "only when in the virtue of this common feeling individuals mutually orient their behaviors, one way or another, a social relation is born" and this is the basis on which communities are being built. In other words, the stepping stone of communities doesn't reside in objective structural elements (such as kinship or shared language) but in fundamentally subjective element: the meaning allotted to these aspects by the social actor. The same author underlines the idea of community as process, meaning ongoing dynamics with double end of determination.

> To further serve the purpose of this article, I will also consider Etzioni's perspective on communities: "we define communities as having two attributes: first, a network of emotionally charged relationships that cover a group of individuals, relations that intersect and consolidate each other and not a mere chain of bilateral relations. To ease things up, we shall name this connection. Second, communities require a certain dose of devotion towards a set of values, customs, shared meanings and a common historical identity – in brief, culture[26]."

Young writers have a common set of affinities as well as the necessary background and instruments to interact: both virtual and non-virtual space to publish and make comments on each others' work, specialized competitions and festivals as well as other interested partners (for example critics) or institutions (USR, cultural media etc) that actively participate in building up the literary community.

Etzioni compares online versus offline communities by bringing up a list of relevant aspects that help building up such communities, out of which I would mention „access" and „thorough interpersonal knowledge".

Access is defined as „the ability to communicate, not in the sense of articulating a message but by being able to reach others". In this respect it is interesting to mention that sometimes supporting the interaction among individuals requires an effort or investing resources – under circumstances where „culture legitimizes contact initiation[27]". Virtual communities elude these procedures encouraged by an environment where communications can take place rather frequent, have no direct costs and do not necessarily imply spatial or temporal neighborhood.

It also needs to be mentioned that the virtual environment allows one to access more than one individual at the same time. For example, www.poezie.ro has an increasing traffic and unique visitors (according to www.trafic.ro the site occupies the

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[25] idem
[26] Etzioni, Amitai. Societatea monocromă. Iaşi. Polirom. 2002
[27] idem

6th place in arts/culture section and 360th in the general ranking with a record of 22.603 visits on 12.01.2010). The urge for high numbers of readers (which is one of the visible manifestations of access) is more visible in case of young writers who have no issues with freely distributing their work on the Internet (thus giving up potential gains from author rights) while the previous generations of writers display a scarce online presence, investing a higher level of importance to "classical" manifestations such as printed materials and events.

Thorough interpersonal knowledge is briefly defined as "identification, authentication and responsibility" and even more: "association of various pieces of knowledge about those directly involved with specific identities, having trust that the other send fundamentally correct messages and the opportunity to make the others responsible[28]". In the specific case of online communities this is where one's possibility to assume various "nicknames" / IDs comes up, which allows "the show off one can permit only in front of strangers" and even "experimenting identities and selves different from the real ones".

This is one of the key elements in reading the clones phenomena through the sociologist's lenses. Following Etzioni's idea one can conclude that in fact loosing inhibitions is one of the main factors that initiates the clones phenomena in a double sense: on one hand, the author (its architect) feels more relaxed once hidden behind a new identity (relaxation is visible both in what concerns the effective writing as well as the artistic and personal interaction with other members of the community/ readers) and on the other hand the receptor (regardless if we are discussing about a writer, critic or reader) is more open towards a new artistic persona, a new writing style which means that comments are formulated independent of the already established persona/ social face of the author. Basically, this "loss of inhibitions" in Etzioni's terms is the sociological side of what Marius Ianus named "less mixture of text and biography". Following this idea one can conclude that the Internet and its ability to grow and pamper online communities are relevantly involved in the change process that affects the literary environment and its members. And at local level, the clone phenomena is one of the most interesting effects of this "transition" period that Romanian writers are going through.

Both professional and artistic communities are more and more interesting from the sociological perspective since they exist and develop within a broader community: the society. Even more, becoming a member means having desirable education and abilities far more complex than the ones required by society in general.

William J. Goode takes this idea even further in his article named "Community within a Community: the Professions[29]" where the focus is on analyzing those structures that sustain the relationship between a specific community and the society in its expanded version where the first is a piece of the latter puzzle.

