Title
Cultic Constructions: A Visual Construction Grammar Approach to the Cult of Personality in Fascist Italy and Communist Romania

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Publication Date
2023

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

Cultic Constructions: A Visual Construction Grammar Approach to the Cult of Personality in Fascist Italy and Communist Romania

By

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A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Romance Languages and Literatures

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Mia Fuller, Co-chair
Professor Eve Sweetser, Co-chair
Professor Mairi McLaughlin
Professor Barbara Spackman

Spring 2023

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Abstract

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This dissertation examines cults of personality from the perspective of cognitive linguistics. Focusing on the cults of Benito Mussolini of Fascist Italy (in power 1922-1943) and Nicolae Ceauşescu of communist Romania (in power 1965-1989), it offers a novel framework for understanding and accounting for longstanding observations regarding such cults' expressly *communicative* nature (see e.g. Wedeen 1999; Leese 2007; Márquez 2020; Postoutenko 2022) grounded in an adaptation of Construction Grammar (Goldberg 1995, 2006, 2019; Hoffmann & Trousdale 2013). At its core, Construction Grammar views the entirety of language to be made up of *constructions*, which are understood as "conventionalized pairings of form and function" that are stored and organized in an interrelated, hierarchical, mental 'constructional' network (Goldberg 2006: 1). Although originally devised specifically with human *language* in mind, Construction Grammar has recently been applied to broader swaths of communication and semiosis beyond language 'proper' such as co-speech gesture, image-text configurations, and other patterns that highlight the frequently *multimodal* nature of human interaction (see e.g. Steen & Turner 2013; Dancygier & Vandelanotte 2017a; Hoffmann 2017b, 2021; Zima & Bergs 2017a,b; Turner 2020, 2022). Aligning itself with such recent extensions, this dissertation considers cultic production (e.g. various conceptually-structured and materially-manifested representations of both Mussolini and Ceauşescu) to constitute *cultic constructions* that, although operating across communicative modalities, nevertheless often take shape *visually* in the form of images. To this end, this study explores the possibility of expanding the constructionist enterprise to include not only linguistic or multimodal but also specifically *visual* constructions into its theoretical apparatus.

Within the present approach, such constructions are taken as the basis for all cultic semiosis and communicativity, which are here analyzed and accounted for across a range of artifacts relating to Mussolini's and Ceauşescu's cults – referred to here as 'cult constructs' – that encompass many different 'kinds' of cult production: official, regime-sanctioned or -produced constructs (e.g. monuments, official photographs, portraits, posters, etc.), unofficial, subversive constructs (e.g. jokes, caricatures, parodies, and ironies at the leaders' expense), and also constructs that evince

the 'afterlives' of both leaders' cults (i.e. representations that appear today or have appeared in recent years, long after both cults have ceased to dominate public discourse). In this way, and in line with fundamental Construction Grammar principles, it presents a *usage-based approach* to cult structuration, organization, and manifestation in which cultic communication emerges dynamically both 'from above' and 'from below,' as well as in their interaction and even once the cult itself has ceased to officially 'operate.'

Various themes central to cult communicativity are explored across this dissertation's seven chapters. The first two chapters serve as introductions and overviews, with Chapter 1 addressing cults of personality and their communicative dimensions (as well as providing an introduction to the study as a whole) and Chapter 2 supplying a concise overview of key terms, theories, and ideas from cognitive linguistics that are deployed throughout the subsequent chapters. Chapters 3-5 then present cognitive-linguistic and constructionist analyses of particularly salient aspects of Mussolini's and Ceauşescu's cults, including the emergence of the multifaceted, polysemous image of both leaders within their respective cult networks (Chapter 3), the pivotal role that *conceptual metonymy* plays in their cults' structuration (Chapter 4), and the peculiar manipulation and appropriation of past, present, and future time into both of their cults (Chapter 5). Throughout these chapters, various cultic constructions are posited and explained based on a range of presented (predominantly) visual data, which are often discussed and compared between the two cult contexts in question.

While each of the cult constructs analyzed in Chapters 3-5 constitutes a representation of Mussolini or Ceauşescu largely disseminated 'from above,' Chapter 6 then highlights the *dialogic* nature of cult communicativity and analyzes the subversive reappropriation and redeployment of these representations 'from below' as instances of *creative conceptual transference* based in particular cultic constructions (e.g. Mussolini's Caesarian pretensions, Ceauşescu's so-called *Epocă de Aur* 'golden age'). These redeployments are taken as evidence that, even if one might not 'believe' in the content of a particular cultic representation (e.g. Mussolini's exceptional virility or Ceauşescu's avowed ordinariness), they are still *entrenched* in individuals' minds and socially *conventionalized* by virtue of their frequent dissemination-cum-exposure so as to (come to) constitute particular, cult-specific constructions. Such reproductions, it is argued, in taking a semantically adulating form and recasting (or, in the present framework, *reblending*) it as a subversive one (while still largely maintaining that same form), demonstrate the remarkable *constructional polysemy* that characterizes the semantic structure of personality cults as a form of what I refer to as multimodal-yet-*hypervisual* 'authoritative discourse' (Bakhtin 1994). Chapter 7 then concludes with a consideration of the two cults' afterlives both in the immediate aftermaths of their respective leaders' falls from power and in their continued vitality in the present day, opening up questions each into cultic communication, emergence, and evolution, into methods for researching visual and multimodal communication within cognitive linguistics at large, and into the nature of possible 'visual constructions' and what they might entail.

Finally, it should be noted that this project in its totality presents a fundamentally interdisciplinary approach to the study not only of personality cult phenomena, production, and communication but also of broader forms of visual and multimodal semiosis. That is, while the principal framework of examination is supplied by cognitive linguistics (and related disciplines such as cognitive science, psychology, and philosophy), this dissertation and its approach also draw heavily on findings and theories from anthropology, visual culture, political science, literary theory, and history. Consequently, alongside hallmark cognitive-linguistic theories such as Construction Grammar, Frame Semantics (see e.g. Fillmore 1982, 1985), Conceptual Blending

Theory (see e.g. Fauconnier & Turner 2002; Turner 2014), and Conceptual Metonymy Theory (see e.g. Kövecses & Radden 1998; Barcelona, Pannain & Blanco-Carrión 2018), several other important contributions to language, communication, and semiotics such as performativity (Austin 1962), citationality (Derrida 1988), and Bakhtin's aforementioned 'authoritative discourse' – and many studies that have followed in their wakes – are brought in to enrich, complement, and nuance the 'cognitive-universal' side of things (e.g. perception, memory, salience, usage and frequency effects, semantic frames, conceptual entrenchment, etc.) with the 'culture-specific' side (e.g. historical or ideological particularities, political and societal structures, various [visual-]cultural considerations, questions of media and reproduction, etc.). It is argued throughout that this kind of blended theoretical approach is essential for capturing the full potential and extent of personality cult communicativity.

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Acknowledgements

I began writing this dissertation in the spring of 2020, swept up in the chaos and uncertainty of the earliest months of the COVID-19 pandemic. Shutdowns, isolation, fear of infection, and a slew of other seismic alterations to day-to-day life made writing – or thinking about writing, or even just *starting* to think about writing – a dissertation very challenging. From then till now, so many people are to thank for getting me and this dissertation across the finish line.

First, I am beyond grateful to my dissertation co-chairs, Mia Fuller and Eve Sweetser, whose belief in this project and advice and encouragement throughout it have meant the world. I owe so much of this work's interdisciplinarity (and, indeed, the interdisciplinarity of my own scholarly approach at large) to courses and conversations with Mia, who has been a constant source of positive energy and refreshing honesty throughout the many chaotic pitfalls of graduate-student life, as well as someone who I've always been able to count on as having my back. I have benefited enormously, too, from Eve's generosity, warmth of spirit, wisdom, and willingness to engage eagerly with whatever bizarre cultic data that I procured and brought her way. While *far* from easy, I truly enjoyed crafting, writing, and discussing a dissertation under both of their guidance that – as this one does – brings together a framework and data that have had no real prior scholarly interaction.

I am also indebted to the support and attentive mentor- and readership of Mairi McLaughlin, whose acumen, attention to detail, and organizational skills have served as a model (if more often an aspiration) since my very first days on campus, as well as to Barbara Spackman, whose insight and careful readership helped shape this project for the better and whose stewardship of my QEs made for a seamless and – at least in hindsight! – rather pain-free process.

I am so, so grateful, too, to my wonderful Berkeley community that I have forged over the last eight years. To Kyle Thomson, I could easily fill 20+ pages detailing all the nonsensical things that we have laughed until we cried over, whether over a vegan milkshake, while driving about town hunting for a late-night donut, or during one of those many weekends spent 'working' in Dwinelle. To Brenda Rosado, *mi monitinha*, I like to think that even just a smidgen of your shining spirit, optimism, and compassion have rubbed off on me over the (literally) countless margaritas, quesadillas, and heart-to-heart conversations that we have shared. To Margherita Ghetti, who, whether on our ninth helping of chips and salsa, beside me dying *nel rosso* con mono Devin, or across the ocean, has been a rock-solid source of support, inspiration, and Piscean wisdom, not to mention a true fashion icon. To Moriah VanVleet, Elizabeth LaVarge-Baptista, Seth Arnopole, and Amanda Minafo, whose incessant hard work too often goes unappreciated, thank you for your years of friendship, help, advice, and many a delicious baked good. And to so many others, in Italian Studies, RLL, and beyond, too: one of the saddest parts of leaving behind life in Dwinelle is leaving behind you all as well.

Beyond Berkeley, I am so thankful for my other communities of stalwart friends, both Michigan- and DC-based, who have variously provided escapes, laughs, adventures, and free-flowing wine over these past few years. You are all, in your own ways, responsible for helping me maintain sanity, coherence, and vim throughout this at times deeply harrowing process.

Since the last days of my undergrad at the University of Michigan when the idea of pursuing a Ph.D. was first planted in my head, the support, encouragement, and love of my family have been a constant and essential presence. Without them, I would not be who I am nor where I

am, here finalizing a dissertation on the back of eight years of graduate school. I love you all so very much.

And, finally, to Danny and Peanut. Danny, my rock and my everything, your support and patience through what I know has seemed like an endless process have been absolutely crucial. Your love, levity, and goober-osity – across who-knows-how-many trips, to all 50 states and beyond – made this process so much easier, more manageable, and more enjoyable than it would have otherwise been. And to Peanut, with whom many walks and snuggles provided much-needed respite from writing and the occasional burst of inspiration. *Vi voglio benissimo*.

Chapter 1 – *Introduction: Cultic Communication*

1.1 – Introduction

Research on cults of personality across time and space has consistently observed their communicative nature.[1] This 'communicativity' operates at multiple levels: on the one hand, it entails a leader and/or regime's attempts to craft and disseminate a desired self-image to its citizens, whose core principles and objectives are embodied in the form(s) of the vaunted image(s) of the leader. These constructed images in turn can be understood as containing multiple, various 'messages' – how the leader sees himself and how he wants to be seen,[2] the ideological tenets underpinning the society that he helms, expectations for public behavior, and even a kind of blueprint for both career advancement and avoiding punishment.[3] In so doing the cult functions as a multimodal, semiotic system in which such messages are transmitted through a wide and diverse range of media and propaganda channels, including the press, photographs, cinema, television, speeches, spectacles, and works of art and architecture.

On the other hand, however, cult communicativity entails a dialogic component in which citizens in turn reproduce these same communicated forms to a variety of ends. Often this serves to buttress the cult: for example, each act of participating in a parade, attending a speech, or hanging the leader's iconic portrait – regardless of the 'sincerity' with which these acts might be carried out – functions, in turn, to maintain the cult and to ensure its continued vitality. This takes place via a peculiar kind of mirroring, mutual performativity in the vein of the philosopher J. L. Austin (1962), who observed that certain linguistic utterances have the capacity to 'do' things, under the appropriate circumstances, by mere virtue of being uttered.[4] In this way a leader's

[1] Examples, grouped according to different cult contexts, include Burke (1992) and Zoberman (2001) on Louis XIV of France; Wedeen (1999) on Hasif al-Asad of Syria; Leese (2007, 2011) on Mao Zedong of China; and Swan (2020) on Benito Mussolini of Italy. Several projects broader in scope and/or comparative in nature that also address cults' communicative capacities include Márquez (2018), Postoutenko (2022), and contributions in Postoutenko & Stephanov (2020; e.g. Márquez 2020; Tikhomirov 2020).

[2] Although in principle there is nothing inherently 'male' about the cultic practices that we will analyze here from the communicative or cognitive side of things, the cults of personality that emerged around political leaders in modern times – including the two cases to be analyzed here – formed by and large around men.

[3] While in many ways directed toward the populace at large, cults and their attendant images and messages also have important functions higher up within the ruling group or party, e.g. to defuse potential rivalries and to maintain a collective subordination of the established elite to the ruler (Gill 1984; Rees 2004: 21; Svolik 2012: 80-81). In this way the cult also serves as a kind of institutional framework within and around which political hierarchies of patron-client relationships form and thrive, coming to function as a powerful instrument on which the hopes for professional growth, financial gains, and access to special goods and privileges all hinge. Although important, this particular function of personality cults will not be our concern here.

[4] A now classic and rather paradigmatic example of such an utterance as 'doing something' is the declaration "I name this ship the *Queen Elizabeth*" uttered while smashing a bottle against the bow of the ship. Rather than simply constituting a statement or description of the act, the utterance, within the particular 'christening' ceremony and uttered by someone vested with the appropriate authority, enacts the very *act* of christening. Austin contrasted this type of utterance – which he called 'performatives' – with 'constatives': the latter do not 'do' anything by virtue of their

purported exceptionality and legitimacy[5] are confirmed – publicly, at least – from all corners of his domain, both 'from above' and 'from below' such that they come to, in a strange sense, become 'reality.' Working further in this 'reality's' favor is that going against it often comes with harsh consequences, whether physical, material, or psychological.[6] Repeated everywhere and openly challenged nowhere, then, the cult and its messages become a given for day-to-day life and expectation.[7] Yet, at the same time and away from the public eye, this dialogism also emerges to the opposite effect: the same images and messages that the cult generates, disseminates, and imposes 'from above' can also be used to subvert, deride, expose, or challenge it 'from below.' Jokes at the leader's expense, caricatures of his person, and even secretive acts of iconoclasm and vandalism provide momentary lapses in and breaks from the cult's otherwise totalizing spell.[8]

This dissertation aligns itself with such approaches to personality cult phenomena and explores their multimodal communicative capacities, focusing on the cults of Italy's Benito Mussolini (in power 1922-1943) and Romania's Nicolae Ceauşescu (in power 1965-1989) within a framework heretofore unexplored: that of Construction Grammar and its broader field of cognitive linguistics. Cognitive linguistics is a coherent framework of interdisciplinary approaches to the study of human language, thought, and communication. Drawing variously on findings in linguistics, cognitive science, philosophy, and cognitive psychology (among other disciplines) it seeks, per one of its leading figures in Barbara Dancygier, to account for human communicative practices "from the coherent perspective of meaning-emergence processes and their embeddedness in conceptual patterns" (2017a: 4). That is, unlike linguistics in the Chomskyan tradition, it considers language to constitute not its own, independent cognitive faculty but one deeply interconnected with and influenced by the rest of human cognition (e.g. perception, memory,

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utterance and conversely can be assigned a value of 'true' or 'false' in relation to some fact or entity in the world. 'Performatives' have no such true/false values and instead, per Austin, can be 'felicitous' – if the necessary social and contextual dimensions for their successful utterance are met – or 'infelicitous' if not. This distinction, as Austin himself came to realize, is not a binary but one of degree such that every utterance can be understood as having both 'performative' and 'constative' dimensions (Nakassis 2013: 60; 2023: 203-204). Austin's work (and others in his wake) are central to my exposition and we shall visit it again below and as we go.

[5] Scholarship on cults of personality has long promulgated the view of their functioning to reinforce or establish a degree of *legitimacy* for a (new) leader or a regime in the eyes of its citizens (e.g. Fischer 1989: 162; Rees 2004: 21; Taylor 2006: 101; Gill 2011, 2021; Strong & Killingsworth 2011; Sperling 2016) and even in those of the leader himself (Barker 2001). 'Legitimacy' as a concept, however – famously described by the political scientist Samuel Huntington (1991: 46) as "mushy" – is not without its problems or detractors. See, for example, Wedeen (1999: 7-11) and Márquez (2016) for issues with the term's imprecision and descriptive value. Acknowledging its shortcomings, it will still be used periodically throughout this dissertation (e.g. Chapter 5).

[6] Integral to the effectiveness of such consequences, of course, is the simple *fear* of them. This fear is what Frank Dikötter (2019) argues, in a recent study of eight notorious personality cults of the twentieth century, critically differentiates such cults from the comparable aspects of political pomp and pageantry that one might observe in democracies. To attain 'success' – intended in its broadest possible sense, for officials and ordinary people alike – one has little choice but to go along with and at least outwardly support the cult for fear of what might happen or what might be taken away if not. Fathali M. Moghaddam (2013: 5-6), too, writing on the psychology of dictatorships, argues that "[l]iving in a dictatorship sharpens the political sensitivities of many people perhaps because in dictatorships just about every job from street cleaner to mayor, every bank loan, every educational opening for one's children, every opportunity to rent a house or start a business, and every improvement in one's life depends on political connections and position. In a dictatorship, the garbage collector has to be as politically tuned in as the mayor because everyone is continuously under threat." Fear, like the cult, becomes a part of the day-to-day reality.

[7] Habituation to the cult and the kind of performativity-via-complicity here described are addressed, in various terms, in Pinkus (1995: 17-18); Falasca-Zamponi (1997: 191); Kligman (1998: 14-15); and Wedeen (1999).

[8] On these topics – which we will investigate in detail in Chapter 6 – see Scott (1985, 1990), Wedeen (1999: chapter 4), Oring (2004), and Vacca (2011).

categorization, bodily and sociocultural experience, etc.). It jointly privileges the universal aspects of the human mind and experience alongside cultural specificities, and in fact provides fertile ground to test their interaction. Cognitive-linguistic research has also increasingly focused on achieving a more holistic understanding of human communication as operative beyond language 'proper,' and as such has expanded its scope of inquiry also to *multimodal patterns of communication* (e.g. co-speech gesture, gaze patterns, image-text interaction, etc.). This capacity to account for 'non-traditional' (i.e. not purely linguistic) and multimodal communicative data makes cognitive linguistics an ideal framework within which to examine personality cults, which always entail far more than – as we shall see in spades throughout this dissertation – 'just' language.

A fairly recent discipline (its origins go back to the 1970s-1980s), cognitive linguistics has since developed into a robust set of theories, terminologies, and methods for analyzing processes of 'meaning emergence,' including semantic frames,[9] Conceptual Blending Theory,[10] Construction Grammar,[11] and the comparable yet distinct Conceptual Metaphor Theory and Conceptual Metonymy Theory.[12] Certain concepts will be introduced in this first chapter while others will be discussed in more detail in the next, or introduced and explored as we go. Here, initially, however, three additional tenets of cognitive linguistics that make it an attractive model for examining personality cult phenomena can be noted: (1) its insistence on the *usage-based* nature of human language and communication; (2) its *'cognitive commitment'*; and (3) the concept of *constructions*. Regarding the first of these, a *usage-based* approach entails not only that *actually attested* 'utterances' or 'uses' (that is, rather than 'armchair' examples) are taken as data, but also the assumption that "experience with language creates and impacts the cognitive representations for language" (Bybee 2013: 49). In other words, exposure as 'input' plays an integral role in structuring one's own use as 'output.' This falls out, in part, from the second tenet, the so-called 'cognitive commitment.' Since its inception, cognitive linguistics has prided itself on this 'commitment,' which amounts to "a promise to build linguistic descriptions and postulate theoretical concepts which are at least informed, if not fully justified, by what is now known about the human brain and human cognition" (Dancygier 2017a: 2; see also Lakoff 1991). Frequency effects, categorization, schematization, entrenchment, cross-modal associations, and other 'domain-general' cognitive processes are all taken into account in various ways in cognitive-linguistic analyses, many of which impact as they are impacted by 'usage' (see Bybee 2013; Hoffmann 2020).

Finally, 'constructions' are the cornerstone of what is known as Construction Grammar and (for now) can simply be defined as, per one of the field's leading theorists, "conventionalized pairings of form and function" (Goldberg 2006: 1). In Construction Grammar (or, adjectivally,

[9] Charles Fillmore's work (1982, 1985) on frame semantics, or what he calls 'the semantics of understanding,' constitutes a cornerstone of much cognitive-linguistic research. Semantic frames will be explored preliminarily in this introduction and then in more detail in Chapter 2.

[10] Conceptual Blending Theory (also known as Conceptual Integration Theory) originates in the work of Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner (2002) and has since come to serve as a seminal theory of meaning construction in cognitive linguistics and beyond (see also Fauconnier & Turner 1998; Coulson 2001; Turner 2014; Oakley & Pascual 2017).

[11] Construction Grammar (Lakoff 1987; Goldberg 1995, 2006, 2019; Hoffmann & Trousdale 2013) has blossomed into one of cognitive linguistics' most prolific models of language and communication. It will be discussed at length in the next chapter and will be a fundamental presence throughout the dissertation.

[12] Conceptual Metaphor Theory and Conceptual Metonymy Theory both trace their origins in cognitive linguistics to George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's seminal (1980) *Metaphors We Live By*, in which they highlighted both processes' centrality to human thought and language (see also Gibbs 1994, 2008). They will be discussed in Chapter 4.

'constructionist') approaches, in a radical departure from other theories of language, "no principled divide" is posited between grammar and the lexicon, between syntax and semantics (Goldberg & Jackendoff 2004: 532). Rather, the entirety of language is considered to consist of such 'form-meaning pairings' at varying levels of schematicity, ranging from specific, individual words to broader, schematic patterns of conventionalized linguistic usage referred to as 'argument structure constructions.'[13] Constructions also form (as they are formed in) organized, hierarchical *networks* subject to the same kinds of domain-general cognitive processes mentioned above (Goldberg 2013: 21-23). Such networks are useful for modeling the interrelation of emergent meaning structures that form the basis not only of language but also semiosis more broadly. This is reflected in recent extensions of the constructionist enterprise into questions of multimodal communication (to be discussed in Chapter 2) that have begun expanding our understanding of what a 'construction' is, can, or should be. That is, rather than a purely linguistic idea, might it apply on a wider scale to other forms of human communication and semiosis?[14] Assuming that it just might, this dissertation explores the application of constructionist principles to data that is fundamentally quite a bit more than 'just' language and that, on the contrary, is *hypervisual* in nature.

In what follows, I treat both Mussolini's and Ceauşescu's cults of personality as communicative systems that take shape and operate in the form of multimodal-yet-hypervisual constructionist networks. In order to demonstrate this, we will be taken on a journey through both cults' many manifestations and leader representations, from widespread iconic photographs and monuments erected in their honor to panegyrical paintings and subversive caricatures, addressing the cognitive principles and processes at work in each. Exploring both the 'what' and the 'how' of cultic communication, we shall speak of emergent 'cult constructions' that, it will be argued, provide a unified approach to cult phenomena's at once communicative, conceptual, and material dimensions. Whether imposed 'from above' or received and reworked 'from below,' a point to be made early on is that the cults themselves – both despite and precisely due to their ubiquity – are still *meaningful* in a plethora of senses, as we shall see in the ensuing pages.

On the broad topic of cult 'meaning,' a useful place to start, I think, is bearing in mind that personality cults never simply spring up in isolation; rather, whether 'genuine' or 'artificial,' they are deeply connected to a series of culturally ingrained patterns that in turn serve to condition the ways in which they are developed and propagated once they have reached a level of institutionalization. These patterns, within the realm of cognitive linguistics and following the work of Charles Fillmore (1982, 1985), can be conceived as *semantic frames*, which are experience-based conceptual schematizations defined, in the singular, as "any system of concepts related in such a way that to understand any one of them you have to understand the whole structure in which it fits" (1982: 111). Frames, in this view, constitute the structuration of our understanding and as such are either *evoked* or *invoked* in all forms of communication – whether it be written or spoken, linguistic or visual – via words or images that serve as indices of those particular frames. As examples pervasive in and thus relevant to cultic systems, the frequent use of religious or nationalistic terminology or imagery in a regime's propaganda can function to *evoke* frames of RELIGION or NATION in the minds of its citizens, which can then in turn be explicitly and repeatedly

[13] Without going into unnecessary detail here, an example of an 'argument structure construction' is the 'ditransitive' or 'double object' construction (e.g. *I baked John a cake*), in which a schematic relationship between a subject, verb, and two objects systematically obtains and forms a conventionalized linguistic pattern. A full discussion of this construction and further elaboration on constructionist principles can be found in Goldberg (1995: chapter 6) and (2019: 39-45).

[14] We will return to this question in the next chapter and again in Chapter 6.

invoked by the regime to structure itself and/or its messages.[15] Understanding which frames are deployed in the service of a cult, how, and to what end(s) are thus critical steps in elucidating the communicative structure of cults.

The rest of this Introduction will deal with aspects of personality cults that are essential to their communicative analysis. Section 1.2 delineates some of their defining attributes as signaled in the literature while section 1.3 supplies my own 'cognitive' cult definition that will be used throughout the dissertation. Section 1.4 discusses various questions of cult 'audience,' and section 1.5 provides a schematic overview each of Mussolini's and Ceauşescu's cults in order to introduce the data at hand. Section 1.6 then discusses the centrality of 'visuality' to their cults and provides an overview of the (largely visual) materials to be examined, noting the variety of sources consulted, how they were compiled, and how they will be analyzed. Section 1.7 brings in and fleshes out the additionally relevant topics of polysemy, reproducibility, and citationality, and section 1.8 concludes with a brief overview of the rest of the dissertation.

1.2 – Cult Criteria

In lay usage, 'cult of personality' tends to connote something mystical, irrational, affective, and intangible. While such associations are not entirely unfounded, they provide little in the way of explanatory value. Establishing at least a working understanding of what a 'cult of personality' is and how it has been understood in the various academic disciplines in which it is deployed as a term is an important first step.[16] The historian E. A. Rees, for example, in the introduction to a collection of essays on leader cults in the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc, provides the following definition:

> A leader cult is an established system of veneration of a political leader, to which all members of the society are expected to subscribe, a system that is omnipresent and ubiquitous and one that is expected to persist indefinitely. It is thus a deliberately constructed and managed mechanism, which aims at the integration of the political system around the leader's persona (2004: 4).

Rees's definition supplies a number of useful elements of personality cults that will be important for the present investigation: its reverent focus on a single, particular leader, that leader's omnipresence in society, its ostensible atemporality, and the fact that it is a phenomenon with both structure and motivation. Jan Plamper's (2012: 5) definition, in turn, considers there to be five characteristics crucial to modern personality cults:[17] (1) an element of secularism that manifests itself in a new form of popular sovereignty (in contrast to the divine right of pre-Napoleon monarchies); (2) an element of patricentrism (i.e. the leader as male); (3) the targeting of the

[15] Throughout this dissertation I will follow the standard cognitive-linguistic notation of referring to specific frames in small, capitalized letters.

[16] I use the terms 'personality cult,' 'cult of personality,' 'leader cult,' and often simply 'cult' interchangeably. The term 'cult of personality,' it should be noted, is widely associated with Nikhita Khrushchev's famous 'secret speech' given at the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1956 in which he condemned Stalin's personalist and despotic style of dictatorship. See Plamper (2004: 22-33) and Zakharine (2020) for thorough discussions of the history of the term and its various applications.

[17] Plamper's focus on specifically 'modern' leader cults points to the fact that their existence itself has a long history traceable to antiquity (see e.g. Price 1984 and contributions in Postoutenko & Stephanov 2020, e.g. Anooshahr 2020; Márquez 2020).

masses made possible by technological advancement; (4) the use of mass media and mass-production techniques to ensure the cult reached citizens throughout the nation; and (5) a limitation to societies that are 'sufficiently closed,' which is to say those whose ruling groups have the means both to dominate and circumscribe the public sphere so as to obstruct (or obliterate) emergent, competing cults from blossoming around other figures. Daniel Leese (2016: 217), for his part, in a recent synthesis of research on leader cults defines them as "the organized worship of state or party leaders by means of mass media, accompanied by varying degrees of popular support, irrespective of the nature of the political regime."

Present in each of these definitions, whether implicit or explicit, is an understanding of the integral role that (new developments in) mass media played in disseminating the twentieth-century leader cults like those of Mussolini and Ceauşescu. Photography, cinema, newspapers, radio, television, posters, postcards, parades, artworks, and more ensured that, in the words of Alexey Tikhomirov, cults were made into "one of the cornerstones of everyday experience by putting into circulation information, images, and performances" dedicated to, depicting, or involving the celebrated leader (2020: 122). This mediatization – and at times even commodification[18] – of the leader's image vested the cult with a kind of 'branding' power, generating particular associations between the leader and his many, various incarnations as they were continually dispersed throughout public discourse (Leese 2011: 16-18; 2016: 220).[19]

What results is nothing short of a public *saturation* of the leader, his image, and his various symbols. This saturation in turn corresponds to a performance of power, a means to simultaneously signal his power and, in that same proliferation, have it actuated and reflected back such that it becomes wholly *conventionalized*. This saturation-turned-conventionalization in turn bespeaks widespread *salience* of two kinds, which, in the cognitive-linguistic literature, are referred to as *cognitive salience* and *ontological salience*, respectively. Hans-Jörg Schmid defines them as follows:

> The notion of *salience* may thus denote both a temporary activation state of mental concepts (*cognitive salience*) and an inherent and consequently more or less

[18] Many fascinating accounts exist of the leader's commodification within cult systems. Mao's effigy, for example, emblazoned on special 'Mao badges,' came to be produced and acquired in staggering quantities, with over 2.5 billion mintings estimated during the peak years of the Cultural Revolution (Dutton 2004: 182; Leese 2011: 215). Mussolini's likeness, too, was deployed in swaths of widely circulating postcards produced 'officially' by the regime yet also – and in greater quantities – by private agencies, suggesting the commercial potential that his image came to possess as an instrument of real marketing value (Sturani 1995, 2003, 2013). Requests were made to incorporate his likeness into a range of commodities, from leather wallets and glassware to medallions and scented soap bars (Gundle 2008: 54-55; Gaudenzi 2015: 267), and his public expression of approval of *Perugina* chocolates was even used briefly by the company as an endorsement (Pinkus 1995: 17). Such commercialization, however, proved unwieldy and risked 'trivializing' the broader ideological and transformational objectives of these regimes if left unchecked, and they consequently put in place a range of policies intended to control cultic commercialization, to varying degrees of success (see Leese 2011: 149; Gaudenzi 2015).

[19] See the work of Nicholas O'Shaughnessy (e.g. 2016, 2018) for expansions on this idea of the power of the leader or regime's 'brand' as "a cohesive iconic system whose function was to remind citizens every moment of the day of the omnipotence and omnipresence of the regime" in the case of Nazi Germany (2018: 15), as well as Heller (2008) for a broader, image-based survey of such twentieth-century authoritarian 'brands' as Mussolini, Hitler, Stalin, and Mao. It should be borne in mind, though, that the idea of political branding is not limited to such regimes or even to leader cults as discussed here, as evidenced by its application to topics ranging from Gandhi's saintly corporeality (Mazzarrella 2010) to the mediatized interplay between contemporary political party platforms, candidates, and messaging practices (Needham & Smith 2015).

> permanent property of entities in the real world (*ontological salience*) (2007: 120; [emphasis original]).

For something to be cognitively salient, it must be 'activated' in a given communicative encounter, "loaded… into current working memory and… thus become[s] part of a person's center of attention" (ibid., 119). Frequent encounters with the leader or his likeness ensures frequent activation: encountering his photograph in a newspaper, his likeness in a poster, or even simply hearing his name all work in this manner. In a similar vein, the leader's very omnipresence across media points to his *ontological* salience on a society-wide scale, as a kind of permanent fixture in the cult's own, customized 'real world.'

1.2.1 – Bodies

Bodies play an integral role in leader cults. On the one hand there is the body of the leader, the core of the cult itself and to which all generated meanings are inherently tied within its semantics.[20] Mussolini is emblematic in this regard. The rise of mass media, advancements in production means and advertising techniques, and a burgeoning consumer and celebrity culture combined to till fertile terrain in which the 'cult of Mussolini' took off and in which he came to emerge as a veritable 'star' in his own right (Falasca-Zamponi 1997: 45-56; Gundle 1998, 2008: 53-57, 2013a). In combination this ensured that he and his body – as we shall most certainly see – were constantly center stage, represented, reproduced, reflected, refracted, evoked, channeled, and imitated in innumerable ways and to an unprecedented degree in what Karen Pinkus (1995: 16-17) has described as "fragmentation as multiplication."

Celebrity and corporeality indeed have a long history, and curious parallels exist between their interaction within personality cults and what Pete Ward has written about the religious dimensions of contemporary 'Celebrity Culture':[21]

> Celebrity Culture is primarily based on visual images. It is the representation and reproduction of images of the self, on film, in digital media, or in print, that constitute the basic building blocks of celebrity discourse. This focus on visual images means that it is the body that audiences consume. An interest in the human

[20] There is a wealth of scholarship on the relationship between bodies, politics, and leadership, a conception often referred to as the 'body politic' (e.g. Kantorowicz 1957; Cavarero 1995; Hobbes 1651/2010; Manow 2010; Musolff 2010a, 2021; Ostiguy & Moffitt 2021). The various meanings, uses, and 'functions' of the leader's body have been documented for an array of different leaders both from the twentieth century (e.g. Swan 2016 on Mussolini; Schmölders 2006 on Hitler; Poon 2019 on Mao) and from the world of today (e.g. Hall, Goldstein & Ingram 2016 on Trump; Joppien 2020 on Erdoğan; Sperling 2016 and Tempest 2016 on Putin). Not only an important symbol of power, virility, fortitude, and national values in life, his body often retains – and gains – new significances even in death (see e.g. Luzzatto 1998; Verdery 1999; Yurchak 2015).

[21] Research on the relationship between politics and celebrity has been similarly robust. Recent relevant work includes contributions in Berenson & Giloi (2010) and Goscilo (2013), volumes that tackle various aspects of the interaction between politics and fame in nineteenth-century Europe and of Russian president Vladimir Putin 'as celebrity,' respectively; the 2020 (11:3) issue of *Celebrity Studies*, edited by David Zeglen and Neil Ewen, which explores the interplay between right-wing populism and 'celebrity politicians' in today's Europe; and Bertellini (2019), a vivid study that, although focused on the American reception of Mussolini, shows how deeply intertwined his image was with the nascent Hollywood scene and marketing innovations of the period such that he was configured and propagated – and, indeed, well received – as a kind of movie star (*divo*) in his own right (see also Gundle 2013d: 44-45; 80 and Erbaggio 2016 for similar discussions).

> body is not something that has arrived with Celebrity Culture… The distinct characteristic of Celebrity Culture is that this interest in the body, and indeed idealized and perfected bodies, becomes mediated and produced by technologies of representation (2019: 50).

The kind of 'celebrity' status that leaders acquire within personality cult systems is of special interest and will be discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, in particular as it relates to the other bodies vital to cult representational systems – that is, those many 'ordinary' bodies of the leader's subjects. Bodies amassed in crowds anticipating his arrival or cheering his words, for example, index his appeal and corroborate the cult's claims of his exceptionality. Various, individual bodies, too, both craft and consume his images, purchase and display his likeness, hear his voice, and discuss his name, in so doing acquiring and in turn attributing him various meanings. The cult as a veritable *system*, in essence, emerges as one single, omnipresent, and mass-produced body is consumed by many.

It is the body of the leader, I contend, whether 'experienced' live in person or mediated through the lens of a camera, transposed in a work of art, or described in language that constitutes what the cognitive anthropologist Edwin Hutchins calls a *material anchor* (1995, 2005). Material anchors provide, per Hutchins, a 'stabilization' of otherwise ephemeral conceptual structure in some corresponding, material form. Examples are wide-ranging and ubiquitous, from sundials and watches anchoring representations of time to a linear arrangement bodies connoting an orderly queue. As Hutchins puts it, something

> is not a material anchor because of some intrinsic quality, but because of the way it is used. It might be better to ask under what conditions something is a material anchor than to ask whether it is a material anchor. If conceptual elements are mapped onto a material pattern in such a way that the perceived relationships among the material elements are taken as proxies (consciously or unconsciously) for relationships among conceptual elements, then the material pattern is acting as a material anchor (2005: 1562).

Thus, translated into the cultic milieus of interest here, it is in various manifestations of the leader that certain conceptualizations of him and his person are provoked and prompted, often times refracted through a propagandistic lens to create 'idealized and perfected' representations not unlike those that Ward observes above in celebrities, in line with the regime's particular ideological aims.[22] Furthermore, it is the reproducibility of the leader's mediated body, made possible by photography, film, and other media, that allows both for an iconography to emerge and for his image to take on new meanings, to enter private spaces, to hijack fantasies, to induce fear and loathing and ridicule, to captivate and inspire. We shall return to this idea later.

1.3 – A Cognitive Cult Definition

The previous section detailed a number of important, intersecting criteria that have been established in the literature on cults of personality. Definitions highlight the cult's ubiquity, its

[22] As Rees puts it, "[l]eader cults, like religious cults, attempt to create a point of reference for the whole belief system, centred on one man, the embodiment of the doctrine" (2004: 7). This idea of embodiment, as we shall see, is indeed central to the cults of both Mussolini and Ceaușescu and will be taken up in Chapter 4.

monopoly, and its debt to mass multimedia for its diffusion. The saturation of the leader that this enables has important cognitive consequences, affording him *ontological* and often *cognitive* salience throughout public discourse such that he acquires a kind of omnipresence. The leader's body, in turn, often mediated and reproduced *en masse*, constitutes a potent *material anchor* grounding any number of emergent conceptualizations of him in some material artifact or experience.

Such findings, as mentioned, are integral to my own 'cognitive' understanding and use of 'personality cult' in this dissertation, which is as follows:

> A personality cult is a complex network built up of a dynamic chain of frame-structured conceptual blends that themselves (potentially) constructionalize and form constructions at varying levels of schematicity.

Many of these terms are drawn from work in cognitive linguistics. Some, like 'construction' and 'frame,' have already been preliminarily explored, and others will be explained as we go. At this juncture, however, I would simply like to underscore that this understanding of a personality cult is envisioned with three of its particular, interrelated (and aforementioned) dimensions in mind: the communicative, the conceptual, and the material. That is, having established that personality cults are communicative phenomena, it follows that – like all forms of communication – they are both conceptually structured and materially manifested ('materially' here understood in its broadest possible sense) in such a way that an understanding of the former is accessible through an analysis of the latter. In other words, I consider the communicative function of a given cult as it manifests in a robust array of different modalities as a both culturally and cognitively structured (and constrained) form of multimodal communication broadly operative in its society's public discourse. Thus, akin to any language, a personality cult's particular features will obtain from a marriage of the universal (i.e. properties and processes of human cognition) and the contextual (i.e. the specifics of its culture), and it is then the analyst's job to dissect this marriage and to examine the contributions of each.[23]

1.4 – Audiences

A perennially thorny question when it comes to research on authoritarian regimes is that of their *reception*, and, given that such regimes tend to be helmed by a 'providential figure' amenable to cultic adulation, the same goes for cults of personality.[24] A question of this magnitude is built up of many smaller ones: is there a difference in which cult messages are directed to whom? Does this vary from cult to cult? Do people believe in the cult's messages? Does that even matter one way or the other? Do they even care or notice these messages? A few words are needed to establish how precisely my cognitive account of cults, with its pointed emphasis on the role of the leader's saturation in public discourse, approaches both the question of cult reception and what Nicholas

[23] Comparative inquiries into leader cults across time and space (e.g. Apor et al. 2004; Morgan 2017; Dikötter 2019; Postoutenko & Stephanov 2020) have also demonstrated the particular ways in which they at once exhibit striking degrees of similarity and uniqueness across multiple dimensions, including purpose, style, function, evolution, and even demise.

[24] On this topic and the many challenges involved in its assessment, see contributions in Corner (2009) as well as Colarizi (2000) and Corner (2012), both of which deal with popular opinion in Mussolini's Italy specifically.

Mirzoeff (2005) calls the 'banality of images,' or the kind of inverse relation that can emerge between the quantity of imagery generated and its ostensible import or impact.[25]

First, any personality cult can mean very different things to different (groups of) people, but the cult itself as a kind of experienced ubiquity is more or less an unavoidable, societal constant in any society in which it comes to be. Put differently, the cult itself is a *given*, even if particular responses to it and its messages are not: some may believe in its messages, some may find the cult preposterous, and still others might fall somewhere in between. Such heterogeneity has been highlighted by scores of studies dealing with diverse leaders, contexts, ideologies, and thus disparate overall cult systems. Christopher Duggan's (2013a) analysis of personal diaries and letters written by Italians under Fascism, for example, suggests a certain level of 'effectiveness' on the part of the cult, a degree to which certain messages – such as that of Mussolini's exceptionality or his generosity – were indeed internalized and were perhaps in part responsible for Fascism's longevity.[26] Other studies, like Lisa Wedeen's (1999) account of the cult of Hasif al-Asad in Syria, underscore the 'patently spurious' nature of many cults' claims. She highlights the absurd posturing of Asad in roles like "the country's 'premier pharmacist'" and argues that the point is not so much to actually believe but to act 'as if' one believes, the cult thus functioning as "a strategy of domination based on compliance rather than legitimacy" (pp. 1; 6).

Others instead signal how the boundaries between belief and incredulity are blurred, unstable, and consequently difficult to pin down with any neat label of 'belief' or 'disbelief.' Yael Navaro-Yashin, for instance, in her (2002: chapter 5) study of secularism and public life in Turkey, deploys a reading of Slavoj Žižek's (1989) conceptions of 'cynicism' and 'fetishism' largely in line with Wedeen's assertions on the cult of Asad. Yet she also notes how "[k]nowledge of ideology may, at times, mesh with belief, but not at others," an assertion that applies not only across different groups of people but even to one in the same individual (2002: 162; see also Cherstich 2014). Alexei Yurchak's (2006) study of individual experiences in the late-socialist period of the Soviet Union also privileges receptive ambiguity. His analysis blends Austin's aforementioned distinction between 'performatives' and 'constatives' with Mikhail Bakhtin's (1994) conception of 'authoritative discourse,' a combination also useful, as we shall see, for understanding the kind of receptive heterogeneity and semantic instability that can unfold in the face of cults' otherwise homogeneous pretensions. Yurchak provides the following eloquent summation of Bakhtin's 'authoritative discourse':[27]

> For Bakhtin, authoritative discourse coheres around a strict eternal idea or dogma and occupies a particular position within the discursive regime of a period. It has two main features. First, because of a special 'script' in which it is coded,

[25] Mirzoeff's term originates within his analysis of the early years of the Iraq War, in which he observes that despite the sheer number of (often horrifying) images produced, they had little observable impact on public opinion. Xavier Márquez (2020: 27) points this out, too, within the context of cultic production: "although a state, particularly an authoritarian state, can usually flood public space with representations and praise of the leader… the saturation of public space with these communicative artifacts… need not result in the amplification of popular emotional attachment to leaders, or in the internalization of the ideological content of propaganda." Citing Paul Veyne (1988), he notes that much propagandistic production may simply be generated and dispersed "without viewers" – that is, without being paid any real attention or scrutiny by those at whom it is directed.

[26] The preface makes this point particularly clear, though see also chapters 7 and 8 that deal with intimate fantasies of Mussolini, as well as Duggan (2013c). Many such letters were sent directly to Mussolini himself, reaching an estimated 1,500 per day in the 1930s (2013a: xi).

[27] See also discussion in Verdery (1991: 89-91), who incorporates Bakhtin's idea of authoritative discourse into her formulation of the interstices between cultural and national-ideological production in Ceauşescu's Romania.

> authoritative discourse is sharply demarcated from all other types of discourse that coexist with it, which means that it does not depend on them, it precedes them, and it cannot be changed by them. Second, all these other types of discourse are organized around it. Their existence depends on being positioned in relation to it, having to refer to it, quote it, praise it, interpret it, apply it, and so forth, but they cannot, for example, interfere with its code and change it. Regardless of whether this demarcated and fixed authoritative discourse is successful in persuading its authors and audiences, they experience it as immutable and therefore unquestionable (2006: 14-15).

Leader cults fit the bill for 'authoritative discourse' on all counts, ubiquitous, 'given,' and discursively privileged in relation to other forms of propaganda as they are. I will consider them as such throughout this dissertation. Additionally relevant in Yurchak's summation, however, is the last line that brackets the persuasive effectiveness of authoritative discourse off to the side as, essentially, irrelevant. My approach here does the same. That is, and with Mirzoeff's 'banality' in mind, I do not deny nor challenge that the immutability of the cult as authoritative discourse and its profusion of imagery could well result in it being ignored and eschewed to the degree possible.[28] Rather, my aim is to account for the semantic *possibility* of cult systems, which entails analysis of the kinds of frames that come to structure them, how they interact and are evoked/invoked, and what kind of polysemy might emerge within the constructionist network. To this end, I do not here focus on binaries of 'dis/belief,' 'dis/engagement,' or 'un/effectiveness' in, with, and of cultic images and messages. To fully account for a cult system's communicative potential, it must be able to accommodate any and all such possible 'receptions.'

To put it differently, my argument here is that even though people may become inured to propaganda's messages, they are still exposed to them – repeatedly – and they are still legible, discernable, and can be internalized irrespective of 'belief' or 'engagement.' This becomes apparent, as we shall see in later chapters, via the reappropriation and exploitation of the cult's omnipresent imagery and representations in response to its visual hegemony and to broader repression and privation. Critical here, as mentioned earlier and as we shall unpack in more detail in Chapter 2, is a *usage-based approach* to communicative forms and their emergence, maintenance, and evolution. The 'audiences' for the messages that Mussolini's and Ceaușescu's cults communicated, then, amount to any and all Italians or Romanians who encountered them, who were exposed to them. Yet uniformity in exposure – like in reception – is not to be expected: rather, both will depend on a range of disparate yet interconnected factors ranging from age, gender, education, and geography to socioeconomic status, ideological persuasion, and how 'accessible' such cultic forms and messages may or may not be.

1.5 – Cults as Data

We have yet to say much in particular about the two personality cults that will be analyzed throughout the subsequent chapters. This section provides a brief introduction to both leaders' cults, supplies a preliminary exploration of the kind of visual data with which we will (largely) be dealing, and explains the rationale for the cults' selection. Far from comprehensive, these introductions are merely meant to provide a schematic picture of both Mussolini (section 1.5.1)

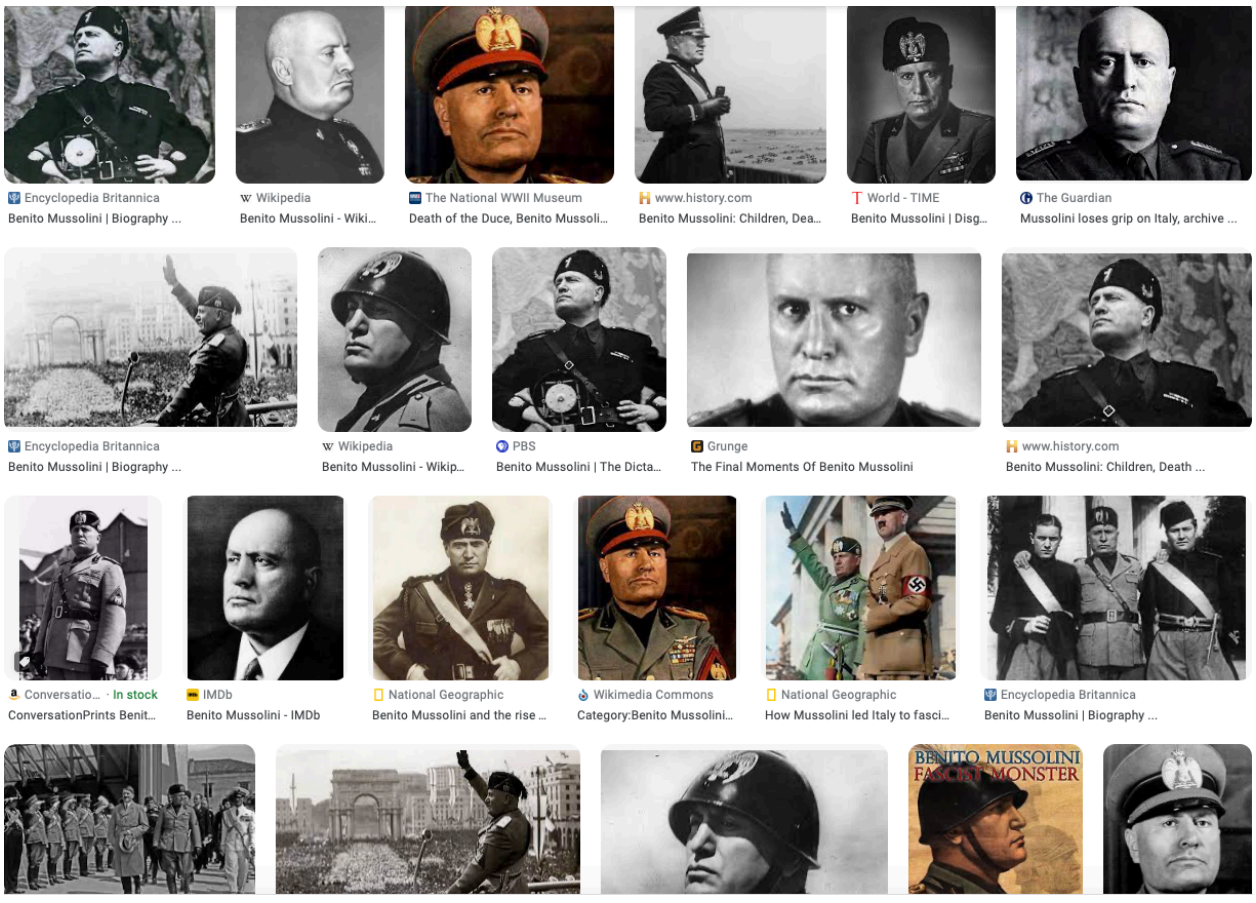
[28] See, for example, Cordali's (2023: 155-158) discussion of such disengagement in the context of Ceaușescu's cult and Romanian socialist propaganda more broadly.

and Ceaușescu (section 1.5.2) as well as some of the fundamental aspects of their respective cults. As we go along, we will provide and expand on important historical, social, cultural, and political factors relevant to and in each.

1.5.1 – Mussolini's Cult

In a 1983 article published in the Italian newspaper *La Reppublica*,[29] the author Italo Calvino presents the evolution of Mussolini's public image as he saw and experienced it as a youth in Fascist Italy.[30] Tracing the many 'hats' worn by Mussolini throughout the Fascist *ventennio*,[31] as he puts it, Calvino enumerates the various 'stages' in the iconography of the *Duce* and how they shifted, were propagated, and were received in a series of anecdotal recollections. From the stately, bourgeois Mussolini of the 1920s to the military-uniformed, helmeted commander of the late 1930s and into the war years, Calvino's account, though brief, paints a lurid picture of a figure

Figure 1.1: Google search of images of Mussolini



[29] The article was also included, in English translation, in the 1990 issue of the *Stanford Italian Review* (8:1-2) dedicated to the relationship between fascism and culture edited by Jeffrey Schnapp and Barbara Spackman.
[30] I follow the relatively standard notation of writing Fascism with a capital 'F' when referring to Mussolini's specific regime and fascism with a lower-case 'f' when discussing 'fascism' as a generic ideology, system, or concept.
[31] *Ventennio* translates to 'two decades' in Italian and is the term used to describe Mussolini's roughly equivalent stint as Italy's *Duce* ('leader').

whose style, mannerisms, and image captured and permeated the minds of Italians, whether out of admiration or repulsion, through his fixture as a ubiquitous presence across contexts (e.g. in schools, at the cinema, in the *piazza*) and media (e.g. in speeches live, transmitted via radio or film, or recorded in the press, or in his image in portraits, photographs, sculptures, stamps, etc.). Although drawn from the memories of just one Italian living under Fascism, Calvino's descriptions testify to Mussolini as an inescapable being whose very omnipresence was secured and magnified by this multitude of forms he could take, in tandem with his saturation across numerous realms of public discourse.[32] In short, his was a veritable 'face' of Fascism, to which Figure 1.1 on the previous page attests.[33]

Figure 1.1 constitutes a screen capture from a Google Images search of 'Benito Mussolini' conducted on February 24, 2023. It depicts the first 22 images that the search generated, a grouping that displays many of Mussolini's most iconic features, poses, and, per Calvino, 'hats.' Among them we see a Mussolini with hands perched on his hips, jaw jutting upward and outward, as well as several versions of his famous, penetrating gaze variously looking out into the distance or directly into the camera. Classic traits of fascism abound, too, from attending crowds and the Roman salute to a concerted military aesthetic and the co-presence of Adolf Hitler. We will observe many such images throughout this dissertation and attend to their meaning structures, their emergent cultic semiosis, and their relation one to another. For the moment, however, the images in Figure 1.1 can simply help us preliminarily 'visualize' both Mussolini and his cult.

Mussolini's cult, for its part, has been described as "a complex synergy of Italian nationalism, mass politics, visual culture, popular religion, celebrity and consumerism" (Gundle, Duggan & Pieri 2013a: 3). It emerged, grew, and took shape amid – as it appropriated and in turn influenced – several other contemporaneous cults of the period, from which its analysis is indissociable (Gentile 1993; Falasca-Zamponi 1997). Harbingers of the Fascist cult of Ancient Rome, for example, which was essential to Mussolini's burgeoning image as a new kind of Caesar, were already present in the period's "cult of classical masculine beauty" (Gori 2000: 39; Nelis 2007; Swan 2016: 366-368; cf. Chapter 5). Linked to Fascism's rhetoric of virility (Spackman 1996), the regime sought its embodiment in Mussolini, whose strength, athleticism, and fearlessness were frequently emphasized and put on display (Falasca-Zamponi 1997: 68). Religion itself was also critical to his cult's structuration and much research has demonstrated how deeply-ingrained Catholic practices, traditions, and beliefs served as a kind of 'blueprint' for Mussolini's cult to emerge and take hold (Gentile 1993, in particular chapter 6; Falasca-Zamponi 1997: chapter 2; Fogu 2003; Adamson 2014).[34] Indeed, in passing we can note that the *frames* structuring Mussolini's cult were diverse and plentiful and played no small part in crafting his trademark multifaceted image that will take shape in the pages that follow.

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[32] And he was not alone in this regard. Similar remarks were made by French journalist Henri Béraud in his (1929) book *Ce que j'ai vu à Rome*, in which he marvels at the proliferation of Mussolini's image that he witnessed during a visit to Rome: "Mussolini is everywhere – his name as well as his effigy, in gestures as well as in words… Wherever you look, wherever you walk, you will find Mussolini, still Mussolini, always Mussolini… The profusion of the images is truly incredible" (cited in Gaudenzi 2015: 267).

[33] See Ben-Ghiat (2020a) for a discussion of five 'faces' integral to Fascist visuality, two of which belong to Mussolini: one alive and 'all-seeing,' and the other dead and 'unseeing.' We will consider both such faces in the pages that follow.

[34] Examples abound of Mussolini's rumored divine-like or saintly attributes, from his purported ability to perform miracles (e.g. halting a volcano's eruption in Sicily with merely his arrival) to invocations of his immortality or divine protection, the latter of which were spurred by his survival of four separately occasioned attempts on his life (a bullet even grazed his nose during one such attempt). See Falasca-Zamponi (1997: 64-78) for further examples and additional details, whose descriptive account of Mussolini's cult remains one of the very best.

Structurally speaking, the cult of Mussolini itself in fact preceded Fascism and maintained significant fortitude even in the waning years of the regime (Duggan 2013c,d). Mussolini, a journalist by training and initially an ardent socialist, possessed a formidable set of skills in media know-how, distinct theatrical and oratory prowess, and a kind of electric 'charisma' that, in combination, crafted the basis for a cult with true, spontaneous origins (Gentile 1998; Duggan 2013c).[35] Moreover, the time was ripe for such a cult, too, as Italy – in the wake of a recent, muddled, and widely panned as 'failed' process of national unification[36] – was yearning for a 'charismatic figure' on whom 'messianic' expectations could rest for bringing the fledgling nation out of crisis, expectations which were only heightened after the horrors of World War I (Gundle 1998; Duggan 2013b,c). Put simply, the stage was set for the crowning of a providential figure and an attendant cult, and no one was better positioned than Mussolini to take advantage.

Mussolini's cult itself truly took off not long after his curious ascension to power in October 1922 in what is known as the 'March on Rome' (Duggan 2013c).[37] As mentioned earlier, the dawn of both mass media and mass production within a nascent consumer and celebrity culture worked in tandem to transform Mussolini into a star whose image came to dominate newspapers, adorn shop windows, and decorate the fronts of innumerable postcards (Sturani 1995, 2003, 2013; Gundle 2013a). This image was carefully curated and managed both by the Fascist regime and by Mussolini himself, and increasingly so as the years progressed, becoming a cornerstone of Fascism's oft-noted 'manufacture of consent' (Cannistraro 1975; Cavalli 1998: 163; Swan 2020). Thus, as Luisa Passerini observes in in her essential (1991) book *Mussolini immaginario*, throughout the 1930s a gradual transformation took place in his cult from the popular 'cult of Mussolini' (*mussolinismo*), with its spontaneous origins, into that of the fully institutionalized 'cult of the *Duce*' (*ducismo*).[38] Mixing authenticity with artifice, the result was that, for many, Mussolini simply 'was' Fascism, his image "the key point of ideological convergence between *ducismo* and *fascismo*" that made the latter somewhat tangible or intelligible (Fogu 2003: 12). And, indeed, with time he would eclipse it, subordinating and relegating the Fascist party to a trivial role beneath his own both increasingly personalistic and personalized rule (Melograni 1976; Falasca-Zamponi 1997: 63-64, 77; Bosworth 2021).

[35] In the realm of his showmanship, it should be noted that Mussolini had a blueprint of his own in the theatrical and dramatic style of the poet Gabriele D'Annunzio, who famously occupied the then Yugoslavia-controlled city of Fiume (Rijeka) and declared it an independent republic in 1919-1920 (see Ledeen 1977 and Pieri 2016).

[36] Italian unification – often referred to as the *Risorgimento* – began as a series of revolutions in 1848 and culminated in the declaration of the Kingdom of Italy in 1861. It was the idea of a 'failed' *Risorgimento* or of an Italy that had no 'real' Italians that germinated throughout the latter decades of the nineteenth century and that ultimately came to structure significant parts of Mussolini's agenda, such as the creation of Fascist *uomo nuovo* 'New Man' (to be discussed in Chapter 4). See Malia Hom (2013) for a more detailed discussion, and in particular pp. 9-13 for its specific incorporation into the Fascist project.

[37] There is some disagreement as to whether the March on Rome constituted a veritable seizure of power in its own right (as it was championed to be by the regime itself) or a symbolic façade for a more bureaucratic, or even serendipitous, assumption of power. For example, though Fascists did 'march' into Rome in October of 1922 threatening violence, they were relatively few in number and no battles formally took place (Mussolini himself arrived by train the following day). See Lyttelton (2004) and Albanese (2006) for detailed discussions.

[38] This transformation took place via what Passerini and others signal – in line with the religious dimensions of his cult mentioned above – as a kind of 'deification' or 'canonization' of Mussolini and his images (see Imbriani 1992; Falasca-Zamponi 1997; Gentile 1998: 228; and contributions in Gundle, Duggan & Pieri 2013b).

1.5.2 – Ceauşescu's Cult

The following is a ludic narrative taken from Călin-Bogdan Ştefănescu's (1991a: 100-101) anthology of jokes told during Nicolae Ceauşescu's more than two decades helming socialist Romania (1965-1989), dated December 2, 1987:[39]

Nea Nicu[40] moare și ajunge la poarta raiului.

Nervos, începe să bată. Sfântul Petru deschide o ușiță și-l întreabă:

- Cine ești tu?
- Dumnezeu! răspunde nea Nicu.
- Pleacă, muritorule, nu huli! Dumnezeu e aici în rai!

A doua zi, scena se repetă. Și-a treia zi, și-a patra tot așa… Exasperat, Sfântul Petru se duce la Dumnezeu:

- Sfinte Părinte, e la poartă un muritor care spune că el e Dumnezeu!
- Da? la adu-l la mine, să-l văd și eu… zice Dumnezeu amuzat.

Când îl vede pe nea Nicu îl întreabă:

- Cine ești tu?
- Eu sunt Dumnezeu! răspunde mândru.
- Cum ești tu Dumnezeu? N-am făcut eu lumea?!
- Ba da!
- N-am făcut eu pe om din țărână?
- Ba da!
- Atunci?
- Da, dar din ce-ai făcut toate astea?
- Cum din cei?! Din haos!
- Păi, vezi?! Haosul cine l-a făcut? Nu l-am făcut eu?!...

Uncle Nick dies and arrives at the gate of heaven

Nervous, he begins to knock. Saint Peter opens a small door and asks him:

- *Who are you?*
- *God! responds Uncle Nick*
- *Be gone, mortal, do not blaspheme! God is here in heaven!*

The second day, the scene repeats. And the third day, and the fourth the same…

Exasperated, Saint Peter goes to God:

- *Heavenly Father, there's a mortal at the gate who says that he is God!*
- *Yes? Bring him to me, so I can see him too… says God, amused.*

When he sees Uncle Nick, he asks him:

- *Who are you?*
- *I am God! he responds proudly.*
- *How are you God? Was it not I who made the world?!*
- *Of course!*
- *Was it not I who made man from earth?*
- *Of course!*
- *Then?*
- *Yes, but out of what did you make all these things?*
- *What do you mean 'out of what?!' Out of chaos!*
- *Well, see?! Who made the chaos? Was it not me?!...*

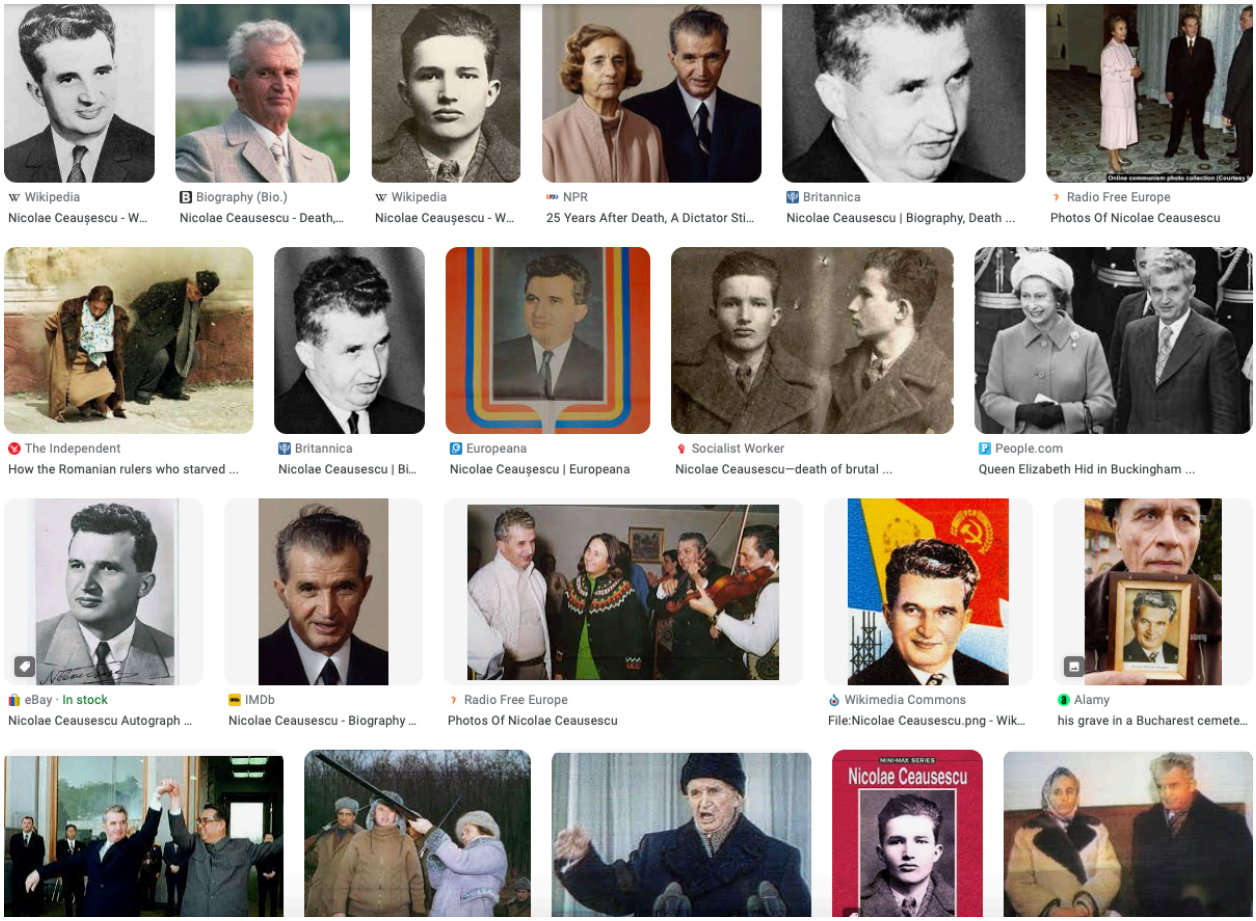
This joke provides a rather illuminating glimpse into Ceauşescu's notorious cult of personality. Told as it was roughly two years prior to his downfall (he would be captured, 'tried,'

[39] A brief note on terminology: the regimes of the Eastern European 'Second World' referred to themselves variously as both 'communist' and 'socialist,' rarely making any concerted distinction between the two. Here I follow this undifferentiating practice of using both terms as a descriptor for Ceauşescu's regime and its ideology in main because this is how it appears in our Romanian propagandistic data, cultic or otherwise. On this topic, however, see Roberts (2004) for a full discussion of this history and of the scholarly implications for 'stretching' the terms too thin.

[40] *Nea Nicu* 'Uncle Nick' was a frequent moniker of Ceauşescu's in such jokes, ostensibly parodying his various familial approximations and concerted effort to emit a sense ordinariness – both of which shall be discussed in full later. The English translation is my own.

and executed alongside his wife, Elena, by firing squad on Christmas day, 1989), it portrays a self-aggrandized, narcissistic Ceauşescu who claims to be God – to God himself, no less. The joke, like others we shall see later on (Chapter 6), at once draws from and pokes fun at Ceauşescu and his regime's self-representation as someone truly larger than life. Consider the image below in Figure 1.2, which, like Figure 1.1, constitutes a screen capture from a Google Images search of 'Nicolae Ceauşescu' conducted on February 24, 2023.

Figure 1.2: Google search of images of Ceauşescu



Here we see a host of different Ceauşescus, from his mugshot when he was arrested at eighteen for Communist 'agitation' to his glossy, official portrait as General Secretary to a photograph from his final speech in 1989, harangued by a booing crowd below. His framed portrait is held aloft to unknown ends in one shot, interspersed with cultic paraphernalia and images of a leader amenable to Queen Elizabeth II and Kim Il-sung alike. Elena, too, is present at his side in several of the pictures, including a still from the couple's execution. This cluster of images – like that of Mussolini above – suggests a multifaceted leader who possessed a range of different meanings. We will explore these meanings in detail as we go but here, for now, Figure 1.2 simply supplies us with another, initial 'glimpse' of Ceauşescu and his cult.

Ceauşescu's cult, in a striking departure from what was just discussed for Mussolini and his cult, has often been considered largely artificial, as overblown bombast inflicted upon a largely disengaged and incredulous, captive audience (the above joke captures this sentiment quite well).

Vladimir Tismăneanu, for example, a prolific writer on Romanian communism, notes the "histrionics" involved in Ceauşescu's cult and attributes its features such as "exacerbated ambition, megalomaniac tyranny, and apocryphal nationalism" to a mixing of diehard Stalinism with Romanian's Byzantine heritage (2003: 208). Alice Mocanescu pulls out similar traits, noting the Ceauşescu cult's combination of "nationalist rhetoric, manipulation of memory, and manufactured charisma" (2010: 416). Indeed, a virulent and encompassing nationalism is a particularly conspicuous feature of Ceauşescu's cult, which went hand in hand with its appeals to historical fantasy and revisionism (cf. Chapter 5).[41]

Nevertheless, the seeds for Ceauşescu's cult were unequivocally sown on August 21, 1968. Addressing a crowd of thousands amassed in Bucharest's *Piața Revoluției* (today's *Piața Palatului*), Ceauşescu delivered an impassioned speech in which he publicly condemned the recent Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in response to the Prague Spring. The speech supplied a forceful denouncement of Soviet hegemony not only in its announcement of Romania's refusal to participate in the invasion, but also in its insistence that there was not one model for 'building socialism' (i.e. the Soviet Model) and that 'each party, each state, each people' should be left to decide for themselves (see Petrescu 2009; Marin 2011). In its wake, Ceauşescu enjoyed widespread, genuine popularity, both at home and abroad, viewed by his own people as a welcomed reformist and by the West as a 'maverick' who dared defy Moscow (Tismăneanu 2003: 202-203).

It would not last, however. Accounts tend to agree that a clear shift in regime policy and the beginnings of the cult's institutionalization can be dated to Ceauşescu's visits to China and North Korea in 1971, where he was reportedly mesmerized by the massive spectacles and mobilization that greeted him upon his arrival (ibid., 206). Thus, apparently inspired by the cults of Mao Zedong and Kim Il-sung, Ceauşescu returned home and set out retooling his regime's ideological and cultural initiatives in such a way that his cult was able to truly take hold, expand, and monopolize public space. It would not be long before it would reach lavish heights: a pivotal moment in the cult's development was Ceauşescu's ascension to the role of 'President of Romania' – a role invented solely for him and in his honor – in March of 1974, complete with an extravagant ceremony in which he was presented with a specially crafted presidential scepter (Fischer 1989: 160; Cioroianu 2013: 222-224; cf. Chapter 3). From there the cult only further crystallized and, into and throughout the 1980s, became the undisputed focal point of the regime around which all political and social life revolved. And, with time, he would be joined on his altar by his wife, who would develop a cult of her own and would increasingly feature alongside him in newspapers and in dedicated artworks of homage (see Tanta 2014: chapter 2; Sorescu-Marinković 2017).

1.5.3 – Why These Cults?

At first blush, the decision to focus on the cults of Benito Mussolini and Nicolae Ceauşescu may seem odd. Ideologically speaking, fascism and socialism occupy opposite ends of the political spectrum, in theory, which suggests radical differences in terms of political philosophy. This ideological dislocation is also paralleled by a temporal one, with Italian Fascism playing out in the

[41] The centrality of nationalism to Ceauşescu's cult and its import in Romanian communist propaganda and cultural production more broadly has been highlighted and discussed by many scholars such as Verdery (1991), Deletant (1995: chapter 4), Petrescu (2009), Mocanescu (2010), and Marin (2011, 2020b). The manipulation and use of history and historical figures has received particular attention in Verdery (1991: chapter 6), Deletant (1992), Zub (2000), Boia (2001), and Cioroianu (2005).

interwar period whereas Romanian communism unfolded within the context of the Cold War. These ideological and temporal disparities have – again, in theory – a number of consequences for cult emergence, structuration, and production: differences in national-historical context, changes in global power dynamics, technological advancement, and various possible motivations for the cult itself could lead to potentially drastic differences in cult manifestation.

Despite these possible challenges, both contexts also share some important similarities. Mussolini and Ceauşescu both enjoyed comparable stints in power (roughly 21 years for Mussolini, 25 for Ceauşescu) during which the cult of personality came to acquire gradually greater prominence, importance, and institutional backing, particularly in the wake of various economic and political crises that emerged and that would eventually lead to their respective downfalls.[42] What consequences might these various factors have had, whether communicatively, conceptually, materially, or in their combination? Indeed, I contend, assessing the very role that differences in regime ideology and national-temporal context may or may not have in cult construction, manifestation, and communication in the light of otherwise significant similarities is itself worthy of investigation. The chapters that follow will entertain such questions, often signaling the two cults' at once marked difference and similarity.

1.6 – Cultic Visuality

The particular constellation of images displayed earlier in Figures 1.1 and 1.2 and others like them (i.e. internet searches of Mussolini, Ceauşescu, Italian Fascism, or Romanian communism) invite further consideration. First, in looking at them in their totality, there are additional structural comments to be made. Some of the images, for example, appear in color while others are in black and white. Some images appear more than once, which might lead us to believe that they are particularly 'representative' images of either Mussolini or Ceauşescu, though at this point we cannot be sure – who selected them, after all, and for what purpose? Wikipedia, NPR, National Geographic, IMDb, and Encyclopedia Britannica are just a few of the 'sources' that one can make out for some of these images.[43]

There is also a discombobulation to the grouped images of both leaders here, clustered together one after the other, temporally and contextually unmarked and isolated. Seeing them like this, we do not know when they are from, for what purposes they were used, or who was responsible for their production; in short, we have no way of knowing what they might have meant in their own time. Yet there is also a unity: we are looking at the same man over and over, (re)mediated and reproduced to ends that, while unclear, suggest a kind of coordination and

[42] In the case of Mussolini, the physical and economic toll that the unsuccessful Italian war effort in World War II had on Italians, in addition to general discontent with increased levels of corruption and frustration at the regime's autarchic policies are considered primary factors leading to his regime's demise (Colarizi 2000: 399-404; Gundle, Duggan & Pieri 2013a: 2). Regarding Ceauşescu, Tismăneanu (2003: 189) notes how the austerity measures imposed in the 1980s, in a desperate yet committed attempt to pay off Romania's substantial foreign debt, resulted in a drastic rationing of food, gasoline, electricity, and heat that served as the primary catalyst for the December 1989 uprisings and subsequent revolution, the only country in the Eastern Bloc to see any bloodshed.

[43] There is also, of course, an algorithmic structuration at work here such that the 'most relevant' images each of Mussolini and Ceauşescu have appeared at the top of the results page. This – in an intriguing parallel to cults themselves – is not static and is subject to change. If one were to take the time to duplicate my searches of 'Benito Mussolini' and 'Nicolae Ceauşescu,' the images generated and their arrangement would surely be – if subtly – different.

interrelation of his various images. Moreover, they hint at Mussolini's and Ceauşescu's own visual saturation throughout Italy and Romania when their cults were in full swing.

Figures 1.1 and 1.2 thus evince a peculiar kind of mirroring effect. That is, while they certainly show us a glimpse of what these figures, movements, and regimes 'looked like' in their own time, they do so in a way refracted through the lens of the present. On the one hand, this is indicative that the cults – in some sense, at least – continue to 'live on' and maintain some form of presence even years after the regimes that birthed them have fallen. We shall return to this observation in the final chapter. On the other hand, however, and as Ruth Ben-Ghiat observes in an essay on visualizing Fascism, internet repositories like Google (not to mention popular conceptions of who and what both Mussolini and Fascism were) enshrine and perpetuate an image of Mussolini near universally "at his peak splendor" (2020a: 106). She warns that "[an uncritical reliance] on this image bank [when] study[ing] fascist regimes [risks] replicating fascism's *point of view*" (ibid., 95; emphasis mine). That is, what we are seeing is – even if refracted and patchworked together by individuals within a milieu very much removed from the *ventennio* – in a sense precisely how Mussolini wanted himself, Fascism, and his regime to be seen. This is true in many ways, and Ben-Ghiat is right to caution against such an uncritical overreliance.[44] It is an argument that, despite its grounding in Italian Fascism, certainly applies more broadly. Yet, I would argue, from the perspective of cults of personality, what makes them valuable as data is precisely *because* what is generated, circulated, consumed, and even that which 'lives on' is, in some sense, a reflection of this particular 'point of view.' Mussolini's and Ceauşescu's cults each structured and projected their images in particular ways, as we shall see, and often with certain goals in mind, but determining or fixing the meanings to be associated with their generated images was never fully in their control. Bearing this in mind allows us to conceptualize cults and their self-presented 'points of view' as emergent constructional templates that open up pathways beyond them, variously to semantic enrichment, bleaching, and reappropriation.

1.6.1 – Hypervisual Authoritative Discourse

As we shall see in more detail in the next chapter, the bulk of theoretical work in cognitive linguistics has – and unsurprisingly given its name – dealt with language *per se*. As a framework, though, as mentioned, it is indeed up to the task of accounting for communication 'at large,' which is crucial when assessing something like a cult of personality that is hypervisual in nature. By and large our analytical terms and tools will be drawn from cognitive linguistics – the likes of constructions, frames, blends, and conceptual metonymy, about which we will have more to say – but some remarks on the primarily *visual* nature of the data at hand and some of its particularities are worth considering up front. The cults of Mussolini and Ceauşescu are indeed analytically inextricable from the broader visual and cultural trends operative in the societies in which they took hold, and the notion of 'visuality' itself is essential for acquiring an understanding of them communicatively, cognitively, and materially.[45]

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[44] Her own essay, for example, provides alternative 'ways of seeing' Fascism by focusing on those who can still be seen in its images, even if at the margins.

[45] Much wonderful work has been done on the visual politics, practices, and proclivities of fascist and socialist dictatorships alike (see e.g. Bonnell 1997; Skrodzka, Lu & Marciniak 2019; Thomas & Eley 2020). Mussolini's Italy has proven an especially productive site of research that runs the gamut of visual culture, from architecture and the built environment (e.g. Ghirardo 1989; Painter 2005; Fuller 2007), photography (e.g. Swan 2016, 2020), and cinema (e.g. Ricci 2008; Ben-Ghiat 2015) to work on Fascism's 'spectacles' (Falasca-Zamponi 1997; Lasansky 2004) and exhibition culture (e.g. Ghirardo 1992; Schnapp 1992; Stone 1993), not to mention several works that tackle the

W. J. T. Mitchell (2015: 6) defines the field of 'visual culture' as "the study of visual perception and representation, especially the social construction of the field of visibility and (equally important) the visual construction of the social field." Personality cults are situated at a peculiar nexus of both components. That is, as Adriana Cordali puts it in her study of visual rhetoric in Ceaușescu's Romania, "[t]otalitarian regimes employ visual materials to make certain sociopolitical issues rhetorically absent (invisible) or present (hypervisible) for political expediency" (2023: 23). As a form of 'colonization' of visual and public space (ibid.; Falasca-Zamponi 1997: 78; Cherstich 2014: 100) marked at once by prescription and proscription, cults and their images give rise to a particular discursive reality – the cult as 'authoritative discourse.' Given the centrality of images to cults, however, they in fact constitute a *hypervisual* form of authoritative discourse, dominating, configuring, and monopolizing what Karen Strassler refers to as 'public visuality,' which she describes as follows:

> [t]he ways that material images, historically constituted ways of seeing, discursive figures and frames, and 'infrastructures of representation' shape the public sphere as a zone of contested visibility and invisibility. Public visuality sets the terms for political visibility (and invisibility), but it can be subject to intervention and transformation through the work of images (2020: 16).

Understanding leader cults as hypervisual 'authoritative discourse' dominating 'public visuality' gels well with the cult definitions discussed in section 1.2 and situates our understanding of cult communicativity firmly within the domain of what will be our primary type of data: the image. Robert Hariman and John Louis Lucaites, in their study of the role of iconic photographs in American democratic culture, observe the following:

> Although it operates without a complex verbal syntax, an image will have to contain social coding if it is to have any meaning… Furthermore, it always is situated within an intertextual field of discourses and other images. A rich visual image in a public space cannot avoid being multiply coded, and these several codes must cohere in a manner that provides a sense of dynamic, dramatic movement toward some whole that can encompass its parts (2007: 34).

The intertextuality of images, their semantic multiplicity, and the critical importance of sociohistorical context for their understanding has been highlighted over and over in research into what or how images 'mean' (see e.g. Panofsky 1955; Barthes 1957, 1977; Clarke 1997; Burke 2001; Kress & van Leeuwen 2021). These insights crucially capture – in line with remarks put forth in section 1.4 – the possibility that images, like cult messages, can mean many different things to different people, or even to one in the same person, across time and place. Images, while often static productions in the form of a photographic still or a painted canvas, are semantically dynamic: they can 'work' or they can fall flat; their contents can be intelligible in their entirety or

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regime's artistic policies and practices at large (e.g. Affron & Antliff 1997; Stone 1998; Braun 2000; Lazzaro & Crum 2004). The visual culture and politics of Ceaușescu's Romania has seen comparably less attention, though Adriana Cordali's (2023) study has recently filled a longstanding gap in research on visual culture under Ceaușescu 'at large.' It is a welcome addition to the variety of studies documenting (the politics of) art and artistic production (e.g. Cârneci 2001; Cioroianu 2006; Mocanescu 2010; Tanta 2014; Preda 2017; and Asavei 2020) under his regime. Of note, too, is Marin (2020a), which provides a visual analysis of Ceaușescu's cult and its various manifestations not out of step with the present investigation.

just in parts; they can elicit strong feelings of devotion or disgust and everything in between. Sometimes we know what they're 'supposed' to mean, other times we do not. Often images prompt us to think of something else that we have seen, related in some way within our mental network. What precisely this 'mental network' of images looks like will be the subject of much of this dissertation, taking the cults of Mussolini and Ceauşescu as valuable data into the nature of what me might consider, in the constructionist sense, 'visual constructions.'

1.6.2 – Materials

In the process of gathering materials for the dissertation (and during its writing), it quickly became clear to me that the breadth of cultic material both produced and available far exceeded the amount of space (not to mention time) that I had at my disposal. Coming up with a useable, representative corpus for the cults in question became a chief concern in what I knew would be a distinctly *qualitative* project rather than an expressly *quantitative* one.[46] To do so, I relied heavily on existing scholarship on both Mussolini's and Ceauşescu's cults – as well as on (Italian) fascism and (Romanian) communism more broadly – in order to be sure that what I compiled was a series of *salient* and *representative* images whose relevant characteristics have been thoroughly documented.

While largely (but not exclusively) visual in nature, the data examined here is very diverse. Cultic 'artifacts' examined include photographs (stand-alone photos as well as those incorporated into other media, e.g. newspapers, magazines, postcards, stamps,), paintings, monuments, architectural works, posters, periodicals, educational material, street art, jokes, poems, caricatures, collages, memorabilia, digital adaptations, and a range of disparate art projects including a woven rug and chocolate confections, each emblazoned with Ceauşescu's likeness (see Chapters 5 and 7, respectively). The sheer diversity of the data is intentional, compiled with the goal in mind of reflecting the variety of forms that cult production takes and the range of media that take part in its dissemination and reproduction.

The images analyzed in this dissertation have been gathered over the course of several years from a wide variety of sources. Each is accompanied (a) by the year of its production, if known, and (b) by a corresponding footnote that supplies information detailing from where it was obtained, by whom it was made (also if known), and – in the case of certain online sources – the date it was accessed and retrieved. This will occasionally be supplemented with additional pertinent information that might expound on an image's content, provide where it appeared 'in its own time,' or detail some other particularity of relevance.

Images have been variously gathered from online repositories ranging from public-access sites such as Wikipedia Commons and Flickr to digitized archival collections to various online collections of Fascist- or communist-era ephemera and relics. Many of the newspaper images examined were photographed during stints in Milan and Cluj-Napoca in the summer of 2018,

[46] Quantitative analyses of cult representations indeed have much value and for certain cult contexts have already been carried out: see, for example, Falasca-Zamponi (1997: 47-49) for a discussion of the number of times in which Mussolini appeared on the front page of the illustrated periodical *L'Illustrazione Italiana* (as well as a comparison to such rather less frequent appearances by previous leaders) as well as Swan (2020: chapter 8) for a typology of different Mussolinis and a quantitative assessment of their appearance across numerous publications. See, too, Marin (2016a) for a diachronic tabulation of various types of portrayals of Ceauşescu in prominent publications (see pp. 467-473 in particular for tables). Additionally, even if not directly relevant to the cults under analysis here, an analogous diachronic assessment of Stalin's featuring in the chief Soviet newspaper, *Pravda*, can be found in Plamper (2012: chapter 2).

courtesy of the collections of the Fondazione Feltrinelli and the Bibliotecă centrală universitară 'Lucian Blaga' at Babeş-Bolyai University, respectively. I additionally consulted numerous print works, including both compiled collections of artistic homage production, jokes, caricatures, and postcards as well as a vast array of existing scholarship on both cults and their various manifestations.

Throughout this dissertation, images are assessed in a manner that blends the visual-cultural approach and the cognitive-linguistic one: that is, on the one hand they are considered in relation to broader visual, cultural, and historical trends circulating in their time of production and dissemination (thus covering the broad 'material' side of things), while on the other they are analyzed and discussed with attention to the relevant cognitive processes at work in their proliferation and ultimate structuration of veritable cult 'networks' (the 'conceptual' side of things). In combining the two approaches, I argue, the cults' *communicative* capacities become apparent.[47]

1.7 – Reproducibility, Productivity, Polysemy

As mentioned in preceding sections, the reproducibility of the leader's image is essential for achieving diffusion, saturation, and omnipresence of his image within public discourse. Mass reproducibility itself, however, implies immutability, a kind of constant regurgitation of the same image(s) over and over. While not wholly inaccurate – indeed, we will consider certain images that fit this billing in the pages that follow – it only captures part of the story. There is also an inherent dynamism to cults of personality in that they are built up and constituted by multiple, competing, at times even contradictory representations of the leader. As E. A. Rees (2004: 12) puts it regarding twentieth-century Eastern European communist cults, "[t]he cult changed in response to changing regime priorities; it changed also from one period to another, acquiring different meaning and a different resonance with different social groups." In a similar vein, Mary Ellen Fischer (1989: 172) remarks on the inherent flexibility of cults of personality, noting how the leader is often imbued with a variety of characteristics in hopes of appealing to the widest range of people possible. Lisa Wedeen (1999: 39), too, notes a "slipperiness" and an "elasticity" to the cult of Asad evidenced in an ebb and flow in the use of certain themes and symbols in its manifestation, as if cycled through as part of some ad-hoc rotation.

This goes also for the cases of Mussolini's and Ceauşescu's cults. Calvino's observations above are but one example of the chameleonic nature of Mussolini and his image. Alessandra Antola Swan (2016: 364), for example, provides a list of some of his most famous incarnations – as a bureaucrat, as a bourgeois-like politician, as a lion tamer, as a helmeted soldier, as a shirtless wheat-thresher and skier – some of which we will examine in this dissertation. Different typings, taxonomies, figurations, guises, phases, and modes of his representation have been proposed and documented, resulting in a rich and abundant literature.[48] Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi describes well the centrality of this representational multiplicity to Mussolini's cult:

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[47] The specifics of this combined approach will be laid out and demonstrated starting in Chapter 3.

[48] The entire volume *The Cult of the Duce: Mussolini and the Italians* is worth considering in this regard, as essentially each chapter therein either proposes or scrutinizes such categorizations of Mussolini and his image across a wide swath of cultic paraphernalia (Gundle, Duggan & Pieri 2013b). Other key studies briefly worth mentioning here include: Passerini (1991), who traces Mussolini's constructed image and its evolution using a corpus of (chiefly) numerous biographies published between 1915-1939; Falasca-Zamponi (1997: chapter 2), which deals with Mussolini the 'myth' and the various means by which his myth was constructed; Luzzatto (2001) and Famulari (2016), which detail his depiction in Istituto LUCE (the premier propaganda apparatus of the regime) photographs and newsreels,

> the plethora of representations that circulated about him during the regime worked to keep alive his myth. From the reassuring and hardworking image of the farmer to the daring figure of the aviator, Mussolini offered a variety of attractive solicitations to one's fantasy world; he satisfied many a taste. Not only a person of culture and vast knowledge for some, embracer of modern creations such as cars and motorbikes for others, but also a reassuring family man, respected statesman, and even conqueror of colonies and founder of a new empire in 1936 – the dynamic variety of roles Mussolini played contributed to foster his fame and increase his attraction (2022: 88).

Ceauşescu's image, too, has been catalogued and categorized at length. Adrian Cioroianu (2005) has established seven principal representations of Ceauşescu or roles attributed to him that circulated throughout his roughly 25 years in power, including that of the 'young revolutionary,' the 'architect of modern Romania,' the 'hero of national independence,' and the 'father of the nation,' which have been taken up and explored further in the work of Manuela Marin (e.g. 2007, 2008, 2016a, 2020a,b). What thus emerges in the case of both leaders, and in most cult contexts more generally, is a richly textured, multivalent – indeed, *polysemous* – image of the leader as the embodiment of numerous, various ideals: leadership, modernity, tradition, masculinity, divinity, bravery, family, exceptionality, ordinariness, internationalness, localness, and many possible others.[49]

Despite apparent contradictions, however, the emergent cult itself is not illegible – that is, it does not 'not make sense' because of this plurality of representations but, on the contrary, draws much of its communicative potential from it. This applies, on the one hand, to the leader's functioning akin to what Pierre Ostiguy and Benjamin Moffitt (2021: 56) refer to in their work on populism as an 'overflowing signifier.' As they observe, "the meaning of the [populist] leader is multifaceted, excessive, overflowing with different (not logically related) readings" whose name and image, by its investiture with such polysemy, "is also full of tensions, contradictions, and (hegemonic) struggles for appropriation."[50] Although their concern seems to be with genuine affinity between the leader and his followers (i.e. an assessment of populist appeal), which is not of special concern here, their insights map remarkably well onto the cult contexts in question. Cult production stipulates a mass-produced heterogeneity that entails that the leader is imbued with numerous, competing, even contradictory meanings. In this semantic enrichment, the contexts in which his image is or can be used (or experienced) accordingly *expands*, a phenomenon that in the linguistic literature is referred as *productivity*. As a definition that we will return to later,

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respectively; Sturani's several expansive and amply documented works on Mussolini in postcards (1995, 2003, 2013); and Swan's recent (2020) book *Photographing Mussolini*, which delves into the conception, production, and dissemination of his photographic image at large. See also Chiessa (2008), a biography of Mussolini that includes many of the kinds of images that will be examined here.

[49] Jeffrey Schnapp (2005: 102), for example, in an anthology of political posters from the 'era of the masses' (1914-1989) cites "the paradox of the mass-produced superior individual" as a necessary appeal for legitimacy at the turn of the century, an appeal that had to grapple with the simultaneous crafting of an image of the leader as both one of the people and as an exceptional, transcendental being. We will consider this apparent paradox in Chapters 3 and 4.

[50] The term, it should be noted, is born out of a reassessment of the work of Ernesto Laclau (2005) and his notion of the 'empty signifier,' or a populist leader who comes to be *devoid* of meaning – rather than 'overflowing' with it – in/on which the 'people' then simply inscribe various meanings and desires. See Ostiguy & Moffitt (2021) for discussion. The populist self-presentations of both Mussolini's and Ceauşescu's cults will be discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

productivity accounts for "how established abstract schemas of a language… can be used to license novel utterances" (Hoffmann 2020: 3).

On the other hand, though not unrelatedly, this communicative potential also plays out in the cult's *dialogic* aspects enumerated earlier. Certain studies, for example, highlight how, even in their production of leader-regime power, cults and their concomitant spectacles also nonetheless "invite transgressions," to use Lisa Wedeen's (1999: 4-5) turn of phrase. Her study – in particular chapter 4 – details how Asad's cult as a semiotic system provides the very material for its own subversion. Similar arguments can be found in Tanta (2014) in the context of state-sponsored art under Romanian communism and in Pelikan (2020), who details the subversive incorporation of Mussolini and Hitler by Slovene artist Tone Kralj in numerous church wall paintings. Even in such reappropriations, however, subversion is not a given. Alexei Yurchak's aforementioned study of the later years of the Soviet Union explicitly centers on the emergence of new meanings out of fossilized, entrenched, repeated ideological formulae. Bringing together Bakhtinian 'authoritative discourse' and Austin's distinction between 'performatives' and 'constatives,' he describes the shifting form-meaning relationship as follows:

> The uniqueness of the late-socialist context lay in the fact that those who ran the Komsomol and party meetings and procedures themselves understood perfectly well that the constative dimension of most ritualized acts and texts had become reinterpreted from its original meaning [and they therefore] emphasized the centrality of the performative dimension of this discourse in the reproduction of social norms, positions, relations, and institutions. This emphasis on the performative dimension took place in most contexts where authoritative discourse was reproduced or circulated… It became increasingly more important to participate in the reproduction of the *form of* these ritualized acts of authoritative discourse than to engage with their constative meanings. It is crucial to point out, however, that this does not mean that these ritualized acts become meaningless and empty or that other meanings in public life were diminishing or becoming totally constrained. On the contrary, the performative reproduction of the form of rituals and speech acts actually *enabled* the emergence of diverse, multiple, and unpredictable meanings in everyday life, including those that did not correspond to the constative dimensions of authoritative discourse (2006: 25).[51]

Translated into precisely cultic terms, what this goes to show is that the *polysemy* that comes to characterize the leader cult operates not only at the level of how the leader is represented, but also at the level of how those representations are themselves received, used, and broadly understood, aptly capturing what the cognitive linguists Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner (2003) consider to be the heart of polysemy, 'meaning potential.' What is more, Yurchak's attention to an instability in the 'constative' dimensions of form-meaning pairings not only allows us to situate cultic production in *precisely* constructionist terms (see the initial definition provided in section 1.1), it also opens the door for a reconsideration of that relationship and what it might mean in variously cultic, contextual, visual, and iterable terms.

[51] Other works on the Soviet context, too, such as Petrone (2000) and Rolf (2013), unpack similar reappropriations of prescribed performances in mass celebrations, noting that while some such reappropriations were subversive, others were 'misfires' that – to use Austin's terms – simply failed to enact performatively their constative dimensions.

1.7.1 – Two Kinds of Polysemy

I argue that two types of polysemy emerge within leader cults of this kind. The first is perhaps the more transparent of the two senses, which I will refer to as *leader polysemy*. This kind of polysemy entails the 'flexibility' of the cult described above and captures how the leader comes to be imbued with numerous, diverse meanings as his image manifests in different contexts. This primarily addresses what might be considered the 'literal' or 'constative' meaning of a given cult artifact, deducible from assessing how and in what ways it depicts the leader and what kinds of semantic frames it evokes. Photographs of Mussolini skiing shirtless in the Apennines or as a 'lion tamer' no doubt helped cultivate his image as a fearless, virile, modern kind of leader, yet they circulated alongside others that depicted him as a much more traditional, bourgeois leader, or that 'softened' his image by depicting him alongside children. Similarly, the constant attention to and documentation of Ceauşescu's numerous meetings with foreign dignitaries in the Romanian press surely sought to highlight his singular importance on the global stage as a kind of intermediary between East and West, while at the same time his peculiarly potent brand of nationalism ensured that he was also often depicted in a far more nativist light.[52] Leader polysemy thus emerges through the proliferation of various established, crystallized *forms* – whether prescribed, accepted, expected, or somewhere in between – in combination with their associated, constative *meanings*. Put differently, and as will be explicated in the following pages, such representations constitute and engender polysemy in the image of the leader that give rise to what I will refer to as (various kinds of) *cult constructions*. We shall explore these issues in detail in Chapter 3.

This very proliferation of the leader's image, however, presupposes a second type of polysemy, one that is tied inextricably to the replicability of such images and their constant emergence and use in new contexts. This results in a cyclic chain of decontextualization and recontextualization in which new, unintended meanings might emerge that challenge or contradict the constative meaning of the artifact itself. I deem this type of polysemy *constructional polysemy* because it entails a polysemy operative at the level of the cult construction itself, i.e. polysemy of an established form-(constative-)meaning pairing. Central to this emergent, constructional polysemy is Jacques Derrida's (1988) theorization of citationality devised in response to Austin's aforementioned (1962) theory of performative speech acts. Austin, we can recall, observed that certain utterances have the potential to 'do things' by mere virtue of being spoken by an individual vested with the proper institutional authority, within a proper social (i.e. a conventional) context (e.g. a priest in a ceremony of marriage stating, 'I now pronounce you married'). Drawing on yet contesting some of Austin's observations, Derrida points to the 'iterability' or 'citationality' of such conventionalized speech acts – which is to say their reproducibility from one context to the next – that in fact precludes the kind of straightforward determinacy of their meaning given in advance *by* this conventionality. In other words, there is always 'room' for new, unintended meanings (or consequences) to emerge. Considerable research has since developed further this inherent indeterminacy of an utterance's 'meaning' or 'force' outside of a particular context of utterance (indeed, as variable *from* one context to the next) such that its incorporation in a *new* context opens the door to new significations, reappropriations, parodies, etc., much in the vein of

[52] While opposite portrayals in many ways, the two were in fact deeply intertwined, both emanating from Ceauşescu's August 21, 1968 speech condemning the invasion of Czechoslovakia by the Soviet Union and the other Warsaw Pact members discussed above.

the studies mentioned above.[53] Any proper account of the cult of personality as a communicative phenomenon must, I contend, afford space to both kinds of polysemies.

1.8 – Dissertation Outline

This dissertation aims to be of value to scholars of both sides of what I consider its theoretical and data 'clumps.' On the 'theoretical' side of things, this refers principally to cognitive linguistics (and Construction Grammar in particular) but also includes other disciplines from which I draw including visual culture, anthropology, and history. On the 'data' side, it broadly encompasses the often-interrelated phenomena of personality cults, propaganda, and particular ideologies or forms of authoritarianism, e.g. the two cases here, fascism and communism. Although these 'cult' and 'cognitive-linguistic' camps have had as yet no scholarly interaction, it is my view that both have much to offer the other. From the cognitive-linguistic side of things, cult production and manifestation constitute rich, as-yet-untapped data. Not only can its analysis provide further insight into multimodal communication more broadly (e.g. comparisons between propaganda and work in visual and multimodal advertising), but it can also shed light on its use and nature in the particular sociopolitical contexts in which cults flourish (i.e. authoritarian regimes). On the other side, by analyzing the cults of Mussolini and Ceauşescu as hypervisual communicative systems from an explicitly communication-oriented, constructionist perspective, many existing findings and observations can be systematically recast – and new ones uncovered – in order to elucidate the structure behind their oft-mentioned but seldom elaborated propagandistic 'code.'

This dissertation is structured as follows. As my work bridges a gap between two historically distant avenues of inquiry, it is first necessary to conceptually 'marry' them, so to speak. This first chapter – in introducing Mussolini's and Ceauşescu's cults as well as cult phenomena more generally – has handled the 'data' side of things while interspersing some theoretical terms and insights from cognitive linguistics and other disciplines where relevant. Chapter 2, in turn, constitutes an (intentionally schematic) overview of some of the principal frameworks of cognitive linguistics and lines of inquiry therein. In particular, four elements critical to the present approach will be taken up and elaborated – semantic frames, Conceptual Blending Theory, material anchors, and Construction Grammar. We will also develop our understanding of these terms and ideas as we go and others will be introduced along the way (e.g. Conceptual Metonymy Theory, which will be introduced in Chapter 4).

Chapter 3 then presents the conceptual network model in which my understanding of personality cults is situated. I argue that various depictions of both Mussolini and Ceauşescu, by virtue of their frequent and repeated manifestation, became conventionalized within their respective societies such that they acquired a kind of constructional status. I demonstrate how the proliferation of numerous, at times even competing representations (what I refer to as 'image-types') of Mussolini and Ceauşescu gave rise to a polysemy at the representational (i.e. constative) level, resulting in a continually enriched network of 'cult constructions' (conventionalized blends) populating the overall cult system. Drawing on works on performativity and citationality (à la Austin, Derrida, and others) and recent work recognizing the important role of context in Construction Grammar (e.g. Goldberg 2019), it is further suggested that alongside such

[53] Derrida's observations have inspired a host of scholars operating within and across a range of disciplines, from literary and critical theory to sociology, anthropology, and linguistics. Important (but by no means exhaustive!) examples include Bourdieu (1991), Butler (1993), Hollywood (2002), Yurchak (2006), and Nakassis (2012, 2013).

representational polysemy (that is, *leader polysemy*) comes to exist also the aforementioned *constructional polysemy*, or the capacity for particular cult constructions to take on new meanings when used in new contexts.[54] The chapter focuses on three such 'image-types' for each leader as disseminated primarily in photographs: Mussolini as a 'virile' figure and as a 'warrior' figure, Ceaușescu as a 'father' figure and as a 'royal' figure, and both leaders as 'popular' figures (in the sense of both as 'one of the people' and as adored by the people). The chapter broadly elucidates the interaction and blending of multiple frame structures involved in each of these 'image-types' and presents emergent networks for each cult.

Chapter 4 introduces the notion of *conceptual metonymy* and focuses on the role that it plays in the manifestation and structuration of both Mussolini's and Ceaușescu's cults. After a brief overview of metonymy and metaphor (which also factors into discussion) from a cognitive-linguistic perspective, three such roles in particular are examined: (a) metonymy's *indexical* qualities in 'presencing' the leader even when he is not physically there via his indirect representation in cult symbols; (b) the metonymies central to both regimes' deployment of the hallmark political metaphor THE NATION IS A BODY with a focus in turn on its role in their populist self-representations and its role in their conceptions of the 'New Man;' and (c) what I consider to be the 'cognitive consequences' of such widespread metonymies, which consists of a kind of conceptual conflation of the leader with the frame of FASCISM/SOCIALISM at large, and even beyond.

Chapter 5 then centers on the peculiar ways in which both regimes manipulated and appropriated *time* in the service of their respective cults from the perspective of Conceptual Blending Theory (Fauconnier & Turner 2002). Departing from the observation that leader cults often evince a potent obsession each with past, present, and future time, this chapter analyzes various combinatory uses of each 'kind' of time in the service of both Mussolini's and Ceaușescu's cults. I argue that the salient allure of Ancient Rome in the case of Fascist Italy and a pantheon of celebrated leaders from Romanian history in the case of communist Romania (all, of course, supplied by particular frames) were recruited to proffer both Mussolini and Ceaușescu with legitimacy in the present. Metonymic relations inherent in regime-sanctioned construction projects and monuments, on the other hand, supplied Mussolini's and Ceaușescu's cults with a degree of *permanence* by projecting the present into the future. Finally, an analysis of a handful of different artistic artifacts manifesting the self-proclaimed historic epochs of each regime – that is, Mussolini's *era fascista* ('Fascist Era') and Ceaușescu's *Epocă de Aur* ('Golden Age') – elucidates the diverse frame structures recruited in their depiction as the simultaneous embodiment, enactor, and culmination of history, as proper 'historic agents.'[55]

The data examined in Chapters 3 through 5 focus on cultic images, messages, and dissemination largely 'from above' – that is, in line with the cults' own 'points of view,' to echo Ben-Ghiat's remarks from earlier. Chapter 6, in contrast, turns to examples of cultic production 'from below' that at once go against the ubiquitous representations (and their constative dimensions) disseminated 'from above' as they redeploy them in the form of jokes, caricatures, and ironies, whether intentional or not, evincing a kind of cultic dialogism. The chapter begins by bridging some of the broader, transdisciplinary approaches to 'subversion' and the

[54] This is evidenced, for example, in jokes or caricatures that take a particular representation exalting the leader and turn it on its head (cf. Chapter 6).

[55] The term originates in Claudio Fogu's (2003) book *The Historic Imaginary: The Politics of History in Fascist Italy*. While devised precisely with Mussolini in mind, I argue that it is applicable to any figure or regime for which the 'historic' as a broad category is of observable preoccupation.

interrelationship between the powerful and the powerless, 'high' and 'low,' and 'domination' and 'resistance' with the constructionist and cognitive-linguistic approach laid out thus far. As will be shown, I view such subversive reappropriations as instances of 'creative conceptual transfer' wherein established, entrenched cult constructions are redeployed in atypical contexts (from, again, the regime's 'point of view') to new effects. This is demonstrated first with jokes and 'overt' caricatures, and then explored in terms of the (ubiquitous?) potential for ironic interpretation as falling out of any given cult artifact.

Finally, Chapter 7 presents an extended conclusion in which the constructional 'afterlives' of both Mussolini's and Ceauşescu's cults are explored. It starts off with a simple question: what happens to cult systems when the leader they venerate is gone? Considering iconoclastic practices in the immediate aftermaths of their falls, evidenced 'nostalgia' for both leaders in recent years, and the kinds of new meanings that emerge from the (re)use of classic cult constructional forms in present day, it opens up a multitude of questions into cult evolution, maintenance, degeneration, and semiosis at large. Unable to provide concrete answers to any of the questions posed, it instead concludes with a series of future considerations on the particular interdisciplinarity here championed, what other 'cultic' data might be out there, and what the benefits or consequences might be of postulating 'visual' constructions for Construction Grammar as a whole.

Chapter 2 – *Cognitive Linguistics: Key Ideas*

2.1 – Introduction

In Chapter 1, I briefly supplied what I called my 'cognitive' definition of personality cults with little additional elaboration. It is supplied again below:

> A personality cult is a complex network built up of a dynamic chain of frame-structured conceptual blends that themselves (potentially) constructionalize and form constructions at varying levels of schematicity.

This chapter constitutes an overview of some of cognitive linguistics' key ideas that are fundamental to my ensuing analysis, including various terms in the above definition such as 'network,' 'frame,' 'conceptual blend,' 'construction,' and 'schematicity.' This chapter is not devised as an in-depth literature review of all of cognitive linguistics and its many classic texts but rather an expansion of particular topics relevant to this dissertation.[1] It is organized as follows: semantic frames are discussed in section 2.2 alongside the relevant notions of construal, profiling, and framing. Section 2.3 then introduces and elaborates some of the key terms and ideas in Conceptual Blending Theory, and section 2.4 fleshes out my use of material anchors. Sections 2.5 and 2.6 are each dedicated to Construction Grammar: section 2.5 overviews the main tenets and terms of the theory (in fact, a family of theories) including usage, frequency, networks, inheritance, entrenchment, and, of course, constructions themselves. Section 2.6 then turns to a discussion of recent expansions of the constructionist framework to 'non-traditional' communicative data such as multimodal communication and discourse-wide questions of genre, priming this dissertation's own such extension of the framework to hypervisual leader cult data.

Cognitive linguistics itself was introduced in the last chapter with attention paid to its focus on *usage*, its *cognitive commitment*, its interdisciplinarity, its applicability to multimodal data, and the idea of a 'construction.' It was argued that the framework was well-suited to the study of personality cult phenomena as a communicative system by virtue of (a) its attention to both universal and culture-specific aspects of cognition and (b) its ability to accommodate non-linguistic and multimodal communicative data. As regards the former, this joint commitment to both universal and cultural factors allows for broader trends and patterns to be observed in cult structuration without risking the erasure of each cult's particular nuances. More concretely, while specific frames or metonymic mappings may vary from cult to cult, the ways in which they interact, are organized, and become conventionalized require the same kinds of ordinary cognitive processes and phenomena that play a role in all usage and knowledge of language. Processes such

[1] Many of cognitive linguistics' various 'classic texts' were compiled in Geeraerts (2006) and can be accessed therein. Certain others will be introduced as we go. For more expansive overviews of the topics here discussed, as well as the cognitive-linguistic enterprise more generally, see Dancygier & Sweetser (2014) and contributions in Dancygier (2017b) and Wen & Taylor (2021).

as entrenchment, conceptual blending, metonymic and metaphoric inferencing, and constructionalization are all – as we shall see – ubiquitous in thought and language. Understanding and identifying the ways in which such processes both operate and can be manipulated in the service of a particular communicative goal (e.g. cult construction), however, can tell us much about how cults emerge in the ways that they do, in the contexts that they do.

Moreover, cognitive linguistics' accommodation of multimodality is not merely serendipitous for the cultic data at hand, multimodal and *hypervisual* as it is. Rather, such data – and, consequently, this dissertation as a whole – can also be situated within current trends each in Construction Grammar and in cognitive-linguistic research more generally that (a) are pushing for a greater integration of linguistic and non-linguistic elements in theories of communication (e.g. Multimodal Construction Grammar) and that (b) apply 'beyond the sentence level,' which is to say at a broader, discourse-level of interaction (e.g. the aforementioned attention to questions of genre).[2] As we shall see as we go, this dissertation presents a use of 'construction' that is a rather radical departure from conventional cognitive-linguistic usage in that it is focused primarily on *visual images*. What precisely this means, what it entails, and how it relates to the linguistic sense of the term are questions that will be unpacked, explicated, and addressed throughout the chapters that follow.

2.2 – Semantic Frames

At the heart of much work in cognitive linguistics is the concept of a semantic frame. As we can recall from the last chapter, frames are experience-based conceptual schematizations that can be defined as "any system of concepts related in such a way that to understand any one of them you have to understand the whole structure in which it fits" (Fillmore 1982: 111). This is to say that frames, as "'prefab' chunk[s] of knowledge structure… possess gestalt structure" such that "an expression referring to some aspect of a frame structure gives conceptual access to the entire structure… evoking one aspect of a frame provides access to the entire frame, and individual frame components are understood in the context of the entire frame" (Dancygier & Sweetser 2014: 17).

Frames are understood as being comprised of *frame elements*, which are simply regular or conventionalized participants or aspects of a particular frame. As an example, both Dancygier and Sweetser (2014: 18) and Gawron (2011: 670) supply the frame of a (traditional) WEDDING, whose elements might include the husband, wife, ceremony, date, best man, maid of honor, priest, etc. These elements are not obligatory in every evocation or invocation of the frame (e.g. a gay wedding, a non-religious wedding, etc.); however, they nonetheless constitute elements of the WEDDING frame by virtue of their conventional association (i.e. established frequency) with it. Frames are thus often discussed as having 'slots,' elements that can – but need not – be filled in depending on a given context. One in the same 'participant' can function as a frame element of multiple frames, and frames themselves can serve as participants in other frames, highlighting the interconnected nature of conceptual structure.

Frames are thus, in a sense, then, quite ordinary, ubiquitous as they are in human thought and language. At the same time, though, as the conceptual building blocks of communication, they can be recruited, manipulated, and deployed to a variety of wholly *extra*ordinary ends. This is

[2] As some examples of recent work in cognitive linguistics that have embraced multimodality as key data to attaining a holistic understanding of human communication, see Forceville & Urios-Aparisi (2009); Dancygier & Sweetser (2012); Sanz (2013); Steen & Turner (2013); Cienki (2016); Feyaerts, Brône & Oben (2017); Pérez Sobrino (2017); and Forceville (2020, 2021).

certainly true of politics – and, by extension, cults of personality – where figures, groups, or parties deliberately select and deploy a set of frames within a community in attempt to structure a set of shared communal values or beliefs.[3] The fact that frames do not merely exist but can also be expressly *used* for specialized purposes requires that a distinction be made between a generic 'usage' of frames and a more agentive process of 'framing,' which is to say the purposeful "establishing [of] a particular set of frames as the dominant one in the public political debate, thus setting the agenda as well as target topics and values, and influencing its outcome" (Musolff 2019: 3; see also Wehling 2017). Within the context of cult systems, with their blend of proscribed and prescribed images, elucidating both frames recruited (i.e. the 'what') and processes of framing (i.e. the 'how') will be of central importance.

Additionally useful here are the concepts of 'construal' and 'profile' as introduced in Langacker (1987, 1991). Langacker observes how the meaning of a given expression or image is not limited to merely the conceptual content that it evokes, but is also constrained and determined by the way in which that content is *construed* – that is, how it is portrayed, what particular aspects are backgrounded or foregrounded, what is (or is not) specified, etc. Construal ultimately determines an expression or image's *profile*, which amounts to the aspect(s) of a given frame that are highlighted or "put onstage and foregrounded as the general locus of… attention" in a particular utterance or instantiation (Langacker 2008: 66). Considering again the WEDDING frame, different elements of that frame thus profile different aspects of it. For example, take 'bride,' 'best man,' and 'priest.' While all participants in the wedding event, each has a very distinct role that, in its invocation, in turn highlights different aspects of the WEDDING frame itself.