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[28] idem

[29] Goode J. William, „Community Within a Community: the professions", American Sociological Review, vol. 22, No 2, aprilie 1957, pp. 194 - 200

The author details two control levers of the above mentioned inclusion system: socialization and social control, as well as client's possibility to choose (to be read as professional evaluation). Some communities' definitions start from kinship or localization but when discussing professional communities one needs to note that they don't fit in these patterns. Goode lists a set of characteristics that stand at the basis of such professional communities worth mentioning:

1. its members share a "sense of identity";

2. when one becomes a member he/she rarely leaves thus the professional community is " a terminal or continuing status for the most part";

3. all members share and promote a set of common values;

4. both members and non members have well defined roles and definitions, pre-agreed and respected by everyone;

5. members share a common language "understood only partially by outsiders";

6. "the Community has power over its members";

7. community limits and borders are clear for everybody, "though they are not physical and geographical but social";

8. "Though it does not produce the next generation biologically, it does so socially through its control over the selection of professional trainees, and through its training processes it sends these recruits through an adult socialization process".

In this context the "clones phenomenon" can be interpreted as a means of testing and in the end crossing the limits of these "unwritten" rules of the professional community. Clones' architects are in most cases young writers and the process as a whole can be linked with the earlier mentioned concept of "project identity" – young writers trying to adapt the established "rule-of-law" to the new context (with a very strong digital, online component).

It is also interesting to analyze professional communities' positioning in relation to the rules and laws of society. In this respect Goode underlines the idea that "Although the occupational behavior of members is regulated by law, the professional community exacts a higher standard of behavior than does the law[30]". In other words, they have the ability to generate an additional and more powerful pressure over the professional individual. For example, the fact that for the moment a clone cannot publish in print (as underlined by Andrei Ruse in a quote mentioned earlier) can be interpreted as a still standing proof of power held by the current establishment.

Even more, by having a strict control of community entries and members' behavior, as well as gaining monopole over certain abilities, several professional communities gain extreme power, higher incomes and greater involvement in decision making process. Lawyers or flight pilots may be an example.

At the other extreme stand those professional communities that lack such power and status, the so-called "powerless professions" in Goode's language. Writers in post communist Romania are part of the latter category, as opposed to the writers of the socialist regime who had a socio-political function to fulfill and were supported by the Government (both in terms of social and economical status). Another factor that impacts

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[30] idem

professional communities' power is their interaction with the values of the society they are part of: "The advantages enjoyed by professionals thus rest on evaluations made by the larger society, for the professional community could not grant these advantages to itself. That is, they represent structured relations between the larger society and the professional community."

It is important to analyze professional communities through the socialization and social control perspective since basically a professional is the one able to solve an issue unsolvable by any other member of the society. Take lawyers or doctors as example: these professionals need to act and perform their job by following a set of pre-established rules and thus contribute to their profession's prestige. In this case, a high social control is manifest while social control helps maintaining the professional standards. But all of these fail to describe writers.

Though part of different social categories, almost all members of society benefit from certain strong of symbolic means of social control: official and legal instruments, free-will in choosing or rejecting one's services and professionals having the possibility to control their colleague's success. All of these contribute to an increase in the quality of professional services provided and have as a direct consequence the implementation of rankings – a very strong tool of social control. Yet both external (coming from the public/clients) and internal (coming from other professionals) create conflicts – a rotten issue especially in case of artistic communities, where the product/ end result is sometimes intangible and subjectively evaluated.

Conclusions

A new generation of writers started a virtual conquest of critics and history and clones are part of their charm and "new rule of order". Digitalization effects are visible and the Internet plays a relevant role in what literary environment means today, even in Romania.

At the same time, readers now have the chance to get connected rather to texts than authors, since creator's singular identity is no longer an established must. From the sociologist's perception, the new approach of identity and consequent group dynamics are highly relevant since they are originated in online communities but also impact offline manifestations.

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