We can take as an example Italian Fascism's and Romanian communism's shared exploitation of history for mythologizing and legitimizing purposes (to be discussed in detail in Chapter 5). Each of the various historical figures, events, and ideas (i.e. frame elements) that were recruited from various historically-based frames (e.g. ANCIENT ROME, ANCIENT DACIA,[4] etc.) were both (a) dispersed widely enough within the shared imaginaries of their respective populations to be readily accessible and interpretable and (b) considered powerful or appealing enough to properly 'frame' Mussolini, Ceauşescu, and their regimes in the desired positive light. This framing could then be accomplished in various ways, depending on a given frame's profile as construed in a given instantiation of the cult.

2.3 – Mental Spaces & Conceptual Blending Theory

Gilles Fauconnier's (1994, 1997) theory of mental spaces and Fauconnier and Turner's (2002) framework for the interaction between such spaces known as Conceptual Blending Theory are helpful in understanding the emergence of meaning structures between frames. Fauconnier and Turner define mental spaces as "small conceptual packets constructed as we think and talk, for the purposes of local understanding and action" (2002: 40). As such, they are themselves comprised of frames and, like frames, can also become entrenched in long-term memory (ibid., 102-103). Mental spaces interact to form 'blends,' which consist of two or more input spaces that are structured by some overarching frame and combine to create new meaning structures. This

[3] See, as an example, George Lakoff's (2004, 2016) arguments on the different familial frame-structured, metaphorical worldviews that conservatives and liberals hold in American politics. The former, per Lakoff, adopt a 'strict father' model while the latter adopt a 'nurturing parent' one.

[4] The ancient, pre-Roman kingdom based in the territory of present-day Romania that, with time, came to exemplify the Romanian spirit and was depicted as a kind of precursor to Ceauşescu's own regime.

'emergent structure,' as it is called, arises in the blend despite the fact that it is not found directly in any of the 'input' spaces, through processes of (frame) composition, completion, and elaboration. Crucial to these processes are both what Fauconnier and Turner term 'vital relations' as well as the 'compression' of these vital relations that can occur across input spaces or in an emergent blend. Vital relations themselves are schematic conceptual relations that include Change, Identity, Time, Space, Cause-Effect, Role-Value, Analogy, Disanalogy, Property, and Intentionality. In unconsciously structuring a blend, these relations constitute "outer-space" links between input spaces that motivate the blend and which in turn can be compressed into relations inside the blend itself, which they term "inner-space" relations (ibid., 92-93).

We can take two examples to demonstrate. First, as Sweetser (2017a: 383) observes, one can hold up a photograph of an infant and unproblematically say to a friend "Here's my mom at age two." While at first blush a mundane and uncomplicated act, our friend's (distinctly human) ability to understand the baby in the photograph and our mother as the same person actually requires a series of complex *mappings* and processes of *compression* between relations such as Identity (the mother likely bears little to no resemblance to her baby self) and those of Time, Cause-Effect and Change that play fundamental roles in our understanding and conceptualization of aging as a process.

As a second example we can take a metaphoric blend relevant to the personality cults at hand that we might simply call POLITICS IS A RELIGION.[5] Within cult systems, as we saw in the previous chapter, a central component of their 'performative' dimension is the undisputed adulation of the leader. He is to be praised, celebrated, and hailed as a providential figure who has brought, is bringing, or will bring greatness to the nation, which itself is often invoked in sacral terms. Whether 'fascism,' 'socialism,' or some other ideology (e.g. capitalism), the leader is the embodiment of a national 'dogma.' Various rituals of 'worship' emerge, too, to venerate the leader, the ideology, and the nation, in which citizens are dutifully expected to participate.

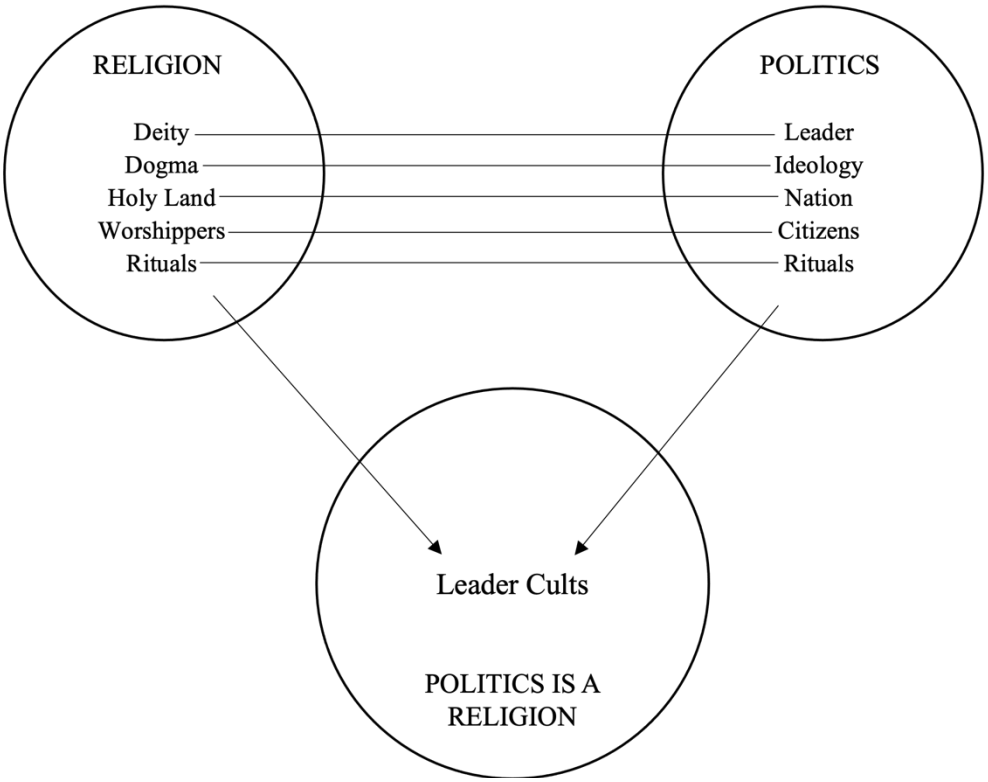
In blending terms, this entails that various elements within a frame of RELIGION come to structure corresponding elements within a frame of POLITICS that give rise to an emergent metaphoric blend: POLITICS IS A RELIGION.[6] This particular kind of blend can be understood as what Fauconnier and Turner (2002: 126) call a 'single-scope network,' which is a network of mental spaces that has "two input spaces with different organizing frames, one of which is projected to organize the blend. Its defining property is that the organizing frame of the blend is an extension of the organizing frame of one of the inputs but not the other." Thus, in this this schematic discussion of the POLITICS IS A RELIGION blend, RELIGION can be understood as the organizing frame through which the overall blend is structured, resulting in an emergent

[5] Metaphors, like frames, are supplied in the cognitive-linguistic literature in small, capitalized letters. Metaphor and its relation to metonymy will be taken up in detail in Chapter 4.

[6] Scholars of Italian Fascism will surely have in mind Emilio Gentile's seminal (1993) *Il culto del littorio: la sacralizzazione della politica nell'Italia fascista* (*The Sacralization of Politics in Fascist Italy* in English), in which he theorizes and documents Italian Fascism as a secular religion, one that we might call, in cognitive-linguistic notation, FASCISM IS A RELIGION. While it is no doubt worthy of an in-depth cognitive analysis, I will not be taking it up here beyond this schematic example and will instead refer the reader to a handful of studies – namely Gentile (1993, 2004, 2006); Roberts (2009); Adamson (2014) – that outline, champion, or dispute the metaphor's applicability, descriptive usefulness, and ontological status. I will simply add to this colorful discussion that, from the perspective of a cognitive linguist, positing something as a metaphor (or a metaphoric blend) does not by any means necessitate an understanding of it as 'not real' or comparably as something 'figurative' in opposition to something 'literal.' Indeed, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's (1980) book *Metaphors We Live By* on the centrality of metaphor to human language, thought, and understanding (and the avalanche of research in its wake) have made this apparent.

conceptualization of politics *as* a religion. A rendering of the kinds of mappings this blend might entail is provided below in Figure 2.1:

Figure 2.1: POLITICS IS A RELIGION blend



The upper two circles in Figure 2.1 represent the input spaces to the blend, which here consist of frames of RELIGION and POLITICS and various constitutive elements therein. The lines connecting elements in both input spaces represent the conceptual mappings that might emerge between the two to ultimately prompt, in their 'blending,' a resultant conceptualization and understanding of politics as a religion, of which the leader cult can be considered its own emergent, component structure. It should also be borne in mind that within any given blend (metaphoric or not), what precisely is 'projected' from input frames will vary according to particular communicative goals. That is, frames are never evoked *in their entirety* but, in their blending, constitutive elements are *selectively projected* according to, again, particular communicative goals (Fauconnier & Turner 2002). In understanding 'politics' as 'religion,' then, various elements of the POLITICS frame such as 'leader' or 'citizens' might feature in the blend while other such elements – 'political party,' 'elections,' 'legislation,' and countless others – will likely not. Put differently, while particular instantiations of the POLITICS IS A RELIGION blend will profile and project various, disparate elements of the input frames, the consistency or *frequency* with which such blends are prompted (deliberately or not) can lead to their societal conventionality, which can in turn entail their impact on cultural worldviews.[7] The role of 'frequency' will be explored further in section 2.5.

[7] On the relation between metaphor and worldview, see discussion in Underhill (2011) that also fittingly takes fascist (Nazi) and communist (Czechoslovak) discursive data in its analysis.

In sum, Conceptual Blending Theory thus provides a framework not only for unpacking what are otherwise often automatic and intuitive everyday acts of thought and communication, but also for acquiring a glimpse into the extraordinary creative power of the human mind and imagination in the construction of very particular meaning structures (see e.g. Coulson 2001, 2006; Turner 2006, 2014, 2020; Timalsina 2015; Gordejuela 2021). Blending, for Mark Turner, is "the origin of ideas [that] lets us fit the big world into the human mind by making new, tight, manageable ideas that we can exploit, like little mental tools, to help us deal with and manage the big world" (2014: 16).

2.4 – Material Anchors

Given this dissertation's focus on the intersection between the conceptual and the material in cult production, manifestation, and structuration, *material anchors* – as defined and described by Hutchins (1995, 2005) and briefly introduced in the previous chapter – are additionally relevant. In his 2005 article, Hutchins departs from the observation that humans have a longstanding tradition (and, indeed, a unique ability) of associating conceptual structure with material structure. He provides the example of a queue, noting how it is a "cultural practice [that] creates a spatial memory for the order of arrival of clients" in which "[t]he participants use their own bodies and the locations of their bodies in space to encode order relations" (ibid., 1559). A queue is thus the byproduct of a blend in which conceptual structure – the notion of sequential order – is mapped onto material structure, i.e. a group of bodies organized in a linear fashion. Material anchors thus provide crucial stability and a kind of concreteness to what might otherwise be ephemeral or abstract conceptualizations.

Such stability is particularly important for something like a personality cult network that is structured and propagated both 'from above' (i.e. regime sanctioned) and 'from below' (i.e. popularly expressed) in a dialogic fashion, and which is thus made up of a swirl of both mutually enforcing and competing conceptualizations of the leader's image, virtue, or skill. This in turn raises the question of what can function as a material anchor and how. Hutchins's answer is that "[a] physical structure is not a material anchor because of some intrinsic quality" that it possesses, but rather "because of the way it is used," thus suggesting a rich variety of possibilities that would seem to mirror the multitude of different forms that cult manifestation itself can take (ibid., 1562). Indeed, Stec and Sweetser (2013: 267) have noted that humans themselves are among the most powerful material anchors, an observation that bears important weight for the present study on personality cults given their position at an intersection of the conceptual and the material that is precisely centered on a human subject.

Given the visual, representational, and image-centric bent of the data to be addressed in this dissertation, however, I will be using Hutchins' ideas here in a broader sense.[8] My use of the term is comparable to the image theorist W. J. T. Mitchell's (2015) useful distinction between a picture and an image, which is worth outlining here. As he puts it, "[t]he picture is a material object, a thing you can burn or break or tear" and, as such, essentially equates to a material anchor (p. 16). The image, on the other hand, is "what appears in a picture" and, importantly, is "what survives its destruction," whether "in memory, in narrative, [or] in copies and traces in other media" (ibid.). Thus, the picture, as the material anchor, "is the image as it appears in a material support or a specific place" (ibid.). As conceptual structure, the image 'takes shape' or 'takes form'

[8] Hutchins' (2005) stricter sense of the term will still factor in, too – see Chapter 5's discussion of monumental metonymy and the idea of cult 'permanence.'

via the various forms of material structure (pictures) in which it features, but it also exists cognitively beyond it.

While this particular terminological distinction will not be deployed in what follows, it provides a useful means to bridge the gap between the more abstract conceptual anchorings (e.g. queues) as discussed by Hutchins with the visual representation of Mussolini and Ceauşescu that we will see and the conceptual semantic structures (e.g. frames, blends, metonymies) that they very much, in their own ways, 'anchor.'

2.5 – Construction Grammar 1: The Basics

Since its emergence in the late 1980s, Construction Grammar has matured and proliferated into a robust theory of language that has been widely applied both across languages and across domains of linguistic inquiry.[9] At its essence, Construction Grammar differs markedly from traditional, generative approaches to grammar (see Chomsky 1957, 1995) in that it considers language to consist entirely of various *constructions*, which can be defined (again, for now) as "conventionalized pairings of form and function" (Goldberg 2006: 1). This understanding of language in many ways constitutes a wider application of Saussure's (1916) remarks on the arbitrary relationship between the formal or acoustic properties of the linguistic sign (the *signifiant*, 'signifier') and its contentful referent (the *signifié*, 'signified'). However, whereas Saussure's observations were couched largely in individual lexical items, Construction Grammar extends these form-meaning pairings to represent the entirety of language. Thus, in this view, both the lexicon and 'grammar itself' (i.e. syntax) – considered largely independent of one another in generative approaches – are conceived in terms of various constructions, which in turn exist and operate at (and are differentiated by) varying levels of abstraction and complexity. This postulation reflects the common assumption in cognitive linguistics that there is in fact "no principled divide" between grammar and the lexicon, with constructions instead occupying spaces along a continuum or a cline with 'procedural' (i.e. grammatical) and 'contentful' (i.e. lexical) poles (Goldberg & Jackendoff 2004: 532). Constructions thus range, for example, from the most specific elements such as individual words and idioms up to highly schematic patterns of conventionalized linguistic usage, such as 'Argument Structure Constructions' (Goldberg 1995; Boas 2011; Perek 2015). To illustrate, various kinds of constructions and examples of each are provided on the following page in Table 2.1:

[9] As just a handful of examples of many such contributions, Construction Grammar or constructionist principles have been productively applied in research on both first language acquisition (e.g. Tomasello 2003; Goldberg 2006) and second language acquisition (e.g. Ellis 2003; De Knop & Gilquin 2016), in sociolinguistics (e.g. Croft & Trousdale 2009; Hollmann 2013), and into questions of dialectal variation (e.g. Hoffmann & Trousdale 2011). Constructionist approaches to questions of language change have proven similarly fruitful (e.g. Bergs & Diewald 2008; Traugott & Trousdale 2013; Barðdal et al. 2015; Coussé, Andersson & Olofsson 2018; and Sommerer & Smirnova 2020b). While much early work relied on English data, cross-linguistic and comparative work has also increased in recent years (e.g. Croft 2001; Fried & Östman 2004; Boas & Gonzálves-García 2014). Furthermore, and relevant for this dissertation's extension of Construction Grammar to account for cult construction, numerous studies that have applied constructionist principles 'beyond the sentence proper,' including work on its application to genre (e.g. Östman 2005; Antonopolou & Nikiforidou 2011; Hoffmann 2015; Nikiforidou 2016, 2018, 2021; Pagán Cánovas & Antović 2016; Hoffmann & Bergs 2018) and on the potential for 'multimodal' constructions (e.g. Steen & Turner 2013; Dancygier & Vandelanotte 2017a; Hoffmann 2017b, 2021; Zima & Bergs 2017b) are also worthy of note. These will be discussed in more detail in section 2.6.

Table 2.1: Constructions at varying levels of schematicity[10]

Constructions	**Examples**
Word	*Iran, another, banana*
Word (partially filled)	*Pre-N, V-ing*
Idiom (filled)	*Going great guns, give the Devil his due*
Idiom (partially filled)	*Jog <someone's> memory, <someone's> asking for it*
Idiom (minimally filled) *The Xer the Yer*	*The more you think about it, the less you understand*
Ditransitive Construction: Subj V Obj_1 Obj_2 (unfilled)	*He gave her a fish taco; he baked her a muffin*
Passive: Subj aux VPpp (PPby) (unfilled)	*The armadillo was hit by a car.*

There are in fact a handful of different theories of Construction Grammar that have been proposed, each with their own particular nuances, formalizations, and foci, and as such they are often referred to collectively as 'constructionist approaches' to language.[11] Despite certain differences, Goldberg (2013: 15) notes four core tenets that are shared by all such constructionist approaches, which are:

1. They consider language to be constituted entirely of *constructions*, which exist at varying levels of abstraction and complexity;
2. Grammar itself does not involve any kind of derivational component, such that semantics are directly associated with surface syntactic forms;
3. In line with other cognitive systems, language is organized in a network of nodes and links between those nodes (typically referred to as a *constructicon*); and
4. They account for cross-linguistic variation and generalizations in terms of domain-general cognitive processes or the functions of particular constructions themselves, rather than by a stipulating an underlying 'universal grammar' (see Roberts 2017).

Additionally, Goldberg notes a fifth tenet that is shared by many but not all constructionist approaches, which is that linguistic knowledge is *usage based* – that is, it is structured and determined by users' experience with, exposure to, and use of language (2013: 16; Bybee 2013: 49). Given these shared assumptions across most types of Construction Grammar, I have not selected one approach for my own purposes here but rather draw from these core tenets to exemplify their applicability and usefulness for modeling cult construction. In particular, and as will be elaborated in more detail below, this will center on the notions of constructions as form-

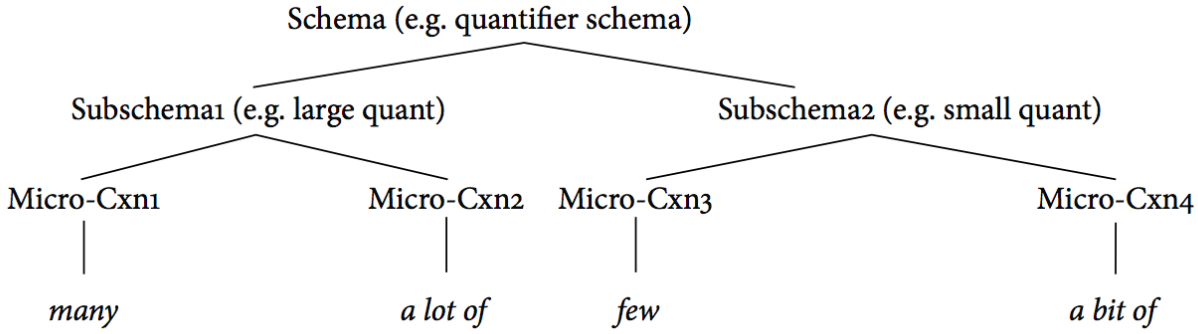
[10] Taken from Goldberg (2013: 17), included with permission of Oxford University Press. One will note, perhaps intuitively, that certain abbreviations stand for various linguistic categories, e.g. N for 'noun,' V for 'verb,' PP for 'prepositional phrase,' and VP 'for verb phrase.'

[11] At present, the principal 'schools' of Construction Grammar include: Berkeley Construction Grammar (see Fillmore, Kay & O'Connor 1988), Sign-Based Construction Grammar (see Boas & Sag 2012), Fluid Construction Grammar (see Steels 2011), Embodied Construction Grammar (see Bergen & Chang 2005; Feldman 2020), Cognitive Construction Grammar (see Lakoff 1987; Goldberg 1995, 2006), and Radical Construction Grammar (see Croft 2001). See also Hoffmann & Trousdale (2013: 111-252) for individual overviews of these various approaches, as well as Hoffmann (2017a: 321-329) for a comparative discussion.

meaning pairings, the network model, and the role of frequency (of usage) in structuring the network.

A few comments regarding terminology are first in order. While constructionist approaches consider all of language to consist in constructions, some scholars have found it useful to terminologically distinguish constructions at different levels of schematicity to facilitate analysis and discussion. I follow Traugott and Trousdale (2013) in this regard and employ their three-way distinction between *schemas*, *subschemas*, and *micro-constructions*.[12] Traugott and Trousdale consider schemas to be "abstract, semantically general groups of constructions" that are also crucially "abstractions across sets of constructions which are (unconsciously) perceived by language-users to be closely related to each other in the constructional network" (ibid., 14). This purely language-oriented understanding of a schema, however, can be expanded, and indeed Traugott and Trousdale note and draw from Kemmer's (2003: 78) definition of schemas as "essentially routinized, or cognitively entrenched, patterns of experience," which will be relevant for our purposes here. Schemas thus broadly constitute the highest, most abstract, and most general constructional patterns in a network that are in turn often instantiated by more specified 'subschemas.' Subschemas are hierarchically intermediate constructions that account for "subregularities" of schemas, or cases in which the fully general grades into the more specific (Boas 2013: 244; see Figure 2.2 below). Micro-constructions are then the most specific constructions, occupying the lowest levels of the network hierarchy and are themselves instantiated by individual *constructs*, or "empirically attested tokens," which is to say, "instances of use on a particular occasion, uttered by a particular speaker (or written by a particular writer) with a particular communicative purpose" (Traugott & Trousdale 2013: 16). This relationship between these different levels of constructions is illustrated below in the simplified taxonomic network provided in Figure 2.2:

Figure 2.2: Constructional hierarchy: schemas, subschemas, micro-constructions[13]

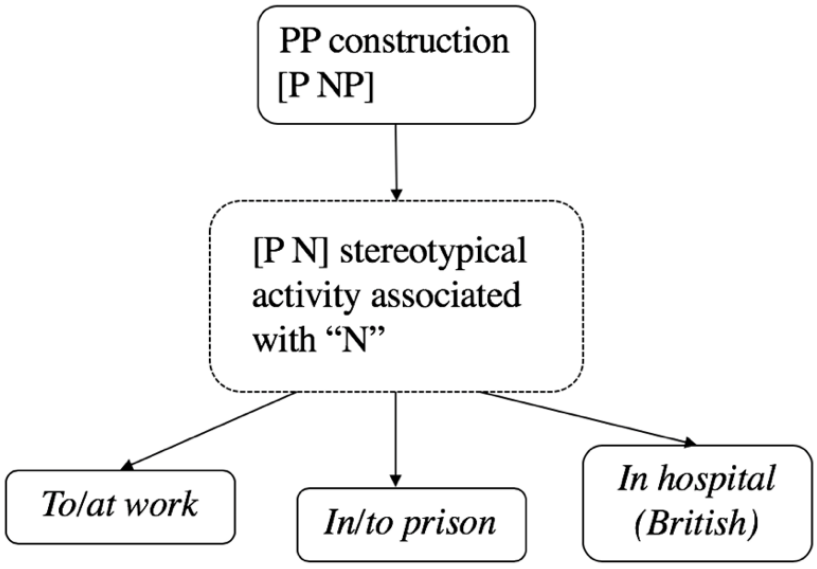


[12] These terminologies, however, vary and are not adopted in all constructionist approaches. In earlier work, for example, Traugott (2008) and Trousdale (2008) refer to the most schematic constructions as 'macro-constructions,' intermediate constructions as 'meso-constructions,' and the most specific constructions as 'micro-constructions.' These terms are also employed in other works such as the genre-based studies of Hoffmann (2015) and Hoffmann and Bergs (2018). Others, such as Goldberg, make no such schematicity-based terminological distinctions.

[13] Taken from Traugott & Trousdale (2013: 17), included with permission of Oxford University Press. One will also note here the shorthand representation of 'construction' as 'cxn.'

As mentioned, the network model is a core feature of constructionist approaches to language. All linguistic knowledge is taken to exist within a structured network as various constructional *nodes* and as *links* between these nodes. The various nodes that constitute a linguistic network are not randomly scattered, but rather are organized *hierarchically* in what Goldberg (1995) refers to as *inheritance relations*. These relations exist between nodes at different levels of schematicity within the network such that more abstract constructions occupying nodes higher up in the network (e.g. schemas) 'dominate' and thus 'sanction' more specific ones (e.g. subschemas or micro-constructions)[14] lower down in the hierarchy. In such relations of 'domination' and 'sanctioning,' the lower-level constructions in turn 'inherit' all information from dominating, higher-level ones that does not directly conflict with any of their own particular properties or any such properties inherited by intermediary nodes.[15] Such relations thus have the benefit of capturing broad generalizations while at the same time accommodating idiosyncrasies, both of which abound in language and for which any theory of language (much less communication more broadly) must account (Goldberg 2006: 45). This hierarchical nature of the network is demonstrated schematically below in Figure 2.3, which depicts how specific English P(reposition) N(oun) micro-constructions (e.g. *to/at work*) inherit their word order from a more general, abstract PP (prepositional phrase) construction higher up in the hierarchy:

Figure 2.3: Inheritance relations in a constructionist network[16]



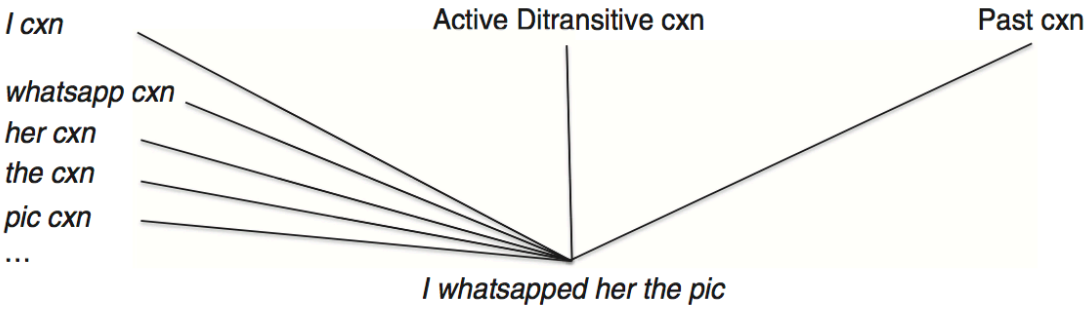
[14] This same relation of 'dominance' and 'sanctioning' also obtains, of course, between subschemas and micro-constructions, as indicated in Figure 2.2. The terms 'dominance' and 'sanctioning' are themselves related: 'dominance' refers to the hierarchical relationship between constructions, whereas 'sanction' – a term originating in Langacker's (1987) work on Cognitive Grammar – intends that the well-formedness of lower-level constructions is directly linked to and derives from the higher-level ones that dominate them.

[15] In her discussion of such relations, Goldberg includes Lakoff's (1984) apt term "inheritance with overrides" to signal this partial nature of generalizations (1995: 73-74). It is this very 'partial' aspect of generalizations in the network that crucially allows for increased specificity and complexity at the lower levels while at the same time permitting linguistic creativity and innovation (see also Goldberg 2019).

[16] Figure taken from Goldberg (2013: 21), included with permission of Oxford University Press.

Importantly, however, a given construction does not necessarily 'inherit' information from just one superordinate construction. Rather, and in line with the highly interconnected nature of the constructionist network, lower-level constructions tend to inherit from multiple higher-level constructions, and as such a given language network is characterized by *multiple inheritance relations* (Lakoff 1987; Langacker 1987; Goldberg 1995: 97-98; Trousdale 2013). Figure 2.4 provides a simplified representation for the relations of multiple inheritance involved in the phrase "I whatsapped her the pic":

Figure 2.4: Multiple inheritance relations[17]



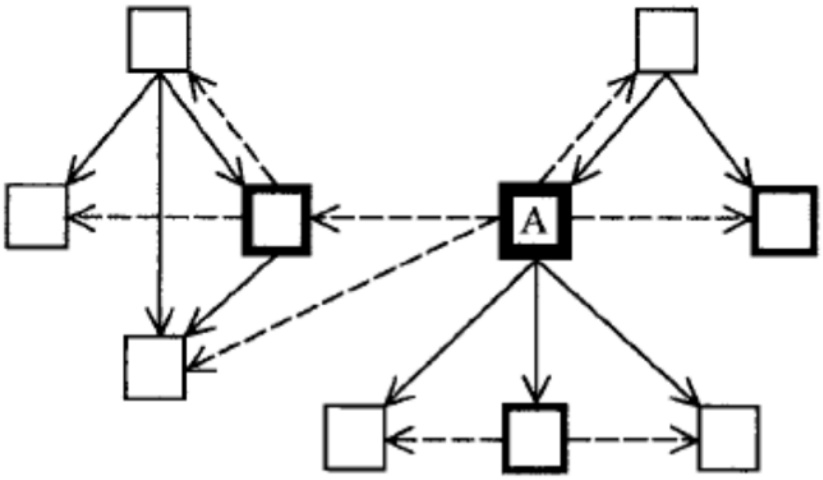
For a native speaker of English, "I whatsapped her the pic" may come across as a novel expression, but it is nonetheless intelligible: frame-based knowledge of what the texting app WhatsApp is and what it can be used for no doubt helps in processing, but the additional presence of an object ('pic') and a recipient ('her') – both of which are specific, 'contentful' constructions – located where they are in the phrase primes an abstract sense of 'transference,' and one that, given the appended *-ed* [t], is understood as having already taken place.[18] This kind of pattern recognition in turn draws from one's own exposure to and experience with language (to be discussed more below): that is, just as language-users draw on such patterns (i.e. constructions) in interpreting the utterances of others, they also deploy them in producing utterances of their own. It is likewise the case that any one utterance draws from a combination of specific constructions (e.g. the individual words used) and schematic constructions (e.g. 'Active Ditransitive'), as Figure 2.4 also indicates.

Furthermore, constructional relations also exist 'horizontally' – that is, they obtain also between constructions at 'the same' level of schematicity.[19] The relational links between various constructions in the network thus are far more "tangled" than simple taxonomies might otherwise

[17] Example and figure taken from Hoffmann (2017a: 316), included with permission of Cambridge University Press.
[18] The intelligibility of this phrase is in part attributable to the *prototypical structure* exhibited by both constructions and categorization more generally (see Lakoff 1987 for the classic discussion), to be discussed in more detail below. As another example, Goldberg (1995: 35) notes that when asking ten non-linguists to identify what a nonsense word 'topamased' meant in the phrase 'She topamased him something,' six out of ten responded that it meant 'give.' Here as well, then, we can understand the presence and arrangement of elements associated with canonical 'transference' as informing these individuals' classification of 'topmased' as 'give,' which itself can be considered the most general (i.e. prototypical) English verb whose semantics indicate transference.
[19] It should also be noted that schematicity is itself a gradient phenomenon, and one that is subject to change over time (Traugott & Trousdale 2013: 16). This is particularly evident in work on language change and variation, in which innovations and change in language use accordingly impact and shape the constructional makeup of the overall linguistic network and are at the heart of its dynamic nature.

suggest, with constructions linked both to their dominating, superordinate constructions as well as to any 'sister' constructions that they might have (Goldberg 1995: 73). Langacker (2008: 226) provides a useful diagram, reproduced below in Figure 2.5, that depicts this complex interconnectivity between various constructions:

Figure 2.5: Prototypicality and motivation in a linguistic network[20]



One will immediately note the bidirectional arrows in Figure 2.5 as opposed to the unidirectional, top-down arrows in Figure 2.3. This is intended to capture the fact that constructions "mutually motivate each other and share aspects of their representation" (Goldberg 2019: 36).[21] Constructional prototypicality (see Lakoff 1987; Östman 2020) and relations of polysemy are relevant here: Construction 'A' in Figure 2.5 can be understood both as the *prototypical* sense of this particular cluster of constructions (to use Goldberg's terms) as well as the most *entrenched* sense (to use Langacker's). In the constructional network, then, less conventional or novel constructions can be understood as 'radiating' outward from a prototypical construction that sanctions them. Goldberg (1995: 75) discusses such polysemous relations for the English Active Ditransitive Construction (e.g. "I whatsapped her the pic"), reproduced below in (1a-f):

(1) a. 'X CAUSES Y to RECEIVE Z' (central sense)
Example: Joe gave Sally the ball.
b. Conditions of satisfaction imply 'X CAUSES Y to RECEIVE Z'
Example: Joe promised Bob a car.
c. 'X ENABLES Y to RECEIVE Z'
Example: Joe permitted Chris an apple.
d. 'X CAUSES Y not to RECEIVE Z'
Example: Joe refused Bob a cookie.

[20] Included with permission of Oxford University Press.
[21] As Goldberg importantly points out, 'motivation' in grammar "captures a fundamental structuralist insight which has been overlooked by most formal linguistic theories," which is that "elements in a system influence each other even when they do not literally interact" (1995: 72).

e. 'X INTENDS to CAUSE Y to RECEIVE Z'
Example: Joe baked Bob a cake.
f. 'X ACTS to CAUSE Y to RECEIVE Z at some future point in time'
Example: Joe bequeathed Bob a fortune.

Examples (1b-f) can be understood as extensions of the prototypical sense of this particular construction in (1a), each of which in turn "mutually motivates" the other by their shared schematic form and meaning – the presence of an agent X, an object Z, a recipient Y, and some sense of transference. This mutual motivation is directly related to and reflects language usage: while inheritance relations are indeed asymmetrical (i.e. top-down) in nature, a usage-based understanding of language in turn entails that higher-level, more abstract constructions – as conventionalized patterns – are stored on the condition that they occur frequently enough in a language to be registered as such. In other words, just as higher-level or prototypical senses of constructions sanction lower-level constructions or extended constructional senses, they are also themselves created and reinforced by these very instantiations that are recognized to constitute them. Consequently, then, language itself emerges "in a bottom-up fashion" (Hoffmann 2017a: 315; Sommerer & Smirnova 2020a: 20).

Approaching language from a usage-based, bottom-up perspective highlights the critical role played by two related factors: that of the *frequency* of constructions and that of constructional *entrenchment*.[22] In terms of frequency, we can note two kinds: token and type frequency. Token frequency refers to how frequently a specific utterance is encountered, while type frequency instead concerns how frequently a particular pattern is encountered (and recognized as such). We can take the example in Figure 2.4 to illustrate: if encountered frequently enough, an expression such as "I whatsapped her the pic" can in fact become *entrenched* as a micro-construction in its own right, completely lexically 'filled' and stored as a complete unit. At the same time, however, if this micro-construction is also frequently encountered alongside different variants of its same pattern (e.g. examples [1a-f]), it can lead to its recognition and storage (or further entrenchment) as a more abstract construction – the Active Ditransitive Construction. Thus, in a "bottom-up" approach to language structuration, it is the instantiation of particular constructs that, given sufficient frequency, can lead to their entrenchment as micro-constructions and that can in turn result in further processes of pattern detection and schematization, and ultimately the creation and storage of more abstract constructions (schemas) higher up in the network hierarchy.

Any discussion of frequency and entrenchment in language, however, must acknowledge the thorny – indeed, impossible – nature of operationalizing any kind of universal understanding of what 'sufficient' frequency is. That is, there is no single, objective measure of what constitutes sufficient frequency to achieve constructional entrenchment, and instead one should expect it to vary considerably across different contexts. Part of the issue, too, however, is that the term 'frequency' itself remains rather unspecified despite its frequent invocation in the literature. Although it is far beyond the scope of the present project to properly dissect what is variously intended by it, a couple of illustrative developments can be briefly discussed. First, in her most recent book, Goldberg (2019: 54) considers her own use of 'sufficient frequency' in her (2006: 5)

[22] The role that the frequency of a given construction plays in determining its overall cognitive status, and indeed that it plays in language more broadly, has long been shown in the work of Joan Bybee (e.g. 2006, 2007, 2010, 2013). The concept of conceptual entrenchment, in turn, owes great debt to the work of Ronald Langacker (e.g. 1987, 1991, 2017).

definition of constructions[23] to be "nonsensical" for two related reasons. The first is that it suggests some fixed threshold of exposure *n* at which a construction becomes 'storable' such that $n - 1$ encounters is (quite arbitrarily) insufficient and thus no pattern is stored. This then leads to the second issue, the problematic assumption that if $n - 1$ encounters are insufficient and thus at such a point the pattern is not storable, recursively, then, $n - 2$, $n - 3$, etc. encounters are also insufficient, such that any single encounter cannot ever be stored to give rise to a 'reencounter,' as it were.

At the same time, however, frequent exposure to a pattern is undeniably linked to its conceptual entrenchment in such a way that 'frequency' itself as a factor, even if problematic, cannot simply be categorically rejected. This has led some scholars to instead consider a given pattern's salience (see e.g. Schoonjans 2017: 3; Schmid 2020: 223-225) in certain contexts as a means to account for both the undeniable effects of frequency and the fact that it is relative. As Schmid (2020: 223) puts it, and as will be discussed as we go, "what is cognitively salient, because it has been entrenched very strongly by frequent repetition, is more likely to come to mind in a given usage situation than what is less salient," such that frequency and salience as factors playing into usage and entrenchment constitute "self-reinforcing feedback loop[s]."

In what follows, all discussions of 'frequency' or 'sufficient frequency' are thus intended in the vein of Traugott and Trousdale's (2013: 5) remarks, in part quoting Clark and Trousdale (2009: 38), that "the necessary frequency for entrenchment is 'gradual and relative, not categorical or universal'" and that 'sufficient frequency' is to be associated with "replication and conventionalization in the textual [or in this case, largely visual] record." Conventionalization, as Langacker (2017: 39) helpfully points out, is a *social* process of which entrenchment is the *individual* counterpart (see also Schmid 2020). Constructions are, of course, stored in individual language-users' minds, but they are then both deployed and absorbed through interaction with other users of that same language. The emergence and development of constructions, thus understood as a phenomenon that plays out both within and across language-users, is a process often referred to as *constructionalization* (Traugott & Trousdale 2013).

2.6 – Construction Grammar 2: Extending the Framework

While the previous section has laid out what we might consider to be the 'bread and butter' of constructionist approaches to *language*, as a theory it has steadily been applied to increasingly diverse phenomena (see note 9 above) and, consequently, has necessarily undergone modifications and adaptations. Proponents of extending the framework see no problem in such endeavors: Steen and Turner (2013: 260), in a seminal article exploring the application of constructionist principles to multimodal data (specifically televised network news), for example, readily remark that such extensions require the researcher to be "open to the possibility of radical discontinuities and unprecedented innovations." Similarly, in a chapter entitled "Dialects, Discourse and Construction Grammar" for the (2013) *Oxford Handbook of Construction Grammar*, Jan-Ola Östman and Graeme Trousdale note the likely need for re-evaluating some of the "traditional" features of Construction Grammar, suggesting that "constructions (as abstract generalizations over instances of usage) are maybe not merely form-meaning pairs, but tripartite form-meaning-function constellations" (2013: 486). Thomas Hoffmann, too, a leading scholar in Construction Grammar, even goes as far as asserting in the recently released *Routledge Handbook of Cognitive Linguistics*

[23] The relevant line reads: "…patterns are stored as constructions even if they are fully predictable as long as they occur with *sufficient frequency*," emphasis mine (ibid.).

that "Construction Grammar is not just a theory of grammar" but rather "a framework that also offers important insights into human semiosis and thinking" (2021: 89).

Before we can begin adapting and applying the constructionist principles just discussed to hypervisual cult construction and manifestation, however, it is perhaps helpful to first review some of the ways in which Construction Grammar has already been expanded to account for communicative data 'beyond language proper' and how its principles and assumptions have been adopted and adapted therein. The first consists in what is now widely referred to as *Multimodal Construction Grammar*, which, as the name suggests, seeks to investigate ways in which the constructionist bread and butter of form-meaning pairings can be applied to contexts in which language is not the only communicative modality in operation (see e.g. Steen & Turner 2013; Zima & Bergs 2017a,b; Hoffmann 2021). Much of this work has focused on multimodality in face-to-face interactions, such as co-speech gesture (e.g. Schoonjans et al. 2016; Cienki 2017; Mittelberg 2017a,b) and co-speech gaze behavior (e.g. Brône et al. 2017), which has sought to assess the ways in which combined 'audio-visual' constructions might be posited, largely with experimental approaches that track their synchronization and frequency of co-occurrence. There is no consensus as of yet, however, as to what exactly constitutes (or should constitute) a multimodal construction, reflecting both the relative freshness of the field as well as differences in theoretical assumptions. Ziem (2017), for example, takes a conservative position, suggesting that *obligatory* co-occurrence of speech and gesture – as opposed to optional or occasional co-occurrence – is necessary for such a multimodal construct to be posited, with the resulting inventory of multimodal constructions thus being quite small.[24] Lanwer (2017: 2), on the other hand, writing in the same issue of *Linguistics Vanguard* dedicated to questions into the nature of Multimodal Construction Grammar(s) (Zima & Bergs 2017b), instead embraces the prototypical nature of constructional knowledge and the gradience of conceptual entrenchment and takes the position that "differences between multi- and unimodal constructions can always be a matter of schematicity." In other words, we should *expect* variation both from construction to construction as well as from language-user to language-user, such that 'obligatoriness' itself becomes impossible to pin down or systematically define (see also Östman 2020).

Multimodal constructionist approaches have also been extended to nonverbal communicative forms, such as those that rely on both image and text. Dancygier and Vandelanotte (2017a), for example, consider Internet memes from a constructionist perspective, signaling their conventional alignment of text and image and the ways in which meaning emerges between the two. They observe that it is typically the image component that supplies rich frame structures that elaborate and fill in constructional 'slots' supplied in often otherwise subject-less, linguistic expressions to result in emergent, viewpointed meanings.[25] Work by Neil Cohn (e.g. 2013, 2018) on comics, too, explores narrative sequencing and structure as "stored patterns" in a constructionist sense that are conventionally employed and readily interpretable as such by readers.

Equally important to our comprehension of media such as memes or comics is our recognition of them as instantiating particular *genres*. Genre itself has recently attracted considerable interest in both cognitive linguistics and cognitive science more generally (e.g. Steen

[24] This position is supported by the intuitive notion that many instances of co-speech gesture could be felicitously 'avoided' without impacting the overall meaning of the linguistic utterance itself.

[25] Constructionist approaches to Internet memes can also be found in Zenner & Geeraerts (2018), Vandelanotte (2021), and Schilperoord & Cohn (2022), the last of which also consists of a remarkable analysis of what they term the *Before-After*-construction across multiple multimodal genres. For recent work on multimodal viewpoint phenomena from a cognitive perspective more generally, see Dancygier & Sweetser (2012), Dancygier, Lu & Verhagen (2016), and the special edition of the journal *Cognitive Linguistics*, edited by Barbara Dancygier and Lieven Vandelanotte (2017b).

2011; Stukker, Spooren & Steen 2016; Vergaro 2018), including research from a constructionist perspective.[26] Much of this genre-related work stems from Östman's (2005) musings on Construction Grammar and discourse. In this seminal paper, he draws parallels between the conventionalized linguistic properties of what he calls certain 'discourse patterns' (i.e. genres) and those observed in grammar 'proper' and makes the argument for extending constructionist approaches 'beyond the sentence' – the traditional focus of syntactic theory – to account also for conventionalized pairings of form and meaning more broadly. Östman makes his case by discussing a range of different genre features from written-language data, ranging from particular, genre-specific linguistic configurations (e.g. article omission in newspaper headlines) up to full-on constructional 'templates,' or the conventional visual arrangement and ordering of items that in itself evokes a particular genre (e.g. recipes).[27]

Constructionist approaches have since been widely applied to a variety of linguistic particularities of genre phenomena, including syntactic-argument-omission in recipes and 'labelese' (Ruppenhofer & Michaelis 2010), article omission in headlines (Östman 2005), an English *past + now* construction characteristic of literary narratives (Nikiforidou 2012), perspective markers in Greek fairy tales (Nikiforidou 2016), stage directions (Nikiforidou 2021), and even the sociolinguistic dimensions of disparaging football chants (Hoffmann 2015) as well as to the broader relation between conventionalized constructional patterns and their recognition in parody (see e.g. Antonopoulou & Nikiforidou 2011; Antonopoulou, Nikiforidou & Tsakona 2015). Some examples are provided below in (2a-d), with genre-based, construction-specific variants given alongside their otherwise typical (or would-be atypical) counterparts:[28]

(2) a. *Serve ø cold* (object-omission in a recipe)
(compare with a standard imperative with 'serve,' e.g. *serve **it**!*)
b. *Contains no alcohol* (subject-omission in a food label)
(compare with e.g. ***It** contains no alcohol*)
c. *Mother Drowned Baby* (article-omission in a newspaper headline)
(compare with e.g. ***The** mother drowned **the**(her) baby*)
d. *She was now beginning to feel annoyed with them for being so late* (past-tense verb in conjunction with a proximal temporal deictic)
(a staple of literary narrative, compare with its unacceptability in a dialogic context -- ?? "I'm telling you, George now appeared in the doorway")[29]

Each of these examples represents "conventionalized pairings of meaning and form, of varying degrees of length and schematicity, whose pragmatic specifications additionally include

[26] Inquiries explicitly linking multimodal constructions to considerations of genre have gained much traction in recent years, such as Fischer and Aarestrup's (2021) analysis of Instagram posts, Alexander Dübbert's (2021) investigation of brand names, as well as the meme- and comic-based studies discussed above.

[27] One will note the alignment here with the Bakhtinian conception of genre (Bakhtin 1986) as variously complex, both conventionally constructed and constrained 'styles' of language usage.

[28] While probing questions of 'genre' has certainly been productive for researchers of Construction Grammar, it is not the only topic that discourse-wide applications of Construction Grammar and constructionist principles seek to address. Scholars have also considered questions of constructional variation, conventionality, dialogism, and the role of context (e.g. Bergs & Diewald 2009; Brône & Zima 2014; Nikiforidou, Marmaridou & Mikros 2014; Petré & Anthonissen 2020; Matsumoto 2021).

[29] Example (2d) provided in Nikiforidou (2012: 194), originally from Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*. The unacceptable dialogic variant is also taken from this work (p. 184), marked here by '??,' the commonplace notation in linguistics for an utterance that is non-standard but not ungrammatical.

their association with particular socio-cultural contexts" – all classic criteria for constructional status simply applied on a broader scale (Nikiforidou 2018: 544). As with Multimodal Construction Grammar, however, there is also disagreement in terms of how and in what ways genre-based constructions at large should be conceived. In general, there is a question of whether *all* genres should be considered constructions in their own right, or if only certain genres that fit certain criteria should merit constructional status. Hoffmann and Bergs (2018) take the former position, rooting their claim in the usage-based, bottom-up nature of language development as discussed in the previous section. In their view, larger 'chunks' or patterns of language, encountered frequently enough (in either 'type' or 'token' sense), can become entrenched just as traditional constructions can, resulting in the formation of the same kind of schematic, hierarchical, prototypically-structured networks. They note:

> Genre-based knowledge is not innate. Instead, language users are exposed to complex FORM-MEANING text constructs and, guided by domain-general cognitive principles (particularly entrenchment based on type and token frequency, salience/prominence and pressing constraints of the working memory), store genre constructions of various levels of abstraction in their long-term memory. Therefore, we put forward the hypothesis that the construction – the basic unit of human symbolic communication – is also the basic mental unit for genre information (ibid., 11).

In their view, all genres can be represented in this way, and they take up Shakespearean sonnets and recipes as illustrative examples. Others, however, such as Nikiforidou (2018), contest the scope of such a claim and question whether *all* genres should be afforded construction status. For Nikiforidou, citing work in Fischer (2015), one critical criterion for determining which kinds of genres should be considered as constructions depends on their *transferability* – that is, how feasibly and felicitously they can be used in 'other' contexts (ibid., 562). She gives the example of the expression *My name's X (and I'm an __holic)*, which can be readily recognized as evoking the introduction of a new member in an AA group, even in other contexts in which it can there produce humorous incongruity (ibid.).[30] She also interestingly notes that 'transferability' "appears to correlate with the degree of entrenchment and concomitant conventionalization of the link between linguistic form and discourse setting" (ibid.). While not fully operationalizable, this understanding of transferability, with its direct linkage to conceptual entrenchment, raises interesting questions for our understanding of personality cult constructions, a topic to which we shall return later and indeed throughout this dissertation.

[30] One will additionally note the partially schematic nature of the *-holic* construction, in that *alco-* can be felicitously substituted for any other number of morphemes indicating the substance of addiction, whether conventional (e.g. *shopaholic*, *workaholic*) or otherwise (e.g. *Trumpaholic*, as used in an amusing 2017 article written by Robert J. Landy for *Psychology Today*, accessed September 1, 2021 at https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/couch-and-stage/201702/trumpaholics-anonymous).

Chapter 3 – *Multiple Mussolinis, Numerous Nicolaes: Constructing the Polysemous Leader Image*

3.1 – Introduction

As we saw in the previous chapter, there is ample room to expand constructionist approaches to language to communicative data that go 'beyond the sentence' and the confines of traditional grammatical analyses. In what follows, I lay out my adaptations of constructionist principles to account for personality cult phenomena, focusing on various emergent 'image-types' of both Mussolini and Ceaușescu as seen (mostly) in photographs. To do so, I have selected three image-types for each leader: for both leaders this includes their depiction as a 'popular' figure (that is, in the sense of both 'adored by the people' and 'as one of the people'), while for Mussolini this also entails his representation as a 'virile' and as a 'warrior' figure and for Ceaușescu it includes his portrayal as a 'paternal' and as a 'royal' figure.[1] It should be noted up front that these image-types in no way constitute any kind of exhaustive categorization or typology for either leader's cult, and have rather been selected on the basis of their firm establishment in the literature (even if obliquely) and their noted salience and widespread dissemination within their respective societies. Rather, my aim here is to develop, present, and elaborate – as well as demonstrate – a cognitive-constructionist network model and its usefulness for understanding the multiple meaning structures that are brought into and which come to influence a cult's structure, image, and resultant polysemy.

The chapter itself is structured as follows: section 3.2 is divided into two parts, the first of which introduces and explains the model, focusing on aspects such as frames and blends, token and type frequency, conventionality, context, polysemy, and citationality, drawing on examples from both leaders' cults. The second part focuses on Mussolini as a 'virile' figure and presents

[1] Prominent examples of such works, even if they will be referenced below, are also supplied here grouped according to 'image-type': for a 'popular' Mussolini, i.e. as a man of the people, works include his widely circulated 1925/1926 biography *Dux*, written by his then lover, Margherita Sarfatti, as well as Burke (2001: 71), Sturani (2013: 147-148), and Swan (2016: 364; 2020: 68, 82). For Mussolini as 'virile' see Spackman (1996), a study constructed around virility as the 'master term' of Fascism itself, as well as Gori (2000) and discussions in Passerini (1991: 99-109), Falasca-Zamponi (1997: 73-74), and Luzzatto (1998: 15-19). Additionally, see Mosse (1998: 168), Di Bella (2004: 40-41), and Swan (2016: 366; 378), which also ties this nicely to Mussolini's 'popular' image, as well as Benadusi (2017: 66-68) and Ben-Ghiat (2020b: 126-129). For Mussolini as a 'warrior,' a 'knight,' or a 'heroic' figure see Luzzatto (2001: 9), Pieri (2013: 167-170), Storchi (2013b), Sturani (2013: 150), Sica (2018), and Swan (2020: 286-288). Discussions of Ceaușescu's efforts to represent himself as an ordinary or 'accessible' Romanian include Fischer (1989: 168), Petrescu (1998), Tismăneanu (2003: 192), Cioroianu (2005: 36-38; 182-209), and Marin (2016a: 226-227). For Ceaușescu as a 'paternal' figure, see Kideckel's (2004) lucid analysis and a discussion of it in Țion (2019: 277-279), as well as Marin (2010: 14-16; 2016a: chapter 3). It is also incorporated into broader examinations of socialist paternalism and gender politics (Verdery 1996: chapter 3) and reproductive policies (Kligman 1998). Finally, Ceaușescu's tendencies for royal or 'Byzantine' extravagance and the idea of 'dynastic' socialism in the Romanian context have been noted in Georgescu (1987), Fischer (1989: 171-173), Boia (2001: 200-201), and Tismăneanu (2003: 213).

numerous, varied ways in which this 'image-type' emerged, culminating in the presentation of a schematic (and initial) network for his cult. The subsequent two sections then each focus on an individual leader, starting with Mussolini (section 3.3) and continuing to elaborate his cult network and then progressing to Ceaușescu (section 3.4).

3.2 – Adapting the Model

It is perhaps most useful to begin by reiterating my understanding and definition of personality cults. As regards the former, I follow much of the scholarship on such cults (e.g. Wedeen 1999, Leese 2007, Márquez 2020, Postoutenko 2022) that understands them to be an inherently *communicative* phenomenon. As mentioned in the Introduction, this entails that – like all forms of communication – cults are, along one axis, both conceptually structured and materially manifested, analyzable in such a way that the former becomes accessible through the latter. At the same time, along another axis, they are also at once structured and constrained according to both culturally specific and cognitively (domain-)general parameters. Culture, cognition, and materiality each play an integral role in cult structuration such that, akin to any language, a cult's particular features obtain from particular combinations of the universal (i.e. properties and processes of human cognition) and the contextual (i.e. the specifics of its culture). This, as we shall see, applies even to the primarily visual nature of the cultic data that will be assessed throughout this chapter and those that follow.

As has been established, my own orientation for such analysis is grounded in cognitive linguistics. From this perspective, semantic frames perhaps provide the most prominent example of the interplay between the cognitive-universal and the culture specific. Frames, as experience-based conceptual schematizations, are knowledge structures ubiquitous in human thought and language: communication of any kind entails the activation of various frames by words, symbols, sounds, etc. that serve as indices of those frames (e.g. the word 'sacrament,' an image of the Christian cross, or the sounds of a pipe organ might evoke a frame of RELIGION in Western, Christian societies). What frames are evoked (and how) is expected to vary in myriad ways, according to many factors: in the case of the cult network, what frames are recruited ranges from culture-specific factors (i.e. what might be salient, auratic, enticing, meaningful, etc. in one culture cannot be expected to have that same value in others) to issues of audience (i.e. to which group or groups in a society is the cult directed?) and historical timing (reflective of the regime's own evolving, never-static agenda and its relation to its people, not to mention any technological and communicative advancements or restrictions that might impact how such frames are accessed or received).

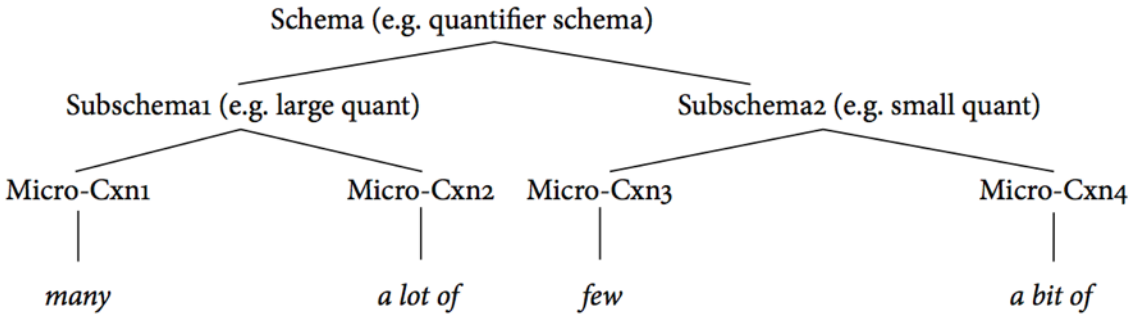
With this in mind, we may also reexamine my cognitive cult definition from earlier, which we are now theoretically equipped to unpack:

> A personality cult is a complex network built up of a dynamic chain of frame-structured conceptual blends that themselves (potentially) constructionalize and form constructions at varying levels of schematicity.

First, it is helpful to recall the terminology introduced in the previous chapter distinguishing constructions at varying levels of schematicity and abstraction. This three-part taxonomy consists of *schemas*, *subschemas*, and *micro-constructions*, with schemas being the most abstract of constructions and micro-constructions the most specific within the network.

Micro-constructions are in turn instantiated by individual tokens of a particular utterance, which are referred to as *constructs*. A schematic rendering of this constructional hierarchy has been resupplied below as Figure 3.1:

Figure 3.1: Constructional hierarchy: schemas, subschemas, micro-constructions



Mirroring the 'bottom up' understanding of network formation within usage-based constructionist approaches, it is perhaps most appropriate to also begin explaining and exemplifying this definition from the lowest, most specific levels of the cult network – that is, starting with individual cult 'constructs.' Cult constructs can be understood as any cult-related 'artifact' that circulated within the regime. As such, they encompass a wide range of different media and modes of representation including newspapers, photographs, posters, works of art and architecture, speeches, postcards, figurines, panegyric odes, and a host of other possibilities.[2] More broadly yet no less applicably, such cult constructs need not be physical objects nor permanent fixtures in of themselves, and thus may also include participation in rallies or parades, attendance at speeches, or any interaction with the dictator's physical being itself (even if just viewing from a distance) as well as remarks exchanged about him in a private setting. We will consider such ephemeral constructs in later chapters, but for now let us focus on two photographic examples, one for each leader, provided on the following page in Figures 3.2 and 3.3.

Both of these portraits hail from early on in Mussolini's and Ceauşescu's reigns, and both can be characterized by a degree of what we might broadly consider 'standardness' in their representation of their respective leaders. By this I mean that their depiction here in isolation, dressed in simple suits and lacking the kind of additional accoutrements, costumes, poses, or expressions with which they might come to be depicted later serves to evoke a standard frame of LEADERSHIP in which their fulfilment of its 'leader' slot – itself predicated on the very knowledge of who both Mussolini and Ceauşescu are and what role they play in their respective societies – appears unremarkable and congruent with expectations of their periods. For Mussolini, this intuition is corroborated by Swan (2020: 274), who remarks that portraits of Mussolini of this kind evoked the status and significance of an oil painting and thus the prestige befitting a world leader,

[2] One will note here, too, that the breadth intended by 'cult-related artifact' does not presuppose that the creation and dissemination of such artifacts was limited to the prerogatives of the regime and what we might consider 'official' or 'sanctioned' representations of the leader, and, on the contrary, is intended to also include 'popular expression' of the cult as produced, consumed, and experienced by ordinary citizens. Relevant examples of this 'popular expression' of the cult of Mussolini include, for instance, its apparent fusion with the cult of saints in popular Catholicism (Luzzatto 2007; Adamson 2014) and its commodification in privately produced postcards (Sturani 2013; see also Gaudenzi 2015 for a discussion of the restraints surrounding such commercialization of Mussolini's cult as well as that of Hitler).

while Ceaușescu's own portrait here is wholly typical of that of any high-profile communist official, as any quick internet search will confirm.

Figure 3.2: Mussolini portrait (1924)[3]

Figure 3.3: Ceaușescu portrait (1966)[4]

At the same time, however, both portraits also evince certain novelties particular to their respective leaders. This is perhaps most readily obvious in the case of Mussolini, whose photograph here bestows on him a certain mysterious quality, an aura perhaps magnified by the prominence afforded to his infamous facial features – his piercing eyes, his formidable forehead, his strong jaw.[5] Both portraits also clearly highlight their respective leader's youth.[6] Upon his appointment as Prime Minister in October 1922, Mussolini was only 41 years old, and his young, vigorous image provided a stark contrast to that of the aged Luigi Facta who preceded him. Not

[3] Retrieved September 14, 2022 from Wikipedia Commons. Link to web address here: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/4/47/Benito_Mussolini_crop.jpg.

[4] Retrieved September 14, 2022 from *Fototeca online a comunismului românesc*, cota: 8/1966 (photograph #E594). Link to web address here: http://fototeca.iiccmer.ro/picdetails.php?picid=33364X1X1.

[5] Much of the 'aura' of Mussolini as a physical specimen can be traced to his then lover, Margherita Sarfatti, whose aforementioned (1925/1926) biography, *Dux*, harnessed the pre-existing excitement and expectations surrounding his figure and transformed him into a fully mythologized character. See Storchi (2013a) for more on Sarfatti's contributions to the cult of Mussolini as well as Duggan (2013c) and Falasca-Zamponi (1997: 85) for a fuller discussion of its pre-regime origins. Further examples of Mussolini's enchanting corporeality – which will itself be taken up in the next chapter – can be found in Isnenghi (1990), Passerini (1991: 70-76), Luzzatto (1998), and Swan (2016).

[6] It should be noted that I intend 'youth' here not so much in a generic sense but in one relative to the kinds of expectations that Italians and Romanians would have had for their leaders and their attendant ages in their respective periods.

merely a distinguishing feature, Mussolini's youth would indeed become a core part of his image and of Fascism itself, constituting a "metaphor of action" integral to Fascism's desire to break with the decadence and inertia of the past (Falasca-Zamponi 1997: 72). Ceauşescu, too, was only 47 years old upon his election to General Secretary in March 1965, having ascended to the position somewhat surprisingly following the death of Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, and he spent the first few years of his rule cultivating a reputation as an open-minded reformer to the thrill of Romanians and the international community alike (Tismăneanu & Iacob 2010: 258).

'Reading' the above images in this way amounts to – in the present framework – outlining a *conceptual blend* that its component features combine to prompt and evoke. Such blends, we can recall, following Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner's (2002) book *The Way We Think*, constitute projections formulated from the interaction of two or more 'mental spaces,' which they define as "small conceptual packets constructed as we think and talk, for the purposes of local understanding and action" (ibid., 40). As cognitive structures, mental spaces – as well as blends – are frame structured and, although operative 'online' in instances of thought or communication, they, like frames, can become entrenched in long-term memory as well (ibid., 102-103). We can simply note here for now, too, that it is in this sense that we can speak of such blends as 'constructionalizing' to form constituent components of the cognitive cult network, subject to constraints of the interrelated processes of conventionalization and entrenchment discussed in the previous chapter (and to which we shall return in the following pages).

Understood in this light, cult constructs constitute a kind of *material anchor* (Hutchins 1995, 2005) in that they provide material realization – a means of 'visualization,' one might say – for a particular conceptualization of the leader. In other words, each individual construct prompts a blend (or blends) in which the leader's (mental) image is imbued with particular frame-structured meaning(s), dependent on the content of the given construct itself. In Figures 3.2 and 3.3, then, the overall blend that is prompted is perhaps not all that remarkable at first glance: indeed, the 'standard' attire of the suit alongside the knowledge of who both Mussolini and Ceauşescu are function to evoke the aforementioned frame of LEADERSHIP populated by an apparently quintessential politician, even if younger than normal. At the same time, however, since it is the relative youth of both leaders that is undeniably profiled here, the constructs in Figures 3.2 and 3.3 can be understood as prompting a blend that takes *both* a frame of LEADERSHIP and a frame of YOUTH as its input spaces, projecting – in and through its 'anchoring' material manifestation – unequivocally an image of both leaders as *young leaders*.[7] In turn, this resultant blend might itself evoke a range of feelings relating to Mussolini, Ceauşescu, or their leadership: for some, as noted above, youth might equate to change, to a break with problems of the status quo, while for others it might more signify inexperience, possibly resulting in skepticism. Indeed, the 'standard' suits worn by both leaders suggests a desire to taper such assumptions brought about by their youth, even when it is (unavoidably, at this point) foregrounded.

3.2.1 – Conventionalization, Iterability, Token Frequency

What the above discussion demonstrates is that any analysis of a cult-related artifact amounts to an analysis of a single attested construct, considering its formal properties (i.e. semantic

[7] In 1924 and 1966, when these photographs were taken, the respective youths of Mussolini and Ceauşescu were, of course, mere historical fact. Youthful vanity was, however, a shared obsession, and both leaders – with time – would go to great lengths to ensure that official depictions showed them only in the prime of their youth, no matter what real-world discrepancies may have been brought about by aging (Falasca-Zamponi 1997: 72-73; Marin 2020a: 197).

frames and indices of those frames) and possible meanings and interpretations (i.e. the emergent blend[s] that it prompts). Analogous to the case of language, then, it is through the proliferation of particular constructs as individual *usage events* that micro-constructions emerge in the network. Traugott and Trousdale home in on the centrality of constructs in usage-based approaches to language, and their remarks are worth repeating here:

> Crucially, for a usage-based model, constructs are what speakers/writers produce and what hearers/readers process. As usage events, they help to shape the mental representation of language… the consequence of production and processing is that the construct is the locus of individual innovation, and subsequent conventionalization (2013: 16-17).

Conventionalization, of course, is to be understood as the social counterpart of individual *entrenchment*. Although not operating within an explicitly constructionist framework, Hans-Jörg Schmid's recent (2020) book on the two processes and their interrelation is once again highly instructive. He considers both conventionalization and entrenchment to constitute 'feedback cycles' that are at once driven and determined by usage: in terms of the former, continued usage of some linguistic convention is central for it to maintain its conventionality within the speech community (88), while for the latter it captures how usage triggers cognitive 'patterns of association' that are then routinized and schematized by repetition (203). Importantly, however, the two processes are "subject to the exigencies" of the other, such that individual entrenchment cannot be conceived independently from the broader trends operative in that individual's speech community (that is, those involved in conventionalization) and vice versa (ibid., 2). Furthermore, it is precisely in the usage event – an individual construct – where such collective and individual processes come together and affect one another (ibid., 82).

Each 'usage event' or 'individual construct' also constitutes an individual 'token' of usage, and as such we can further recall here the distinction between 'token' and 'type' frequency discussed in the previous chapter. The images on the following page in Figures 3.4 and 3.5 provide intriguing examples with which to explore such frequencies within a cult context. Mussolini 'as thresher,' as seen in Figure 3.4, is no doubt one of his most well-known and commented on 'guises.'[8] This particular photograph hails from July 1934, taken at the first installment of what would become an annual event in a widely publicized propagandistic campaign known as 'The Battle for Wheat.'[9] In it, Mussolini is depicted in short sleeves, protective goggles postured on his forehead, hauling a hefty sheaf of wheat – in short we have an image that, in cognitive-linguistic terms, is clearly profiling a frame of AGRICULTURE in such a way that Mussolini is construed not as an Italian dignitary but as a farmer. The result is, quite undeniably, a representation that is surely *incongruous* with the polished, bourgeois image of Mussolini in Figure 3.2 from a decade earlier. That is, even if here he is fully clothed (more on that later), in blending terms this constitutes a *clash* between the invoked frame of AGRICULTURE and that of POLITICS (or LEADERSHIP) evoked by Mussolini's presence in the image, a clash that is remedied in an emergent double-scope blend

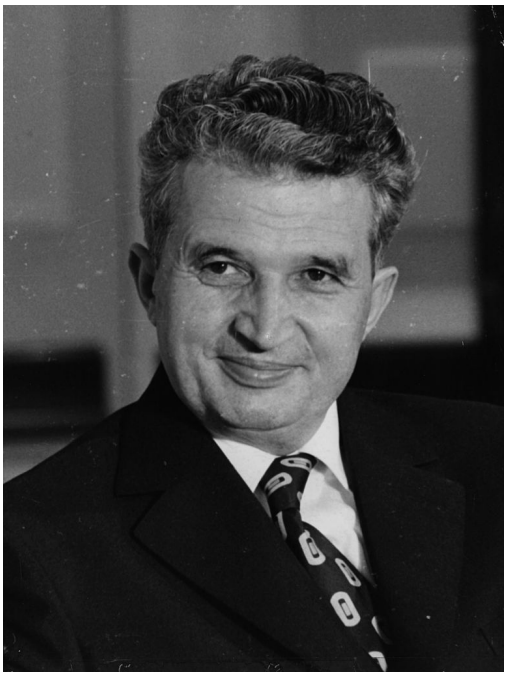
[8] For detailed discussions of Mussolini 'as thresher' see Swan (2016: 366-371) and Fuller (forthcoming).

[9] Also referred to as the 'Battle for Grain,' the *battaglia del grano* constituted a regime-sponsored effort (initiated in 1925) to combat Italy's dependence on imported wheat by aggressively promoting the *granarizzazione* ('grain-erization') of Italian agriculture, a campaign which is to be understood in the broader context of desires for self-sufficiency and in resultant autarchic measures imposed in both the economic and cultural spheres. See Helstosky (2004: 4-7) for more details specifically on the *battaglia del grano*, as well as Ben-Ghiat (2001: 135-138) for the regime's efforts in achieving cultural autarchy.

through the *compression* of his role on the one hand as 'leader of Italy' and on the other as 'farmer' (as supplied by the AGRICULTURE frame) in the emergent blend, as suggested on the following page in Figure 3.6:[10]

Figure 3.4: Mussolini as thresher (1934)[11]

Figure 3.5: Ceaușescu portrait (year unknown)[12]



Put differently, here an image of Mussolini – by virtue of the ontological salience of his role as leader of Italy and Italians' understanding of him as occupying that role – cannot help but frame-metonymically evoke the political frame:[13] it is in this way that Mussolini becomes conceivable not *just* as 'politician' but *also* as 'farmer,' and, indeed, even as a *leader-farmer* hybrid, with a rich range of attendant emergent meanings.[14] This is in part attributable to what Fauconnier and Turner (2002: 251) describe as the remarkable cognitive "stability" of 'characters' in that they can readily and coherently be 'transported' across different frames and contexts to

[10] A 'double-scope blend' is Fauconnier and Turner's term for a blend that has input spaces "with different (and often clashing) organizing frames as well as an organizing frame for the blend that includes parts of each of those frames and has emergent structure of its own" (2002: 131). Furthermore, and contrary to what their title might suggest, such 'clashes' are not in themselves problematic or cumbersome for processing; rather, they are at the heart of much of human creativity (ibid.).

[11] Image taken from Swan (2020: 186). The image adorns a postcard.

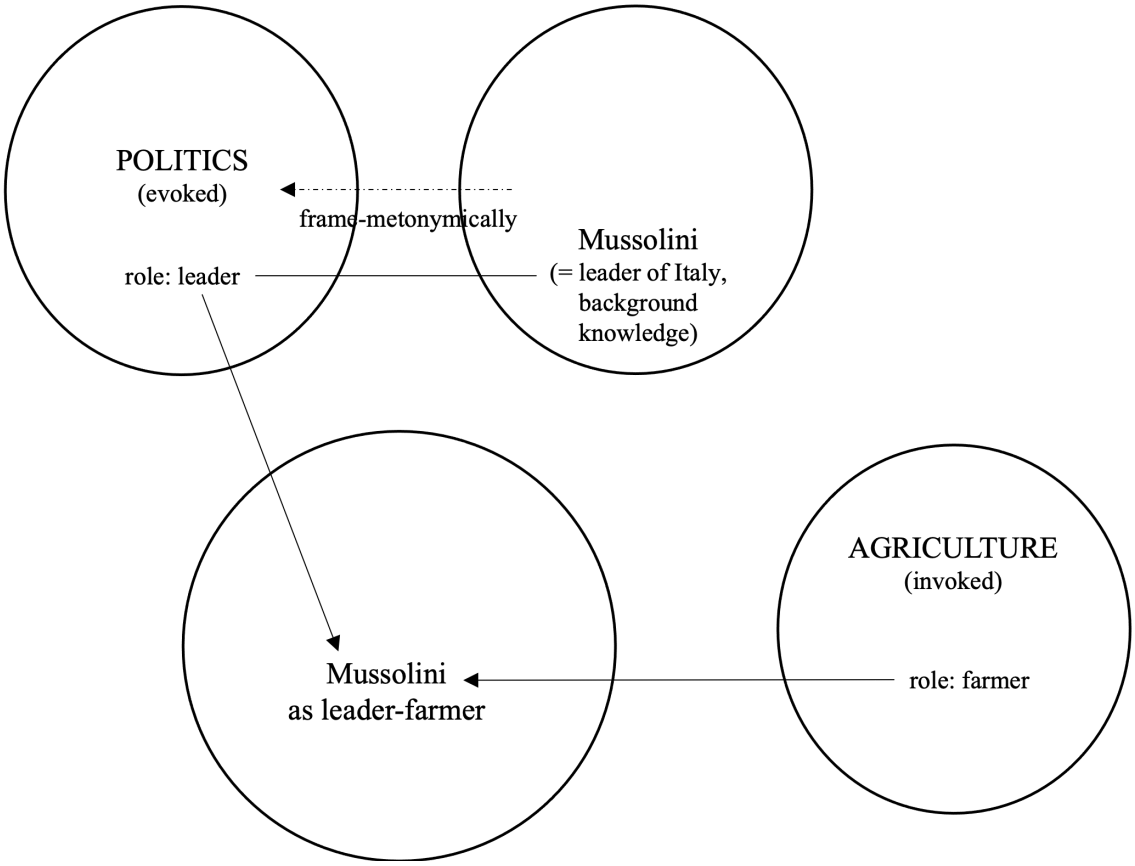
[12] Image © Getty Images, included with permission. Their site considers the photograph to be from 1986, though it is surely older than this as it appears already from at least the late 1970s.

[13] *Frame metonymy*, following Dancygier and Sweetser (2014: 101), refers to instances in which one frame element is used to refer to either the entire frame of which it is a part or to other elements within that frame. Both frame metonymy and metonymy more generally will be taken up in Chapter 4.

[14] From a propagandistic perspective, images such as these that were circulated by the regime can be understood as *framing* (in the sense discussed in Chapter 2, section 2.2) a projection of Mussolini – that is, as the explicit *invocation* of a particular frame designed to enrich his image in some manner (in this case, possible enrichments include making him more relatable, less 'stodgy,' a man of the people, etc.). We will have more to say on this as we go.

achieve new meanings or attributes without the risk of eroding 'who they were' prior.[15] Thus, in Figure 3.4 Mussolini 'as politician' is not 'erased' but merely backgrounded, and it is in this sense that the cult network is continually 'enriched' through the incorporation of new frames and emergent blends.

Figure 3.6: Mussolini as *leader-farmer* blend



One might now plausibly ask: but what does this have to do with 'token' or 'type' frequency? Returning to our constructionist framework, the Mussolini 'as thresher' in Figure 3.4 is again to be understood as an individual cult construct and, thus, as an individual 'token' of usage as well. The proliferation of particular tokens can, however, as we have seen, then lead to their entrenchment as 'micro-constructions' in their own right (i.e. 'sufficient token frequency').[16] Figures 3.8-3.10 on the following page are suggestive in this regard. In each we find the initial Mussolini 'as thresher' (provided again in Figure 3.7 for comparison) incorporated into three different cult constructs: in Figure 3.8 he is superimposed atop the tower of Littoria, one of the

[15] As just one example, they give a hypothetical, modern professor of philosophy who asks herself, "If I were Kant, how would I attack this problem?" (ibid., 253). Such a statement, they note, prompts a counterfactual blend in which the professor's knowledge of Kant (and of his views and knowledge) is projected alongside her own knowledge, her current situation, etc. such that she 'becomes' Kant in order to approach the problem at hand.

[16] On the question of what is to count as 'sufficient' frequency see discussion in Chapter 2, section 2.5.

Figure 3.7: Mussolini 'thresher' A (1934)

Figure 3.8: Mussolini 'thresher' B (1937)[17]

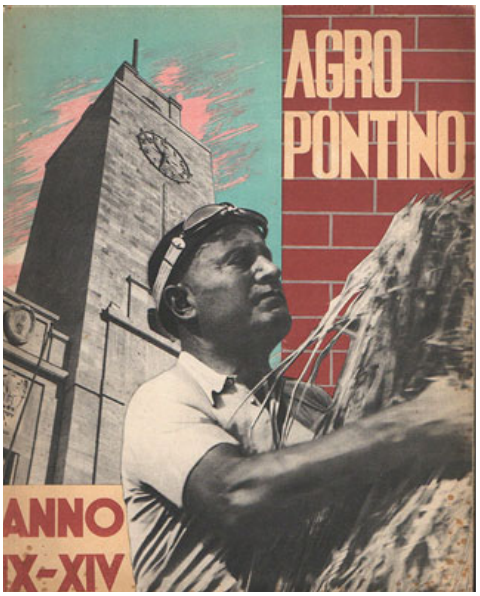


Figure 3.9: Mussolini 'thresher' C (year unknown)[18]

Figure 3.10: Mussolini 'thresher' D (1938)[19]

[17] Taken from Swan (2020: 186), who presents the images in Figures 3.7-3.9 in a similar manner and to whom my observations here regarding token frequency are indebted. The image in Figure 3.8 adorns the cover of a propagandistic booklet from 1937. In addition to the tower behind him, one will note the *Anno IX-XIV* in the lower left-hand corner, representing years nine through 14 of the *era fascista* 'Fascist era,' which Mussolini inaugurated upon coming to power in 1922 and thus corresponds to 1930-1934 (see Chapter 5 for an in-depth discussion).

[18] Image taken from Swan (2020: 186). A quote from Mussolini himself can be found in the top-right corner of this school notebook cover from an unknown year.

[19] Image courtesy of Mia Fuller's personal collection.

Fascist 'New Towns' constructed in the reclaimed land of the Pontine Marshes (*agro pontino*) south of Rome,[20] and in Figure 3.9 he adorns a school notebook, his heavenly threshing image dominating and fading into the sky overlooking a handful of mortal farmers hard at work. In Figure 3.10, a 1938 poster for the 'Battle for Wheat,' his image appears graphically altered, transformed into an illustration in which the sleeves (and collar) of his shirt are noticeably absent, leaving his bare, muscular arm to dominate the scene and thus invoking another pivotal frame in Mussolini's image – that of VIRILITY – that will be discussed in more detail later on. Here, though, for the moment, we can simply highlight the fact that a particular Mussolini 'as thresher' is reproduced in three new constructs – that is, it is 'cited' – each of which retains formal structure (and thus a degree of the 'constative' meaning this projects, as in Figure 3.6) but which in turn are accompanied by new contexts and the possibility for new resultant blends.[21] Put simply, it would appear to be a conspicuously productive token of Mussolini.

Turning now to Figure 3.5, one will immediately notice that this particular portrait of Ceauşescu hardly differs from that supplied earlier in Figure 3.3: Ceauşescu indeed appears older (it is from the late 1970s), but the blend that is prompted – decontextualized here as it is – suggests a kind of *continuity* in its similarity, a sort of concessive 'update' calculated to acknowledge, yet at the same time minimize, his advancing age. This desire for continuity, or striving for an idealized iconography, was in fact a characteristic of all communist regimes and their utopian aspirations, but it was one directly at odds with their simultaneous desire to depict a 'reality' that was ever changing – hence, socialist realism and its inherent tensions.[22] The Soviet context, the bastion of socialist realism and a model for the regimes of the Eastern European bloc, is telling in this regard: specifically in terms of the cults of Lenin and Stalin, Jan Plamper amply documents the debates on how to appropriately depict both leaders in the Khrushchev period, which pitted allowing for innovations in their images against strict adherence to the established canons (2012: 198-202). Alexei Yurchak, in turn, details the rigid standardization of Lenin's image later on in the 1960s and 70s such that he came to be portrayed in an increasingly "fixed and repeatable style" that led artists to "quote" images in their own productions (2006: 55). In the Romanian context, although socialist realism had been abandoned as the official (i.e. the only tolerated) style of art from 1960 onward (Preda 2017: 143) and Ceauşescu was himself still very much alive, the situation was nonetheless quite comparable. The notion of "quoting" from a canon of preexisting, acceptable representations just as readily applies to Ceauşescu and his image: he never in fact posed for any of the numerous artworks made of him in his honor, for example, and artists instead were required to draw from a narrow selection of approved photographs for inspiration (Cioroianu 2006: 256). Figures 3.11-3.14 below attest, too, to what historian Adrian Cioroianu has termed the *videologie* ('videology') of Ceauşescu, by which he means "the ideology that tends, gradually but inexorably, to be reduced to the exhibition of a single effigy, to the display of a single portrait" (ibid., 251).[23]

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[20] Often considered one of Mussolini's greatest successes by his admirers and detractors alike, the malaria-ridden Pontine Marshes had long vexed officials in the region and had proven virtually uninhabitable since Roman times. Under Mussolini, the marshes were drained and transformed into arable land on which these 'New Towns' were constructed, totaling five in number (for more on the processes of land reclamation and eradication of malaria, see Snowden 2006; for more details on the New Towns themselves, see Pennacchi 2008).

[21] See Abdel-Raheem (2019) for a different (though not entirely unrelated) cognitive take on such practices of pictorial replication or intertextuality, which he refers to as 'visual recycling.'

[22] See, however, Petrov (2011) for a discussion and complication of how the term 'reality' has been applied and theorized in many works on socialist realism.

[23] The original reads: "…ideologia ce tinde, gradual, dar inexorabil, să se rezume la exhibarea unei singure efigii, la etalarea unui singur portret" [my translation].

Figure 3.11: Ceauşescu portrait A

Figure 3.12: Ceauşescu portrait B (1988)[24]

Indeed, the 'obsession' that Cioroianu observes in Ceauşescu with his own portrait is clearly evinced here, with this particular shot achieving immensely widespread circulation in the 1980s, popping up not only in the newspapers but also adorning the likes of postage stamps (Figure 3.12), propaganda posters (Figure 3.13), and paraded placards dancing above marching crowds, virtually constituting a miniature 'Ceauşescu-crowd' of its own (Figure 3.14). In each of these 'quoted' or 'cited' images his face is indeed retouched, too, his effigy thus 'updated' but rendered ageless, reflecting a sort of un-real reality.[25] Icons, after all, in the Orthodox tradition of which Romania is a part, do not age but remain immutable from one context to the next (Kemp 2012: 17).[26] Thus, not only do Figures 3.12-3.14 demonstrate the proliferation of an idealized image of Ceauşescu, they also suggest the degree to which deliberate, precise replicability of that image was sought and – at least in the kinds of regime-sanctioned constructs shown here – ensured.

[24] Retrieved September 14, 2022 from Wikipedia Commons. The stamp celebrates the occasion of his 70th birthday. Link to web address here: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:TimbruNicolaeCeausescu.png.

[25] In fact, prior to this particular portrait ascending to iconic status, another, younger one was used, which was gradually replaced with the one shown here. I do not know of any work that has pinpointed a precise date for this substitution, nor made any real mention of it at all, but it certainly can be traced to sometime in the late 1970s or early 1980s. The photo itself appears to be from 1978.

[26] The salience (indeed, usefulness) of Orthodox iconography was not lost on party officials in the relevant countries, lending to aspects of its feature in the cults of Lenin, Stalin, and beyond (Rees 2004: 7; see Bonnell 1997: 32-33; 144-149 and Pisch 2016 for discussion of its implementation in visual propaganda). At the same time, however, such 'socialist iconographies' were not limited to Orthodox societies, as David Forgacs (2016) has shown for the case of the famed Italian socialist, Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937). Indeed, his case presents striking parallels with Ceauşescu's: a single photograph of Gramsci was consistently redeployed across contexts (ranging from portraits adorning the walls of party headquarters to the covers of volumes of his collected writings) that notably portrayed him in an idealized manner with no trace of the disability (a curvature of the spine) that, while obviously not determining the entirety of his person, nonetheless constituted an integral part of the 'real' Gramsci.

Figure 3.13: Ceauşescu portrait C (1986)[27]

Figure 3.14: Ceauşescu portrait D (1989)[28]

3.2.2 – Citationality, Polysemy, Context

What are we to make of the series of constructs just presented in Figures 3.7-3.14 for both Mussolini 'as thresher' and Ceauşescu the 'ageless icon?' For our purposes here, a couple of points need to be made. First, it is the proliferation of such particular constructs that, within the context of the cult system, amounts to *token frequency* and that can potentially lead to the entrenchment-cum-conventionalization of such tokens as *micro-constructions*. Second, and relatedly, each of these constructs brings with it – that is, as we have noted, 'cites' – the frame structures in the original photograph *through* its reincorporation in a *new* construct, appearing in a new context. In other words, not only do the photographs in Figures 3.8-3.10 and 3.12-3.14 constitute individual constructs, and thus tokens, in their own right but they also, in and through their citation of the original photographs in Figures 3.7 and 3.11, evidence the symbiosis between usage, conventionality, and iterability at the heart of usage-based approaches. It is in this way that 'iconic' images emerge, in a constructionist sense, as reproducible 'citations' of a particular construct that gain conventional traction and acquire a degree of cognitive entrenchment through their

[27] Taken from Preutu (2017: 423), a 1986 poster for the annual celebration of the 'Liberation from the Occupation of Fascism.' The poster itself can be found in the collection of the Consiliul Național pentru Studierea Arhivelor Securității in Bucharest.

[28] The image consists of a still from the 1989 celebration of the 'Liberation from the Occupation of Fascism' as reported on page one of the August 26, 1989 edition of *Scînteia*, the Romanian Communist Party's chief newspaper. One will note the portraits of Elena, Ceauşescu's wife, interspersed among his own. My photograph, courtesy of the collection of the Bibliotecă centrală universitară 'Lucian Blaga' at Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania.

reproduction-as-usage.[29] Crucially, however, it is their very reproducibility *across* contexts that allows for such constructional citations to be inscribed with rich, diverse, and emergent meanings – indeed, unintended ones, perhaps – that are not predeterminable in advance, as argued by Derrida (1988), Butler (1993), and others.[30] We will look more closely at examples of this kind in later chapters.

It is also here where we can begin to see the emergence of and interaction between both *leader polysemy* and *constructional polysemy*. In the case of the Mussolini 'threshers,' on the one hand the result is an enriched image of Mussolini at the constative level: not only is he a politician, but now also a farmer to boot. Yet, while the initial frames of AGRICULTURE and POLITICS encoded in these repeated images of Mussolini are indeed retained, their iteration and incorporation in new constructs, appearing in new contexts, invites new emergent interpretations (that is, new blends) and associations with new frames. That is, constructionally speaking, while the *formal* aspect of such representations of Mussolini 'as thresher' remains fixed, the *meaning* aspect is far less stable. The situation is parallel in the case of the Ceauşescu portrait: although the images of him that we have seen thus far have presented a far more static image – and, indeed, to such a degree that *leader polysemy* seems rather decidedly suppressed – the same possible effects of reproducibility and recontextualization cannot be elided nor dismissed.

Thus, a critical role in ascribing cult constructional meanings falls to the parameters of the context in which it is produced or encountered. It is worth recalling here the "exigencies" that Schmid (2020: 2) notes as mutually operative between processes of entrenchment and conventionalization. Cognitive processes such as the detection, association, and storage of (frequent/repeated/salient) patterns are, of course, the hallmark of individual entrenchment. What is 'frequent,' 'repeated,' or 'salient' in a given speech community is, however, in turn determined by its social conventions, which includes any kind of power dynamic(s) that may exist and operate within it (ibid., 81; Bourdieu 1991). Transferring this understanding to what Jan Plamper calls the "closed societies" characteristic of personality cults provides telling insights into the kinds of 'conventions' in place therein. For Plamper, such societies are marked by "highly circumscribed public space" in which "media-transmitted criticism of a leader cult or the introduction of a rival cult" are nearly impossible, a state apparatus that "exercises a high degree of violence," and in which "the political personality cult is usually crucial in defining the relationship between ruler and ruled" (2012: xvii). In other words, the 'closed society' itself constitutes an 'exigency' of the regime that is intelligible to 'ruler and ruled' alike, such that cult 'conventions' fall out from a mixture of mutually enforcing prescription and proscription, a combination that formulates and dictates a sort of overarching metacontext – the cult as hypervisual 'authoritative discourse' (Bakhtin 1994).

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[29] I will note here an important caveat that follows from remarks made in the Introduction: what counts as 'iconic' to one member of a community will not necessarily hold true for all members of that community. In this sense the examples provided in Figures 3.7-3.14 are heuristic in that they demonstrate the kind of reproducibility *en masse* integral to much cult proliferation and its cognitive import, rather than being understood as universal regime 'icons' in of themselves. While the former is more or less uniform (i.e. experiencing the ubiquity in the leader's image, universal cognitive principles), the latter will vary considerably on the grounds of (frequency of) exposure and access to particular constructs. Put simply (and starkly): if you never saw the Ceaușescu portrait in Figure 3.11, it would not be 'iconic' for you. But if you encountered it frequently, in various contexts, from day to day… then quite conceivably it would acquire such 'iconic' status. We will return to this idea in Chapters 6 and 7.

[30] Examples of what we might call this citational 'effect' of images abound in the literature on icons, suggesting both their transferability across contexts and the power of this context in determining their interpretation. See, for example, Cheles (2004, 2016); Hariman & Lucaites (2007); Ghosh (2011); Alexander, Bartmański & Giesen (2012); Kemp (2012); and Mielczarek & Perlmutter (2014).

In the previous chapter we introduced constructions as "conventionalized pairings of form and function." While useful in capturing the cognitive premise of the constructionist enterprise, it nonetheless connotes a degree of staticity in a particular construction's makeup, suggesting total uniformity at both the formal and functional 'poles' of a given construction irrespective of contextual factors. This has, in turn, led to an understanding that what (or what must) constitute(s) a construction must be better able to account for the critical role of context in traditional and 'adaptive' constructionist approaches alike. In fact, Goldberg's (2019: 7) most recent definition of a construction precisely reflects this understanding of constructional meaning as something that cannot be posited entirely 'in advance' of the particular context of its utterance:

> Constructions are understood to be emergent clusters of lossy memory traces that are aligned within our high-(hyper!) dimensional conceptual space on the basis of shared form, function, and contextual dimensions.[31]

Within the multimodal-yet-hypervisual communicative system of a cult of personality, Goldberg's expansion of a construction to incorporate a tripartite interaction between form, meaning, and context is crucial and allows us to felicitously recalibrate the above discussions of polysemy and citationality in explicitly constructionist terms (see also Östman & Trousdale 2013).

3.2.3 – Mussolini's Threshings: Type Frequency

We have now, hopefully, set the stage in terms of how individual cult constructs can be understood in relation to one another in terms of *token frequency* – that is, as a relationship of constructional citationality – in addition to outlining the two kinds of polysemy and their interaction operative in the cult's manifestation. With this in mind, let us for the moment put aside Ceauşescu and his portraits and focus on Mussolini and his many threshings. The photographs in Figures 3.7-3.10 above suggest a particularly generative incarnation of Mussolini 'as thresher,' but, of course, his depiction as such was not limited to this photograph (or, rather, to reproductions of this photograph). Indeed, the blend itself proved remarkably productive, anchored in numerous constructs that circulated widely throughout the 1930s, such as the photographs provided on the following pages in Figures 3.15-3.18.

As noted earlier, photographs such as these were taken annually as part of the wider 'Battle for Wheat' campaign and were disseminated extensively in the press and beyond. The Mussolinis threshing in Figures 3.15-3.18 suggest a conscientious reframing of the campaign over time, though importantly without rupturing it entirely: on the one hand, as with the 'thresher' constructs discussed above and most obvious here in Figures 3.15 and 3.16, a frame of AGRICULTURE is still manifestly invoked and profiled such that an image of Mussolini 'as farmer' is unequivocally projected. On the other hand, however, each of these constructs in Figures 3.15-3.18 quite strikingly differs from those seen earlier in that in each of them Mussolini is now *bare chested*.[32] Hinted at earlier, Mussolini's bare-chestedness was a defining feature of his public representation,

[31] As she herself notes, this "more inclusive" definition of constructions is indebted to advances in our understanding of how human memory, learning, and categorization operate that have emerged in the roughly fifteen years between this book and her previous one (ibid.). The added term 'lossy' is borrowed from computer science and is intended to capture the schematic, partial nature of human memory (ibid., 6).

[32] One will note, though, that the side-by-side images of Mussolini threshing in Figure 3.16 in fact consist of two separate threshings, one in which he is bare chested and one in which he is (still?) wearing a white shirt akin to the one worn in Figures 3.7-3.10.

tethering his image to the idea of the Fascist *uomo nuovo* 'New Man' – who was to be "virile, dynamic, bellicose" – and constituting its exemplary embodiment (Gori 2000: 28).[33] This shift is readily apparent in comparing the two later images (Figures 3.17 and 3.18, both from 1938) with the earlier two (Figures 3.15 and 3.16, both of which include photographs from the 1935 campaign). In the former, the frame of AGRICULTURE appears far less potent, contextually salient but decidedly backgrounded to Mussolini's manly bare chest and its unmistakable evocation of a frame of VIRILITY.

Figure 3.15: Mussolini 'thresher' (1935)[34]

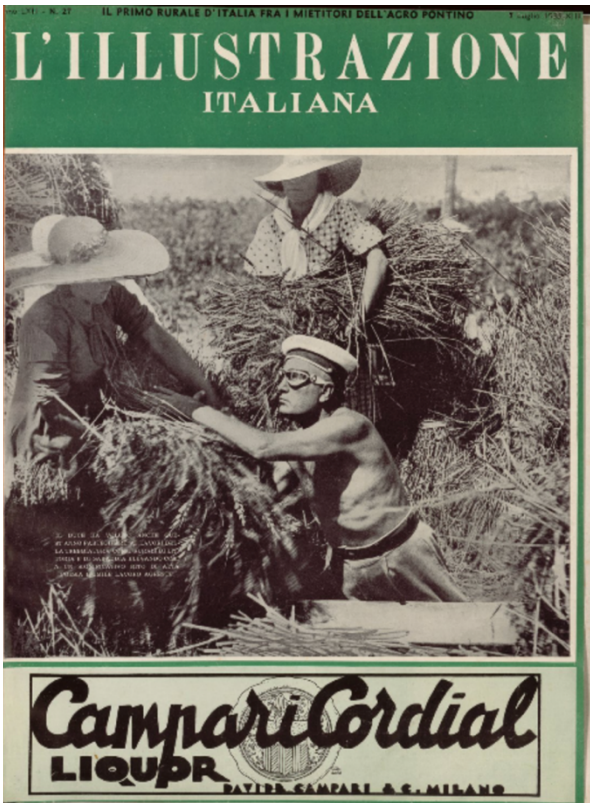
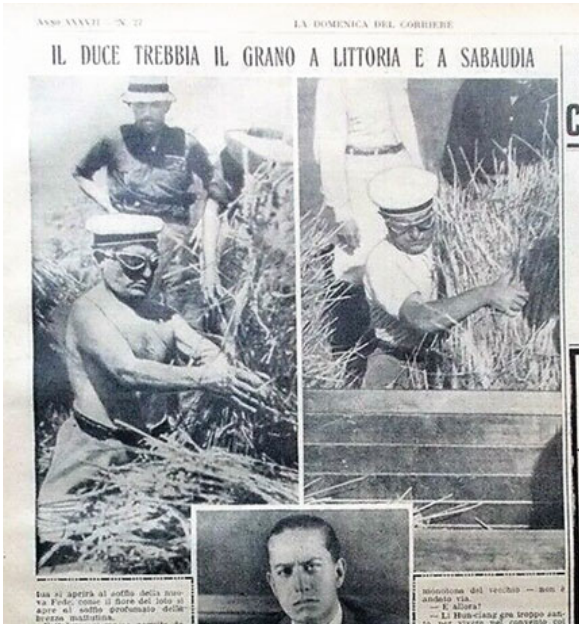


Figure 3.16: Mussolini 'thresher' (1935/37)[35]



To bring things back to our now-tripartite constructionist terms, both the repeated, 'quoted' Mussolinis 'as thresher' in Figures 3.7-3.10 and the other, differing instantiations in Figures 3.15-3.18 can potentially be understood as *micro-constructions* – that is, as fairly 'specific' pairings of

[33] Indeed, Mussolini's own iconography is often discussed as inextricable from his naked torso and to the kinds of images provided in Figures 3.15-3.18 (as well as numerous others, some of which will be discussed below). Mussolini's influence in this regard is worth highlighting: he was in fact the first modern Western head of government to adopt such 'flaunting' techniques of corporeality, which have since provided a kind of blueprint for numerous political leaders of all stripes that have followed, from Barack Obama to Vladimir Putin (Swan 2020: 103-104).

[34] Retrieved August 6, 2021 from the *Emeroteca digitale italiana* as found online via *Internet Culturale*, the digital repository of the *Istituto Centrale per il Catalogo Unico delle Biblioteche Italiane*. This image is of the front page of the July 7, 1935 edition of the popular periodical *L'Illustrazione Italiana*. Link to web address here: https://www.internetculturale.it/jmms/iccuviewer/iccu.jsp?id=oai%3Awww.internetculturale.sbn.it%2FTeca%3A20%3ANT0000%3ARAV0070589_188712&mode=all&teca=MagTeca+-+ICCU&fulltext=1.

[35] Taken from Swan (2020: 121). Although the images are from 1935, at a later point in the book (p. 187) she notes that the article is from a 1937 edition of the paper *La Domenica della Corriere*.

form (i.e. indices of particular frames of AGRICULTURE, VIRILITY, etc.) and (constative) meaning(s) subject to context – should they be encountered frequently enough. Swan (2016: 368) formulates the multiple, possible meanings embedded in such images of Mussolini 'as thresher' *a torso nudo* well, noting:

> Although nudity from the waist up served the purpose of confounding the code of political conformism as a subversive communicative tool, overtly it helped to further the popular and populist appeal of Mussolini, while mobilising elements of sexual enticement.

Figure 3.17: Mussolini 'thresher' (1938) A[36]

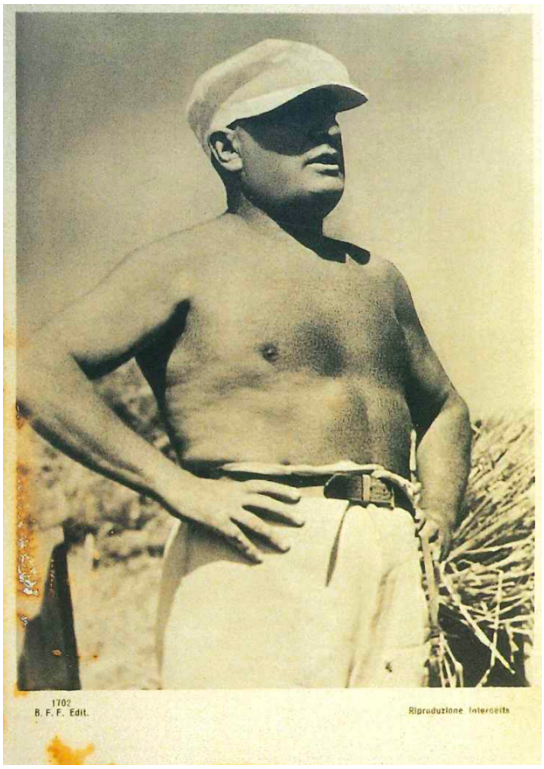


Figure 3.18: Mussolini 'thresher' (1938) B[37]

Taken together, however, we can now firmly speak of an emergent *type* of Mussolini 'as thresher,' too, consolidated over numerous tokens to form a *subschema* higher up in the cult network. As highlighted by Swan in the passage above, this Mussolini 'as thresher' subschema bespeaks further emergent polysemy at the constative level: that is, beyond a frame of AGRICULTURE that is evoked and profiled – with all the possible resultant meanings from its blend with a frame of POLITICS – now very evidently a frame of VIRILITY has come to structure Mussolini's cult as well. 'Virility,' in fact, constitutes the "master term" in Fascist ideology per

[36] Image courtesy of the Archivio Sturani in Rome (see Sturani 2003: 133). This image adorned a postcard from 1938, and he draws attention to the fact that it has been retouched to remove chest hair (ibid.; see also Swan 2016: 368; 370).
[37] Retrieved October 21, 2022 from *Emeroteca digitale italiana* as found online via *Internet Culturale*. This image is of the internal cover page of the July 10, 1938 edition of *L'Illustrazione Italiana.* Link to web address here: https://www.internetculturale.it/jmms/iccuviewer/iccu.jsp?id=oai%3Awww.internetculturale.sbn.it%2FTeca%3A20%3ANT0000%3ARAV0070589_188765&mode=all&teca=MagTeca+-+ICCU&fulltext=1.

Barbara Spackman's (1996) analysis of Fascist rhetoric – indeed titled *Fascist Virilities* – subject to various "inflections" manifested in its other, contemporaneous cults of youth, duty, strength, war, and so on (ibid., 2).[38] Following this logic, we can take the images below in Figures 3.19-3.24 as illustrative of Mussolini in some of his most famous, widely circulated 'virile' guises:

Figure 3.19: Mussolini 'thresher' (1938) C[39]

Figure 3.20: Mussolini 'skier' (1937)[40]

This frame of VIRILITY integral both to Fascism and to Mussolini's image is seen profiled in the above cult constructs in different ways to different effects. The Mussolinis in Figures 3.19-3.21, for example, each present further instances of Mussolini's bare chest: Figure 3.19 consists of another 1938 example of Mussolini 'as thresher,' while Figure 3.20 depicts him skiing shirtless in the Apennines. Figure 3.21 additionally presents a marked contrast in its juxtaposition of the VIRILITY prominent in the bare-chested, swimsuit-clad Mussolini alongside the traditionally dressed Austrian Chancellor, Engelbert Dolfuss (Swan 2020: 308). Different 'inflections' of Mussolini's virility are instead profiled in Figures 3.22-3.24: the Mussolini in Figure 3.22, decked in military uniform, riding horseback, and victoriously brandishing the "Sword of

[38] Spackman also supplies relevant dictionary definitions of 'virility' in both English and Italian to set the stage for her study, culled from OED and Zingarelli's Italian dictionary, respectively. It is worth noting that while in neither language does 'virility' necessarily equate to simply 'phallic' or 'masculine,' the Italian sense of the word also appears decidedly broader, linked to qualities such as "force, voice, age, energy, wisdom, courage" and functioning as a referent to "that which is proper or suitable to the strong, well-balanced and self-confident person, aware of his role, duties, responsibilities, etc." (a 'his' that reflects grammatical gender rather than biological sex; ibid., 2).

[39] Taken from Swan (2020: 302), a photo that adorns a 1938 postcard and that was taken in in the Fascist New Town of Aprilia.

[40] Image courtesy of the Archivio Storico Istituto Luce, © Cinecittà. This and other photographs from this series, shot on the slopes of Terminillo in 1937 by the prominent LUCE photographer Spartaco Appetiti, were circulated widely across various media (Swan 202: 98-99).

Figure 3.21: Mussolini 'swimmer' (1933)[41]

Figure 3.22: Mussolini 'warrior' (1937)[42]

[41] Image © Fotoeca Gilardi, included with their permission. The photograph was taken in 1933 and circulated locally as a postcard (Swan 2020: 308).
[42] Image courtesy of the Archivio Storico Istituto Luce, © Cinecittà, photograph by Luigi Leoni. This image featured on the front page of the *Corriere della Sera* on March 20, 1937, the day after it was taken in Tripoli, Libya (Swan 2020: 286).

Figure 3.23: Mussolini 'aviator'[43] (1936/39)

Figure 3.24: Mussolini 'lion tamer' (1924)[44]

Islam,"[45] suggests an appeal to the Fascist cult of war and violence, while the Mussolini 'as aviator' in Figure 3.23 plays into the Fascist fascination with technology, dynamism, and modernity.[46] Figure 3.24, notably the only construct here from the 1920s, sees an entirely unfazed Mussolini crouching next to and petting a lioness, in this way projecting bravery, fearlessness, and even an all-caution-to-the-wind-like total disregard, if not contempt, for danger. Adorning a postcard, it is accompanied by a telling, abridged quote from Cicero in an imperial-style script, which in English reads, 'Courage is the quality by which one undertakes dangerous tasks and endures hardships.'

In the chapter of her book *Fascist Spectacle* dedicated to the myth of Mussolini, Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi (1997: 77-78) provides a 1938 report from the Ministry of Popular Culture on Mussolini's image circulating at the time that captures the salience that his representation as a fearless, 'tough guy' enjoyed:

> 'Not only the so called educated and cultured people, but also the man in the street have noticed that the Duce's scorn for danger and his audacity are known all over

[43] Retrieved October 22, 2022 from Wikipedia. Swan (2020: 175) notes that this photograph was published in a 1936 book by Guido Mattioli entitled *Mussolini Aviatore*, and also appeared in a 1939 edition of the newspaper *Corriere della Sera*. Link to web address here: https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Mussolini_aviatore.jpg.

[44] Image courtesy of the Archivio Sturani in Rome (see Sturani 2003: 24), and similar ones circulated widely in the early 1920s (see e.g. Falasca-Zamponi 1997: 69; the cover of the July 12, 1926 issue of *TIME magazine*). Mussolini was even given a lioness cub as a gift in 1923, and an image of him holding it while riding in an automobile was converted into a different postcard captioned with "The daily car ride of His Excellency, Mussolini" (ibid., 70).

[45] Not just any sword nor just any scene, the so-called "Sword of Islam" was bequeathed to Mussolini during a 1937 trip to Libya designed to present him as both the "Founder of the New Roman Empire" and as the "Protector of Islam" (see Wright 2005).

[46] Like its obsession with violence, dynamism, and youth, Fascism's embrace of technology is to be understood as part of broader intellectual currents inherited from the Futurist movement. See Gori (2000), Gentile (2003), Adamson (2008), Merjian (2019), and Baxa (2022) for various discussions of and perspectives on the Futurist-Fascist dynamic and the influence of the former on the latter.

> the world, not only in Italy. Twenty years of assiduous, continuous daily practice of the most dangerous sports… have created around the Duce the conviction that nothing, literally nothing, is forbidden to him.'

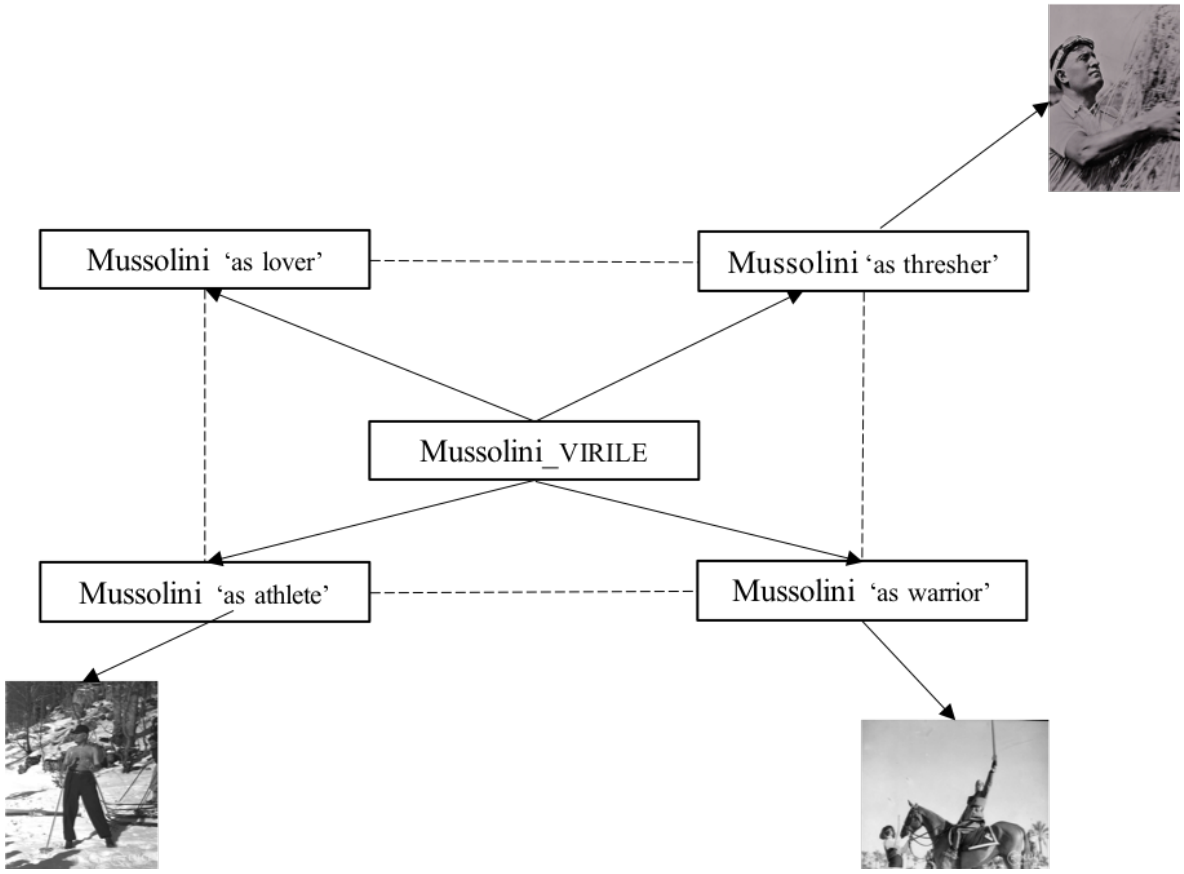
That final line might well have applied to Mussolini and his relation to women, too, as his appetite for sex was no secret even if perhaps somewhat veiled behind his 'mainstream' image as a family man. Even if they did not circulate in photographs or works of art, Mussolini's 'conquests' were nonetheless certainly part of his 'virile' image, structuring and maintaining it in the form of rumors and fantasies alike (see e.g. Boatti 1989; Duggan 2013a: chapter 8; Ben-Ghiat 2020b: 126-129).

3.2.4 – From Type Frequency to the 'Virile Network'

Thus, as with the Mussolini 'as thresher' constructs, it is with the proliferation of various cult constructs profiling a frame of VIRILITY that 'cluster' in the emergent cult network to give rise to two more-schematic constructions: first, each of these *types* of Mussolini as provided in Figures 3.19-3.24 can, by virtue of its salience and widespread dissemination, be understood as developing into a particular *subschema* in its own right, such that we can also speak of Mussolini 'as athlete,' or Mussolini 'as lover,' or Mussolini 'as warrior' as productive groupings sanctioning the emergence of new such tokens in a process akin to the kind of 'feedback cycle' mentioned earlier and described in Schmid (2020). Second, the very 'clustering' of these various subschemas impacts the structure of the cult network itself such that an emergent *schema* of a broadly 'virile' Mussolini is born out of the proliferation of such constructs 'from the bottom up.' A schematic rendering of this network is provided on the following page in Figure 3.25.

The network itself can be explained as follows: at its core – both diagrammatically and in practice – is the schema, which I have labeled Mussolini_VIRILE to capture the fact that it is the blend of Mussolini's figure with a frame of VIRILITY that constitutes the most schematic, shared conceptual structure and which in turn comes to 'sanction' all lower-level constructions populating the network. This sanctioning is depicted via solid, arrowed lines radiating outward to various emergent subschemas – Mussolini 'as athlete,' 'as lover,' 'as thresher,' 'as warrior,' among a host of possible others. The dashed lines, in contrast, are intended to capture the kind of 'horizontal' links that obtain between these sister nodes in a network: as subschemas, each is slightly more specified than their dominating Mussolini_VIRILE schema, but they all still share that same VIRILITY-frame structure, simply profiled in a particular way. That this frame of VIRILITY can be profiled in so many different ways speaks to its own polysemous nature – its considerable 'meaning potential,' in Fauconnier and Turner's (2003) terms – that, in turn, contributes to the richness of the resultant leader polysemy that emerges in the cult's continued manifestation (itself evident in the variety of virile types supplied in the subschemas). At the same time, however, VIRILITY is not the only frame blended with Mussolini's image in each of these subschemas, nor in any of their sanctioned micro-constructions, depicted here in select images of Mussolini skiing, threshing, and brandishing the "Sword of Islam." Rather, since *multiple* frames are likely to be blended in a given cult construct, multiple frames come to impact and structure the overall cult network – a point to which we turn in the next section.

Figure 3.25: Mussolini_VIRILE network



3.2.5 – What's Ahead

While much has already been described and outlined for a constructionist approach to cult construction, there is still a fair bit more to be said. In what follows, I will continue my exposition specifically in terms of laying out the relations of *multiple inheritance* operative in the network hierarchy, and at the same time will continue to detail the frames incorporated and the blends prompted in both Mussolini's and Ceauşescu's cults in turn, in sections 3.3 and 3.4, respectively.

3.3 – 'Multiple Mussolinis'

The preceding section constituted an overview-cum-introduction to the ways in which a constructionist approach – in tandem with other insights from cognitive linguistics – can help us to understand cults of personality as semiotic systems at once communicative, cognitive, and material in nature. We did so by postulating the emergence of a Mussolini_VIRILE schema within the cult network through the proliferation of numerous constructs that blended his 'character' with a particular profiling of a frame of VIRILITY, ensuring that the polysemy in his image was both observed and cognitively accounted for. This section continues to focus on Mussolini and his image(s) and elaborates in turn two more of his observed 'image-types' – Mussolini as a warrior figure (section 3.3.1) and Mussolini as a popular figure (section 3.3.2).

3.3.1 – Mussolini 'as warrior'

We can begin with Mussolini 'the warrior' that was introduced in the previous section. Although violence had characterized Fascism's early years and certainly remained omnipresent in its rhetoric (Ferrari 2013), it was not until the mid-1930s that full-blown warfare became a permanent reality, and to mixed results for Mussolini and his regime. It is generally acknowledged, for example, that Mussolini enjoyed perhaps the peak of his popularity among Italians in 1935-1936 following the invasion and subsequent conquering of Ethiopia.[47] Promulgated variously as a civilizing mission, as a prospect for bountiful economic opportunity, and as a 'restoration' of the imperial glory of Ancient Rome in the form of Italy's own long-awaited empire, Mussolini's May 9, 1936 declaration that Italy 'finally has its empire' was largely met with celebration and feelings of vindication.[48] Following the brutal subjugation of Ethiopia, Mussolini would then involve Italy in the Spanish Civil War until its conclusion in 1939, just over a year prior to Italy's entry into World War II on July 10, 1940 and just months shy of the war's eruption itself. Italy's performance in World War II, however, would prove disastrous, to the point where Mussolini himself was removed from his post as prime minister by King Victor Emmanuel on July 25, 1943 and subsequently arrested.[49] He would then be rescued by Nazi forces that September, and would go on to helm the puppet state Republic of Salò until his death at the hands of partisan forces on April 28, 1945.

It comes as little surprise, then, that within this context war, violence, and militarism – whether past, present, or brewing – also came to have a profound impact on the development of Mussolini's image. Giuliana Pieri (2013: 164), for example, in synthesizing the iconographic 'phases' in the image of Mussolini posited in numerous works from Di Genova's (1997) exhibition of Mussolini memorabilia to the art historian Franco Sborgi's (2003) essay on his portraits to Calvino's own descriptions provided in Chapter 1, notes that all agree upon the emergence of an 'Imperial Mussolini' in the 1930s that would last until his death. Thus, in our terms, a frame of WAR became increasingly – and consciously[50] – invoked to color Mussolini's image as the decade progressed, as evidenced below in Figures 3.26-3.31:

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[47] This interpretation is indebted to the work of Renzo De Felice (1974) who first described the period of 1929-1936 as "gli anni del consenso," which in English has been translated as both "the years of consent" and "the years of consensus." De Felice's own position was in opposition to the prevailing postwar stance that Fascism was a totalitarian system inflicted unwillingly upon Italians, and in elaborating his claims he opened the floodgates to the debate of whether Fascism constituted a force of 'coercion' or 'consent' – often framed in such binary terms – that continues to roil today. See Painter (1990) for a classic overview of De Felice's position in this regard and its influence and attendant controversy, as well as Albanese and Pergher (2012) – particularly the introduction – for a more recent take on such questions.

[48] Italy itself was often labeled the 'least of the Great Powers' following its unification in 1861 due in main to the fact that it was 'late to the game' in acquiring colonial territory in Africa: its first official colony would be established in Eritrea in 1890, and soon after Italy would suffer a 'humiliating' defeat at the hands of the Ethiopians at Adwa (in 1896). See Ben-Ghiat (2001) and Fuller (2007) for syntheses of the anxieties induced by this label, and solutions and strategies proposed in response in the realm of cultural production and in colonial projects themselves, respectively, as well as their (2005) jointly edited volume dedicated to Italian colonialism.

[49] On the Fascist war efforts, see Bosworth (2005: chapters 13-17) as well as Labanca (2015) specifically on the war in Ethiopia. Of tangential relevance, too, is the growing body of work on Fascist wartime propaganda and its often-limited efficacy, and we can briefly note here contributions such as Arnold (1998), Bosworth (2004), Corner (2010), and Petrella (2016).

[50] Throughout the *ventennio*, Mussolini's regime sent special directives – known as *veline* – to the press indicating what should and should not be published and what kinds of images of Mussolini should, could, and could not be used (see Tranfaglia 2005 for further discussion). One such directive from 1942 makes explicit the desire for the depiction

Figure 3.26: Mussolini in helmet (1933)[51]

Figure 3.27: Mussolini in uniform (1939)[52]

This frame of WAR is profiled in these constructs in various ways. Figures 3.26 and 3.27, for example, both of which constitute widely circulated photographs of Mussolini, depict him in two of his most prominent militaristic guises – wearing his helmet and bedecked in uniform – which serve to evoke an image of him as ever-prepared for battle. Figure 3.28, instead, in incorporating additional bodies alongside Mussolini's own construes him as 'commander-in-chief,' aided by the configuration of his uniformed figure perched atop a tank, towering over the crowd of soldiers and officials gathered around him. This kind of oscillation between soldier and commander reflects the ambiguities possible in profiling the frame of WAR and in blending it with the character of Mussolini in that he could be felicitously construed as either depending on the exigencies of the construct-in-context.

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of a militaristic Mussolini, calling for "Fotografia del Duce possibilmente con l'elmetto" ('photograph of the Duce possibly with a helmet'). This is also the title of a (1995) essay by Angelo Schwarz on such directives, and one can find numerous others included therein on pages 63-74.

[51] Retrieved August 6, 2021 from the *Emeroteca digitale italiana* as found online via *Internet Culturale*. This image is the front page of the October 29, 1933 edition of *L'Illustrazione Italiana.* Link to web address here: https://www.internetculturale.it/jmms/iccuviewer/iccu.jsp?id=oai%3Awww.internetculturale.sbn.it%2FTeca%3A20%3ANT0000%3ARAV0070589_188676&mode=all&teca=MagTeca+-+ICCU&fulltext=1.

[52] Retrieved October 21, 2022 from *Emeroteca digitale italiana* as found online via *Internet Culturale*. This image is of the internal cover page of the March 26, 1939 edition of *L'Illustrazione Italiana.* Link to web address here: https://www.internetculturale.it/jmms/iccuviewer/iccu.jsp?id=oai%3Awww.internetculturale.sbn.it%2FTeca%3A20%3ANT0000%3ARAV0070589_188802&mode=all&teca=MagTeca+-+ICCU&fulltext=1. See Swan (2020: 153-155) for a discussion of the photograph featured on this page, which was taken by Ghitta Carell in 1936.

Figure 3.28: Mussolini 'commander' (1934)[53]

Figure 3.29: Mussolini in uniform + helmet (1942)[54]

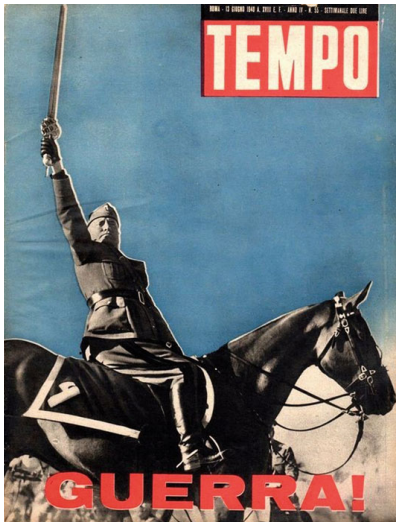
Figure 3.29, in turn, consists of a painting commissioned in 1942 by the *Scuola di Mistica Fascista*,[55] when Italy's calamitous war effort was already well underway. Contextually, then, it

[53] Image courtesy of the Archivio Sturani in Rome (see Sturani 2013: 147), a 1934 postcard commemorating a speech Mussolini gave to military officers.
[54] Image included courtesy of the Museo Magi900 in Pieve di Cento, Italy, which houses much of the famed Duilio Susmel collection (see Petacco 2009; Arangio 2021).
[55] The 'School of Fascist Mysticism' was an organization founded in Milan by Niccolò Giani in 1930 dedicated to the training of future leaders of Fascism and based explicitly on a spiritual, antirational understanding of fascism (see Grandi 2004).

indeed speaks to the salience or even intended 'power' of such a blend in a performative sense: that is, if one depicts Mussolini as a war hero – medal-studded breast pocket and all – then so it (it, of course, being Italy's victory) shall be. In a similar vein, Figure 3.30 resupplies the photograph of Mussolini brandishing the "Sword of Islam" discussed earlier as one of his many 'virile' incarnations. As mentioned, its depiction of Mussolini on horseback, with the sword pointed skyward, not only portrays him as a warrior but also evokes a sense of *victory*, whether freshly won or imminent. Indeed, the photograph itself would be repurposed for the announcement of Italy's entry into World War II, as shown below on the cover of the June 13, 1940 issue of *Tempo* magazine provided in Figure 3.31:

Figure 3.30: Mussolini and the Sword of Islam

Figure 3.31: Mussolini and the Sword of Islam enter World War II (1940)[56]



What is more, Figure 3.31 again speaks to the citational nature of many cult constructs and the constructional polysemy emergent in such practices. While the frame of WAR is profiled in precisely the same manner in both Figures 3.30 and 3.31, the contexts surrounding each were radically different: although Italians were generally enthusiastic about conquering (and exacting revenge on) Ethiopia, they were far less so about entering into war alongside Nazi Germany, with whom Italy officially entered into the 'Pact of Steel' on May 22, 1939 (Goeschel 2018: 142-143). Citationally speaking, the rather simplistic cover of the October 29, 1933 edition of *L'Illustrazione Italiana* in Figure 3.26 is also suggestive in its pairing of a close-up and recognizable image of a helmeted Mussolini with his signature, thus clearly drawing on his celebrity to concoct what amounts to a mass-produced, autographed headshot.[57]

The prominence (i.e. salience) and quantity (i.e. frequency) of WAR-structured images of Mussolini in the later years of his regime suggest the emergence of a new schema along the lines of what was discussed in the previous section for his blended image with a frame of VIRILITY. Following the format initiated there, we can call this schema 'Mussolini_WARRIOR.' Mussolini 'as

[56] Taken from Swan (2020: 289).

[57] The additional inclusion of 'Roma 28 ottobre XI' scrawled beneath is intended to recognize the eleventh anniversary of the March on Rome, which the edition celebrates. We can recall here that XI refers to the eleventh year of the *era fascista,* or 1933.

warrior,' however, we can recall, was one of the postulated subschemas dominated by the Mussolini_VIRILE schema and thus already present in the network. Rather than positing an individual such schema *and* subschema, the development of the Mussolini_WARRIOR schema can in fact be understood simply as a change in the *schematicity* of that subschema such that it develops *into* a schema. Schematicity itself is a gradient phenomenon (Traugott & Trousdale 2013: 16) and, as has been stressed, the cult network is inherently dynamic in nature such that changes or developments in usage will impact the overall structure and organization of the network itself, e.g. the schematicity of constructions. At the same time, increases in constructional schematicity (e.g. the emergence of a schema from an erstwhile subschema, often referred to as 'schematization') are also frequently associated with an increase in constructional productivity (Barðdal 2008; Gyselinck 2020), productivity which – as mentioned – is apparent in the regime's developments in the 1930s and in the concomitant public saturation of WAR-structured depictions of Mussolini.

The 'evolved' cult network is provided on the following page in Figure 3.32, with changes provided in red. The emergent Mussolini_WARRIOR schema, in its 'promotion' from a subschema of the Mussolini_VIRILE schema, now occupies space alongside it at the 'core' of the network. The bidirectional arrow between the two schemas is meant to capture their shared structure and the fact that they 'mutually motivate' one another by virtue of that shared structure (Goldberg 2019: 36). That is, even if Mussolini_WARRIOR has emerged as a schema in its own right, it has not wholly separated from the Mussolini_VIRILE schema of which it was a part, and the two in fact remain tightly connected. This is partially captured by the relations of *multiple inheritance* (Goldberg 1995; Hudson 2007; Trousdale 2013; Sommerer 2020) that now characterize the numerous types of Mussolinis 'as warrior' discussed in Figures 3.26-3.31. Here Mussolini 'in uniform,' Mussolini 'as soldier,' and Mussolini 'as commander' now constitute subschemas that are sanctioned by the emergent Mussolini_WARRIOR schema, but they are not sanctioned by this schema alone: rather, given the interrelation of the Mussolini_WARRIOR and Mussolini_VIRILE schemas, these subschemas in fact 'inherit' structure from both, as shown via the black and red arrows converging on each. Such relations of multiple inheritance are fundamental to the cult network in that they (a) capture the fact that cult constructs inevitably draw from multiple frames, (b) accommodate both the interconnectivity of conceptual structure and the interrelation of particular frames, and (c) allow for flexibility in the generation of contextually emergent meanings. Indeed, taking the supplied iconic photograph of Mussolini with the "Sword of Islam" as an example, we can note that it could 'inherit' from any (that is, all) of the three subschemas of Mussolini 'in uniform,' 'as soldier,' and 'as commander,' depending on its construal-in-context.

Evolutions in the cult network of the kind described above are possible in a myriad of different directions. In no way are they specific to Mussolini's cult nor are they, with regard to his cult, limited to this particular attested evolution. Rather, such developments are simply dependent on the dynamism of the 'exigencies' of the overall social system of which the cult is a part, and factors could range from spontaneous shifts in the leader's image to imposed modifications from above. With this in mind, we can now turn to section 3.3.2 and Mussolini's 'popular' image.

3.3.2 – Mussolini 'as popular'

The final 'image-type' of Mussolini to be discussed here constitutes his representation as what I have broadly termed a 'popular' figure, with the intent of playing to the word's own polysemy such that it incorporates constructs in which he is depicted both 'adored by' and 'as one of' the people.

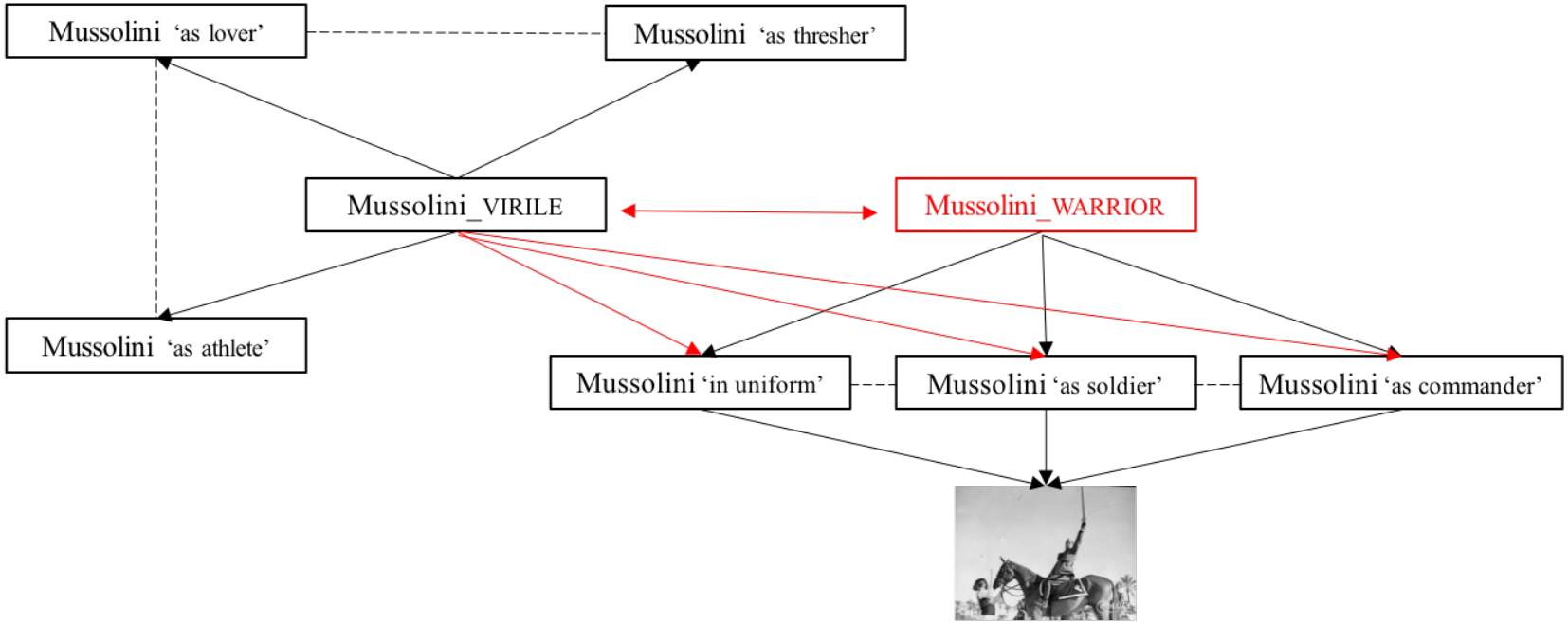


Figure 3.32: Mussolini network – VIRILE + WARRIOR

We can begin with the former. Within the cult system, the dictator's body, as we have observed, is pivotal in that it, whether in the flesh or in some manner depicted, constitutes a material anchor for some conceptualization X of him, who he is, what he stands for, etc. No less critical, however, is the role often played by other bodies, namely those of the ordinary citizens who partake in rallies, populate crowds, attend speeches, and whose presence for all intents and purposes 'affirms' the leader's claim to be the embodiment of the nation.[58] Figures 3.33-3.35 are illustrative in this regard:

Figure 3.33: Mussolini 'among the crowd' (1940)[59]

Figure 3.34: Mussolini 'with babies' (1939)[60]

Although images of Mussolini in front of or among an adoring crowd were circulating already in the 1920s[61] and had increased with the initiation of the *andare verso il popolo* 'going toward the people' campaign in the early 1930s,[62] it has been observed that they enjoyed a noted uptick in frequency in the regime's later years, ostensibly as an attempt to pictorially produce popularity as in reality it declined (Sturani 2013: 147-148; Gundle 2013b: 122-125; Swan 2020: 180).[63] Indeed, the photograph in Figure 3.33 adorns a postcard from 1940, that in Figure 3.34 was

[58] We will consider the hallmark political metaphor of which this embodiment is a part – THE NATION IS A BODY – and both its application in and populist implications for Mussolini's and Ceaușescu's cults in Chapter 4. On the various roles of crowds in politics and political imagery across time and space, see the companion volumes Schnapp (2005) and Schnapp and Tiews (2006), as well as Gundle (2013b) specifically for their import to Mussolini's cult.

[59] Image courtesy of the Archivio Sturani in Rome (see Sturani 2013: 148).

[60] Taken from Swan (2020: 136), a photograph by Vincenzo Carrese.

[61] Such images were partly due to a perceived need to 'soften' Mussolini's reputation early on, both in the wake of the widespread *squadrist* violence carried out prior to the March on Rome as well as following the scandal brought about by the murder of the prominent socialist and Mussolini critic, Giacomo Matteotti, in June 1925, which it was widely suspected that Mussolini himself had orchestrated (Gundle 2013a: 83).

[62] The campaign itself was part of a larger, nation-wide project to inculcate Italians into the Fascist Party through social and leisure programs devised by its then-Secretary Achille Starace in 1933. From a cult perspective, it entailed an increase in Mussolini's rehearsed and ritualized visits throughout Italy, giving speeches, inaugurating construction projects, meeting peasants, participating in motor sports, and beyond (see e.g. Berezin 1997: 141-149; Nicoloso 2008; Baxa 2013, 2022: chapter 5; Gundle 2013b).

[63] The work of Enrico Sturani (e.g. 1995, 2003, 2013) has provided invaluable insight into the robust postcard industry and market that existed under Fascism. As mentioned, Sturani notes how numerous 'unofficial' postcards adorned with Mussolini's image were produced – that is, without regime approval – and circulated widely, suggesting Mussolini's power as a 'brand' and the popularity of his effigy as a commodity. Such 'unofficial' renderings, however,

taken in May 1939 upon a visit to Turin, and the panorama shot in Figure 3.35 is drawn from the front page of the August 29, 1936 issue of *Il Popolo d'Italia*. In each of these constructs, however, we can note that it is the presence of a multitude of bodies that inherently evokes a frame of what we might simply call CELEBRITY, profiling an image of Mussolini as 'larger than life,' so to speak, as a figure literally magnetic to the masses. At the same time, however, constructs such as those in Figures 3.33 and 3.34 convey intimacy, too, in that Mussolini still appears as 'having time' for personal exchanges, individual salutations, etc., thus projecting an image of Mussolini in one facet of what Peter Burke (2001: 71) describes as a "demotic" style of leadership common (and new) to twentieth-century dictatorships.[64]

Figure 3.35: Mussolini 'with crowd' (1936)[65]


Il Duce mentre parla dal balcone del Palazzo del Governo - tra indescrivibili acclamazioni - al Popolo di Potenza (*Fot. « Luce »*)

Mussolini's image as a 'man of the people,' then, is complicated in its ambiguous relation to *la folla oceanica* 'the oceanic crowd,' an ambiguity between 'celebrity' and 'demotic' status that is exploited to great and varied effect in different constructs. On the one hand, the relation to the crowd as a singular entity is electric, captivating, and 'irrational' per the thought of the period, an irrationality that is harnessed by Mussolini's 'charisma,' by his singular domination over the

circulated alongside regime-sanctioned ones, and it is of note that the one provided in Figure 3.33 is in fact one such 'official' postcard, thus aligning with the idea that from the end of the 1930s depictions of Mussolini 'as one' with Italians were explicitly sought (2013: 148).

[64] Also noted in Swan (2020: 68; 207-208).

[65] My photograph, courtesy of the collection of the Fondazione Giangiacomo Feltrinelli in Milan, Italy.

attendant, expectant crowd (as in Figure 3.35).[66] Yet, on the other hand, constructs such as Figures 3.33 and 3.34 demonstrate Mussolini's simultaneous connection to the crowd as individualized constituents, as compositionally 'parsable' such that intimate and fantastical – even if hypothetical – relations can be posited between him and each legible face in the crowd.

Figure 3.36: Mussolini 'with son' (1937)[67]

Continuing in the vein of Mussolini's 'popular' image in the second sense – that is, as a man 'of the people,' or as an 'everyday' man – we can now also reconsider the various constructs of Mussolini_VIRILE discussed earlier in the light of multiple inheritance relations. More specifically, each of the constructs seen earlier profiling his bare chest, his athletic prowess, his embrace of modern technologies, his insatiable sex drive, his youth and overall vigor can now also be simultaneously understood as 'clustering' to form a new schema in the cult network that we can deem Mussolini_DEMOTIC. As with the other schemas, it emerges through the proliferation (i.e. usage) of such constructs that profile his image as an 'everyday' man in some way (see Figure 3.37 below). Beyond those from section 3.2, others such as Figure 3.36 also clearly present Mussolini in a 'demotic' style and contribute to the emergence of the Mussolini_DEMOTIC schema. This particular image – a postcard from 1937 – not only prompts a blend of Mussolini in the role of a relatable father but might also effectively serve as a tonic for the hyper-sexualized, hyper-militaristic image of him predominating at this point in his regime.

[66] The work of Gustave Le Bon, particularly his (1895) *Psychologie des Foules* 'Psychology of Crowds,' was highly influential and largely responsible for such perspectives on crowds as 'irrational' (and, relatedly, as 'feminine,' too) during this period. See Schnapp (2006) for a fleshed-out discussion, as well as Falasca-Zamponi (1997: 17-26) for Le Bon's influence on Mussolini.

[67] Image courtesy of the Archivio Sturani in Rome (see Sturani 2013: 146). Although this postcard was mass-produced by the Fascist regime, Sturani notes that the original photo from which it draws dates to 1930 and in fact features Mussolini and his son surrounded by several (ostensibly) peasant Italians who were later cropped out of the official production (see ibid. for a comparison of the two photographs).

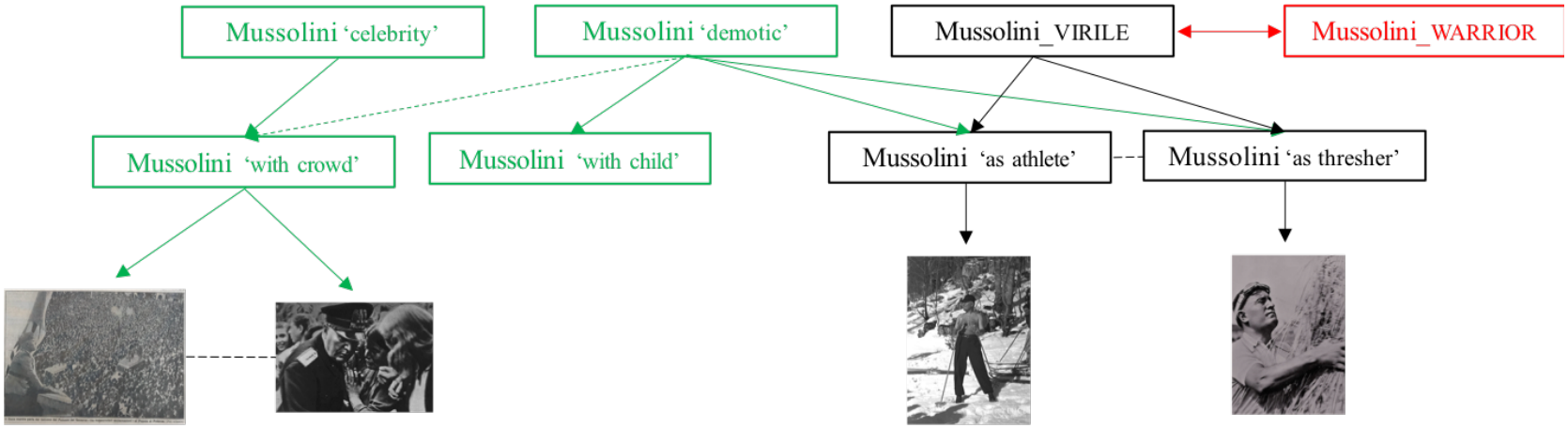


Figure 3.37: Mussolini network – VIRILE + WARRIOR + POPULAR

Figure 3.37 provides a simplified network for Mussolini's multifaceted image as we have encountered it in this chapter, now incorporating the additional Mussolini_DEMOTIC schema alongside another emergent schema – Mussolini_CELEBRITY. The two, in combination, capture Mussolini's oscillating relationship with the crowd described above in Figures 3.33-3.35 while also accounting for both his purely demotic images and providing additional structure to his virile-demotic ones to boot. Changes to the network have been provided in green, and we can note the green and black arrows converging on the Mussolini 'as athlete' and 'as thresher' subschemas signaling multiple inheritance. Additional subschemas of Mussolini 'with crowd' and Mussolini 'with child' are also included, sanctioned by the Mussolini_CELEBRITY schema and the Mussolini_DEMOTIC schema in turn. One will also note, however, the presence of a dashed-line arrow between the Mussolini_DEMOTIC schema and the Mussolini 'with crowd' subschema, which is intended to capture the fact that certain constructs' construals of Mussolini and the crowd – as we have seen, and an example of which has been supplied in the right-hand image – indeed profile a more intimate relationship, suggesting the possibility for relations of multiple inheritance to obtain also in such cases between the two broadly 'popular' Mussolini schemas postulated here.

3.4 – 'Numerous Nicolaes'

For most of this chapter, we have focused on Mussolini and his image, observing the frame structures central to his cult, the kinds of blends prompted by their various construals and profilings in different cult constructs, and the organization and structure of the emergent cult network itself. Here, in this section, we return to Ceauşescu to conduct a similar analysis for his cult and its image(s). Last we saw Ceauşescu, we can recall, our focus was on the highly particular reproducibility of his image (a simple portrait) from one context to the next. In this section, we will instead analyze three observed 'image-types' of Ceauşescu: as with Mussolini, his depiction as a 'popular' figure (section 3.4.1), as a 'father' figure (section 3.4.2), and finally as a 'royal' figure (section 3.4.3).

3.4.1 – Ceauşescu 'as popular'

Just as we saw with Mussolini and his image, Ceauşescu's cult was also characterized by a concerted effort to render him a 'popular' figure, as a man able to seamlessly navigate between his adoration by the masses – his purported 'celebrity' – and his role as a caring leader who took the time to visit with and hear from ordinary, individual Romanians (his 'demotic' side). We can begin with the latter, as it occupies a decidedly more ideological space in the cult's structure in Ceauşescu's case. That is, unlike Fascism (or Nazism), communist regimes had to grapple with the contradiction that a vaunted image of the leader projected in the face of their egalitarian pretensions, of maintaining an image of the leader as *primus inter pares*.[68] One of the ways around

[68] Solutions to this predicament varied. Rees (2004: 10) notes how various, smaller cults around lesser Party officials also blossomed in the early Stalin years that "buttressed" his own cult, while Plamper (2004: 29-32) highlights Stalin's own initial emphasis on the importance of 'collective leadership' that eventually gave way to the incorporation-as-justification of 'the role of outstanding individuals' into official Marxist theory. This was also the case during the first years of Ceauşescu's rule when public festivals and celebrations expressed gratitude and support for the Party as a whole rather than for just him and his leadership, though this would start to change from 1968 onward (see Marin 2016a: 129-140). Moreover, virtually all socialist leader cults operated within the bounds of the established communist pantheon, and as such existed alongside and contended for space with the contemporaneous cults of (the myths of)

this problem, it appears, was to go (not unlike Mussolini!) 'to the people,' which Ceauşescu did habitually in the form of his oft-reported *vizite de lucru* 'work visits,' as shown below in Figures 3.38-3.39.

Figure 3.38: Ceauşescu *vizită de lucru* A (1978)[69]

PROLETARI DIN TOATE ŢĂRILE, UNIŢI-VĂ!

Scînteia

ORGAN AL COMITETULUI CENTRAL AL PARTIDULUI COMUNIST ROMÂN

Anul XLVIII Nr. 11 218 | Vineri 15 septembrie 1978 | 6 PAGINI — 30 BANI

Cu prilejul vi
secretarul gener
preşedintele Repu
Cluj şi al desch
1978-1979, astăzi
Napoca o mare c
şi televiziune vor
care va avea loc

Vizita de lucru a tovarăşului Nicolae Ceauşescu în judeţul Caraş-Severin

● *Pretutindeni, în unităţile economice, marele miting din Reşiţa — vibrante însufleţite expresii ale sentimentelor fierbinţi faţă de secretarul general al partidului* ● *Dialog fructuos cu oamenii muncii, obiectiv clar, mobilizator: „cetăţile de foc" ale Caraş-Severinului să-şi amplifice cantitativ şi calitativ aportul la progresul tehnic, la industrializarea patriei*

În cea de-a doua zi a vizitei de lucru în judeţul Caraş-Severin, tovarăşul Nicolae Ceauşescu, secretar general al Partidului Comunist Român, preşedintele Republicii Socialiste România, s-a întîlnit cu noi colective de oameni ai muncii din unităţi industriale şi agricole, examinînd modul în care este valorificat potenţialul economic şi uman al judeţului, cum se materializează sarcinile privind creşterea cantitativă şi calitativă a producţiei, sporirea eficienţei întregii activităţi, pentru ca oamenii muncii din această parte a ţării să-şi aducă o contribuţie sporită la efortul general de edificare a societăţii socialiste multilateral dezvoltate.

Împreună cu secretarul general al partidului, la vizită participă tovarăşii Iosif Banc, Virgil Cazacu, Gheorghe Rădulescu şi Ilie Verdeţ.

(Continuare în pag. a II-a)

Primire deosebit de călduroasă făcută de muncitorii întreprinderii de construcţii metalice din Bocşa

A predominant theme in the Romanian press throughout his reign, Ceauşescu's *vizite* acquired a kind of ritual status both in terms of their constituent activities and their rapportage (Petrescu 1998). Designed initially as an opportunity for the Romanian Communist Party (RCP) leadership to visit the nation's counties (*judeţe*) to tour and inspect various facilities, as time went by and as Ceauşescu's cult began to take over as the regime's unequivocal centerpiece, so too did the *vizite* become organized for, around, and in honor of his person (ibid., 232; Marin 2016a: 217-228; Marin 2020b: 227). Cristina Petrescu (1998) describes the fixed nature of such *vizite* in detail. They would commence with a warm reception for Ceauşescu (and with time, his wife, Elena, too) to welcome him to the selected locality, accompanied by coordinated fanfare drawing on and even fabricating local traditions (ibid., 230-231). The actual visits themselves were increasingly

Lenin, Marx, and Engels (see, for example, Tumarkin 1983 for discussion), though it is worth noting that their visual presence largely ceased in the Romanian context after 1980 (Marin 2016a: 135).

[69]Image retrieved August 30, 2021 from Bibliotecă Digitală Hunedoara's online archive. Link to web address here: http://www.bibliotecadeva.eu/periodice/scanteia/1978/09/scanteia_1978_09_11218.pdf.

centered on Ceauşescu's figure, too, and came to revolve around his questions posed and his *indicații* 'directives' judiciously given to the workers, farmers, miners, builders, or any other group with whom he was 'consulting' (ibid., 235).[70] The photographs in Figures 3.38 and 3.39 – the front pages of the September 15, 1978 and June 27, 1985 issues of the RCP's chief newspaper, *Scînteia*, respectively – provide examples of the rapportage of his *vizite*.

Figure 3.39: Ceauşescu *vizită de lucru* B (1985)[71]

Joi 27 iunie 1985 — 6 PAGINI — 50 BANI

VIZITA DE LUCRU A TOVARĂȘULUI NICOLAE CEAUȘESCU ÎN UNITĂȚI AGRICOLE DE CERCETARE ȘI PRODUCȚIE DIN JUDEȚUL CĂLĂRAȘI

Un nou și rodnic dialog cu specialiști și oameni ai muncii din agricultură în vederea dezvoltării intensive și accelerate a acestei ramuri de bază a economiei, pentru obținerea unor recolte superioare de cereale și plante tehnice

Tovarășul Nicolae Ceaușescu este întîmpinat cu deosebită stimă, cu sentimente de profundă dragoste și prețuire de locuitorii din Ștefan Vodă

Scînteia reported each *vizită* in the same manner. The headline would read, *VIZITA DE LUCRU A TOVARĂŞULUI NICOLAE CEAUŞESCU ÎN…*, 'Comrade Nicolae Ceauşescu's work visit to…' followed by the location (usually a county or city name) and possibly additionally specifying whom or what he visited in particular (as in Figure 3.39). Beneath the headline would be a photo, and always one in which Ceauşescu's figure was surrounded by throngs of Romanians, typically either in dialogue, as if discussing some aspect or procedure of a factory or farm (Figure 3.38) or depicting him partaking in the initial festivities ushering in his visit (Figure 3.39). Often, and more so as time went on, he would be photographed wearing a flat cap (as in both Figures 3.38

[70] Petrescu considers the 1970s to have brought the *perioadă clasică* 'classical period' of Ceauşescu's *vizite*, characterized by the emergence of what she calls *mitul conducătorului multicompetent*, 'the myth of the multicompetent leader,' who, depending on the site he visited, rotated between p*rimul miner al țării* 'premier miner of the country,' and 'premier farmer,' 'premier builder,' and so on (ibid.).

[71] My photograph, courtesy of the collection of the Bibliotecă centrală universitară 'Lucian Blaga' at Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania.

Figure 3.40: Ceauşescu *vizită de lucru* collage (1973)

and 3.39), as if part of a costume designed to get into 'demotic character.' Moreover, even with such clear and repetitive structure, the photographs were still always colorfully captioned with effusive language. The captions for the *vizite* in Figures 3.38 and 3.39 are indicative in this regard, and they are provided below in (1-2):

(1) Primire deosebit de călduroasă făcută de muncitorii întreprinderii de construcții metalice din Bocşa

"Especially warm welcome made by the workers of the metal construction company in Bocşa"

(2) Tovarăşul Nicolae Ceauşescu este întîminat cu deosebită stimă, cu sentimente de profundă dragoste şi prețuire de locuitorii din Ștefan Vodă

"Comrade Nicolae Ceauşescu is greeted with special esteem, with feelings of deep love and appreciation by the inhabitants of Ștefan Vodă"

Figure 3.41: Ceauşescu *vizită de lucru* C (1986)[72]

[72] From page 3 of the August 22, 1986 issue of *Scînteia*, retrieved August 30, 2021 from Bibliotecă Digitală Hunedoara's online archive. Link to web address here: http://www.bibliotecadeva.eu/periodice/scanteia/1986/08/scanteia_1986_08_13685.pdf.

Not limited to the press, however, Ceauşescu's *vizite* also featured prominently elsewhere, such as in massive volumes of homage (*Omagiu*) published in his honor from 1973 onward. An example is the collage provided in Figure 3.40, tellingly captioned with "his desk is the surface of the country." Clustered together, packed side by side, the desired effect seems to be performatively demonstrative, as if supplying irrefutable 'proof' of Ceauşescu's accessibility and attentiveness.[73]

Constructionally speaking, the formulaic nature of Ceauşescu's *vizite* and their rapportage is quite striking. Although the images evidently 'differ' from one *vizită* to the next (after all, they did take place in different localities, with different groups of people, etc.), at the same time they also remain remarkably consistent, and as such we can readily posit an emergent Ceauşescu type (that is, *subschema*), namely Ceauşescu 'in *vizită*.'

Figure 3.42: Ceauşescu *vizită de lucru* art A (year unknown)[74]

Figures 3.41-3.43 above and on the following page attest to the productivity of this particular subschema. Figure 3.41 hails from the August 22, 1986 issue of *Scînteia* celebrating the 42nd anniversary of the 'Liberation from the Occupation of Fascism' that was marked – and increasingly so over time – by extravagant parades and spectacles in Bucharest (see Marin 2016a: 129-140). This image of Ceauşescu, constructed of placards held up by coordinated audience

[73] See Fischer (1981: 129-130) for more on this inaugural 1973 edition of *Omagiu* in which the collage in Figure 2.40 can be found (pp. 18-19).

[74] By Dragoș Zipel, a painting entitled *Working Visit at Reşița*, date unknown. It is part of the collection of Romania's Muzeul Național de Artă Contemporană, included with permission.

members, portrays a hypothetical *vizită* between him and a group of miners (note, too, the very same portrait seen earlier plastered above the scene and between the invocation of *Epoca de Aur – 'the golden age'*). Figures 3.42 and 3.43 instead consist of paintings based on both aspects of the *vizite* described above, the consultation with workers at their work site (Figure 3.42) and the local celebration of the Ceauşescus' arrival in Prahova county (Figure 3.43). Each speaks, on the one hand, to the salience of Ceauşescu's *vizite* and their role in projecting a blend in which he is an attentive, involved, affable leader whose presence and advice are as sought as they are celebrated. On the other, they underscore the frequency with which this blend was invoked and attest to its stability over time and across media.

Figure 3.43: Ceauşescu *vizită de lucru* art B (1977)[75]

Ceauşescu's image as a 'popular' figure was not limited to his many *vizite*, although they certainly constituted by far the most frequent and salient constructs projecting such an image. Photographs of Ceauşescu and his wife, Elena, partaking in 'everyday' cultural activities alongside ordinary Romanian citizens (such as traditional chain dancing, known as *hora*, as in Figure 3.44 on the following page) also circulated widely. Furthermore, as we saw with Mussolini, the wide shot of the leader overlooking the crowd intended to capture it in its entirety was a tactic also deployed in the Romanian press, as shown in Figure 3.45.

[75] A 1977 painting entitled *Vizita lui Nicolae şi Elena Ceauşescu în județul Prahova*. Retrieved August 30, 2021 from the collection of the National Museum of Romanian History via its online exhibition *Portretele unui dictator* ('The portraits of a dictator') and included here with permission. Link to web address here: http://www.comunismulinromania.ro/index.php/poporul-ceausescu-romania/.

Figure 3.44: Ceauşescu dancing (1973)[76]

The context in which Figure 3.45 appeared is additionally important to consider. In the days preceding this August 4, 1977 issue of *Scînteia*, miners of the Jiu Valley staged what at that point was the largest strike during Ceauşescu's rule, protesting the recent increase in the retirement age from 50 to 52 and the elimination of certain disability pensions (Cioroianu 2013: 232). The miners demanded to send a delegation to the capital, but officials, in a panic, blocked trains from leaving the valley, aggravating the situation further. Eventually Ceauşescu himself, who had been vacationing at the Black Sea, was forced to head to the valley to hear out the miners and verbally placate them.

Reported as it was, though, as a photographic combination of Ceauşescu's enthusiastic welcome in Petroşani (the valley's largest city) and his subsequent speech in front of a large crowd captured in panorama gives no hint of this backdrop crisis, ostensibly aiming to liken this visit to any other.[77] Although hidden from view, however, the context of the strike is, of course, not simply erased. This in turn suggests the performative dimensions of the construct – that is, a desire to *enact* the 'popular' Ceauşescu blend described above through its constative presentation – as it opens the door to new, emergent meanings and interpretations, e.g. satirical, derisive, jaded, etc. in nature.[78] Put differently, this construct clearly draws on an established pairing of *form* and ('constative,' i.e. literal) *meaning*, but its incorporation in a context in which that constative meaning is decidedly challenged calls into question its capacity to effectively 'license' such a reading – hence, constructional polysemy.

[76] The photograph can be found in the (1973) published volume of homage to Ceauşescu, *Omagiu* (p. 72).
[77] This particular front-page format combining a photograph of Ceauşescu's arrival with a panoramic shot of him overlooking a crowd was also a rather common feature throughout the 1970s and 80s in general.
[78] Cioroianu, for example, considers this strike to have been a veritable *piatră de hotar* 'milestone' in Ceauşescu's regime, not only in the sense that it took place precisely halfway through it, but also in its signaling a *despărţirea definitivă* 'definitive split' between Ceauşescu and the working class that he claimed to represent (2013: 231-233).

Figure 3.45: Ceaușescu 'with crowd' panorama (1977)[79]

PROLETARI DIN TOATE ȚĂRILE, UNIȚI-VĂ!

Scînteia

ORGAN AL COMITETULUI CENTRAL AL PARTIDULUI COMUNIST ROMÂN

Anul XLVI Nr. 10 873 | Joi 4 august 1977 | 6 PAGINI — 30 BANI

TOVARĂȘUL NICOLAE CEAUȘESCU A FĂCUT O VIZITĂ DE LUCRU ÎN VALEA JIULUI

Aspect din timpul vizitei

Tovarășul Nicolae Ceaușescu, secretar general al Partidului Comunist Român, președintele Republicii Socialiste România, a făcut, în cursul zilei de miercuri, o vizită de lucru în Valea Jiului, pentru a analiza la fața locului, cu cadre cu munci de răspundere din economie, cu reprezentanți ai organelor locale de partid și de stat și cu oameni ai muncii, felul în care se îndeplinesc hotărîrile celui de-al XI-lea Congres al partidului în acest sector al industriei noastre.

În această vizită, secretarul general al partidului a fost însoțit de tovarășul Gheorghe Oprea, Gheorghe Pană, Ilie Verdeț, Constantin Băbălău, ministrul minelor, petrolului și geologiei.

La sediul Comitetului municipal de partid Petroșani, tovarășul Nicolae Ceaușescu s-a întîlnit cu activul de partid și de stat din acest mare bazin carbonifer al țării. Conducători ai unor mari exploatări miniere, muncitori mineri fruntași în producție, activiști de partid au prezentat pe larg felul în care se îndeplinesc indicațiile Plumbuită de extracție a cărbunelui, obiectivele fixate pentru dezvoltarea continuă, corespunzătoare a bazei tehnico-materiale a acestei importante ramuri a economiei naționale. Totodată, ei au înfățișat măsurile întreprinse în vederea folosirii cît mai bune a capacităților de producție existente, a creșterii productivității muncii, a ridicării calității lucrărilor, a reducerii cheltuielilor de producție, a sporirii eficienței întregii activități economice.

Vorbitorii au arătat că, în ansamblu, în acest an, în condițiile în care se acționează cu hotărîre pentru aplicarea măsurilor stabilite de conducerea partidului, pentru folosirea mai bună a capacităților de producție existente, a creșterii productivității muncii, a ridicării calității lucrărilor, a reducerii cheltuielilor de producție, a sporirii eficienței întregii activități economice, se vor realiza și depăși sarcinile de plan pe întreaga producție industrială. Ei au subliniat că, în ciuda unor greutăți obiective, cauzate în mare parte de condițiile grele de exploatare a zăcămintelor, minerii din Valea Jiului au obținut în primele șase luni ale anului o producție suplimentară de peste 1,9 milioane tone cărbune, au realizat economii suplimentare la prețul de cost în valoare de peste 100 milioane lei, au dat economiei naționale peste 1 milion tone cărbune în plus față de prevederile inițiale. Ei au arătat că, în cinstea celei de-a 55-a aniversări a Eliberării patriei, minerii din Valea Jiului au hotărît să dea economiei naționale în acest an încă 1,5 milioane tone cărbune în plus față de sarcinile de plan, să realizeze economii suplimentare la prețul de cost în valoare de 100 milioane lei.

Tovarășul Nicolae Ceaușescu a arătat că, în cursul vizitei, a avut prilejul să se convingă de hărnicia și dîrzenia cu care minerii din Valea Jiului muncesc pentru a scoate din adîncuri cît mai mult cărbune, de grija deosebită pe care o acordă dezvoltării bazei tehnico-materiale a minelor, folosirii cu randament sporit a capacităților de producție existente, creșterii productivității muncii, ridicării calității lucrărilor, reducerii cheltuielilor de producție, sporirii eficienței întregii activități economice. Secretarul general al partidului a subliniat că, în condițiile în care se acționează cu hotărîre pentru aplicarea măsurilor stabilite de conducerea partidului, pentru folosirea mai bună a capacităților de producție existente, a creșterii productivității muncii, a ridicării calității lucrărilor, a reducerii cheltuielilor de producție, a sporirii eficienței întregii activități economice, se vor realiza și depăși sarcinile de plan pe întreaga producție industrială. El a arătat că minerii din Valea Jiului au hotărît să dea economiei naționale în acest an încă 1,5 milioane tone cărbune în plus față de sarcinile de plan, să realizeze economii suplimentare la prețul de cost în valoare de 100 milioane lei.

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Secretarul general al partidului a exprimat deplina încredere că minerii din Valea Jiului, harnicii constructori ai bazinului carbonifer, vor acționa cu toată hotărîrea pentru a-și îndeplini și depăși sarcinile de plan pe acest an, pentru a da economiei naționale cît mai mult cărbune, pentru a-și aduce o contribuție tot mai mare la înfăptuirea politicii partidului nostru de dezvoltare generală a economiei naționale, a societății noastre socialiste, mărețele obiective ale Congresului al XI-lea al partidului de creștere neîntreruptă a nivelului de trai al poporului, pentru a asigura condiții tot mai bune de muncă și viață celor ce muncesc, hotărîrile privind perfecționarea conducerii și organizării activității de producție, lărgirea continuă a democrației muncitorești. În timpul acestei vizite, secretarul general al partidului a fost informat despre existența în întreprinderile din Lupeni a unor neajunsuri în organizarea muncii, a unor abateri în aplicarea legislației, precum și asupra unor deficiențe din activitatea conducătorilor unităților miniere.

În cadrul întîlnirii, secretarul general al partidului a expus pe larg politica partidului nostru de dezvoltare generală a economiei naționale, a societății noastre socialiste, mărețele obiective ale Congresului al XI-lea al partidului de creștere neîntreruptă a nivelului de trai al poporului, pentru a asigura condiții tot mai bune de muncă și viață celor ce muncesc, hotărîrile privind perfecționarea conducerii și organizării activității de producție, lărgirea continuă a democrației muncitorești. În acest context, tovarășul Nicolae Ceaușescu a criticat sever organele de conducere ale unor unități miniere, organele locale de partid și de stat pentru deficiențele constatate în activitatea lor și a stabilit ca acestea să fie temeinic analizate și să se ia măsuri energice pentru înlăturarea lor grabnică.

În dialogul purtat cu minerii din Lupeni, tovarășul Nicolae Ceaușescu și-a exprimat deplina încredere că acest important detașament muncitoresc al Văii Jiului își va ocupa în cele mai bune condiții munca, va da dovadă de disciplină muncitorească, va munci fără preget pentru a îndeplini în mod exemplar sarcinile de onoare ce îi revin în asigurarea economiei naționale cu combustibil.

Adunarea populară de la Petroșani

În continuare, în Piața municipiului Petroșani a avut loc o mare adunare populară, la care au participat mii de mineri din întreaga Vale a Jiului, ingineri, tehnicieni, cadre de conducere, precum și mii de cetățeni din Petroșani și localitățile învecinate.

Adunarea a fost deschisă de primul secretar al Comitetului municipal de partid Petroșani, tovarășul Clement Neagu, care, exprimînd entuziasmul mitingului participanții, a salutat cu căldură prezența secretarului general al partidului.

A urmat apoi cuvîntarea tovarășului Nicolae Ceaușescu, care a fost urmărită cu deosebită atenție și viu interes de către cei prezenți.

Cuvîntul cuvîntul în cadrul adunării, Gheorghe Feier, directorul exploatării miniere Vulcan, Gheorghe Litcan, miner șef de brigadă la exploatarea minieră din Livezeni, ing. Rodica Tatulici, directoar la întreprinderea „Vidrotex" din Lupeni, au dat elan bucuriei cu care întregul nostru popor, întreaga suflare românească întîmpină cea de-a 55-a aniversare a Eliberării patriei, a victoriei istorice asupra fascismului, a dat glas hotărîrii de a obține noi și tot mai importante succese în opera de construire a societății socialiste multilateral dezvoltate în patria noastră.

(Continuare în pag. a III-a)

Imagine de la adunarea populară

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23 August 1944 1977

În întîmpinarea marii noastre sărbători naționale

Fapte de vrednicie muncitorească în cronica întrecerii

Bilanț rodnic pe șapte luni

● Oamenii muncii din industria Capitalei au obținut, în întîmpinarea apropiatei sărbători de la 23 August, un important spor de realizări suplimentar în cele 7 luni ale anului o producție globală industrială în valoare de peste 1,9 miliarde lei și o producție marfă în valoare de peste 1,1 miliarde lei. Printre altele, aceste sporuri de producție se concretizează în 1600 tone mașini și utilaje tehnologice, 1250 tone laminate, 1 000 tone țevi din oțel, motoare cu ardere internă și motoare electrice însumînd 35 700 CP și respectiv 12 500 kW, 8 000 mc produse prefabricate din beton armat, 700 tone materiale și elemente de construcții din mase plastice, 721 000 mp țesături, 11 000 tone tricoturi comestibile etc. Planul productivității muncii a fost depășit cu 2,7 la sută, aproape întregul spor de producție fiind realizat pe această cale. De asemenea, sarcinile planului la export au fost depășite cu 10,4 la sută. (Dumitru Tircob).

● Oamenii muncii din unitățile economice ale județului Botoșani întîmpină marea sărbătoare de la 23 August cu noi realizări în producție. Îndeplinirea înainte de termen a sarcinilor de plan pe cele șapte luni ale anului a permis obținerea unui spor de producție de peste 70 milioane lei.

● Oamenii muncii din industria județelor Dîmbovița și Buzău cinstesc apropiata sărbătoare de la 23 August cu un bilanț rodnic. Folosirea cu randament sporit a întregului potențial tehnic și uman a materialelor la fiecare perimetru 7 luni din acest an în realizarea unei producții suplimentare evaluate la circa o jumătate de miliard lei — sumă care întrece substanțial angajamentul asumat pentru această perioadă. În perioada amintită specialiștii unităților din cele două județe au introdus în fabricația curentă mai bine de 600 produse noi sau modernizate, executate pe baza unor noi tehnici și tehnologii ce materializează gîndirea tehnică proprie.

● În unitățile industriale ale Sălajului, încă și cărui rînt de dezvoltare se numără printre cele mai înalte din țară, ce dosfășoară o vie activitate creatoare, alimentată de dorința fiecărui colectiv de a întîmpina cu realizări cît mai frumoase marea sărbătoare de la 23 August. Raportate pînănzilor la zi, depășirile însumează peste 82 milioane lei, cu 44 la sută peste angajamentul asumat. Sporul de producție este concretizat, printre altele, în 12,7 milioane cărămizi și blocuri ceramice, zeci de tone de fire de bumbac, mobilă și produse pentru industria electrotehnică și electronică în valoare de peste 5 milioane lei. Calitatea produselor realizate de tînăra industrie sălăjeană a determinat lansarea a zece comenzi de către beneficiarii externi, cea ce a facilitat depășirea prevederilor planului livrărilor la export cu 9 milioane lei valută. (Agerpres).

Însemnate sporuri de productivitate

Colectivul Șantierului naval din Drobeta-Turnu Severin a obținut pînă acum însemnate succese pe linia modernizării producției, generalizării tehnologiilor avansate de lucru. Ca urmare a aplicării în practică a unor invenții și inovații, a valorificării inteligenței colective, s-a trecut pe scară largă la mecanizarea operației de vopsire a navelor, a lucrărilor de fasonare a tablelor și profilelor. Prin dotările actuale de modernizare a șporit substanțial productivitatea muncii, care a făcut posibil ca în 7 luni ale anului să se obțină o producție suplimentară de peste 34 milioane lei. (Virgiliu Tătaru).

Economii de metal prin reproiectare

La întreprinderea „Metalotehnica" din Tîrgu Mureș, în ultima vreme au fost revizuite tehnologiile de construcție a unor mașini textile la care unele repere metalice grele au fost înlocuite cu altele din materiale plastice de mare rezistență. De asemenea, au fost supuse reproiectării mai multe tipuri de mașini automate — de tricotat rectiliniu, de cusut și șnrfilat, de tricotat bătut, de încheiat ciorapi etc. — care, pe lîngă parametri calitativi superiori, au devenit mai ușoare, economisindu-se într-un singur trimestru peste 15 tone metal. (Agerpres).

Producție în continuă diversificare

Tînărul colectiv al Întreprinderii de elemente pneumatice și aparate de măsură și control din Rîmnicu Vîlcea a realizat în 7 luni o producție-marfă suplimentară evaluată la circa 4,5 milioane lei, obținută în întregime pe seama creșterii productivității muncii. În întîmpinarea marii noastre sărbători naționale, glorie aceștuia colectivul acestei A.M.C. a obținut cel de-al 30-lea produs. Importantă este și realizarea unei game de 16 tipuri de microcontre de exterior respectiv de la 25 la 300 mm. (C. Lăiuci).

Prin valorificarea deșeurilor

Perfecționarea fluxului tehnologic la Combinatul de îngrășăminte chimice Valea Călugărească a condus la ridicarea valorii materiei prime transformate în produse finite. Edificator este faptul că, în prezent, mai mult de 30 la sută din cantitatea totală de materie primă utilizată azi o constituie deșeurile sub formă de substanțe active și alte materiale. Bunăoară, prin utilizarea la obținerea sulfatului de sodiu a fodofotosului, în acest an s-a obținut, peste prevederi și în condițiile reducerii sensibile la materiale a cheltuielilor de fabricație, o producție de sulfat de sodiu estimată la 22 000 tone. (Agerpres).

La ordinea zilei:

IRIGAȚIILE!

Cu toate mijloacele, pe suprafețe cît mai mari, să asigurăm în permanență apă culturilor

Ploile din ultimele zile au fost folositoare, dar avînd un caracter local ele n-au fost suficiente nu au refăcut rezerva de umiditate din sol. În aceste condiții se cere ca în toate zonele agricole să se continue fără răgaz irigarea culturilor. La această acțiune de mare răspundere trebuie antrenate toate forțele de care dispune fiecare unitate agricolă, toate formele de organizare a lucrărilor, astfel încît programele zilnice de udări să fie îndeplinite întocmai.

În unitățile care au semnalat sîmbătă dimineața privind funcționarea sistemelor de irigații în județele Mehedinți și Dolj.

MEHEDINȚI

Toate sistemele, mari sau locale trebuie să funcționeze din plin

În aceste zile, în multe unități agricole din județul **MEHEDINȚI** se acționează pe intensitate pentru buna desfășurare a irigațiilor, pentru ca ana să asigurăm apa necesară în rădăcina plantelor. Am urmărit timp de o zi cum anume se fac datoria cei investiți cu răspunderi în acest sector. La cooperativa agricolă din Salcia, bunăoară, se muncea cu spor. Sub îndrumarea directă a specialiștilor, culturile sînt irigate după un program tocmai stabilit pe culturi și sunrafețe, pe zile și ore. În această perioadă — ne spunea Constantin Bădiță, președintele cooperativei agricole — irigăm cu prioritate porumbul pentru boabe în cultură succesivă. Aveam o bună experiență în acest domeniu. Pe terenurile pe care am aplicat anul trecut 4—5 udări am recoltat 2 100 kg boabe la hectar, porumb din cea de-a doua cultură. Pînă acum, pe 250 ha cultivate cu porumb după orz s-au și aplicat două udări. Începînd de la 3 august s-a trecut intens la aplicarea celei de-a treia udări". Încă un lucru bun remarcat aici, la Salcia : s-au organizat schimburi de udători, astfel încît sursa de apă din sistemul local să fie folosită integral pentru a se iriga și 200 ha cu hrecnă, precum și 300 ha cu legume. La Gîrla Mare, Prisloi și Gruia, conducerile cooperativelor și specialiștii se îngrijesc ca procesele de irigații să fie respectate întocmai.

În județul Mehedinți ar putea fi însă irigate suprafețe mult mai mari. O parte însemnată din lucrările marelui sistem de irigații Crivina-Vînju Mare au fost terminate. Și totuși, unele instalații nu funcționează. Pe multi kilometri de conducte apa nu poate curge. Ca urmare, în județul Mehedinți nu se îndeplinesc programele de irigări. Iată cîteva date. La nivel de județ s-a prevăzut inițial să se facă prima udare pe 11 815 ha, dar s-a făcut numai pe 6 813 ha ; a doua udare — pe 1 603 ha din 7 600 planificate, iar a treia udare — numai pe 1 200 ha, din cele 7 980 stabilite în program. De ce ? Trasatul de construcții pentru îmbunătățiri funciare din Craiova a întîrziat mult lucrările pe acest mare sanitoc. Chiar și acolo unde lucrările au fost terminate, nu s-a putut iriga din plin, deoarece au apărut o serie de defecțiuni la stațiile de pompare, pe canalele de aducțiune. Constructorii au trebuit să înlăture neîntîrziat defecțiunile ivite, dar nu se prea grăbesc.

(Continuare în pag. a III-a)

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[79] My photograph, courtesy of the collection of the Bibliotecă centrală universitară 'Lucian Blaga' at Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania.

Figure 3.46: Ceauşescu_PRIMUS INTER PARES network

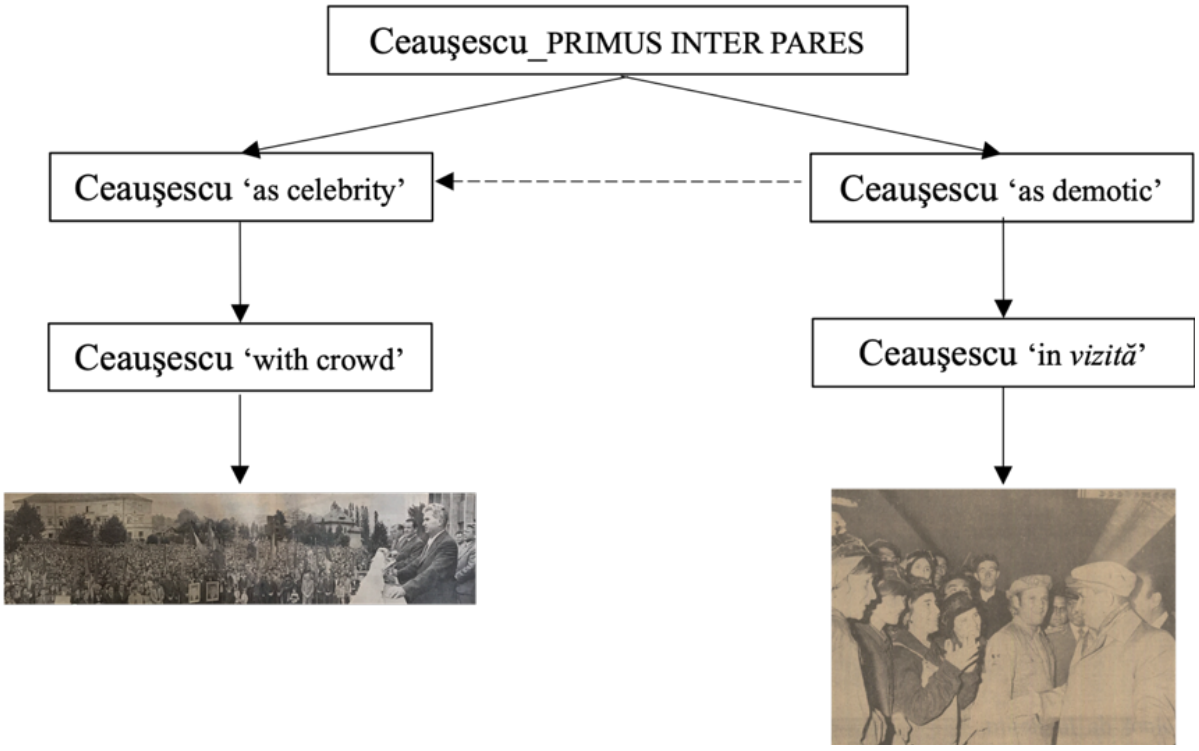


Figure 3.46 above provides a schematic rendering of Ceauşescu's cult network. As with Mussolini's network, two distinct yet compatible subschemas of Ceauşescu 'as celebrity' and 'as demotic' are posited, which in turn can be understood as sanctioning additional, more-specific subschemas such as Ceauşescu 'with crowd' and Ceauşescu 'in *vizită*,' respectively (individual constructs of which are also provided). As mentioned earlier, however, Ceauşescu's cult differs from that of Mussolini in an important, ideological respect: as overblown as it was and as larger-than-life as he was shown to be – indeed, such that he reached the echelons of a kind of "communist pharaoh," as Vladimir Tismăneanu (2003: 189) notes punchily (more on that to come, too) – Ceauşescu's cult for all intents and purposes had to pretend otherwise. That is, within the socialist system, to felicitously justify the leader's 'celebrity' status, it must be itself tethered to an image of him that is precisely, and purposely, its opposite, to an understanding of him as *primus inter pares*. Thus, on the one hand Ceauşescu's depiction as a 'popular' figure is characterized by the same ambiguity as Mussolini's, as an oscillation or tension between 'celebrity' and 'demotic.' This has been captured in the network through the emergence of a schema that we might call Ceauşescu_PRIMUS INTER PARES, in which both the 'demotic' and the 'celebrity' sides of Ceauşescu are subsumed. On the other hand, though, as an integral or decisive part of Ceauşescu's image (perhaps in the same way that 'virility' was for Mussolini's image) the two sides appear decidedly more linked than mere oscillation between one or the other would suggest: rather, the relationship appears to be one not merely of correlation but of causation, as 'celebrity' *because of* 'demotic,' or *primus* grounded in *pares*. This has been represented in Figure 3.46 by a dashed-line arrow, denoting both a 'horizontal' link between 'sister' (i.e. related) constructions as well as accounting for the fact that it is the 'demotic' that plays the crucial role here in motivating the 'celebrity,' a tension that we shall return to in section 3.4.3.

3.4.2 – Ceauşescu 'as father'

While not by any means unique to the Romanian case, the premier political metaphor THE NATION IS A FAMILY occupied a central position in Ceauşescu and his regime's self-image.[80] Gail Kligman (1983: 84), for example, remarks that "[l]oyalty to and respect for the Party [was] based upon construing the Party as the symbolic family of the people" such that it reflected "the transposition of the traditional hierarchical ordering of relations within the family, especially with regard to authority." Katherine Verdery (1996: 63) echoes such sentiments, and has indeed described the entire State-citizen relationship under socialism as one of "socialist paternalism," which she defines as follows:

> Instead of political rights or ethnocultural similarity, [socialist paternalism] posited a moral tie linking subjects with the state through their rights to a share in the redistributed social product. Subjects were presumed to be… grateful recipients – like small children in a family – of benefits their rulers decided upon for them.

Figure 3.47: Ceauşescu 'with child' (1978)[81]

In such a system, it was Ceauşescu, as the leader, who unsurprisingly came to occupy the role of the nation's father figure, as the *părinte al naţiunii* 'parent (father) of the nation,' as both its *pater* and its *genitor* (Kideckel 2004: 128).[82] The richness of the FAMILY frame structuring this

[80] Indeed, examples of the metaphor's deployment can be found in cultures the world over, from the kinds of (European) authoritarian regimes under scrutiny here (Borneman 2004) to postcolonial Africa (Schatzberg 2001), and from American politics (Lakoff 1996/2016; Cienki 2005) to contemporary right-wing populism (Norocel 2010).
[81] The image is from the (1978) volume of homage to Ceauşescu, *Omagiu* (p. 495). Note the presence of the flat cap.
[82] Kideckel links Ceauşescu's role as *pater* to his desire to "educate, mobilize, and discipline" Romanians, to "orient them to his vision of the 'new socialist man'" (ibid.). As *genitor*, on the other hand, he cites Ceauşescu's extreme pronatalist policies (see Kligman 1998 for a full account) and 'systematization' (i.e. mass-scale, mandated resettlements) as attempts to "biologically remake Romania's population and transform the social and historical contexts in which people lived" (ibid.).

metaphoric blend ensured that numerous possible paternal attributes or archetypes were mappable onto Ceauşescu's image according to its profiling and construal in a given construct: at times he was an authoritarian or disciplinarian father, at other times he was the provider or protector, and still others showed him as a caring, nurturing figure (as suggested on the previous page in Figure 3.47).[83]

Figure 3.48: Ceauşescus 'with children' A (1979)[84]

In terms of visual constructs, two additional elements were frequently deployed alongside Ceauşescu to project an image of him as the 'father of the nation' – hordes of smiling children and his wife, Elena. A peculiarity of Ceauşescu's cult is that, while it flourished at the expense of other RCP officials, it was, with time, also joined by an emergent cult around his wife (see Tanta 2014: chapter 2; Sorescu-Marinković 2017).[85] Just as Ceauşescu was 'father of the nation,' so was Elena

[83] Intriguing, too, is that his familial image was not in fact limited to that of 'father of the nation.' At times he also occupied other familial roles in the overarching THE NATION IS A FAMILY metaphor, such as that of *fiul al națiunii* 'son of the nation' when underscoring his membership in the national community was sought over highlighting his paternal attributes (Marin 2016a: 271-272). Letters sent to Ceauşescu, too, attest to the efficacy of the familial metaphor in structuring citizens' relationships to him, even as they variously described him using additional roles such as godfather, (nuclear) family member, or relative (Marin 2010: 14-15; Anton 2016: 271-273).

[84] Retrieved August 26, 2021 from *Camera Arhiva*, an online archive of printed matter published under communism. Link to web address here: https://cameraarhiva.com/2019/10/30/19791-cutezatorii-pc-personal-collection/.

[85] For all the artificiality that has been ascribed to Ceauşescu's cult, Elena's was surely even more fabricated. While largely built around her role as 'mother of the nation,' it also centered on her pretension to be a world-renowned chemist (which was widely recognized to be false) and was often compounded by her apparent vanity, rumors alleging sexual depravity, and a widespread belief that she was really to be blamed for her husband's follies and failed policies (Kideckel 2004: 132). As such, public opinion of her was and remains far lower than that of her husband, and as recently as 2013 public polls showed that 87% of Romanians viewed her negatively, whereas only 45% viewed Nicolae unfavorably (figures cited in Sorescu-Marinković 2017: 344).

the embodiment of its mother, and the two often were depicted in their shared role as Romanians' 'parents,' as shown in Figures 3.48-3.50. Figure 3.48 is taken from the front cover of the January 1979 edition of the youth magazine *Cutezătorii* ('The Dare Devils') and features both Nicolae and Elena amid a crowd of children of a variety of ages, many of whom are dressed in traditional attire.[86] Figure 3.49, in turn, consists of the front page of the June 1, 1983 issue of *Scînteia*, and includes a photograph of a commissioned artwork that plasters young, smiling, flower-picking children around the equally contented Ceaușescus, the paper's headline reading *PENTRU TOȚI COPIII – DREPTUL LA VIAȚĂ, LA UN VIITOR FERICIT!* ('For all the children – the right to life, to a happy future!').

Figure 3.49: Ceaușescus 'with children B' (1983)[87]

1 IUNIE – ZIUA INTERNAȚIONALĂ A COPILULUI

PENTRU TOȚI COPIII – DREPTUL LA VIAȚĂ, LA UN VIITOR FERICIT!

NICOLAE CEAUȘESCU

PARTIDULUI, recunoștința vie a copiilor țării

Eliana CRISTESCU

Figure 3.50: Ceaușescus 'with children' C (1989)[88]

Iubiți părinți

Pe pământul României,
Pentru toți copiii țării,
De la freamătul câmpiei
Pînă-n piscurile zării,

Nicolae Ceaușescu
E părinte iubitor,
E un vîrf semeț de munte
Îmbrăcat în tricolor..

Iar Elena Ceaușescu
Ne e mamă iubitoare

Ce ne luminează drumul
Cu petalele de floare.

Glas curat și voie bună,
Știu copiii să se joace,
Crește în țara mea frumoasă
Porumbeii albi de pace.

Martin VIOREL

Figure 3.50 is particularly noteworthy. It is drawn from a 1989 edition of the children's magazine *Almanahul Şoimii Patriei* ('Almanac of the Falcons of the Fatherland,' with *şoimi* 'falcons' being an epithet that the RCP used for its youth members) and includes artwork of Nicolae and Elena once again surrounded by, among other things, happy, traditionally dressed children. Beneath the image, however, is a poem entitled *Iubiți părinți* 'beloved parents,' provided

[86] From the late 1970s onward, January was a special and highly generative month for both of their cults since it housed both of their birthdays (Elena on the seventh, Nicolae on the twenty-sixth), which were consistently accompanied by days' worth of fanfare and panegyric press.

[87] Retrieved August 26, 2021 from the Bibliotecă Digitală Hunedoara's online archive of newspapers and magazines. Link to web address here: http://www.bibliotecadeva.eu/periodice/scanteia/1983/06/scanteia_1983_06_12681.pdf. The artwork itself, which is from 1981, can also be viewed online in color here (last accessed April 19, 2023): http://www.comunismulinromania.ro/index.php/galerie-speciala/ceausescu-tinerii/#1456489451145-c50e206c-f56c.

[88] Retrieved August 26, 2021 from *Camera Arhiva*. Translation of the poem below is mine. Link to web address here: https://cameraarhiva.com/2019/10/22/1989-almanahul-soimii-patriei-bvau/.

below in (3), which takes the otherwise inferable parental positioning of the Ceauşescus and renders it explicit:

(3) Pe pământul României	In the land of Romania
Pentru toți copiii țării	For all the children of the country
De la freamătul cîmpiei	From the rustling of the field
Pînă-n piscurile zării	Up to the peaks of the horizon
Nicolae Ceauşescu	Nicolae Ceauşescu
E părinte iubitor	Is a loving parent
E un vîrf semeț de munte	Is a tall mountain top
Îmbrăcat în tricolor	Dressed in the tricolor
Iar Elena Ceauşescu	And Elena Ceauşescu
Ne e mamă iubitoare	Is our loving mother
Ce ne luminează drumul	Who lights our way
Cu petalele de floare	With flower petals
Gînd curat şi voie bună	Clean thinking and good cheer
Ştiu copiii să se joace	The children know how to play
Cresc în țara mea frumoasă	They grow up in my beautiful country
Porumbeii albi de pace	White doves of peace

Thus, we can conclude that Ceauşescu's depiction as a father figure was both fairly ubiquitous and even blatant in nature, and as such can be understood in terms of the emergence of an additional structuring subschema in the cult network, that of Ceauşescu 'as father' (see Figure 3.51 below). Interesting, however, is the fact that, in addition to all his metaphorical fatherhood, Ceauşescu was also a literal father, a role that he fulfilled no less prominently: it was widely speculated, for example, that the couple's youngest son, Nicu, who lived a high-profile life alongside his parents, was being groomed to succeed him (Kideckel 2004: 132). Widespread nepotism, too, ensured that numerous members of Nicolae's as well as Elena's extended families acquired important posts in the regime, a combination that has led to his regime's characterization both as 'dynastic socialism' (Georgescu 1987; Tismăneanu 2003: chapter 7) and as 'socialism in one family' (de Flers 1984).[89]

In other words, then, family and fatherhood – both literal and metaphorical – were each integral to Ceauşescu's cult and image. To account for this, in the network we can posit two additional, further-specified subschemas subsumed under that of Ceauşescu 'as father,' related via what Goldberg (1995: 81-89) refers to as 'metaphorical extension links.' That is, a Ceauşescu as 'literal father' subschema exists alongside one of Ceauşescu as 'metaphorical father,' the latter of which constitutes a metaphorical extension of the former, represented by a dotted-line arrow in

[89] One can note another stark contrast here with the case of Mussolini, who, despite having numerous children himself, never named a successor and famously declared in his 1927 *Discorso dell'ascensione*, "Non è ancora nato il mio successore" 'my successor has not yet been born' (cited in Spackman 1996: 153). That is, despite the grumblings of certain Fascist officials concerned with what would happen to Fascism without Mussolini, such thoughts never seemed to have preoccupied Mussolini himself, and he would claim a few years later "I truly believe that there will not be a Duce number two" (cited in Falasca-Zamponi 2015: 42). The result, as we will explore in Chapter 4, was an understanding, both implicit and explicit, that "Mussolini equaled [F]ascism and vice versa" (ibid., 41).

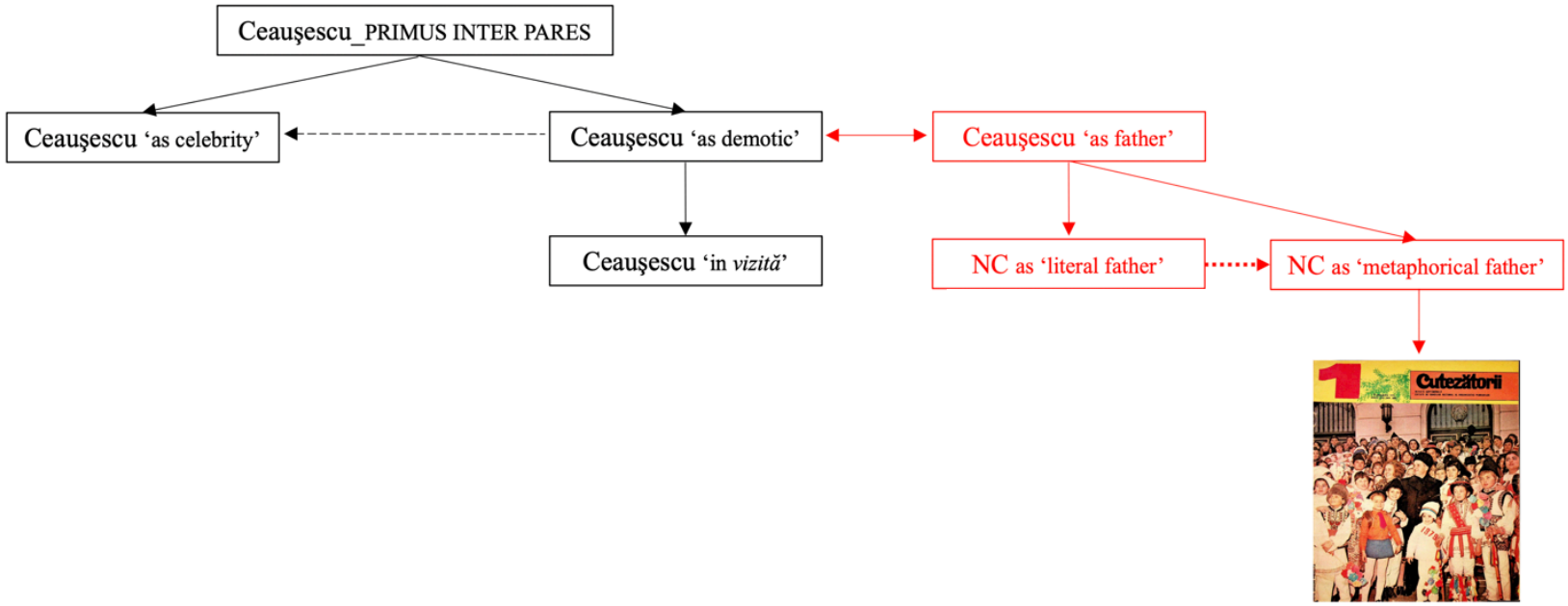


Figure 3.51: Ceauşescu network – PRIMUS INTER PARES + FATHER

Figure 3.51. In this way, Ceauşescu's 'literal' fatherhood can be understood as facilitating his representation as a metaphorical father figure of the nation, without wholly determining it. Per the model, both subschemas instantiate further specifications of their dominating, more general Ceauşescu 'as father' subschema, sharing the same FAMILY frame structures inherited from it and simply deploying them differently.

Moreover, as implicated in individual constructs, the two senses were clearly related and influenced one another. David Kideckel notes how Romanians "were of two minds about Ceauşescu's familism" (2004: 132). On the one hand, Romanians "saw something appropriate" in the way that Nicolae and Elena ensured that their own were taken care of, "a practice that modeled their own strategy for survival" (ibid.). This relatability suggests that the Ceauşescu 'as father' subschema stands in relation to the Ceauşescu 'demotic' subschemas posited above, a relationship of 'mutual motivation' (Goldberg 2019: 36) as indicated by the bidirectional arrows in Figure 3.51. On the other hand, however, Kideckel also notes that the daily privation and suffering that most Romanians faced left them embittered by the Ceauşescus' blatant familism, leaving them with "a sense of being abandoned by their parental guides in favor of a select few relatives" (2004: 132). Thus, the metaphorical blend and its constative efficacy were complicated by daily realities and – just as we saw with the Ceauşescu 'popular' constructs above – were evidently subject to the 'exigencies' of context and consequent new and divergent interpretations and contradictions. Such contradictions, in fact, provide the perfect stepping stone to the last of our observed 'image-types' of Ceauşescu in this chapter: Ceauşescu as 'royal' figure, to which we now turn.

3.4.3 – Ceauşescu 'as royal'

Adrian Cioroianu remarks that in 1974 Ceauşescu was at the 'apogee' of his power (2013: 222). He had been secretary of the RCP for nearly ten years, during which time he had cultivated a 'maverick' image within the Eastern European communist bloc to the delight of Romanians and the West alike. Abroad, this image was variously studded with high-profile visits by the likes of Richard Nixon in 1969 (which Ceauşescu would reciprocate in 1970), pointed neutrality in the prominent Sino-Soviet dispute of the late 1960s, and eventually a trip to the United Kingdom in 1978 culminating in a knighting by Queen Elizabeth II.[90] At home he represented defiance in the face of Soviet hegemony in the form of his passionate insistence on 'building socialism' in an expressly 'Romanian way,' winning him genuine popularity that had yet to be mired in the widespread shortages and forced rationings of the 1980s (ibid.; Marin 2016a: 63-87).

It is within this context that, on March 28, 1974, Ceauşescu ascended to the role of President of Romania, a title and office suddenly created in a session of the Great National Assembly especially for him, and to which he was unanimously elected.[91] Politically, the move allowed Ceauşescu to further consolidate his power and acquire "unrivalled influence" in Romanian politics by collapsing his erstwhile role as General Secretary – as, again, *primus inter pares* – with that of a head of state (Gheorghe 2015: 66). Visually or 'cult-wise,' we might say, however, his 'promotion' to this role was no drab affair and was instead accompanied by an official

[90] There is a vast literature on Romania's foreign relations during the Ceauşescu era, addressing both the tactics of Ceauşescu and his regime to position him as an independent, influential figure on the global stage as well as his reception in the West and the strategies this entailed for both parties within the Cold War context. A few notable examples include: Pechlivanis (2017) on Romanian-American relations; Deletant (2007) and Gheorghe's (2015: 67-73) excellent synthesis on Romanian-Soviet relations; Stanciu (2014) on Romania in the context of the Sino-Soviet dispute in particular; and Percival (1995) and Bowd & Anton (2019) on Ceauşescu's reception in the United Kingdom.
[91] He would be reelected – each time running unopposed – to this post twice more in 1980 and 1985.

ceremony akin to a coronation. Ceauşescu, in front of the Great National Assembly, was draped in a sash in the style of the Romanian tricolor and presented with a custom-made, golden *presidential scepter* by veteran party member Ştefan Voitec, as shown below in Figures 3.52-3.53 (Cioroianu 2013: 223):

Figure 3.52: Ceauşescu 'with scepter' A (1974)[92]

Photographs of the event circulated widely, both nationally and abroad, and came to serve as a chief source of inspiration for artworks of homage over the next fifteen years (see Figure 3.54 on the following page). Famously, too, the Spanish painter Salvador Dalí, having come across one such photograph in the days following the ceremony, sent a telegram of ironic congratulations noting his 'approval' of the scepter, which Ceauşescu's propaganda apparatus proudly had published all the same in *Scînteia* (ibid.). Indeed, Dalí's amusement is quite understandable: the very idea of a *presidential scepter* is nothing short of paradoxical. The scepter itself, in cognitive terms, can be readily understood as a material anchor facilitating a blend of two incongruent governmental traditions within the context of a third, even more incongruent one – that is, within a supposedly egalitarian socialist society, one without presidents *or* kings – a blend that is maintained and projected in constructs such as Figures 3.52-3.54 (and discussed in more detail below). In this sense, then, we can be reminded of the conceptual 'clashes' discussed earlier in the case of Mussolini 'as thresher,' which appear here decidedly more problematic: how was Ceauşescu's image as Marxist visionary, as *primus inter pares*, to be felicitously reconciled with that of, essentially, a communist king?

[92] Retrieved August 30, 2021 from *Fototeca online a comunismului românesc*, cota: 1/1974 (photograph: #E580). Link to web address here: http://fototeca.iiccmer.ro/picdetails.php?picid=33336X12X862.

Figure 3.53: Ceauşescu 'with scepter' B (1980)[93]

Figure 3.54: Ceauşescu 'with scepter' C (1978)[94]

The answer may simply be that it did not matter. It is widely assumed, for example, that Ceauşescu was enchanted by the degree of disciplined spectacle, pageantry, and choreography adulating the leader that he witnessed during visits to Mao's China and Kim's North Korea in 1971 and sought to incorporate similar practices into his own burgeoning cult upon his return (Tismăneanu 2003: 206; Cioroianu 2013: 210-212; Deletant 2019: 277). The enactment of the so-called 'July Theses' that same summer mandated a "firm political orientation" for all artistic and cultural production in the service of the regime and its ideological messages (Preda 2017: 144), which, by the mid-1970s (and thus coinciding with Ceauşescu's ascendancy to the presidency), came to increasingly center on the glorification of Romania's *Conducător*, ushering in his cult's intensification and true proliferation (Cârneci 2001: 130; Tismăneanu 2003: 206; Preda 2017:

[93] Retrieved August 26, 2021 from *Camera Arhiva*. The photograph is from the third page of a 1980 edition of the film magazine *Cinema* and is partnered with an excerpt from a speech by Ceauşescu praising the role of cinematography in the service of the regime's cultural aims to create the *omul nou* 'New Man' (technically 'new human being') and to build *societatea socialistă multilateral dezvoltată* 'the multilaterally developed socialist society.' Link to web address here: https://cameraarhiva.com/2019/10/23/1980-magazin-estival-bvau/.

[94] A 1978 painting titled *Ceauşescu – Preşedinte*, by Doru Rotaru. Retrieved August 16, 2021 from the National Museum of Romanian History's online exhibition *Portretele unui dictator* and included with permission. Link to web address here: http://www.comunismulinromania.ro/index.php/galerie-speciala/ceausescu-presedinte/#1456489451300-ff5d26f6-4a55.

173). Put simply, such deification – regardless of incongruities generated – was expressly desired and achieved.

Alternatively, Ceauşescu's ostentatious majesty may have been useful. Mary Ellen Fischer, for example, has suggested that 'royal' portrayals of Ceauşescu were designed to appeal to "the peasant origins and nationalism" of most Romanians at the time, long accustomed to princely dynasties and for whom such depictions would intelligibly resonate (1989: 173). Unlikely to be well versed in socialist ideology, the aforementioned conceptual 'clashes' such 'royal' constructs projected would accordingly not register in the same problematic manner. While we cannot drum up every possible interpretation for such Ceauşescu 'as royal' constructs – as indeed we cannot for all other such constructs discussed in this chapter – we can still conceptually unpack them and their impact on the Ceauşescu cult network. Figure 3.55 below provides an illustration of the kinds of mappings involved in the constructs in Figures 3.52-3.54, each of which are structurally nearly identical in their inclusion of Ceauşescu clutching the scepter:

Figure 3.55: Ceauşescu 'as royal' blend

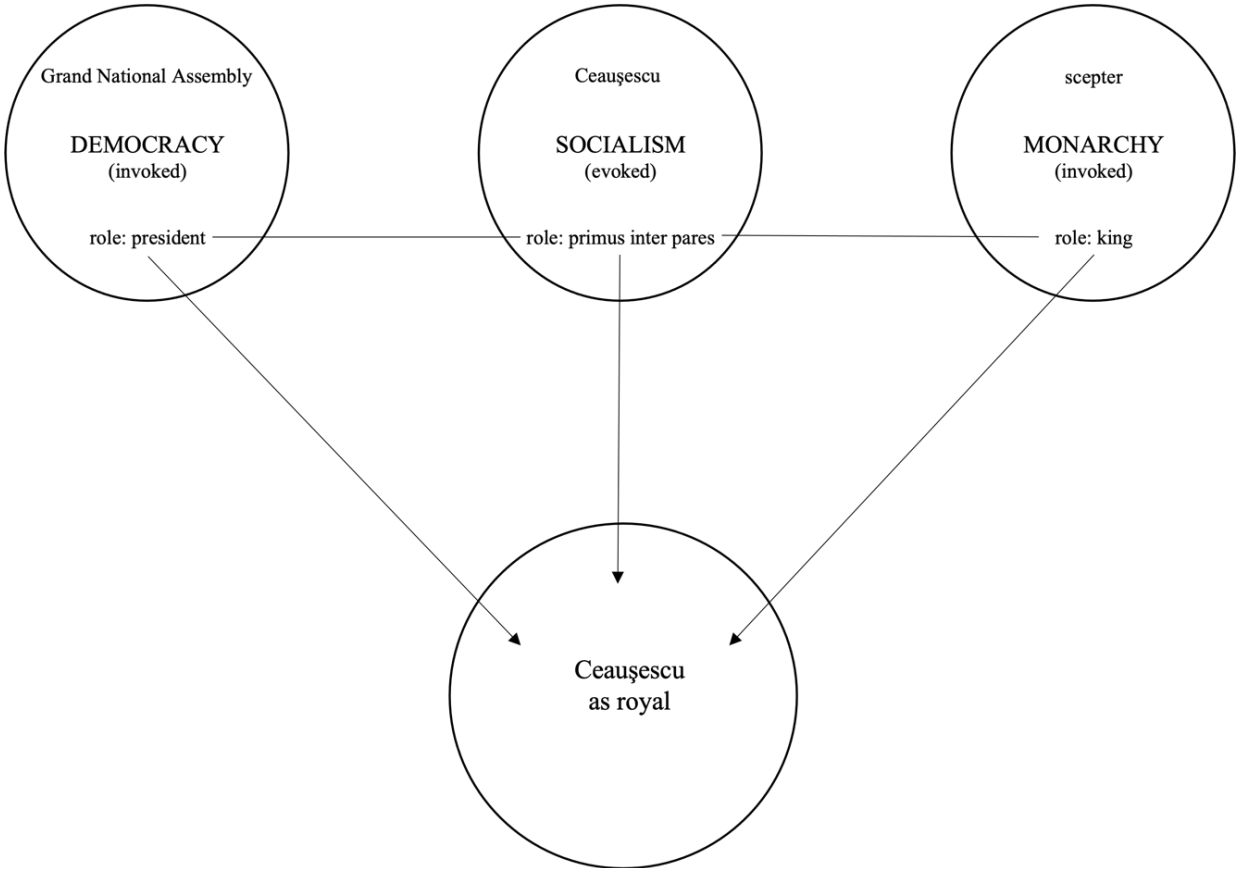


Figure 3.55 posits three input spaces that together project structure into an emergent blend that has been labeled Ceauşescu 'as royal.' Each of these input spaces, in turn, is structured by broader political frames and particular profiled elements within them, frames that have been referred to simply as DEMOCRACY, MONARCHY, and SOCIALISM. Each of these frames, I contend, is either invoked or evoked in constructs in which Ceauşescu is depicted with his scepter. To explain, first, by simple virtue of his presence in the construct and the overarching context (and

requisite knowledge of this context) of who he is and what Romania is – i.e. the leader of a socialist country – Ceauşescu serves to evoke a frame of SOCIALISM, a frame in which the 'leader' slot is, as we have established, to be understood as *primus inter pares*. Second, knowledge of the coronation ceremony and the title of the scepter itself – the 'presidential scepter,' as mentioned, or *sceptru prezidențial* – instead function to invoke a frame of DEMOCRACY, purportedly part of the socialist project but profiled here rather particularly: that is, on the one hand, the fact that the 'elected' body of the Grand National Assembly created the title of 'President of the Republic' might 'legitimate' it in some manner, as an outcome of a democratic process of sorts (no matter how manipulated). On the other hand, however, the explicit creation of the title of 'President' out of nothing generates considerable tension with the role of *primus inter pares* evoked by the frame of SOCIALISM. The presence of the scepter itself in turn complicates matters even further, as it rather unequivocally invokes a different political frame – that of MONARCHY – in which Ceauşescu's image is projected as filling the role of 'king,' a kind of leader neither elected nor '*inter pares*.'

What emerges in the blend, however, is a rather distinctly 'royal' portrayal of Ceauşescu – hence, 'as royal.' That is, despite the three input frames and their associated leadership roles, it is that of MONARCHY and 'king' that appear to have won out, to have 'overridden' the others. On the one hand, given the prominence of the scepter in such constructs, perhaps this is not all that surprising nor remarkable. Yet, on the other, such an image of Ceauşescu is fundamentally in opposition to the rest of the existing cult network up until this point, constituting a rupture both representationally and ideologically.[95] Thus, even at the 'constative' level Ceauşescu 'as royal' constructs are deeply in conflict with the Ceauşescu 'as demotic' subschema with which this section began. It is a tension that has been represented in our final cult network for this chapter (on the following page in Figure 3.56) via a prominent purple line acting as a 'blockade' of sorts between arrows connecting the Ceauşescu_PRIMUS INTER PARES schema and this emergent Ceauşescu_ROYAL one. It is intended to capture the incongruence between the two schemas, as well as how even in directly contradicting one another they still do not preclude the other, the varied consequences of which will be considered throughout the rest of this dissertation.

[95] 'The 1974 Moment' is in fact the title of a (2016) thesis by Emanuel Marius Grec that takes Ceaușescu's ascension to the Romanian Presidency as the precise and official turning point bringing about the explosion of his cult.

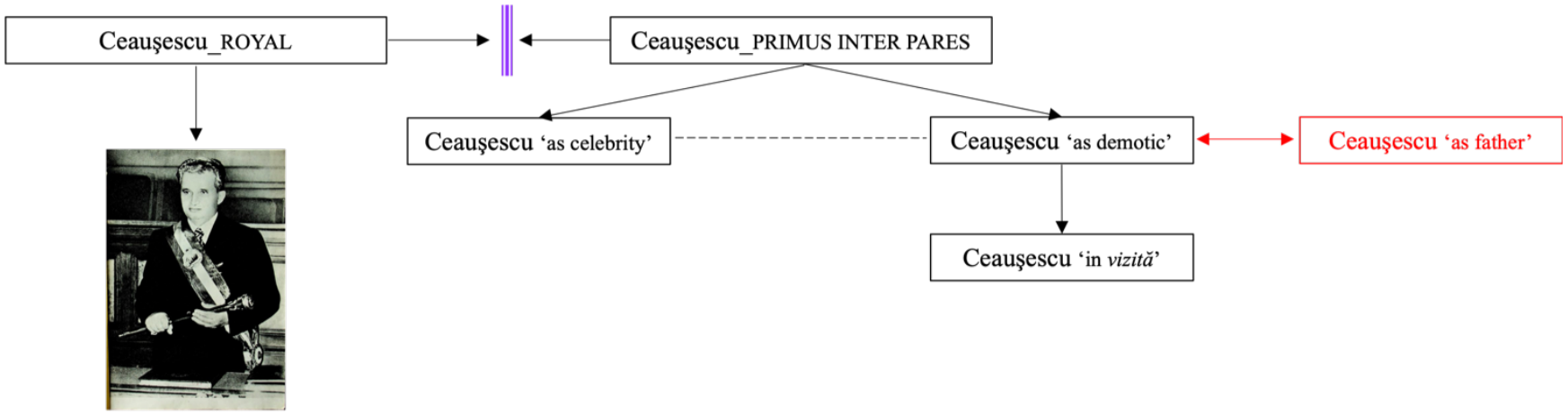


Figure 3.56: Ceauşescu network – PRIMUS INTER PARES + FATHER + ROYAL

Chapter 4 – *Cultic Metonymies*

4.1 – Introduction

Chapter 3 presented a cognitive-constructionist model of personality cult formation, organization, and manifestation in which proliferating images of the leader gave rise to various cult constructions that came to populate an emergent cult network. Specifically, we encountered groupings of particular constructs that suggested the 'bottom-up' emergence of various cult schemas including Mussolini_VIRILE, Mussolini_WARRIOR, Mussolini_CELEBRITY, and Mussolini_DEMOTIC within Mussolini's cult network and Ceauşescu_PRIMUS INTER PARES and Ceauşescu_ROYAL within Ceauşescu's network. This chapter continues explicating this model but with a focus on the prominent and multifaceted role played by processes of conceptual *metonymy*. Broadly speaking, metonymy has traditionally been understood as a figure of speech in which some entity A 'stands in' for another entity B to which it is related or with which it is 'contiguous' in some manner.[1] While there is far more to metonymy than this, a simple, relevant example of this kind is useful for setting the stage and can, in fact, be found frequently in Mussolini's own rhetoric in his famous designation of Fascists as *camicie nere* 'black shirts.' In referring to Fascists by one of their constituent 'parts,' so to speak, i.e. their uniforms, Mussolini deployed a canonical example of what in cognitive-linguistic research on metonymy is often called a PART FOR WHOLE metonymy[2] – that is, a 'part' (i.e. the black shirt) stands in for the 'whole' (i.e. the Fascist individual wearing it).

Metonymy is, of course, not limited to figures of speech or even to language 'proper' but, on the contrary, occurs just as robustly within and across all communicative modalities.[3] This is because, more than anything, metonymy is a *mode of thought*, as demonstrated in George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's (1980) pioneering *Metaphors We Live By*. Although the book's focus – as its

[1] Metonymy as a concept has an ancient history dating back to at least Aristotle and has been the subject of many a book and article since that have proffered numerous definitions, typologies, and frameworks by and with which to understand it. A full overview of such treatises is of course beyond the scope of this dissertation, but essential works on metonymy include Roman Jakobson's (1956) influential essay on the metaphoric and metonymic 'poles' in language (see Matzner 2016 for a contemporary reassessment) as well as several works specifically from a cognitive-linguistic perspective including Lakoff & Johnson (1980: 35-40); Kövecses & Radden (1998); Panther & Radden (1999); Panther & Thornburg (2003); Peirsman & Geeraerts (2006); Benczes, Barcelona & Ruiz de Mendoza (2011); Bierwiaczonek (2013); Denroche (2015); Littlemore (2015); Zhang (2016); and Barcelona, Pannain & Blanco-Carrión (2018), each of which addresses various theoretical challenges in the delineation and description of metonymy as a conceptual process. On a more general level, see Bierwiaczonek (2013: chapter 1) for a brief yet thorough cross-disciplinary history of the concept of metonymy and Ruiz de Mendoza (2021) for an up-to-date review of its treatment in the cognitive-linguistic literature.

[2] Throughout this chapter and those that follow, I will follow the conventional cognitive-linguistic practice of referring to posited conceptual metonymies in small capital letters.

[3] A handful of works worth noting in this regard include Green (2005); Forceville (2009); Urios-Aparisi (2009); Nagy (2015); Feng (2017); King (2017); and Pérez Sobrino (2017), which variously address topics such as metonymy in art, metonymy in advertising, and multimodal metonymies from a variety of theoretical, critical, and disciplinary backgrounds.

title suggests – was more on metaphor than metonymy, Lakoff and Johnson nonetheless convincingly showed how ubiquitous both metaphor and metonymy are as conceptual processes and the role that they play in structuring the ways in which we as humans think and talk. In its wake an enormous body of literature has emerged addressing both phenomena individually and in their interaction, in language as well as in and across other modalities.[4] This has in turn given rise to entire research paradigms known respectively as Conceptual Metaphor Theory and Conceptual Metonymy Theory, both of which remain cornerstones of cognitive linguistics to this day.

Metonymy and metaphor, it is worth remarking, are themselves comparable yet distinct conceptual phenomena. Unlike metonymy, which, as mentioned, holds between two (broadly) related entities, metaphor constitutes the understanding or representation of one concept (often referred to as the 'target') in terms of another (the 'source'), with the two structuring frames being (largely) *unrelated*. Classic examples from Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 4) demonstrating the conventional conceptual metaphor in English ARGUMENT IS WAR can be found below in (1a-e):[5]

(1) a. Your claims are *indefensible*
b. He *attacked every weak point* in my argument.
c. His criticisms were *right on target*.
d. I've never *won* an argument with him.
e. If you use that *strategy*, he'll *wipe you out*.

In each example, various elements of the source frame of WAR are selected and mapped onto 'corresponding' elements within the target frame of ARGUMENT in order to, per Lakoff and Johnson, more concretely conceptualize and in turn linguistically describe them. In so doing, this conceptual metaphor also reflects a cognitive predilection for understanding more abstract concepts (i.e. verbal arguments) in terms of more concrete ones (i.e. physical warfare) that is here deducible via mappings such as 'winning a war' → 'winning an argument' in (1d) or 'physical attack' → 'verbal attack' in (1b) (ibid.).[6]

Although we will look at some conceptual metaphors in this chapter – e.g. SOCIALISM IS A BUILDING PROJECT, THE NATION IS A BODY – the primary focus will instead be on conceptual metonymy. This decision has a handful of motivations. For one, not only has metaphor been the more privileged of the two processes in much of the cognitive-linguistic literature, it has also arguably been more observed and remarked upon in various studies on Fascism, communism, leader cults, and propaganda, and to this end it is worth accordingly highlighting the ways in which conceptual metonymy operates in these areas, too.[7] As will be explicated in the following pages, metonymic processes indeed play a paramount role in cult construction and manifestation, three

[4] Important linguistic works on the interaction between metaphor and metonymy include Goossens (1990); Barcelona (2000); Dirven & Pörings (2002); Panther, Thornburg & Barcelona (2009); Handl & Schmid (2011); and Ruiz de Mendoza & Galera Masegosa (2014: 107-117) while their interaction multimodally is considered in works such as Urios-Aparisi (2009); Pérez Sobrino (2017); Sweetser (2017b); Kashanizadeh & Forceville (2020); and Kuczok (2020).

[5] As with conceptual metonymies, when discussed conceptual metaphors will also be provided in small capital letters.

[6] See Kövecses (2020: chapter 2), though, for some pushback on the 'concrete' vs. 'abstract' distinction in figurative thought and language.

[7] This is not to say that such observations have never been made. Spackman (1996: 125-126), for example, in discussing metonymies observed in Erasmo Leso's (1973) study of Mussolini's rhetoric, points to their implications for the Fascist formulation of the 'body politic' and metonymy's role at large in "the ideological fantasy of the unity of the social body," an idea that we shall take up in section 3.3. Metonymic symbolism is also suggested in Tanta (2014: 71; 98) for the Ceauşescus and in Fuller (forthcoming) for Mussolini in the Fascist New Towns.

of which have been singled out and will be discussed in detail in this chapter. They are: (a) the metonymic relations inherent in, and responsible for, the power of certain symbols to evoke or 'presence' the leader; (b) the metonymies involved in both regimes' deployments of the hallmark political metaphor THE NATION IS A BODY; and (c) what we might term the 'cognitive consequences' of the proliferation of the leader's image in cult societies – whether in direct or indirect form – in terms of potential resultant frame restructuration and the cult- or leader-centric frame-metonymic associations to which it gives rise. Throughout, we will additionally observe the ways in which conceptual metonymic relations are behind the emergence of new cult constructs and constructions (e.g. leader symbols) as well as the kinds of metonymic relations that come to operate between constructs, constructions, and schemas such that one (or part of one) can metonymically evoke another.[8]

Before embarking on the present chapter's investigation, however, some additional words on metonymy from a cognitive-linguistic perspective are warranted. One of the more influential definitions of metonymy within Conceptual Metonymy Theory is that put forth by Zoltán Kövecses and Günter Radden (1998: 39), which considers it to be "a cognitive process in which one conceptual element (thing, event, property), the vehicle, provides mental access to another conceptual entity (thing, event, property), the target, within the same frame, domain, or idealized cognitive model (ICM)."[9] This idea of 'providing access' is central to many cognitive-linguistic understandings of metonymy (e.g. Langacker 1993: 30; Panther 2006: 153; Littlemore 2015: 4) and forms the basis of the present chapter's use of the term as well. To illustrate, we can take perhaps the most classic example, also from Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 35) and provided below in (2):

(2) The *ham sandwich* is waiting for his check.

Even considered here in isolation, it is easy both to interpret this sentence and to envision the kind of context in which it might be encountered: the setting is a restaurant of some kind, possibly a diner, in which (2) is uttered by one server to another. The *ham sandwich* in question, of course, is not a literal reference to one such sandwich but to the man who ordered it and thus constitutes, within the context of the utterance, an example of a metonymic *vehicle*. Indeed, metonymy has long been associated with this kind of referential function, as a relation of one thing 'substituting' or 'standing for' something else (e.g. Nunberg 1978; Lakoff & Johnson 1980; Warren 1999). In many accounts of metonymy, too, that the metonymic vehicle can 'stand for' or 'provide access to' the metonymic target depends on a relationship described (though not unproblematically) as one of conceptual *contiguity* (Jakobson 1956; Peirsman & Geeraerts

[8] Positing metonymic relations between constructions has a history in the Construction Grammar literature. Dancygier & Sweetser (2005), for example, refer to them as examples of "constructional compositionality" in their analysis of a wide range of English conditional constructions (see also Bierwiaczonek 2018 for a different take on constructional metonymy in these same kinds of constructions). Similar frame-metonymic relations are also explored multimodally in Dancygier & Vandelanotte (2017b) and Vandelanotte (2021: 173-174) as observed in internet memes, which are postulated and analyzed as multimodal constructions.

[9] 'Frames,' 'domains,' and 'ICMs' are all terms that, alongside 'mental spaces,' have been put forth in the cognitive-linguistic literature to describe the conceptual structures that are variously recruited, generated, manipulated, and projected in human thought and language. I will continue to use 'frame' to describe such structures and will speak of conceptual 'blends' (Fauconnier & Turner 2002) when describing their combination in novel, online structures as evidenced in any given cult construct. On the usage of these terms and their (not always consistent) differentiation, see Geeraerts (2010: 222-229); Dancygier & Sweetser (2014: 73-81); and Kövecses (2017).

2006).[10] Koch (1999: 146), for example, defines contiguity as "the relation that exists between elements of a frame or between the frame as a whole and its elements," an understanding perfectly in line with Kövecses and Radden's (1998) definition provided above and that indeed accounts for many other classic examples of metonymy, such as those below in (3-4):[11]

(3) The *White House* isn't saying anything.

(4) The *buses* are on strike.

Example (3) demonstrates a widespread metonymic relation of what has been called THE PLACE FOR THE INSTITUTION as (4) provides an example of the OBJECT USED FOR USER metonymy. Both 'work' felicitously with Koch's definition of frame-internal contiguity in that broader frames of, say, the US GOVERNMENT or BUSES, can be understood as prototypically consisting of the relevant elements (e.g. the president and other officials; bus drivers) that can be metonymically 'accessed,' profiled, and thus intelligibly communicated through other salient components of those same frames. In this vein, salience is also crucial in structuring metonymic relations between vehicles and targets in that what is selected as the former reflects an aspect or component of the latter that is particularly salient or contextually 'highlighted,' whether within a specific moment of use (cognitive salience) or more broadly on a sociocultural scale (ontological salience; see Kövecses & Radden 1998; Barcelona 2005, 2016; Schmid 2007; Handl 2011). Indeed, salience, both as we have seen and as we shall see, is an unequivocally important factor in the cult systems of both Mussolini and Ceaușescu in structuring the what, how, and why of the metonymies that take hold.

While many instances of metonymy operate in this manner, however, the idea of frame-internal contiguity does not account for the totality of possible metonymies. As Bierwiaczonek (2013: 15) rightly points out, the understanding of metonymy as limited to operating within a single frame in theory precludes the many instances of metonymy that involve novel, online metonymic relations between elements not necessarily occupying the same frame.[12] He provides a modified version of Kövecses and Radden's definition, which is given below (ibid., 16):

> A cognitive process in which one conceptual entity, the vehicle, provides mental access to another conceptual entity, the target, associated with it within *the same single integrated conceptualisation* (emphasis mine).[13]

As we will see throughout this chapter, both Kövecses and Radden's (1998) original definition and Bierwiaczonek's (2013) modified version are applicable within Mussolini's and Ceaușescu's cult systems. The 'online' aspects of meaning construction highlighted in Bierwiaczonek's formulation capture the kinds of interconstructional metonymies that will be particularly apparent in the symbolic metonymies discussed in section 4.2, while Kövecses and

[10] On the deficiencies of the term 'contiguity' to sufficiently capture the totality of possible metonymic relations see Croft (2006); Littlemore (2015: 51-53); and Radden (2018: 169-170).
[11] Both examples are from Lakoff & Johnson (1980: 38).
[12] Koch, in fairness, does recognize such challenges to his own theory of contiguity-based metonymy and points out the importance of both 'salience' and 'prototypicality' in frame-internal contiguity relations. As he puts it, "contiguity relations only hold for 'salient' members of the conceptual categories involved. Frames and the contiguity relations constituting them have 'prototypical' character" (1999: 150).
[13] Bierwiaczonek's definition can thus readily be understood as a blending approach to metonymy (cf. Coulson & Oakley 2003).

Radden's focus on frame-internal metonymic relations has important implications for conventionality, entrenchment, and 'frame modification' (see section 4.4). Additionally relevant is Panther's (2006) semiotic treatment of metonymy as a relation grounded in Peircean indexicality, which, as will become evident in the following pages, is another important aspect of both Mussolini's and Ceauşescu's cult systems and the metonymies operative therein.

This chapter is organized as follows: section 4.2 begins with a discussion of cult symbols and lays out how factors such as conventionality (and conventionalization), citationality, and indexicality all combine to metonymically 'presence' the leader (Nakassis 2017), which is in turn tightly linked to a leader's achievement of *omni*presence. Various ways in which Mussolini and Ceauşescu were metonymically-symbolically 'presenced' are discussed in turn in sections 4.2.1 and 4.2.2, respectively, which are treated as emergent, symbolic constructions with implications for both leaders' overall cult networks. Section 4.3 then turns to the political metaphor THE NATION IS A BODY and unpacks its deployment in the service of both leaders' cults. It sheds light on the kinds of metonymies at work within the metaphor from a variety of angles, including the populist dimensions projected in both cults' self-representations (section 4.3.1) as well as the metonymies peculiar to their respective conceptions of the 'New Man' and how each of their bodies were in turn configured and depicted in relation to this conception and, by extension, to their people as a whole (section 4.3.2 for Mussolini and section 4.3.3 for Ceauşescu). Section 4.4 then consists of concluding remarks and observations regarding the overall role of conceptual metonymy in a cult system's broader semantics, priming further elaboration in Chapter 5.

4.2 – Cult Symbols

This section is dedicated to the particular evocative power of symbols and suggests an understanding of them in terms of conceptual metonymy.[14] As will be shown, both leaders' cult systems were built up in many ways beyond their literal images and, consequently, the emergent networks came to be populated also by numerous, 'nonliteral' constructions – that is, by symbols. Constructionist approaches, while not as yet applied to non-linguistic (at least in part) forms of semiosis, have nonetheless long recognized the capacity for the storage of 'non-predictable' and 'predictable' constructions alike should they occur "with sufficient frequency" (see e.g. Goldberg 2006: 5; chapter 3).[15] Frequency of use, as has been noted, is closely tied to a given construct's conventionality and thus its 'survivability' as a construction within a constructional network. Symbols, in turn, as described by Charles S. Peirce in his tripartite typology of signs, differ from icons and indices precisely in that, rather than denoting a 'likeness' or a 'real-world connection,' they owe their significance to convention.[16] For example, that a green light indicates 'go' at a traffic stop or that a dove symbolizes peace are meanings derived from *the conventional practice* of attributing those signifiers with such corresponding meanings. Conventionalization, as we can recall, is a social (i.e. non-individual) practice and as such is inextricable from other, broader social trends and dynamics in and around which it occurs (Schmid 2020). This includes, in our two cases, the overarching cult metacontexts of Mussolini's Italy and Ceauşescu's Romania in which many such symbolic conventions emerged around both leaders and their representations by virtue of the

[14] See Riad (2019) for another approach to visual metonymy and leadership symbolism, focusing on uses of the Sphinx in political cartoons.
[15] I will refer the reader here back to section 2.5 in Chapter 2 in which the theoretical and methodological issues with what is to count as 'sufficient frequency' in constructionist approaches are addressed.
[16] See Atkin (2013) for a useful overview of Peirce's theory of signs.

extraordinary ontological *salience* that they both enjoyed, part and parcel of their hypervisual authoritative discourse.

In principle, then, symbols, as form-meaning pairings based in particular conventional associations, should meet the criteria for constructional status should they adequately 'proliferate.' The citational nature of sign proliferation, however, as Constantine Nakassis (2012: 626) has observed in his work on brands and counterfeits, additionally entails dimensions of both Peircean iconicity and indexicality: on the one hand, citation inherently constitutes a reproduction of some kind, entailing a degree of 'sameness' between that which cites and that which is cited; on the other hand, however, citation also bespeaks an 'irreducible difference' between the citing and the cited, a temporal disjunction that is bridged yet not erased in the citation's act of 'pointing to' that renders the two discursively coeval (Derrida 1988; Silverstein 2005). In other words, and as Nakassis himself puts it, "the citation contains within it a replica of what it cites, re-presenting it even as it indexically calibrates the cited event to the citing event" such that "the citation diagrams the relationship between two events that, through the act of citation, come to share substance even as they are marked by difference" (2012: 627). In this way, then, cult symbols can be understood as combining elements from all three of Peirce's types of signs, though not necessarily – as we shall see – to the same 'degree.'

The proliferation of symbolic (i.e. indirect) representations of the leader alongside those of his 'literal' image – whether in person, on screen, or in print – is demonstrative of this kind of 'shifting' in sign-type degree, for a consequence of such proliferation is the leader's even further saturation within public discourse such that he acquires that oft-observed, personality-cult-classic dimension of *omnipresence*. Omnipresence, I contend, within Mussolini's and Ceauşescu's cult metacontexts constitutes a kind of performative 'presencing' (Nakassis 2017)[17] that obtains from what Christopher Ball (2014) has described as semiotic *dicentization* – that is, as "indexical interpretation" or the creation of indices out of other signs (ibid., 152).[18] More than simply falling out from symbolic or iconic dimensions, omnipresence entails a notion of "being present at" (i.e. evocation) a given place of 'encounter' that can only be described as indexical in nature (Hudson 2008: 200). Omnipresence and 'presencing' alike, then, emerge through the privileging of the indexical over the iconic and the symbolic that occurs through this act of evocation, in means of leader representation both literal (e.g. photographs, where the iconic meets the indexical) and indirect (e.g. symbols that combine the symbolic with the indexical).

This section focuses on symbolic evocation, which, I argue, in turn constitutes a kind of visual referential metonymy in which the leader's person is indexed by a given symbol and therefore rendered (indirectly) present within the moment of its encounter. This act of performative 'presencing' operates by virtue of the salient metonymic relationship that holds between the leader and the many, varied symbols that (come to) constitute his symbolic 'vehicles.' In such symbolic 'encounters,' metonymy abounds such that Mussolini or Ceauşescu can be 'accessed' by a host of elements constitutive of their being or that are associable with them in some manner. As we shall

[17] Nakassis proposes a 'metapragmatics of presence' in his study of the so-called 'mass heroes' in Tamil cinema that he employs to address "the question of presence and existence itself… the very possibility of indexicality as a semiotic ground" (ibid., 203). Focusing on a particular film star in Rajinikanth and his 'performative pointing,' he further suggests that filmic depictions of such stars "are not only (or even primarily) representations of characters in a film… rather, they are presencings of [their] being," an idea that has informed much of the present chapter's considerations of symbols, metonymy, and indexicality (ibid., 203-204).

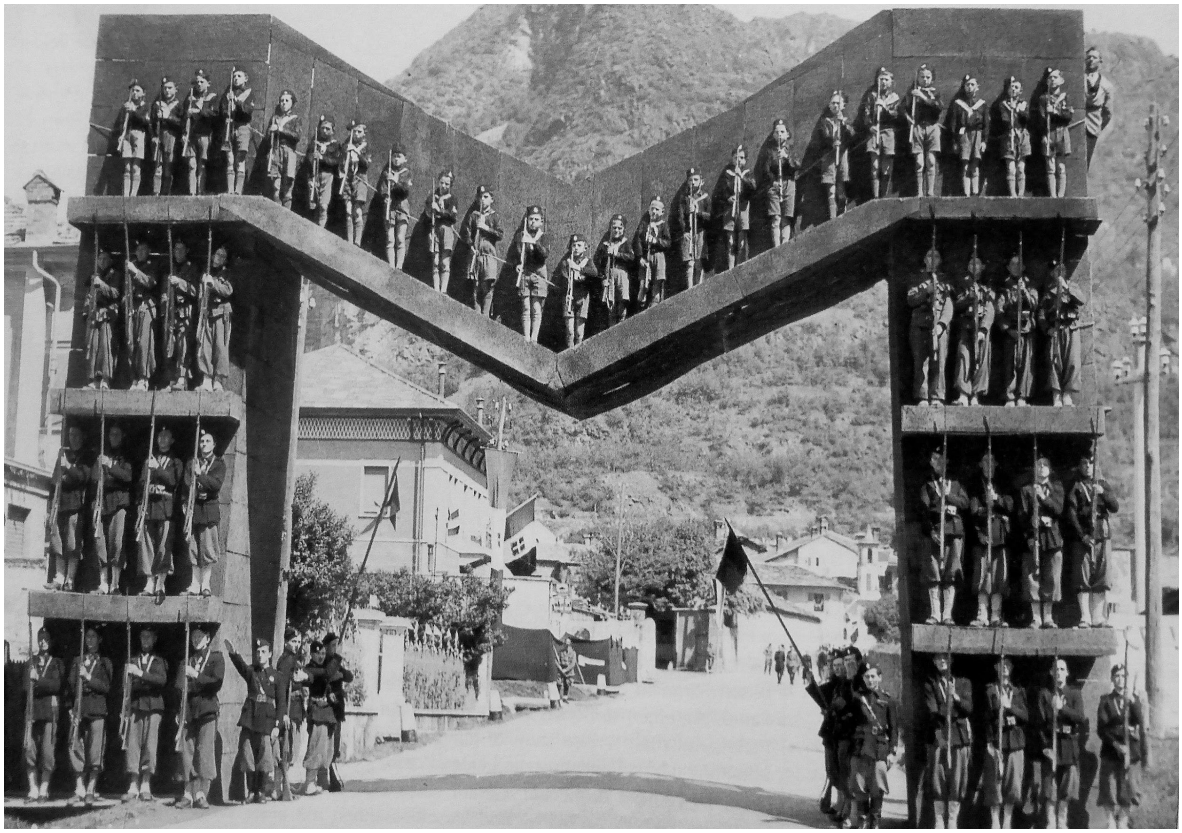
[18] His full definition of dicentization considers it to be "[a] process of signification wherein a likeness or a conventional relation is interpreted as actually constituting a relation of physical or dynamic connection. Dicentization is both a moment in which indexicality is created and it is itself a form of creative indexicality" (ibid.).

see, while some of these might fall under the rubric of frame-internal contiguity, others present cases that appear more reliant on context and thus salience, both ontological and cognitive. Such symbols are considered first for Mussolini in section 4.2.1 and then for Ceauşescu in section 4.2.2.

4.2.1 – Evoking Mussolini

As noted by Giorgio di Genova (1997: 15) in the introduction to a companion volume to an exhibition of Mussolinian memorabilia from the *ventennio*, the iconography of the *Duce* is characterized by a particular "varietà" ('variety') not found in the cults of Hitler, Stalin, or Mao, whose images were instead, he notes, "sostanzialmente pedissequa ai dettami del verismo per una immediata riconoscibilità."[19] While this observation refers principally to images of Mussolini literally 'as such,' it applies equally to the symbolic evocations of him that obtain metonymically. We can take the images below in Figures 4.1-4.4 as initial, illustrative examples:

Figure 4.1: Giant 'M' gate (1939)[20]



[19] *…essentially slavish to the dictates of realism for immediate recognizability* [my translation]. Enrico Sturani (1995: 234) points out, however, that earlier images of Mussolini from the 1920s also more or less follow the rules and trends of realism before giving way to a style "sempre più monumentale" ('increasingly monumental') in the 1930s that swung between classical and modernist impulses.

[20] This gate was constructed in honor of Mussolini's visit to the town of Verrès in the Aosta Valley. Retrieved May 18, 2022 from Wikipedia Commons, link to web address here: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Arch_of_Triumph,_set_in_honor_of_the_arrival_of_Mussolini_at_Verres_in_1939._(47711057512).jpg.

Figure 4.2: Mosaic 'M' at the *Foro Mussolini* (completed 1938)[21]

Figure 4.3: Postcards decorated with 'M' (mid-1930s – 1940)[22]

Figure 4.4: 'M' postcard-Fascist eagle blend (~1938)[23]

[21] Retrieved April 25, 2022 from Flickr.com. Photograph by Anthony Majanlahti. Link to web address here: https://www.flickr.com/photos/antmoose/57188280.

[22] Image courtesy of the Archivio Sturani in Rome (see Sturani 1995: 280). From top-left to bottom-right years of publication are 1938, 1939, 1934, and 1940.

[23] Image courtesy of the Archivio Sturani in Rome (see Sturani 1995: 281).

Unsurprisingly yet no less strikingly, it takes but knowledge of the (meta)context in which each of the above images appeared to know precisely to what (that is, to whom) these various depictions of 'M' 'refer' – Mussolini himself. These 'Ms' were ubiquitous throughout the *ventennio*, taking shape as monumental sculpture such as the M-shaped gate in Figure 4.1, studding works of art and architecture as in Figure 4.2's 'M' mosaic found in Rome's *Foro Mussolini*,[24] and decorating countless pieces of distributed ephemera as in the postcards shown in Figures 4.3-4.4. Indeed, from the miniscule 'Ms' emblazoning Fascist badges and uniforms (Falasca-Zamponi 1997: 80) to the mammoth, M-shaped *palazzo M* 'M palace' built in the New Town of Littoria, these Mussolinian 'Ms' appear to have known no material, formal, or dimensional bounds, cropping up virtually anywhere to ensure that, even when he was not physically there, Mussolini was nonetheless still 'present' (Sturani 2003: 161-162).

This 'presencing' effect is a result of metonymic processing. Conceptually, such 'Ms' speak to the ontological salience of Mussolini within Italian society under Fascism such that an emergent, metonymic link between him and the first letter of his surname is readily, if not immediately, perceptible. This may seem wholly unremarkable to scholars of Italian Fascism, but from a cognitive perspective the proliferation of such 'Ms' at once resulted in as it fed off (à la Schmid's 2020 feedback loop) a conventionalized and productive metonymic relation operative within Mussolini's cult system that we might call MUSSOLINI'S INITIAL FOR MUSSOLINI, a cult-specific iteration of a broader metonymic relation involved in initialisms (see e.g. Bierwiaczonek 2013: 66).[25] As the conventional, symbolic association between such 'Ms' and Mussolini grew alongside each 'M-as-usage event,' so too did they acquire an indexical quality responsible for their '(omni)presencing' potential and, in time, indeed can be posited as having formed (symbolic) constructions within his cult network. This is to say that these 'Ms' – in conventionally and consistently 'providing access' to Mussolini conceptually – were as deployable as they were interpretable as symbols, capable of evoking his image on a wide scale. This broad evocative power, however, entails that these symbolic 'M' constructions were quite schematic in nature, 'presencing' Mussolini without necessarily prescribing any concomitant frame structures that were instead supplied by other co(n)textual features in a given construct-blend.

To this end, Figure 4.4 warrants additional comment due to its blending of another of Fascism's prominent symbols in the eagle with the Mussolini-evoking 'M,' which in turn emblazons a monumental, golden *fasces* – yet another such symbol – around which glistening, modern, white airplanes fly.[26] Far from unique, such a cult artifact is demonstrative of the combinatorial power of symbols to collectively 'reinforce,' we might say, the metonymic potential of a given construct by virtue of opening out the possibilities for further, even novel metonymic

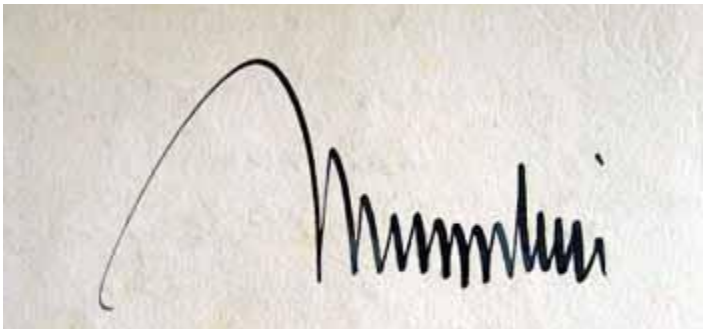
[24] Constructed between 1928 and 1938 in anticipation of the 1940 Olympic Games scheduled to be, but never actually, held in Rome, the *Foro Mussolini* was and remains a robust sporting complex, now operating under a new moniker, the *Foro Italico*. The mosaic 'M' in Figure 4.2 and other unequivocally Fascist relics can still be observed there today.

[25] Bierwiaczonek (2013) considers initialisms of this sort to be a case of 'writing metonymy' that operate in terms of what some scholars have referred to as a *metonymic chain* (see e.g. Barcelona 2005; Brdar-Szabó & Brdar 2011; Ruiz de Mendoza & Galera Masegosa 2014: 117-134; Pérez Sobrino 2017: 60-62; 102-110), by which is intended a succession of metonymic relations involved within a single observable 'instance' of metonymy. In initialisms of this kind, the first letter of the word (or words) stands in for the whole word(s) that in turn stands for the represented concept (Kövecses & Radden 1998: 24 refer to this last relation as a 'sign metonymy'). Given the salience both of such 'Ms' as independent symbols and of Mussolini himself within the overarching cult metacontext, however, I do not believe it is necessary to posit such a chain, as the 'Ms' in question over time unquestionably came to concretize as symbols in their own right. Such chains are nonetheless useful, though, for understanding the conceptual processes involved in emergent symbolic metonymies of this sort and their (potential) constructionalization.

[26] The 'Caproni' that also adorns the *fasces* refers to the prominent Italian aircraft manufacturer of the same name.

connections to be activated or generated rather than being explicitly 'tied,' as it were, to any one constructional schema. By clustering and interacting with one another, cult symbols can thus both acquire and harness the kind of polysemy observed in the last chapter to 'presence' the leader according to a host of possible, context-specific interpretations.[27] Many Mussolinian 'Ms,' it is additionally worth noting, and particularly those that occurred in printed material such as the postcards in Figure 4.3, even took the form of the 'M' in Mussolini's own signature, as seen below in Figure 4.5. In so doing they further underscore the metonymic connection to Mussolini, now profiled not only by 'his' letter but also his handwriting.[28]

Figure 4.5: Mussolini's signature[29]



The images in Figures 4.6-4.8 on the following pages present a different kind of metonymic vehicle for Mussolini's presencing. Known as a master orator even in his own time, Mussolini fully subscribed to Gustave Le Bon's (1895) insistence on the 'magical power of words' and sought to have his own words, and by extension whatever magic they possessed, preserved beyond their initial moments of utterance.[30] To do so, choice quotations and slogans were selected and put up around the country, coming to adorn walls, towers, and monuments both old and new and thus giving rise to a metonymic relation that we might broadly term MUSSOLINI'S WORDS FOR MUSSOLINI (see e.g. Vettori 1975; Isnenghi 1985; Versari 2018).[31]

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[27] E.g., in the case of Figure 4.4, its possible evocation of the widely dispersed images of '*Mussolini aviatore*,' Mussolini 'as pilot' (see Mattioli 1936) that in turn, as we have seen, might profile variously (or simultaneously) such schemas as Mussolini_VIRILE and Mussolini_DEMOTIC.

[28] Despite the generality of the 'type' of metonymy from which it draws, it is interesting to note that the potential for metonymic evocation afforded to Mussolini's 'M' does not appear to find parallels in other leader cults. One does not find Hitler, Stalin or Ceaușescu, to take a handful of examples, readily 'presenced' as 'H' or 'S' or 'C' in their respective societies.

[29] Retrieved May 20, 2022 from Wikipedia Commons. Link to web address here: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Firmamussolini.jpg.

[30] We can recall from Chapter 3 the influence that Le Bon's work on crowd psychology had on Mussolini (see note 66 in particular). It is worth pointing out, too, that early linguistic research on Fascism (e.g. Simonini 1978; Desideri 1984) sought to zero in on and assess the verbal 'magic' of Mussolini the orator by thoroughly documenting his lexical, syntactic, pragmatic, and enunciative choices as evidenced in speeches (see also Golino 1994).

[31] Such "fetishization of Mussolini's words" and their concomitant exposition, Maria Elena Versari notes, exploited existing traditions of inscriptional commemoration that had taken root in the wake of Italian unification but went a step further in "the creation of monumental inscriptions, readable from a distance and completely harmonized within the architecture itself," such that ordinary 'Lictorian Towers' became "veritable 'talking towers'" (2018: 258; 261). While this public and architecturally oriented deployment of Mussolini's words seems rather particular to his cult, the 'fetishization' of the leader's select words-as-wisdom is not, it should be noted, as evidenced, for example, by the

Figure 4.6: Mussolini quote engraving[32]

Figure 4.6 presents a quote from Mussolini's May 9, 1936 speech referred to as *La proclamazione dell'Impero* ('The Proclamation of Empire'), given in Rome upon the conquest of Ethiopia in which he did just that – declare the (return of the) Italian Empire.[33] More of interest to us here, however, is how once again the salience of who proclaimed this citation and why function in tandem to metonymically 'presence' Mussolini, perhaps even as a direct memory of him reciting the line if one had heard it live. Figure 4.7 shows another quote, and one that became a principal slogan of the regime – *Credere. Obbedire. Combattere* ('Believe. Obey. Fight.'). The metonymic evocation of Mussolini is arguably strengthened here, too, by the "dialogic structure" imposed by the imperative use of the infinitive in that, more than a mere declarative, Mussolini's words constitute a veritable call to action on his behalf (Versari 2018: 256). Put differently, we can once again note that Mussolini's salience within and alongside his cult metacontext renders quite clear who is to be 'believed,' 'obeyed,' and 'fought (for),' even if a given onlooker might be unaware of who had originally uttered the inscribed command.

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compilation of Mao's spoken-turned-written words in the famed, widely disseminated *Little Red Book* (see Leese 2001: chapter 5; Cook 2014).

[32] Photograph by Marco Signoretto in the town of Alessandria, taken from *Ventennio Oggi* in accordance with the Creative Commons License. Retrieved September 16, 2022, Link to web address here: https://www.ventenniooggi.it/alessandria-scritte--motti-del-ventenni?lightbox=dataItem-klcdk1e51.

[33] See Chapter 3, notes 48-49 for discussion of the Fascist imperial project and the Ethiopian campaign specifically. Interestingly, this epigraph also presents a couple of slight lexical modifications from the original: in the actual speech, Mussolini proclaims that "*Il popolo italiano ha creato col suo sangue l'Impero*," while in this particular engraving 'Italy' has come to substitute 'the Italian people' – a metonymic relation of THE NATION FOR ITS PEOPLE – whose blood has gone from 'creating' to 'founding' the empire.

Figure 4.7: Fascist slogan engraving A[34]

Constructionally speaking, this metonymic relation between Mussolini and his words points to the emergence of another higher-level, more schematic construction in that the metonymic vehicle will vary from construct to construct (that is, the particular words spoken-turned-inscribed) while still sharing in the fact that they were at one time uttered by Mussolini. This variety in turn permits a slew of possible Mussolini schemas to be concomitantly, metonymically accessed in accordance with the words' contents and the frame(s) that they evoke, as in both Figures 4.6 and 4.7's rather forceful evocation of (at least) the Mussolini_WARRIOR schema.

The faded, weathered condition of the epigraphs in Figures 4.6 and 4.7 reflects their contemporary state, of course, and not how they would have appeared during Fascism.[35] Figure 4.8 provides a glimpse of one such inscription in its own time, though with a twist: not only is there the same command of *Credere. Obbedire. Combattere*, but now it appears within quotation marks, its citationality thus explicitly marked and rendered highly (cognitively) salient. In so doing

[34] Photograph dated August 2011 and taken in Catanzaro, no photographer provided. Retrieved from *Ventennio Oggi* in accordance with the Creative Commons License. Accessed September 16, 2022, link to web address here: https://www.ventennioggi.it/catanzaro-scritte--motti-del-ventennio?lightbox=image_ncf.

[35] On this topic, Segàla (2000) consists of a remarkable photographic exposition of many such surviving epigraphs, slogans, symbols, and images (mostly of Mussolini) still adorning city walls in various states of decay. The photographs document primarily (though not exclusively) cities and towns in the Piedmont, and their continued presence – even if dilapidated – should be understood as testament to the ambivalence surrounding surviving Fascist-era monuments and relics in Italy today (see Malone 2017 and Arthurs 2019 for broader discussions). Additional examples of such relics can also be found on the website *Ventennio Oggi* (link to web address here: https://www.ventennioggi.it, last accessed March 28, 2023), from which both Figures 4.6. and 4.7 are drawn.

it indexes other like commands, which, in combination with the co-present stenciling of both Mussolini's image (and one of his most iconic, too – we shall encounter it again later) and his signature,[36] suggests a particularly powerful presencing effect that at once draws from, cites, and indexes – that is, metonymically evokes – not only his celebrity but also his image as a warrior. Translated into explicitly constructionist terms, then, we can note that as a construct Figure 4.8 is sanctioned by as it metonymically evokes both the Mussolini_CELEBRITY and the Mussolini_WARRIOR schemas, constituting a multimodal blend that inherits meaning from, as it simultaneously reinforces, both schemas.

Figure 4.8: Fascist slogan engraving B (year unknown)[37]

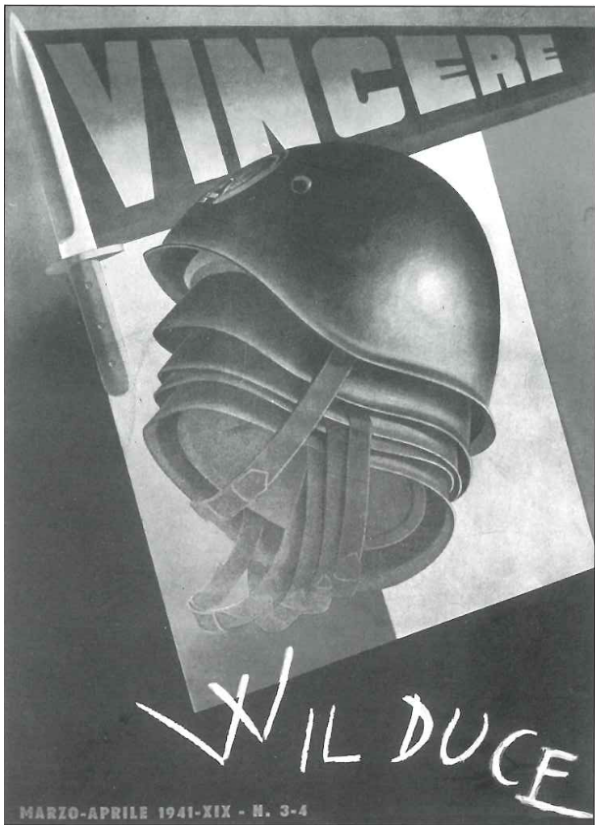
A final means of metonymically evoking Mussolini and thus 'presencing' him returns us once more to his body, and specifically to his head and its profile. Further underscoring the centrality of Mussolini's physical attributes to his cult, Sergio Luzzatto notes in his vivid history of Mussolini's body how it was customary to describe – and in so doing, celebrate – Mussolini's physical appearance throughout the *ventennio*, with particular attention paid to his facial features, including the "huge cranium, the high curved forehead, the powerful jaws, the protruding nose, the bushy eyebrows, the dark eyes" (2005: 14).[38] A seemingly endless stream of portraits,

[36] This appears to have been a fairly common practice, too, as evidenced in the numerous vestigial examples of Mussolini's surviving signature provided in Segàla (2000: 302-305) that appear beneath various quotations.
[37] From Heller (2008: 83). The photograph occupies the page's background, as evidenced by the three, color portraits of Mussolini laid over top. No year is given, but it was taken in the town of Capalbio in southern Tuscany.
[38] The original Italian version reads, "cranio grosso, la fronte alta e curva, le mascelle potenti, il naso robusto, i cigli folti, i grandi occhi neri" (Luzzatto 1998: 16). Moreover, in some cases it appears that existing words could not

sculptures, murals, coins, and prints of his face and profile transposed such words back into image and can be found in scores in any surviving catalogue or collection, from the most imperial and Caesarian in inspiration to the quintessentially futurist à la Renato Bertelli's famous (1933) 'Continuous Profile of Mussolini.'[39]

Figure 4.9: Mussolini profile A (1938)[40]

Figure 4.10: Mussolini profile B (1941)[41]



The salience that Mussolini's facial features possessed by virtue of their constant extolment in prose and the plastic arts alike in turn affected a robust metonymic connection between such features and Mussolini himself. Figures 4.9-4.12 demonstrate some of the ways in which Mussolini's facial features, even (and often) in mere silhouette form, could function as powerful

describe Mussolini's face and thus neologisms were required, as in Curzio Malaparte's coining of the term *mascellutico* 'jawsome' to describe it (Di Genova 1997: 17). See also Passerini (1991: 37-39; 70-76) for a discussion of these practices and for additional examples of how Mussolini's physicality and physiognomy were celebrated in biography, as well as Swan (2020: chapter 10) for their accentuation and display in photography.

[39] For collections of Mussolinian artifacts – and, by extension, further examples of how his ubiquitous profile was artistically deployed – see Di Genova (1997), Sborgi (2003), and Petacco (2009) as well as a discussion of their post-regime lives in Pieri (2013b) and Arangio (2021). See also Merjian (2019) for a detailed and wide-ranging analysis of the 'Continuous Profile' in the context of artistic trends prior to, during, and after Fascism.

[40] A poster advertising the sixth national gathering of the *Arma del Genio*, a corps of the Italian army, in June of 1938. Retrieved May 18, 2022 from *Cartoline dal Ventennio*, an online repository of Fascist-era ephemera. Link to web address here: https://www.cartolinedalventennio.it/free-extensions/propaganda/adunate-concorsi-manifestazioni?switch_to_desktop_ui=250&page=3#category.

[41] Image courtesy of the Archivio Sturani in Rome (see Sturani 1995: 235). This image adorned the front-page of a 1941 edition of the periodical *L'industria della stampa*, a color version of which can be found in Heller (2008: 80).

metonyms for his entire person. In each, the celebrated jaw, nose, and forehead are all prominently visible, joined by pursed lips and, in Figures 4.9 and 4.10, his signature helmet, too.

Figure 4.11: Mussolini profile C (1935)[42]

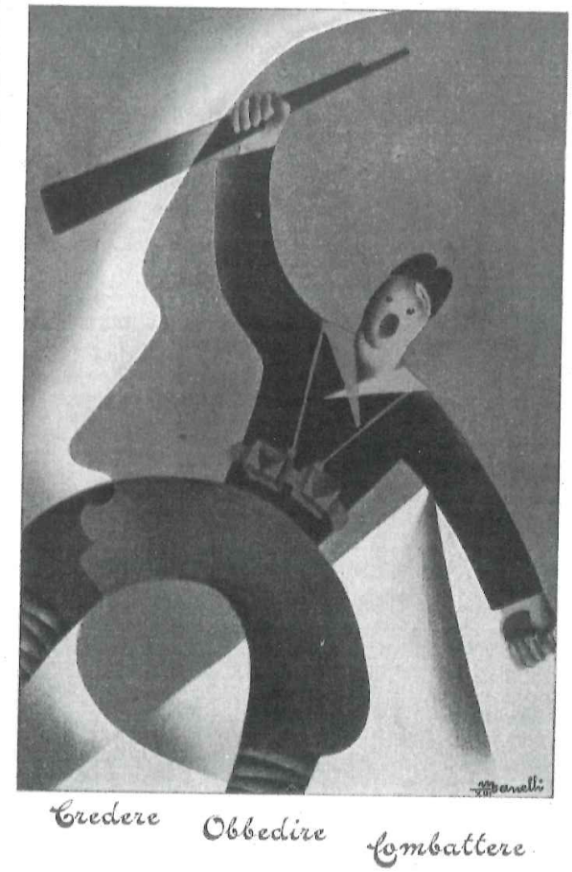


Figure 4.12: Mussolini Profile D (1936)[43]

Several comments are warranted here. First, to reiterate, it is the ontological salience that not only Mussolini but also his facial features possessed that sanctions the metonymic inference of his person from its depicted silhouette and thus, in so doing, enacts his 'presencing.'[44] Indeed, that Mussolini's body – even in fragments, vague approximations, or in silhouette – could readily and powerfully function as a metonymic vehicle for his entire being is yet another feature rather

[42] Image courtesy of the Archivio Sturani in Rome. It depicts a postcard from 1935 (see Sturani 1995: 237).
[43] Taken from Heller (2008: 82). The image occupied the cover of a 1936 edition of the youth magazine *Gioventù Fascista* ('Fascist Youth').
[44] Painter, Martin & Unsworth (2013: 58-63) and Moya Guijarro (2019), for example, have reported precisely this kind of metonymic dimension to silhouettes as used in children's picture books in which a character's identity can be inferred from his or her 'incomplete' depiction wherein a part stands for the whole (e.g. a silhouette, a shadow). Such metonymic inferencing, however, is more 'complex' in that it requires that "characters be understood conceptually at some stage before they can be tracked in the story" so that they can be "expanded upon by the reader for them to be interpreted correctly" (Moya Guijarro 2019: 197). While Fascist Italy is obviously worlds away from a child's picture book, such findings point yet again to the salience that Mussolini enjoyed such that his silhouette could – arguably anywhere, at any time – readily prompt metonymic inferences.

peculiar to his cult, at least as far as those of his contemporaries are concerned.[45] Furthermore, it is also this salience that is able to 'cut through' the ambiguity, so to speak, inherent in these constructs – most notably in Figures 4.9 and 4.10 – such that even if one is not *constrained* to metonymically infer Mussolini from these silhouettes, such a reading is certainly possible if not wholly preferred.

Second, each of these constructs – whether through its inclusion of the war helmet, of battle commands such as *Credere-Obbedire-Combattere* and *Vincere* ('win'), of weaponry, or the invocation of *la pace romana* 'Roman peace' in the context of the Ethiopian conquest (Figure 4.12) – can be understood as metonymically evoking a particular Mussolini schema, the Mussolini_WARRIOR schema. In turn, and given their interrelation as discussed in the last chapter, the Mussolini_VIRILE schema is also frame-metonymically accessible due to how integrally tied it is to Mussolini's body that here, even in silhouette form, constitutes the metonymic vehicle by which he is 'presenced.' Such silhouettes, then, and indeed also various parts of Mussolini's face and body, can be understood as clustering to form an additional, emergent, higher-level construction through which each can act as a vehicle to metonymically access a host of possible Mussolini schemas within the network. And, once again, which schemas are accessed is subject to the kinds of frames evoked (often multimodally) within a given construct subject to its interpretive context (e.g. a frame of WAR in Figures 4.7-4.10).

Figure 4.13 on the following page resupplies Mussolini's cult network with additions provided in red. At the top are the three schematic constructions (schemas) discussed in this section that have been labeled Mussolini_M, Mussolini_WORDS, and Mussolini_SILHOUETTE. Each of these schemas, as has been pointed out, serves to provide metonymic access to Mussolini without necessarily prescribing any particular frame content such that any particular image-type schema (e.g. Mussolini_VIRILE, Mussolini_WARRIOR, Mussolini_CELEBRITY, etc.) is evoked. Rather, such frames and resultant schemas are supplied by additional co(n)textual elements that fill 'slots' in these schematic, symbolic constructions. To demonstrate, Figure 4.11 has been included in the network, which one can immediately observe is connected by thick, dashed-line arrows representing metonymic relations to the Mussolini schemas Mussolini_WORDS (via the slogan) and Mussolini_ SILHOUETTE (via, naturally, his silhouette).[46] These arrows are intended to capture the fact that constructs such as Figure 4.11 provide metonymic 'access' to Mussolini without stipulating further frame structure and thus a particular, other Mussolini schema. The solid, bidirectional arrow that connects Figure 4.11 to the Mussolini_WARRIOR schema, in contrast, signals that by virtue of the construct as a whole with its 'fillers' (e.g. the contents of the slogan's words, the little warrior doll) it constitutes an instantiation of the Mussolini_WARRIOR schema by which it is sanctioned and which it serves to reinforce.

With all this in mind, we can now turn to the – altogether different – metonymic-symbolic evocation of Ceauşescu.

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[45] It is hard to imagine Hitler's feeble frame, for example, as readily serving – nor being enthusiastically deployed to serve – as such a robust symbolic-metonymic vehicle for his person. One can make this claim, I think, without denying Hitler the kind of forceful (if peculiar) corporeal charisma that has been demonstrated in work by Claudia Schmölders (2006) and Lutz Koepnick (2020). See Chapter 3, note 33, though, for remarks on the legacy of Mussolini's bodily displays in today's world.

[46] One will note how the Mussolini_M schema appears to be floating in isolation in the network. This is simply because, as may be apparent, Figure 4.11 presents no such metonymic 'M' and thus is not sanctioned by this particular schema. The explanation that follows, however, could readily be applied to any of the constructs in Figures 4.1-4.4, too.

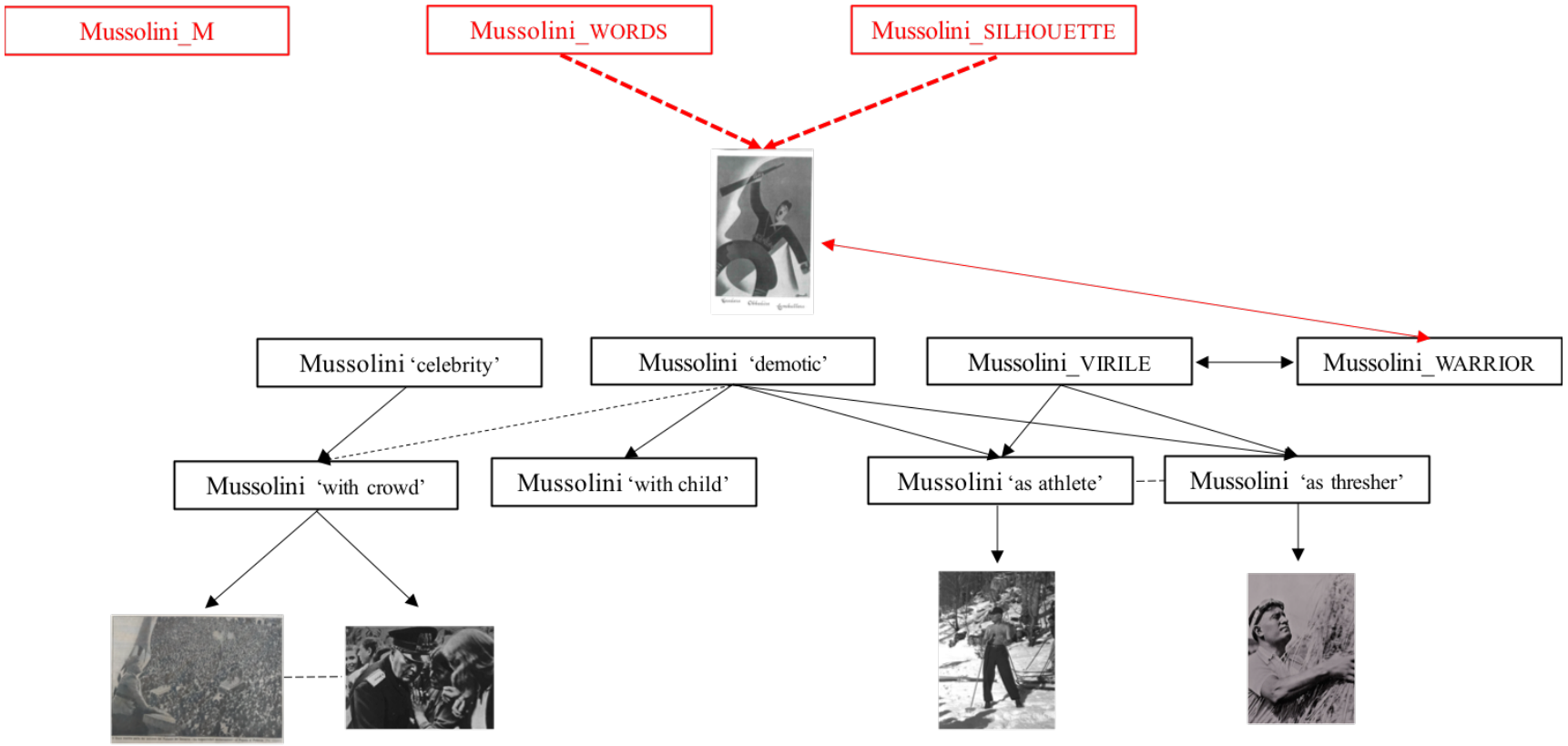

Figure 4.13: Mussolini network – symbolic-metonymic constructions

4.2.2 – Evoking Ceauşescu

Ceauşescu's symbolic omnipresence, as has been hinted at and which will be fleshed out in this section, differed markedly from that witnessed with Mussolini. Reasons for this are numerous, but a principal one with which to begin is the simple fact that Ceauşescu was in no way the bodily specimen that Mussolini was. This is as much attributable to cultural and historical factors as it is to ideological or pragmatic ones; consequently, however, the kinds of corporeal metonymies proliferating in Mussolini's cult system find no place in Ceauşescu's – an observation that we will return to later. The ideological dimension, though, as suggested in the previous chapter, is once again particularly revealing in that the very existence of Ceauşescu's cult – like all communist leader cults – was entirely antithetical to communist principles. As a result, Ceauşescu, his cult's practitioners, and the cult itself constantly had to grapple with striking a balance between 'primus' and 'pares' in his projected role as *primus inter pares*.[47]

One of the principal strategies for overcoming this tension was the glorification of the RCP, whose sacred role of guiding Romania along the path to socialism was championed relentlessly. The party's essential duties and cause, coupled with a host of reasons justifying them, were laid out explicitly at the eleventh RCP Congress in 1974:[48]

> În perioada făuririi societății socialiste multilateral dezvoltate și a trecerii spre comunism, partidul va continua să constituie forța politică conducătoare a întregii activități economico-sociale. Acest rol al partidului, recunoscut de întregul popor, este rezultatul politicii sale juste, marxist-leniniste, al identificării lui depline cu interesele vitale ale maselor populare, al capacității sale de a conduce cu fermitate poporul pe calea eliberării sociale și naționale, a făuririi societății socialiste, a ridicării bunăstării materiale și spirituale.
>
> During the forging of the multilaterally developed socialist society and the transition to communism, the party will continue to be the leading political force of all economic and social activity. This role of the party, recognized by the entire people, is the result of its just, Marxist-Leninist policies, of its full identification with the vital interests of the popular masses, of its capacity to firmly lead the people on the path of social and national liberation, of the forging of socialist society, of the lifting of material and spiritual well-being [my translation].

Years spent simultaneously ruling and shepherding Romanians had vested the RCP with a kind of 'impersonal charisma' that, in its fusion of material and symbolic power, provided an outwardly more legitimate vessel in which to channel the early laudatory sentiments that both undergirded and foreshadowed Ceauşescu's burgeoning cult without risking total incongruence with the socialist society in which it was emerging.[49] As time went by, however, such glorification

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[47] By contrast, Mussolini encountered no such difficulties. In fact, both his regime and his cult blossomed within an ideological and intellectual milieu that expressly sought and championed its totalitarian pretensions, as declared in Mussolini's own (1932) *Doctrine of Fascism* (co-written with the philosopher Giovanni Gentile) [Mussolini 1933].

[48] Partid Comunist Român (1975: 112). The eleventh RCP congress is one of many milestones that scholars have pointed to during Ceauşescu's regime for the gradual consolidation of his power alongside the reimplementation of repressive measures and restrictions following the 'thaw' of the late 1960s (see Tismăneanu 2003: 207).

[49] The term 'impersonal charisma' originates in John Breuilly's (2012) essay on Weber's notion of charismatic domination, which he uses to describe a kind of charisma that is not innate to any one person (i.e. the canonical

also became rather transparently geared beyond just the RCP *per se* and was instead intended for the party's *Conducător* with which it was readily and consciously conflated.[50] Figures 4.14-4.15 below provide illustrative examples of how this conflation was multimodally realized:

Figure 4.14: 'Long live the Romanian Communist Party' A (1986)[51]

Both figures present a standard scenario for RCP functions (Figure 4.14) and more general celebrations (Figure 4.15) alike in the 1980s, in which a well-worn slogan – in both instances *traiască Partidul Comunist Român în frunte cu Secretarul său general, Tovarăşul Nicolae Ceauşescu* ('Long live the Romanian Communist Party led by its General Secretary, Comrade Nicolae Ceauşescu') – features beneath 'the' photograph of Ceauşescu himself (cf. Figure 3.6). Yet, although both the RCP and Ceauşescu are mentioned by name in the slogan, the overall effect is one of conflation, the party collapsed into the image of Ceauşescu and thereby metonymically *reduceable* to one of its constituent individuals.[52] Such conflations were also apparent in the

'charismatic leader') but rather to an office or institution. It is worth mentioning here, too, though, that the RCP suffered from an "anemic legitimacy" (Tismăneanu 2003: 217) that, for the myriad shortages and hardships brought about by the final decade of Ceauşescu's reign, in fact stemmed from its very weak standing in the country prior to World War II and its eventual ascendancy to power via what is often described as not a genuine but an "imposed" revolution (King 1980: 39; see also Deletant 2019: chapters 1-2 for a fuller discussion). Thus imposed as it was, whatever 'impersonal charisma' that the RCP could claim to have was marginal at best and rather ineffective in practice, in spite of the RCP's relatively high membership in relation to other Soviet bloc countries (Stoica 2005).

[50] This relationship between Ceauşescu and the RCP has also been considered one of 'substitution' per observations in Pavelescu (2011), a term that, as we can recall, is rather common in cognitive and rhetorical descriptions alike for metonymy's (referential) functions.

[51] Taken from *Fototeca online a comunismului* (photograph #V166). Retrieved April 26, 2022. Link to web address here: http://fototeca.iiccr.ro/picdetails.php?picid=44306X158X226.

[52] Discussions of metonymic reduction and its counterpart in metonymic expansion can be found in Ruiz de Mendoza & Díez Velasco (2002) and Ruiz de Mendoza & Galera Masegosa (2014: chapter 4). As the latter describe them:

slogans decorating placards in mass festivals, parades, and other gatherings, as in the prominent slogan *Ceauşescu-PCR!* that linguistically yoked the two together amid a sea of Ceauşescu's own portraits, effectively subsuming the party in the face of its embodiment.[53]

Figure 4.15: 'Long live the Romanian Communist Party' B (1986)[54]

The press played a large role, too: May 8, the anniversary of the RCP's founding in 1921, was celebrated annually in *Scînteia* and provides a telling look into how by *partid* 'party' what was often really meant was 'Ceauşescu.' Figures 4.16-4.17 on the following pages, both pages from the 1987 edition celebrating the RCP's 66th anniversary, are suggestive in this regard:

"*Expansion* and *reduction* are reverse cognitive operations. The former consists in broadening the amount of conceptual material that we associate with the initial point of access to a concept, which is intrinsically prominent. The latter is the result of giving conceptual prominence to part of a concept or of a conceptual complex… which are not intrinsically prominent. The activity of these operations is generally associated to metonymic stands-for relations, namely part-for-whole metonymies also termed *source-in-target* and *target-in-source* metonymies respectively" (ibid. 92-93).

[53] The slogans that were paraded and displayed in Ceauşescu's, his wife's, and the RCP's honor were not static but evolved over time like any other component of the cult network, with those celebrating the latter gradually giving way to adulations of the former two. See Marin (2016a: 135-136) and Petrescu 1998: 232-233) for details and examples as well as Cordali (2023: 141-159) for additional discussion, from a visual-rhetorical perspective, of both slogans and Ceauşescu's omnipresent image. It should also be noted that PCR reflects the Romanian ordering of *Partid Comunist Român*.

[54] Taken from *Fototeca online a comunismului românesc* (photograph: V127). Retrieved June 2, 2022. Link to web address here: http://fototeca.iiccmer.ro/picdetails.php?picid=44228X1X1.

Figure 4.16: *Scînteia* page honoring the 'party' and its accomplishments A (1987)[55]

PAGINA 2

SCÎNTEIA — vineri 8 mai 1987

66 DE ANI DE LA FĂURIREA PARTIDULUI COMUNIST ROMÂN

PARTIDUL

FIINȚĂ DIN FIINȚA EROICĂ A POPORULUI

„Avem tot dreptul să privim cu satisfacție și mîndrie la tot ceea ce am realizat și să afirmăm, fără teama de a greși, că înfăptuirile revoluționare, marile transformări economico-sociale și edificarea cu succes a noii orînduiri nu ar fi fost posibile fără existența unui partid revoluționar, care a știut să înfrunte teroarea sălbatică, ilegalitatea, a dat multe și multe jertfe din rîndurile membrilor săi, ținînd întotdeauna sus steagul luptei împotriva asupririi și exploatării, pentru apărarea intereselor supreme ale întregului popor, a independenței și suveranității României. Tocmai de aceea, partidul nostru se bucură astăzi de stimă, încredere și este urmat în mod unanim de întregul popor, care știe că numai sub conducerea partidului își are asigurat viitorul liber în rîndul națiunilor independente ale lumii!".

NICOLAE CEAUȘESCU

În numele aspirațiilor supreme ale poporului

Uriașa forță modelatoare a idealului comunist

IMAGINI CARE DEFINESC NOUL CHIP AL PATRIEI

[55] *Scînteia*, May 8, 1987, page 2. My photograph, courtesy of the collection of the Bibliotecă centrală universitară 'Lucian Blaga' at Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania.

Figure 4.17: *Scînteia* page honoring the 'party' and its accomplishments B (1987)[56]

SCÎNTEIA — vineri 8 mai 1987 PAGINA 3

66 DE ANI DE LA FĂURIREA PARTIDULUI COMUNIST ROMÂN

PARTIDUL

CENTRUL VITAL AL SOCIETĂȚII NOASTRE

8 MAI 1921-1987

Cu deplină încredere în partid, înfăptuim hotărîrile Congresului al XIII-lea, construim viitorul comunist

Ample și profunde transformări revoluționare

„Epoca Nicolae Ceaușescu", epoca unor măreți și multilaterale împliniri

IMAGINI CARE DEFINESC NOUL CHIP AL PATRIEI

[56] *Scînteia*, May 8, 1987, page 3. My photograph, courtesy of the collection of the Bibliotecă centrală universitară 'Lucian Blaga' at Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania.

While PARTIDUL 'the party' does prominently emblazon the top of both pages, underneath are panegyric collages of Ceauşescu and Elena accompanied by subtitles *ființă din ființă eroică a poporului* '(the people's) being of heroic beings' and *centrul vital al societății noastre* 'nerve center of our society' that once again blur the references between what is conveyed by word (that is, the RCP) and image (Ceauşescu). Conceptually, what this kind of willful (even if never outright expressed) conflation of Ceauşescu with the RCP amounts to is another kind of metonymy, and one bidirectional in nature depending on the construal: that is, both CEAUȘESCU FOR RCP (metonymic expansion) and RCP FOR CEAUȘESCU (metonymic reduction) are felicitously deployable as cult-metacontext-specific variants of the aforementioned, widespread PART FOR WHOLE and WHOLE FOR PART metonymies. This is simply to say that, as the RCP secretary, Ceauşescu was always part and parcel of the RCP, so to speak, such that any praise (or criticism) directed toward the latter implicates – and thus was in turn redirectable toward – the former. At the same time, however, Ceauşescu's proclaimed embodiment of the RCP served to temper his cult's otherwise lurid megalomania, even if only in principle, as the latter supplied a metonymic vehicle ideologically consistent with socialism's tenets.[57]

Beyond their role in structuring such ambivalent metonymies, Figures 4.16-4.17 are additionally indicative of a second means of metonymic-symbolic evocation of Ceauşescu, what we might term broadly the 'imagery of progress.' At the bottom of both figures, various photographs depicting Romania's rapid modernization – in this case shots of widespread industrialization, agricultural output, innovations in transportation, glimmering new housing complexes – can be found that, per *Scînteia*, are *"imagini care definesc noul chip al patriei"* – 'images that define the new face of the homeland.'[58] To properly comprehend their metonymic power, however, such photographs must additionally be understood within the broader context of one of the regime's favorite metaphors – SOCIALISM IS A BUILDING PROJECT. Although variously an ideology, a politico-economic system, and a future aspiration, socialism was, at least as far as its relation to Ceauşescu's cult is concerned, above all something to be built, as much literally as metaphorically.[59] At the helm of such a project, of course, was Ceauşescu, who consequently

[57] As a brief note of comparison, it is worth mentioning how Mussolini and Fascism were not at all constrained in any similar way by the National Fascist Party (PNF). On the contrary, in fact, Falasca-Zamponi (1997: 60-63) notes that the PNF was gradually weakened and subordinated to Mussolini's will such that, by the end of his first decade in power, "Mussolini's power constituted a given fact… [he] was the leader, and he could do without the party," something that Ceauşescu, despite his own iron grip on the PCR, could never have felicitously done (ibid., 63). Many Italians seemed to have internalized this understanding, too, as Mussolini's image and standing would remain decidedly 'above' the anger and frustration that was directed instead toward the PNF and party officials over day-to-day shortages, regulations, and requirements. This is encapsulated in the preponderance of the phrase *se lo sapesse il Duce* 'if only the Duce knew,' implying that, had his corrupt officials not been keeping him in the dark, he would certainly have rectified whatever situation had arisen (Duggan 2013d: 132-133; see also Corner 2012 for more on PNF dynamics and popular reception). There is little corresponding evidence of this kind of exculpation for Ceauşescu, apart from the tendency to place blame on Elena as mentioned in the previous chapter in note 85 (though see Fischer 1989: 92-93 for some examples from the earlier years of his reign).

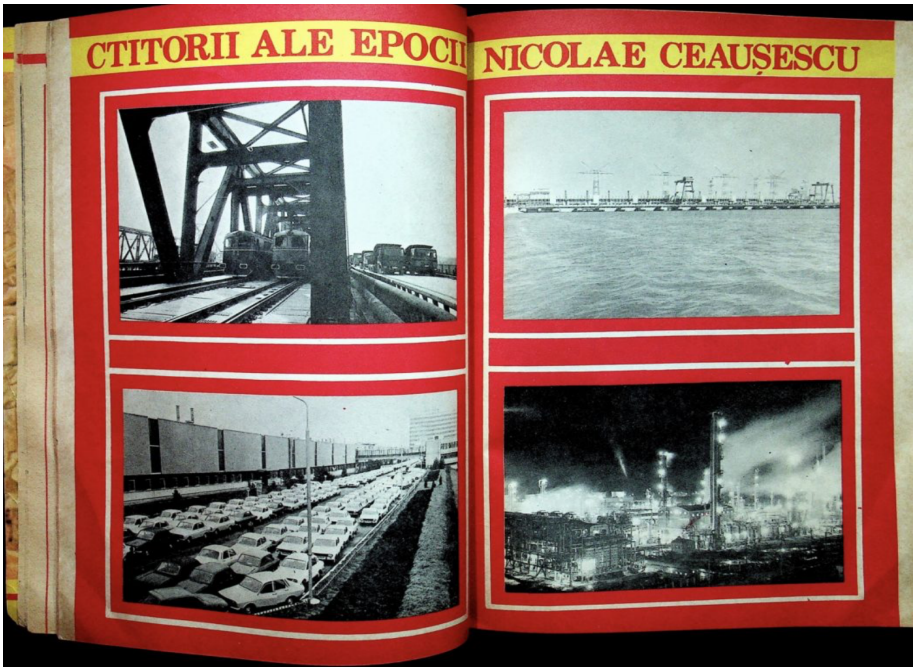
[58] The frequency with which images of this kind and accompanying reports and figures of unprecedented economic, agricultural, and industrial output appeared in *Scînteia* is discussed in Hațegan (2017: 212-213).

[59] Manuela Marin organizes her (2016a) book on Ceauşescu's cult around principal groupings of ways in which he was depicted, one being *arhitectul României moderne* 'The Architect of Modern Romania' that broadly covers his role in his regime's various social, urban, demographic, and industrialization 'design' projects (pp. 203-282; see also Tanta 2014: 97-107; Marin 2020a: 199-201). The language of socialist discourse reflected these architectural metaphors, too, with words such as *construire* 'construction,' *făurire* 'forging,' *întărire* 'reinforcement,' *edificare* 'edifying, building,' and *ridicare* 'raising' used frequently to describe the regime's innumerable accomplishments (Feidaros 2014). *Scînteia* even went as far as proclaiming in its July 24, 1977 edition that *a construi* 'to build' was the

enjoyed many a construction-related epithet, among them *primul arhitect,* ('the premier architect'), *făuritorul de istorie nouă* ('the forger of new history'), and *ctitor* ('founder') of socialism and socialist progress in Romania (Marin 2016a: 214), not to mention the 'architect of national destiny,' per Vladimir Tismăneanu (2003: 196).

Figures 4.18-4.21 below attest to the salience of this particular metaphor in socialist discourse and its role in Ceauşescu's cult. Figure 4.18, pages from a November 1989 issue of the periodical *Magazin Istoric*, provides another example of the 'imagery of progress' that Ceauşescu's regime readily extolled. Such images, I would contend, could metonymically evoke Ceauşescu by virtue of the rather forceful indexical relation that they suggest, operative on two levels. That is, not only do such photographs serve to index and thus 'prove' that Romania is thriving and modernizing under Ceauşescu, but they also present such advancements as a direct consequence of his rule, as blatant 'effects' following from Ceauşescu's 'cause.'[60]

Figure 4.18: Advancements in the 'Age of Ceauşescu' (1989)[61]



If, then, such shining new construction projects were to index Ceauşescu's incomparable leadership, so too could they in theory metonymically 'presence' him. Indeed, there may be no better example of such presencing potential than his most infamous of projects, *Casa Poporului*

"*verb-simbol, acțiune definitorie pentru realitățile României socialiste*" ('verb-symbol, defining action for the realities of socialist Romania').

[60] In highlighting Ceauşescu's presentation as the 'master architect' within the Romanian socialist system it should not be accordingly assumed that, because it was not discussed in the previous section, Mussolini's cult conferred him no such role. On the contrary, Mussolini's hand in his regime's many architectural endeavors has been amply documented in Nicoloso (2008) and thus the various Fascist construction projects and monuments could, consequently, evoke him as those discussed here did for Ceauşescu. Such questions will be taken up further in Chapter 5.

[61] Retrieved April 26, 2022 from *Camera Arhiva*. Link to web address here: https://cameraarhiva.com/2019/10/23/198911-magazin-istoric-dispozitiv-books/.

'The House of the People' (Figure 4.19). An impossibly gargantuan structure, construction of the palace began in 1984 following a highly publicized inauguration ceremony in which the Ceaușescus poured the first cement (Figure 4.20) but remained unfinished by the time of their overthrow in December 1989 (though that did not stop it from featuring frequently in cult-themed propaganda, as seen in Figure 4.21).[62] In line with what was observed above for the RCP, Irina Tulbure (2013: 86) suggests that in cult constructs of this kind "even if the architectural work was claimed to be the guest star, most of the pictures had *the great architect* and his wife as the main focus," a focus that conflates the two and prompts a metonymic relation that we might call BUILDING FOR BUILDER (emphasis original).[63]

Figure 4.19: Ceaușescu's *Casă Poporului* (2009)[64]

We can conclude this section by bringing things back to the constructional network and noting a handful of discrepancies between the metonymies operative in Ceaușescu's network and those observed in Mussolini's. On the one hand, things appear quite similar: the proliferation of metonymic vehicles indexing Ceaușescu and thus rendering him 'present,' including the 'imagery of progress' and the RCP, can be understood as coming to constitute nonliteral, symbolic constructions within his cult network. At the same time, however, the metonymies at work in Ceaușescu's network appear more constrained, evincing little of the polysemous 'meaning

[62] It remains the world's second largest government building, behind only the US Pentagon.
[63] Titling this metonymic relation as such, of course, requires further metonymies: 'builder' as a target here entails a metonymic reduction of all persons involved in the *Casă's* construction, e.g. contractors, workers, architects, designers, financiers, etc. to one such person, who, perhaps even almost paradoxically, is construed as Ceaușescu despite the fact that his role in 'building' was never anything more than ceremonial.
[64] Retrieved February 9, 2023 from Flickr.com. Photograph by George M. Groutas, taken May 2, 2009. Link to web address here: https://www.flickr.com/photos/jorge-11/3804071520.

Figure 4.20: Ceauşescus pouring the first cement at the *Casă Poporului* construction site (1984)[65]

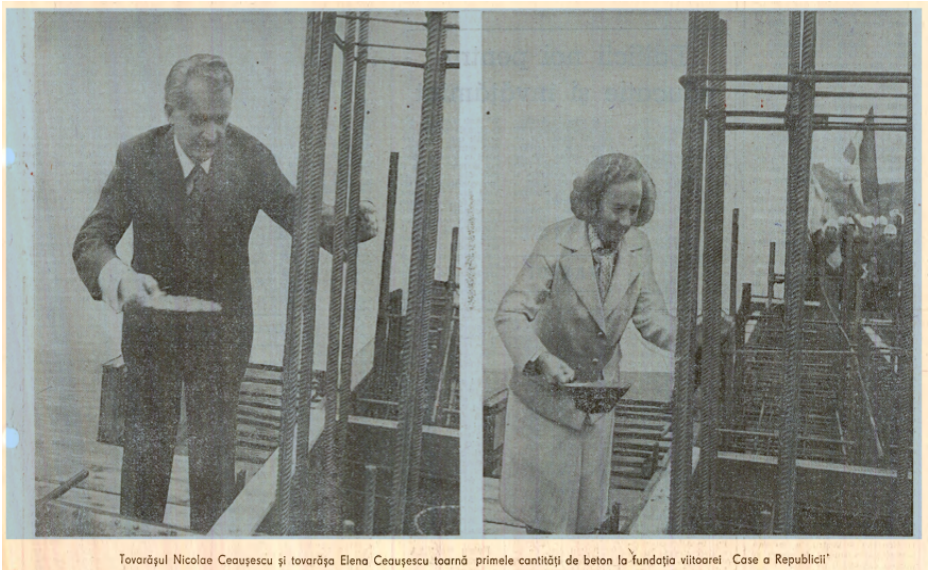


Figure 4.21: Painting of Ceauşescu '*in vizită*' at the construction site of the *Casă Poporului* (1986)[66]

[65] Image retrieved June 14, 2022 from Bibliotecă Digitală Hunedoara's online archive. Link to web address here: http://www.bibliotecadeva.eu/periodice/scanteia/1984/06/scanteia_1984_06_13013.pdf.

[66] Painting by Vasile Pop Negreşteanu, entitled *Visit to the Civic Center*, oil on canvas. It is part of the collection of Romania's Muzeul Național de Artă Contemporană and is included with permission.

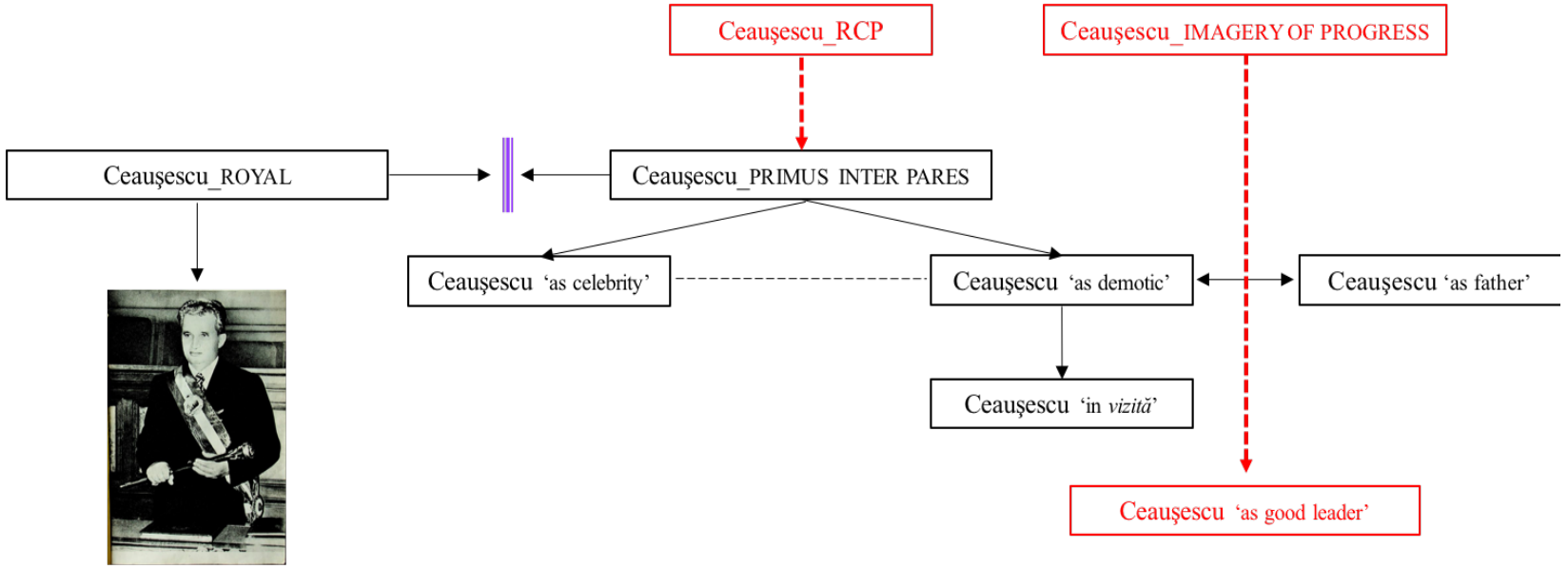


Figure 4.22: Ceauşescu network – symbolic-metonymic constructions

potential' characterizing the symbolic construct(ion)s in Mussolini's network. That is, while Mussolini's silhouette, words, or 'M,' as we saw, were more 'flexible' metonymic vehicles in that they could provide metonymic access to a host of different Mussolini schemas, what could symbolically evoke Ceauşescu was formally very limited to a select (and ostensibly carefully curated) group of symbols that brought along with them a set of consistent frames, mappings, and schemas (e.g. PROGRESS, SOCIALISM IS A BUILDING PROJECT, Ceauşescu_PRIMUS INTER PARES, etc.). Figure 4.22 provides a visualization of these metonymic particularities with, as before, changes provided in red. One will once again note the presence of two symbolic schemas (termed Ceauşescu_RCP and Ceauşescu_IMAGERY OF PROGRESS) alongside the thick, dashed-line arrows symbolizing metonymic relations. What Figure 4.22 aims to demonstrate, however, and in contrast to what was observed with Mussolini's cult symbols, is how the Ceauşescu schemas to which these symbolic constructions provide access are, as mentioned, decidedly more limited: that is, the Ceauşescu_ RCP schema appears inextricable from the Ceauşescu_PRIMUS INTER PARES schema, even if it were to 'misfire' such that a given interpretation of a relevant construct does not yield 'belief' in Ceauşescu as occupying this role (see discussion in Chapter 6). The Ceauşescu_IMAGERY OF PROGRESS schema, in turn, suggests a metonymic association with a new Ceauşescu subschema that we might simply call Ceauşescu 'as good leader' in that, more than anything, it would seem, constructs under its umbrella were to reflect (that is, index) the impressive modernization of Romania under his superb leadership.

As mentioned earlier and has been demonstrated throughout this section, the symbolic constructions evidenced here played an integral role in 'presencing' their respective leaders and, consequently, performatively generating their omnipresence even when, of course, they were not *literally* present or even otherwise depicted. With this in mind, we can now turn to the metonymies operative in both cult systems in a different, almost opposite sense – that is, rather than metonymies evoking a body in its absence, the next section will instead focus on the metonymies at work precisely in the body, whether it be that of the leader, those of the people, or the formulation of a 'national body' as a whole.

4.3 – THE NATION IS A BODY … But Not Just Any Body

This section brings us back to the realm of the leader's body and explores the incorporation, if we can bear the pun, of one of politics' most foundational and enduring metaphors into the cults of both Mussolini and Ceauşescu – that of THE NATION IS A BODY. Often referred to as the 'body politic,' this metaphor has a long history within Western political philosophy (see Musolff 2010a). From Thomas Hobbes' (1651/2010) *Leviathan* to Ernst Kantorowicz's (1957) study on the idea of the king's two bodies in conceptions of divine right, the 'body politic' has proven a flexible concept that can be profiled and projected through a host of diverse mappings between various, political target frames and a source frame of BODY. Indeed, many intuitive examples swiftly spring to mind: the leader might be understood as the body's 'head,' national boundaries might constitute a kind of 'skin,' and enemies or opposition might be mapped to a 'disease' threatening the nation's 'health.'[67]

[67] Other important studies worth mentioning here include Susan Sontag's (1978) essay specifically addressing metaphors of disease as well as Lefort (1986: chapter 9), Cavarero (1995), Harris (1998), Protevi (2001), and Neocleous (2001) on (dis)uses of the 'body politic' metaphor more generally. The metaphor has been treated at length, too, from a cognitive-linguistic perspective by Andreas Musolff (e.g. 2004, 2010a,b, 2016, 2021).

Bodily metaphors of this kind, while not limited to authoritarian contexts, certainly proliferate in them due in no small part to their relentless appeals to dichotomies of 'good' versus 'evil,' which in turn allow for clean-cut metaphoric partitions between 'health,' and 'disease,' between 'infectee' and 'infector.'[68] More importantly for our present argument, though, it is also the metaphor of the 'body politic' that allows for the personification of the nation in its leader, as the embodiment of a rich host of possible histories, values, and traits – in short, as the embodiment of 'his people.' Conceptually, this embodiment is more than just a straightforward metaphoric mapping, however, and in fact results from a complex interaction of both metaphoric and metonymic relations that structure an emergent blend: the BODY frame that constitutes the source frame, for example, can be understood as in metonymic relation to the multitude of bodies that make up the population of the simultaneously recruited NATION frame, with the emergent personification of the nation thus 'standing in' for its citizens. This citizenry was not, however, all-inclusive and within both Fascist Italy and communist Romania was instead fantasized and promulgated via the concept of the 'New Man,' those citizens who were 'properly' Fascist or communist in nature. Ambivalent in its ethnicity yet deeply patriotic, the 'New Man' – known as the *uomo nuovo* in Fascist Italy and *omul nou* in communist Romania – was to possess a handful of carefully selected qualities, among them a fierce loyalty to the State and/or Party. [69] And, of course, who could have served as a better model for this 'New Man' than Mussolini or Ceauşescu themselves? The metonymies at work in the overarching blends thus came full circle, with both leaders coming to metonymically stand in not only for their idealized subjects, but also by extension for the nations that they both ruled and represented.

It is in this way, too, through the interweaving of metaphoric and metonymic relations within such 'embodiment' blends that cult systems like Mussolini's and Ceauşescu's principally projected the *populist imagery* so central to their self-representations.[70] As discussed in the previous chapter, essential to both leaders' cults was a peculiar oscillation between their exceptionality and their being 'just one of the people.' This is what, within the realm of populism studies, María Esperanza Casullo (2021) has referred to fittingly enough as *synecdochal representation* – that is, she notes, rather than simply outright 'mirroring' the population that he represents, the leader "represents the people only partially," and, crucially, "only in those aspects that [he] has chosen as signifiers" (ibid., 78). This selectivity in populist appeal finds its parallel not only in Mussolini's and Ceauşescu's own vacillations between 'CELEBRITY' and 'DEMOTIC'

[68] Nazi Germany's widespread use of bodily and medical metaphors that presented Jews as parasites or as a disease to be eradicated is perhaps the most notorious case (see e.g. Chilton 2005; Musolff 2010b), although such metaphors were also deployed under Fascism with perceived dissidents – Jews, socialists, non-Fascists (whose existence is curiously recognized as it is denied) – externalized from the body politic and depicted as toxic contagions imperiling the nation's health and hygiene (Spackman 1996: 145-155). In fact, metaphors of 'social health' abounded under both Mussolini's and Ceauşescu's regimes, manifesting perhaps most prominently in their shared obsession with ([en]forcing) the generation of *new* bodies (Horn 1994; Kligman 1998).

[69] Both *uomo* in Italian and *om* in Romanian, while grammatically masculine, in fact mean 'human' or 'human being,' though *uomo* also doubles as the Italian word for 'man.' As we shall see, the Italian 'New Man,' in its inextricable linkage to Mussolini and his frame of VIRILITY, is decidedly more gendered than its Romanian counterpart.

[70] Populism has long been seen as a core component of fascist ideology per Roger Griffin's formulations (e.g. 1993, 2018) and has recently been suggested in a contemporary 'rereading' of the evolution of Fascism in Bosworth (2021). Conversely, and despite its apparent populist sheen, many socialist regimes have encountered considerable difficulty with actualizing populist principles (see Olson 2017). Sandu (2018), however, considers the emergence of Ceauşescu's cult in the early 1970s as a populist experiment born out of attempts to harness the nationalist sentiments that would become as foundational to Ceaușescu's regime as the cult itself (see Verdery 1991). On the role of 'embodiment' in populism and populist representation more generally, see Moffitt (2016: 63-68) and Ostiguy & Moffitt (2021).

but also in their regimes' conceptions of the New Man, which relied upon an internal 'other' to be excluded from the body politic and with which it could be accordingly contrasted. Both leaders' cult systems shared in this, as we shall see, but to different effects that were rendered metonymically.

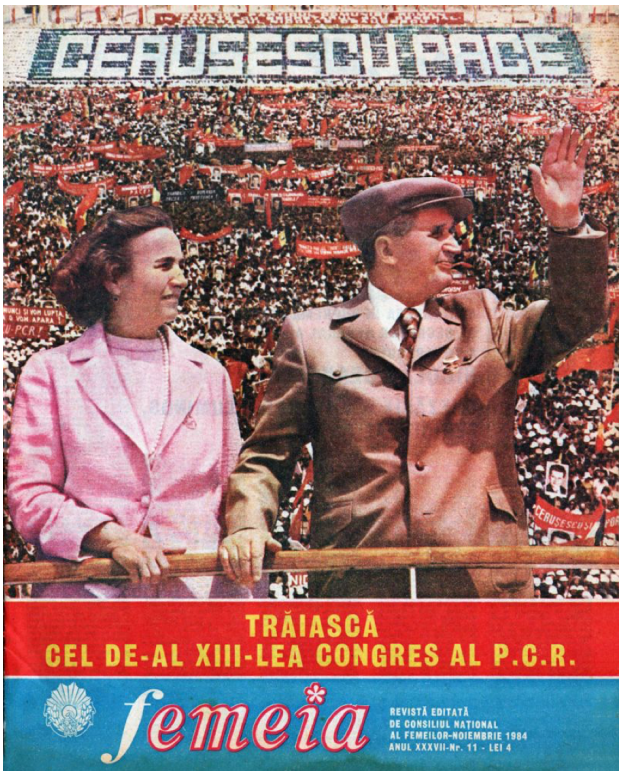
Section 4.3.1 begins by considering these populist dimensions of Mussolini's and Ceaușescu's cults as evinced in constructs that center on both the body of the leader and the bodies of his citizens, focusing on the metonymies operative in their interaction to evoke the metaphoric THE NATION IS A BODY blend. Sections 4.3.2 (Mussolini) and 4.3.3 (Ceaușescu) then turn to both regimes' conceptions of the 'New Man' and demonstrate the divergent strategies by which both leaders were to be its embodiment, actualized in metonymies based in 'as' and 'with,' respectively.

4.3.1 – Embodying the Nation

Although the leader's body may be at the core of a given cult system, other bodies play no less crucial a role. As argued in the previous chapter, images of Mussolini or Ceaușescu together with such bodies amassed in 'oceanic' crowds prompted emergent schemas that we referred to broadly as 'CELEBRITY.' Continuing with this line of thought, such crowds – whether experienced in person, in print, or on screen – are pivotal to the cult's populist self-representation, its

Figure 4.23: Mussolini crowd art (1936)[71]

Figure 4.24: Ceaușescu crowd art (1984)[72]



[71] Retrieved May 18, 2022 from Luciano Cheles' (2012) article "La communication politique des années quatre-vingt," which appears online in the *Cahiers d'études italiennes* through OpenEdition Journals. Link to web address here: https://journals.openedition.org/cei/docannexe/image/428/img-3.jpg.

[72] Image courtesy of the Nasui Collection in Bucharest. Retrieved May 18, 2022. Link to web address https://www.cosminnasui.com/2014/10/ceausescu-personality-cult-archive/.

performativity, and its claims (even if tacit) to popular legitimacy in that they are indexical of the charisma traditionally associated with leader cults. That is, they at once can connote the leader's popularity, people's enthusiasm for him and his regime, and inferentially their approval and thus his 'adequacy' as their collective national embodiment. Consider the examples in Figures 4.23-4.26:

Figure 4.25: Mussolini crowd (1935)[73]

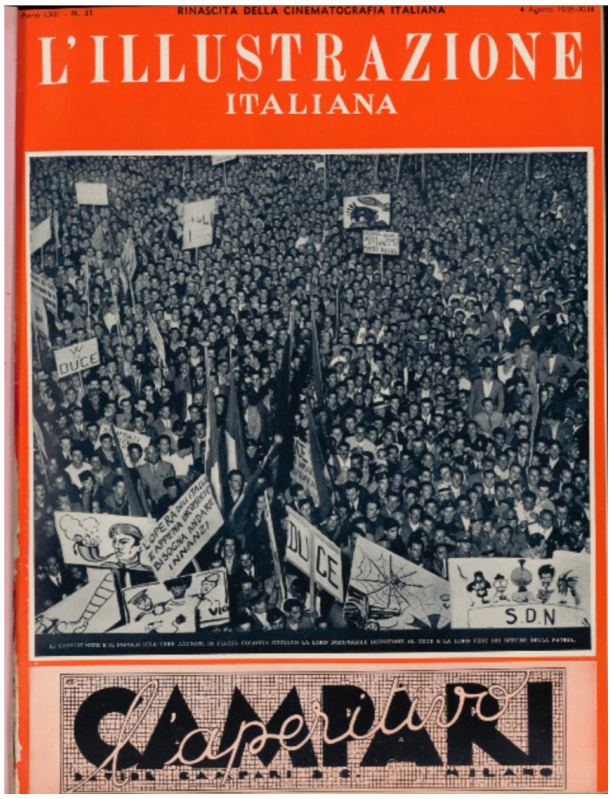


Figure 4.26: Ceaușescu crowd (1984)[74]

All four images consist of front-pages or covers of periodicals and each likewise features the very 'oceanic' crowds just mentioned. The first two consist of artistic renderings of both Mussolini and Ceaușescu (and, naturally, Elena) amid the backdrop of adoring, cheering crowds, visuals that clearly evoke the aforementioned frames of CELEBRITY that in turn index both leaders' apparent widespread appeal.[75] The second two figures, however, consist of *only* the popularity-indexing crowds: Mussolini and Ceaușescu are themselves physically absent but contextually highly salient such that they are, in effect, metonymically 'presenced' by virtue of the crowd's

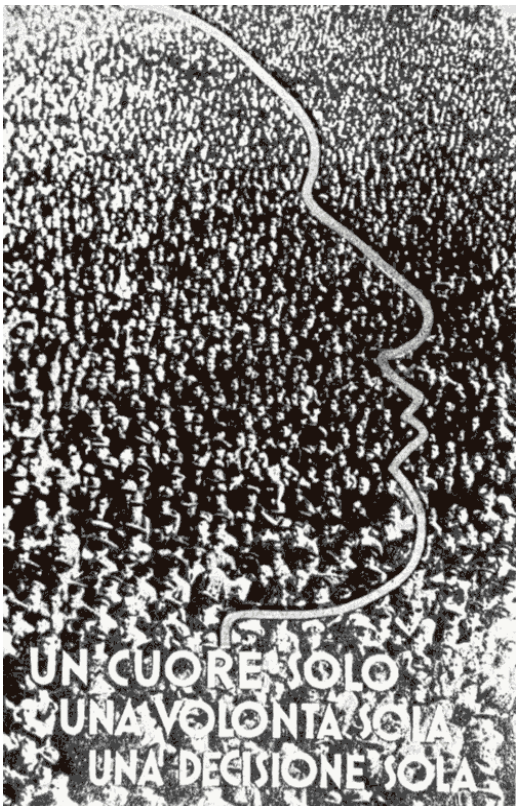
[73] Retrieved May 18, 2022 from the *Emeroteca digitale italiana* as found online via *Internet Culturale*. This image is from the front page of the August 4, 1935 edition of *L'Illustrazione Italiana*. Link to web address here: https://www.internetculturale.it/jmms/iccuviewer/iccu.jsp?id=oai%3Awww.internetculturale.sbn.it%2FTeca%3A20%3ANT0000%3ARAV0070589_188716&mode=all&teca=MagTeca+-+ICCU&fulltext=1.

[74] Image courtesy of the Nasui Collection in Bucharest. Retrieved May 18, 2022. Link to web address here: https://www.cosminnasui.com/2014/10/ceausescu-personality-cult-archive/.

[75] The captions are telling, too – the image of Mussolini depicts *"moltitudini esultanti intorno al Condottiero"* ('rejoicing multitudes around the Leader') while the Ceaușescus are accompanied by text proclaiming *"trăiască cel de-al XIII-lea congress al PCR"* ('long live the 13th congress of the RCP'), thus displaying the same transparent exaltation of the former and the latter's conflation with the RCP observed in the previous sections.

indexicality in their respective cult metacontexts. Such constructs thus not only constitute further tokens of the Mussolini_CELEBRITY and Ceauşescu_CELEBRITY schemas already presented (Figures 4.23 and 4.24) but also, in the cases of Figures 4.25 and 4.26, demonstrate further how such schemas could be frame-metonymically evoked, too, simply through the semiotic accretion of amassed bodies, slogans, titles, and images.

Figure 4.27: Mussolini silhouette + crowd poster (1934)[76]



Perhaps as a result of such images' metonymic 'presencing' power, the crowds of people that constitute the frame-metonymic 'vehicles' are themselves reduced to essentially a nondescript mass, evincing rather plainly what Claude Lefort (1986) refers to as the 'People-as-One' so central to totalitarian fantasies. A formulated (and fabricated) whole takes shape, per Lefort, in the body of the all-powerful *Egocrat*, another spin on a PART FOR WHOLE metonymy and indicative of the 'fusion' of leader and people in populist and leader-cult systems alike. As he puts it:

> Such a power [the Egocrat], detached from the social whole, towering over everything, merges with the party, with the people, with the proletariat. It merges with the body as a whole, while at the same time it is its head. A whole sequence of representations is to be found here, the logic of which should not escape us.

[76] Retrieved July 7, 2022 from Laura Malvano's (2003) article "De 'la fiumana dell'Umanità assetata di giustizia' à la foule consensuelle du fascisme : à propos de la représentation de la foule en peinture," which can be found online in *Laboratoire italien* through OpenEdition Journals. Link to web address here: https://journals.openedition.org/laboratoireitalien/docannexe/image/331/img-6.png. Schnapp (2006: 11) dates the poster to 1934.

Identification of the people with the proletariat, of the proletariat with the party, of the party with the leadership, of the leadership with Egocrat. On each occasion, an organ is both the whole and the detached part that makes the whole, that institutes it (ibid., 299).

Figure 4.28: Mussolini 'NATION AS BODY' (1934)[77]

Figure 4.29: Ceaușescu 'NATION AS BODY' (1981)[78]

Figures 4.27-4.29 are indicative of the metonymies involved in both cults' fusion of leader, nation, and (idealized) citizens in that each depicts the structuring of either Mussolini or Ceauşescu by means of a gathered crowd of cheering Italians or Romanians. Figure 4.27, one will surely note, not only aptly captures the populist sentiment infused in Mussolini's cult but also provides a further example of the metonymic power of his silhouette, transposed atop a mass of Italians beneath which reads the text: *un cuore solo, una volontà sola, una decisione sola* ('one heart alone, one will alone, one decision alone'). Here Mussolini's embodiment is rendered multimodally: a metonymic collapsing of the 'hearts,' 'wills,' and 'decisions' of an entire nation into his own obtains linguistically that in turn reinforces the visual presentation of his silhouette as being carved literally 'of' the people. THE NATION IS A BODY blend is thus projected quite plainly, at once metonymically drawing from and evoking the Mussolini_DEMOTIC schema and indexing Mussolini's populist appeal.

[77] The image, retrieved October 6, 2022 from *Archivio Grafica Italiana*, is of an oft-cited 1934 poster by Xanti Schawinsky. Link to web address here: http://www.archiviograficaitaliana.com/project/226/s. Additional discussions of it can be found in Poggi (2002: 747-748), Foster (2004: 128-129), Schnapp (2005: 104; 151), and Merjian (2019: 314).

[78] From *Scînteia*, December 5, 1981, page 1. My photograph, courtesy of the collection of the Bibliotecă centrală universitară 'Lucian Blaga' at Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania.

Metonymies abound, too, in both Figures 4.28 and 4.29 to similar effects. Figure 4.28, a 1934 poster for that year's elections (hence the prominent *SI* emblazoning it), consists of a large, introspective Mussolini whose own body is given shape by a sea of gathered Italian bodies. Here such bodies, like the bodies in Figure 4.27, frame-metonymically evoke the NATION frame as they are corralled into the body of the leader in order to constitute it. Figure 4.29, in slight contrast, is a graphic from a December 1981 edition of *Scînteia* celebrating Ceauşescu's efforts toward establishing PACE 'peace' and 'a Europe without nuclear arms.'[79] The NATION frame is also evoked here, but more directly via the inclusion of Romania's outline that is then filled in with the people out of which Ceauşescu emerges (with an olive branch in hand, no less). Both images, however, strongly suggest a centrality of the leader as emerging *through* his people,[80] of the cult of personality as existing by virtue of its exaltation – whether genuine or feigned – on behalf of the populace at which it is directed who, in so doing, were already well on their way to becoming the 'New Man' that each regime sought. This embodiment of the cult was further strengthened by Mussolini and Ceauşescu's own role as the very archetype of this 'New Man,' to a discussion of which I now turn.

4.3.2 – Mussolini and the Fascist *uomo nuovo*

The origins of the Fascist conception of the *uomo nuovo* can be found in the Futurist movement that took off in Italy in the years just prior to World War I, which "promoted values such as instinct, strength, courage, sport, war, youth, and dynamism and speed as exemplified by modern machines" (Gori 2000: 30). Translated into Fascist ideals, the *uomo nuovo* constituted a project of anthropological revolution that sought to transform Italians into "virile, dynamic, bellicose" beings (ibid., 28), qualities that were to be reflected in the physical perfection of the body that drew on classical models of beauty (Swan 2016: 364).[81] It was a frequent theme in Fascist propaganda, championed in the media, incorporated into works of art, and heralded by Fascist officials and Mussolini alike. One famous example is the *stadio dei marmi* 'Stadium of Marble Statues' in Rome's *Foro Mussolini*, which is encircled by a multitude of sculptures that give physical shape and form to the *uomo nuovo's* strength, beauty, and athleticism (Figure 4.30).

In addition to such representations of the *uomo nuovo*, Italians also had its flesh-and-blood archetype from which to draw inspiration in Mussolini himself. Indeed, the previous chapter's exposition of the constructionalization of emergent Mussolini_VIRILE and Mussolini_WARRIOR (sub)schemas should be understood as indications of the overlap between Mussolini's cult and broader trends in Fascist culture and ideology, as arising from cultic manifestations of the *uomo nuovo*. Figures 4.31-4.33 on the following pages provide fascinating examples that shed light on the kinds of 'Fascist metonymies' operative at this intersection.

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[79] Another of Marin's (2016a) Ceauşescu 'types' is *'eroul sau campionul păcii mondiale'* ('the hero or the champion of world peace'), which she draws from the extensive coverage of his efforts to establish himself and Romania on the world stage, e.g. the frequent emphasis on his calls for disarmament and his many visits with foreign dignitaries at home and abroad (see chapter 4 in particular).

[80] Barbara Spackman, in an application of Žižek's (1989) theorization of fetishization in communist totalitarianisms to Mussolini and Fascism, suggests as much. As she puts it, "the refetishization of the Duce that occurs in [F]ascism is a fetishization of the people/nation *in* the leader," with his projected charisma thus not so much grounded in "superman" attributes but is rather "the charisma of a nation, a people, a 'race'" (1996: 90-91; italics original).

[81] See Gori (2004), Ponzio (2015), Dagnino (2016), and Bernhard & Klinkhammer (2017) for further discussion of various aspects and practices involved in the Fascist project of creating the *uomo nuovo* in Italians. Designating this project as an 'anthropological revolution' is a characteristic of the work of Emilio Gentile (e.g. 2005).

Figure 4.30: Statue in the *Foro Mussolini's 'Stadio dei Marmi'*[82]

Figure 4.31: Mussolinis commemorating[83] the March on Rome (1932)

Figure 4.32: Army of Mussolinis (~1938)[84]

[82] Retrieved May 3, 2022 from Wikipedia Commons. Link to web address here: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Beeld_van_een_bokser_in_het_Stadio_dei_Marmi_onderdeel_van_het_sportcomplex_Foro,_Bestanddeelnr_191-1327.jpg.

[83] Retrieved May 3, 2022 from *Cartoline dal Ventennio* (see note 40 above). Link to web address here: https://www.cartolinedalventennio.it/free-extensions/propaganda/adunate-concorsi-manifestazioni?switch_to_desktop_ui=250&page=3#category.

[84] Image courtesy of the Archivio Sturani in Rome (see Sturani 2013: 150). The approximate date of publication is given in Sturani (1995: 267).

Figure 4.33: Mussolini soldier (1939)[85]

Let us consider each construct in turn. Figure 4.31 consists of a 1932 poster advertising the ten-year anniversary of the March on Rome, for which the regime planned a spectacular commemorative exhibition.[86] The poster displays three, black shirt-clad men marching in apparent lockstep, evoking the fabled activities of the march itself. Yet, it is clear, they are no ordinary Italian militants but in fact three Mussolinis. Here, as with the silhouettes shown in the previous sections, their identity is unmistakable due to the prominence of the highly salient facial features, even etched as they are in a jagged, modernist style.[87] Figure 4.32 presents a similar scene: here a

[85] Retrieved May 3, 2022 from the *Emeroteca digitale italiana* as found online via *Internet Culturale*. This image is of the front page of the February 5, 1939 edition of the popular periodical *L'Illustrazione Italiana*. Its caption notes the celebration of the 14th anniversary of *La Milizia Volontaria* ('The Voluntary Militia') of the regime, the successor to the paramilitary *squadristi* forces, and that it is a reproduction of a painting entitled *Legionari in vista del Mediterraneo* 'Legionaries in sight of the Mediterranean.' Link to web address here: https://www.internetculturale.it/jmms/iccuviewer/iccu.jsp?id=oai%3Awww.internetculturale.sbn.it%2FTeca%3A20%3ANT0000%3ARAV0070589_188795&mode=all&teca=MagTeca+-+ICCU&fulltext=1.

[86] The 'Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution,' as it was called, was held in Rome and attended by over 3.5 million people during its run from 1932-1934 (Fogu 2003: 3-4). It has received considerable attention from scholars for its distinct combination of spectacle, propaganda, and modernist exhibition style. On such topics see, for example, Ghirardo (1992); Schnapp (1992); Stone (1993); and Fogu (2003: chapter 5).

[87] It is worth pointing out, too, that each of the three Mussolinis sports what could readily be considered his three most iconographic 'looks' of different phases of his reign. In the middle there is the bare, (mostly) bald head characteristic

literal army of Mussolinis, each identically helmeted and uniformed, holds their daggers skyward as if saluting, by some twist of logic, themselves. Figure 4.33, in turn, depicts just one Mussolini, who here appears as one commanding yet ordinary soldier among many, pointing outward to the battle ahead.

Across all three figures there is a metonymic bidirectionality evident that harkens back to Lefort's People-as-One and requires some unpacking. Figures 4.31 and 4.32, in their inclusion of multiple Mussolinis, suggest a metonymic *expansion* of his own body such that, in essence, all Italians *have become* Mussolini. Thus, the People *are* indeed One, in line with Lefort, but a One rendered here more discursively 'literal' in the form of carbon-copy armies of militant Mussolinis themselves indexical of the *uomo nuovo* that the Italians that they constitute were expected to (have already) become.[88] Figure 4.33, by contrast, in its placement of a singular Mussolini among ordinary Italians instead points to a metonymic *reduction* of the same People-as-One's 'megabody' to that of a solitary soldier-citizen, valiantly taking up the fight as any *uomo nuovo* would. In other words, in Figure 3.33 it is not that Italians have become Mussolini but the reverse – now Mussolini has become an(y) Italian.

In such constructs, then, Mussolini forcefully indexes Fascism's idealized *uomo nuovo* in that his iconicity as its paradigm is projected beyond his own 'body proper,' as it were, and becomes construable as any other (male) Italian. In so doing, the body making up THE NATION IS A BODY blend is still Mussolini's body, but it is no longer his alone, now metonymically extended to and shared with each of his subjects. To put it differently, and I think powerfully, Mussolini was at once all Italians (Figures 4.31 and 4.32) as all Italians were Mussolini (Figure 4.33), the metonymies operative in his metaphoric nation-body as elastic as they were encompassing. This observation of Mussolini's depiction 'as' – be it 'as' Italians, of Italians 'as' him, or 'as' something else – is indeed something that will be explored further in the next chapter. For now, however, we can turn to Ceauşescu and *omul nou*.

4.3.3 – Ceauşescu and the Communist *om nou*

In contrast to the hyper-virility and tropes of classical beauty that characterized the Italian *uomo nuovo*, the Romanian *om nou* had at its core less a focus on aesthetics and one more on the individual's 'spirit.' As Bocarnea and Osula (2008: 203) note, Romanian socialism's version of *om nou* was to be "a builder of the [sic] socialism and communism, with a large horizon of theoretical, scientific, and professional knowledge, with a militant revolutionary spirit." He was also to be "a perennial revolutionary, forever leading the transformation of society," to possess "a socialist revolutionary patriotism," and to be ready to defend "the revolutionary achievements, the independence, and the sovereignty of his fatherland" (ibid.).[89]

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of images from the 1920s; the black fez that he donned for much of the 1930s leads the group; and the helmeted warrior most featured during the later years and into the war(s) brings up the rear.

[88] As Enrico Sturani (2003: 121) aptly puts it: "Mussolini… sarebbe stato il 'prototipo dell'Italiano nuovo'; lo sforzo di somigliargli, trapassando dal piano ideologico a quello dello stile, dell'atteggiarsi, sarebbe arrivato ad agire sulla fisonomia e sul fisico stesso dei suoi fedeli, che finirono per (ri)generarsi da lui attraverso una sorta di clonazione" (*Mussolini… would have been the 'prototype of the New Italian'; the effort to resemble him, moving from an ideological level to one of style and attitude, would come to act upon the physiognomy and physique of his faithful, who would end up (re)generating from him through a sort of cloning* [my translation]).

[89] See also Anton (2018) on the construction of *omul nou* as a 'utopian project.' It should also be borne in mind that, despite their respective foci, neither regime's conception of the New Man was limited to either the purely physical or the spiritual. The formation of the *uomo nuovo* and indeed Fascism itself were certainly viewed as projects of

Visually speaking, Ceauşescu's embodiment of *omul nou* presents a striking departure from what was just observed with Mussolini and the *uomo nuovo*. That is, despite the preponderance of organized, disciplined, and athletic bodies in socialist imagery and spectacles, the image of the leader himself was always quite conservative, rarely straying from the blueprint of his classic suit, iconic smile, and signature wave. In fact, Ceauşescu's exemplary *omul nou* qualities more often found space in the press, and particularly on the occasion of his birthday and its associated fanfare, as in examples (5-6) below:

(5) O viață de revoluționar comunist, de patriot înflăcărat, exemplar dăruită slujirii idealurilor poporului, cauzei socialismului (January 25, 1981)

A life of a communist revolutionary, an exemplary, inspired patriot, dedicated to serving the ideals of the people, to the cause of socialism

(6) Contribuția de inestimabilă valoare teoretică și practică tovarășului Nicolae Ceauşescu la întărirea continuă a rolului conducător al partidului, centrul vital al întregii națiunii (January 26, 1989)

The contribution of priceless theoretical and practical value of comrade Nicolae Ceauşescu in the continuous reinforcement of the leading role of the party, the vital center of the entire nation

Moreover, neither Ceauşescu's body nor the bodies of Romanians evince any of the bidirectional metonymies observed in the previous section with Mussolini and the Italians. Rather, constructs such as the images in Figures 4.34-4.36 on the following pages appeared frequently that deploy an altogether different take on Lefort's People-as-One.

Figures 4.34 and 4.35 – as we saw above in Figure 4.29 – consist of three principal (groups of) elements: an outline of Romania, a crowd of Romanians filling in that outline, and a large, dominating image of Ceauşescu himself. Yet, unlike with Mussolini, there is a kind of stark, mandated compositionality to these images in the sense that each component is required to 'combine' to generate their overall effect(s) while at the same time remaining wholly individually parseable. Figure 4.36, in turn, presents a different image that is paired with a poem entitled *'PRIN ANI - LUMINĂ'* ('Through the Years – Light'). Here, Ceauşescu is conspicuously – indeed, *highly* conspicuously, we might even say – absent, and instead the image consists of an amalgamation of the various metonyms that we have observed for him: 'imagery of progress,' signaled by the power lines, dams, and agricultural symbols, the RCP, and, now, Romanians-as-Romania, too. In the case of Ceauşescu's cult, then, Lefort's formulation of the People-as-One holds true in the sense that Romanians indeed are depicted as constituting a monolith, a unified mass of *omini noi* 'New Men.' At the same time, though, there is an inconsistency in the form of a representational break such that Ceauşescu's body – when present – is never actually construed 'as' the people that he, at the

'spiritual' reorientation (see e.g. once again Mussolini & Gentile's 1932 [Mussolini 1933] Doctrine of Fascism, which is quite explicit in this regard), and, similarly, it would be wrong to claim that communist formulations of the New Man did not prioritize physicality, athleticism, and discipline, which were unquestionably cornerstones of such regimes' many spectacles, parades, and celebrations (see e.g. Tupitsyn 1994; Roubal 2003; Rolfs 2013; Petracovschi 2020). As far as each regime's conception of the New Man is reflected in their respective leader cults, however, such foci do appear to differentiate them rather markedly.

risk of paradox, is to embody.[90] Rather, this embodiment and his *omul nou* quintessence are each given shape visually by virtue of the co-presence of his many metonyms that here appear essential, the frames that they concomitantly evoke necessary to conjure Ceauşescu in these roles. In other words, pivotal to Ceauşescu's embodiment is not a depiction 'as' but a depiction 'with.' This suggests a striking difference in the ways both cult systems sought to represent their respective leaders, which we will explore in more detail in the next chapter in terms of how both cults recruited history and historical figures.

Figure 4.34: Ceauşescu-Romania A (1981)[91]

Figure 4.35: Ceauşescu-Romania B (1986)[92]

[90] Even his depiction emerging from the crowd above in Figure 4.29 stops short of rendering him 'as' ordinary Romanians (or vice versa), who themselves appear borderline amorphous, and instead his presence looms above them – if benevolently – as he dwarfs them.

[91] *Scînteia*, May 1, 1981, page 1. My photograph, courtesy of the collection of the Bibliotecă centrală universitară 'Lucian Blaga' at Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania.

[92] We can recall that we initially viewed this poster in Chapter 3 when observing the ubiquity of the particular portrait of Ceauşescu included in it. It is taken from Preutu (2017: 423).

Figure 4.36: 'Ceauşescu'-Romania C (1979)[93]

4.4 – Conceptual Conflations

By way of a conclusion, I would like to here propose a final and broad metonymic relation that came to operate in both Mussolini's and Ceauşescu's cult systems and which, I would contend, plays a powerful role in any cult system. I have termed this relation 'conceptual conflation' in order to capture what I would characterize as the gradual reconfiguration of an overarching political frame that occurs in such contexts such that particular elements within that frame (e.g. the role of the 'leader') can come to frame-metonymically stand in for it as a whole. It is the leader's salience, both ontological and often cognitive, that affords him this status as a kind of 'master metonym,' so to speak, capable of standing in not only for his people (as we have just seen) but for the entire regime, for government itself, and for an attendant range of interrelated frames including, but even exceeding, politics 'at large.'

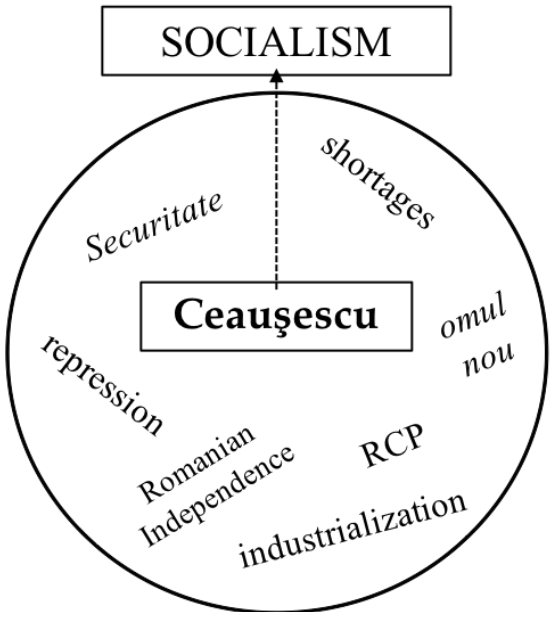
More concretely, and specifically in the cases of Italian Fascism and Romanian socialism, as both Mussolini's and Ceauşescu's cults came to be the recipients of increased emphasis in the later years of their regimes, so too did the leader element of their respective governmental-political frames (e.g. FASCISM/SOCIALISM) that each fulfilled swell in salience. As each came to occupy an increasingly central role in the collective understanding of Fascism/socialism, they came to be explicitly identifiable with it, beyond merely embodying its ideals. What this suggests, then, is that

[93] *Scînteia*, July 15, 1979, page 1. My photograph, courtesy of the collection of the Bibliotecă centrală universitară 'Lucian Blaga' at Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania.

a frame-metonymic relationship conceptually emerged between the leader as 'target' and the political frame of which he was a part in his institutional role (e.g. FASCISM/SOCIALISM) as 'vehicle.' Put plainly, a mere evocation or invocation of the frame FASCISM or SOCIALISM – itself often occurring frame-metonymically – would then serve to also evoke the leader himself. Figures 4.37 and 4.38 below provide a diagram of this kind of emergent, metonymic relation. In each, an overarching frame of FASCISM or SOCIALISM is depicted via a large circle in which some of the numerous possible, associable frame elements have been provided, ranging from the negative (e.g. Fascist violence, shortages, secret police in the form of OVRA and the *Securitate*[94]) to the positive (e.g. Fascist welfare programs, Romanian industrialization, variants of national pride) to the bureaucratic or even 'neutral' (e.g. both regimes' party organizations and apparatuses). Centrally located in each, to metaphorically convey their particular significance-cum-salience, are Mussolini and Ceauşescu. The dashed arrow connecting each leader to his respective, overarching political frame is meant to suggest the metonymic relation that comes to hold between him and this frame, a metonymy that again, in essence, conflates (or, we might even say, *equates*) Mussolini with Fascism and Ceauşescu with socialism.

Figure 4.37: Mussolini as 'master metonym'

Figure 4.38: Ceauşescu as 'master metonym'



Such findings, then, suggest an opportunity to recast what has long been observed in the study of both leaders' cults in cognitive terms explicitly grounded in metonymy. That is, both Fascism's apparent evolution (crystallization?) into a fairly bread-and-butter dictatorship held together by *ducismo* 'Duce-ism' and the similar, already noted centrality that Ceauşescu's cult came to play in Romanian socialism can be understood at once as emerging from as they

[94] It should always be borne in mind that, in spite of the often glitzy propaganda in which they were championed, both leaders' cults were still disseminated and consumed within dictatorial regimes in which the 'fear factor' of stepping out of line was very real, made all the more so by sophisticated secret police systems and wide-reaching networks of informers. On the Fascist OVRA (which stands for *Organizzazione per la Vigilanza e la Repressione dell'Antifascismo* 'Organization for the Surveillance and Repression of Anti-Fascism') and the *Securitate* under Ceauşescu, see respectively Franzinelli (1999) and Deletant (1995).

engendered a conflation of leader and regime. This conflation in turn ultimately resulted in a gradual restructuration of these frames of FASCISM and SOCIALISM such that one of their particular, constitutive frame elements in the leader could readily – and quite possibly unavoidably – frame-metonymically evoke them as a whole, and vice versa. This observation will continue to prove essential in the following chapter on time in which, as we shall see, such metonymic relations constitute the heart of both cults' presentations of their respective leaders as simultaneously the harbinger, enactor, and embodiment of a 'historic' era.

Chapter 5 – *Blending Time*

5.1 – Introduction

At this point in the dissertation, we have observed the multifaceted structuration of both Mussolini's and Ceauşescu's cults as communicative, constructionist networks through the interplay of a host of different factors and processes both material and cognitive in nature, including salience, conventionality, entrenchment, usage, citationality, indexicality, and, per the overarching focus of the previous chapter, conceptual metonymy. We have considered the proliferation of various (types of) constructs to constitute a formation of both cults from the 'bottom up' even if, by and large, these constructs were themselves disseminated from the 'top down' in line with regime guidelines, interventions, and curations. This chapter represents both a continuation and a slight departure from this exposition. It takes a closer look at both cults' mechanisms of meaning construction from the perspective of Conceptual Blending Theory, with a particular focus on both leaders' cult systems' semantic exploitation and (re)deployment of a ubiquitous conceptual construct of a different sort – that of time.

Time itself, like the role of the leader, often takes on remarkably salient forms and functions in authoritarian contexts that are worth unpacking in some detail up front.[1] From Nazi millenarianism to the eternal and historic revolutionary process of constructing socialism in Eastern European communist regimes, the authoritarian appropriation of time sees the past, the present, and the future interacting in peculiar and at times complex ways. Often, it has been observed, this occurs as a means through which a regime seeks legitimation.[2] In so doing, new topologies of time are constructed that refract historical and contemporary realities in order to create a kind of transcendental narrative. The regime is placed in the present, leading toward some brighter future – typically the culmination of some destiny – and somehow constitutes both the byproduct of a contentious, rupturing struggle as well as the resuscitation of a glorious past. Far

[1] While research on the politics of time 'at large,' so to speak, abounds (see Koselleck 1985; Maier 1987; Osborne 1995; and Hartog 2003 for classic examples), works on the relationships between particular political models and their organization and use of time are by comparison rather rarer. Important and relevant examples of such work include Stephen Hanson's (1997) study of Soviet institutions, Roger Griffin's (2007) probing analysis of the Modernist foundations underpinning Fascism and Nazism, and Katherine Verdery's (1996: chapter 1) observation of the gradual expropriation of Romanians of their control over their own (sense of) time under Ceauşescu (see also Berezin 1997: chapter 5 for similar arguments regarding Fascism's "colonization of time" through mass public rituals). Additional contributions include Barbara Spackman's (2001) dissection of Fascism's temporal tensions in the 1935 film *Vecchia guardia*, Ara Merjian's (2019) synthesis of the deployment of such tensions lending to the multivalence of Renato Bertelli's famed 1935 *Continuous Profile of Mussolini*, as well as the special 2015 issue of *Journal of Modern European History* (13:1) edited by Fernando Esposito and Sven Reichardt (2015b) that deals specifically with various topics in fascist temporalities.

[2] Argumentation of this type is frequently found in studies on Soviet-/communist-type regimes, which often note how such appeals for historical legitimacy were inextricable from concomitant appeals grounded in nationalism (e.g. Verdery 1991; Boia 2001; Rees 2004; Petrescu 2009; Mocanescu 2010; and Gill 2011), despite tensions this generated with the concept of Marxist internationalism and, indeed, Marxism itself (see Verdery 1991: 309-315 for discussion).

from a seamless creation, however, this new temporality is rife with gaps and discontinuities: the immediate past (i.e. the period directly preceding the regime), for example, is often stricken from the historical record, and instead elements from a deeper, more 'mythical' past are selectively plundered and fastened to the regime's self-presentation like badges of honor. At the same time, this recent past is still subject to careful invocation in which it is purposely cast as a period of great decline and decadence out of which the present regime with all its revolutionary fortitude – whether real or imagined – has emerged victorious. Simultaneously bound to yet severed from the past, a new order is heralded in the present that holds distinct potential in its combination of (selective) renewal of what was, its championing of what currently is, and its promise of what will be.

Importantly, then, and despite what appears at first glance to be a firmly 'backward-looking' gaze in the discourses of many authoritarian regimes, they nevertheless have a focus very much geared toward the future. That is, even if breaking with the past has brought about a life in the present that is assured to be 'better' than the recent past – Stalin's famous declaration in 1935 that "Life has become better, comrades; life has become more cheerful"[3] in the wake of the hardships brought about by the first Soviet Five-Year Plan immediately springs to mind – the *very* best is still yet to come. Hitler's fantasies of an enduring, utopian 'Thousand-Year Reich' perhaps capture this best, bringing the very idea of eternity into the realm of public consciousness in the form of a racialized eschatology.[4] Functioning as a unifying yet elusive end goal with which to seduce citizens with promised bounties and glory, the future, like the past, was decidedly malleable upon invocation, capable of tapping into and channeling a diverse range of expectations, desires, and goals.

To further complicate matters, however, is the fact that this 'glorious' future, which always seems to be dangling just over the horizon, is never itself attained nor even attainable. In line with the formative, processual, and experimental aspects of most totalitarian logics, the requisite revolution that has brought about the present regime, though itself a historical event and thus 'complete,' can never be considered as such, for to do so would be to suggest that the struggle is over, that the decadence has been overcome, and that the 'end goal,' for all intents and purposes, has been achieved. In other words, allowing the revolutionary spark to fizzle out risks obviating the regime altogether, and thus it must live on in a "*perpetual present*," which, quite curiously, often takes the form of a proclaimed golden age of peace, prosperity, and (reclaimed) prestige (Bradatan 2005: 284, italics original). The regime consequently trumpets its victories and accomplishments as both evidence of its successes and a glimpse of what is to come under its continued guidance. In the words of Searle (1979), whether or not the "world" (i.e. reality) matches the "word" (i.e. propaganda) would appear to be of little relevance, with the remarkable result that the 'glorious' future is at once distant, imminent, and already arrived.

This chapter departs from the dual observation that such temporal appropriations, manipulations, and fusions were similarly rampant in the propaganda and wider discourse of both Fascist Italy and communist Romania, and that these manipulations themselves were reflective of a greater preoccupation with bestowing Mussolini, Ceauşescu, and their respective eras with specifically *historic* dimensions. In the case of Fascism, the myth of Ancient Rome and its regeneration under Mussolini were a focal point of the regime's rhetoric and self-representation,

[3] Quoted in Fitzpatrick (2000: 90). This quote appeared in *Pravda*, the chief Soviet newspaper, in 1935 and became a prominent slogan of the regime. See also Petrone (2000), a study of Soviet mass festivals in the 1930s, which takes a different translation as its title – *Life Has Become More Joyous, Comrades*.

[4] See Rhodes (1980) and Sabrow (2005: 363-365) for more details.

serving as a core motif from its recurrent depiction in works of art and architecture to its invocation as justification for its imperial ambitions and colonial conquests.[5] Ceauşescu's regime similarly had a penchant for recruiting a vigorously nationalistic history to its own ends, frequently invoking the names and images of past leaders – from the pre-Roman kingdom of Dacia through to Romanian unification in 1862 – and incorporating anniversaries of important historical victories and occasions into its own calendar of propagandistic festival-rituals. The past, under both regimes, occupied a clear place of primacy in each of their public spheres that only grew with time. Functioning ambiguously as a source of propagandistic pride to be celebrated or as a symbol of a decadent order to be destroyed, it was subject to emphasis, erasure, or reconstruction as Mussolini and Ceauşescu saw fit.[6]

Yet in both cases it was not just their respective pasts that were either dredged up to adorn or buried to refurbish the present: these pasts co-existed alongside and in turn influenced very powerful emphases on the futures of both nations as well. The Fascist obsession with *romanità* ('Roman-ness') came, in the words of one of Fascism's more prominent intellectuals and politicians, "not from erudition, not from books, not from so-called 'dead history," but rather from a belief in its power to inspire "not a restoration but a renovation, a revolution in the idea of Rome."[7] In other words, *romanità* possessed, despite its ostensible focus on an antiquity lost in the sands of time, a clearly "futural dynamic" for devout Fascists that was deeply imbued with not only historical but *historic* significance (Griffin 2007: 222). The discourses of Eastern European communist regimes, and indeed the works of Marx and Engels more broadly, were also replete with this same kind of futural dynamic, whose "ingenious trick" amounted to, in the words of Costica Bradatan, "mix[ing] oil and water," i.e. "'Messianic time' with 'historical time,'" in such a way that they could maintain that "a transfigured, Messianic humanity was not only possible, but historically necessary" (2005: 269).

Moreover, both regimes also deliberately sought to differentiate themselves from the past through their installations of new 'time-scapes' that situated them on a wholly unique temporal axis, removed from yet inspired by history while heading straight into a deliberately Fascist/communist future. In Fascist Italy this took the form of the *era fascista* ('Fascist era') and in Romania it came to be in the proclaimed *Epocă de Aur* ('golden age') brought about by Ceauşescu's leadership. From the deployment of new calendars to the creation of a host of novel, secular regime- and nation-centric holidays, celebrations, and commemorations, both the *era fascista* and the *Epocă de Aur* constituted concerted efforts on the parts of Mussolini's and Ceauşescu's regimes to both discursively and institutionally bend and reconfigure time to their will.[8] Crucially, however – and simply necessarily, one might add – both of these new 'time-

[5] The Fascist cult of *romanità* has received considerable attention from scholars, who have demonstrated its variety of applications across media, including in art (e.g. Stone 1998, 1999; Lazzaro & Crum 2004), in architecture and city planning (e.g. Kostof 1978; Minor 1999; Baxa 2010; Kallis 2011; Arthurs 2012; Tymkiw 2019), and in film and literature (e.g. Caprotti 2009; Lamers & Reitz-Joosse 2015) as well as the various ideological and political uses to which it was put throughout the *ventennio* (e.g. Visser 1992; Fuller 2007; Nelis 2007, 2014; Burdett 2010).

[6] There has likewise been plentiful research on authoritarian regimes and the built environment. For Fascism, one will note examples such as Cederna (1981), Ghirardo (1989), Fuller (2004, 2007), Painter (2005), Nicoloso (2008), Kallis (2014), and Versari (2018). For Ceauşescu's Romania notable contributions include Salecl (1999), Iosa (2006), O'Neill (2009), and Grama (2019).

[7] Quoting Giuseppe Bottai, taken from Griffin (2007: 222).

[8] The French Revolutionary calendar was, of course, the inspirational prototype for many subsequent politically motivated attempts to refashion or restart time anew (see Perovic 2012). One will additionally note the work of Schneider (1968) and Griffin (2008) on such refashionings of time under Fascism, as well as studies such as Verdery (1996: chapter 1) and Bradatan (2005) for (Romanian) communism.

scapes,' despite their historical and futural dimensions, existed and played out in the present. That is, while they relied very much on emotive appeals to the past and the future, they were self-referentially very much grounded in the 'now,' characterizable both as a 'now' in relation to a particular time of utterance or encounter as well as to Mussolini's or Ceauşescu's regimes more generally. It is, I will argue, in this conflation of past, present, and future that the specifically *historic* dimensions of both leaders, and by metonymic extension their respective reigns, emerge.

In such constructed temporalities the boundaries between past, present, and future are blurred so that they all, in essence, blend together. In this chapter, I will explore in detail the nature of these temporal 'blends' through the lens of, aptly enough, Conceptual Blending Theory (CBT; see e.g. Coulson 2001; Fauconnier & Turner 2002; Turner 2014) and illustrate the ways in which they interacted with, served, and ultimately lent structure to the cults of Mussolini and Ceauşescu. Conceptually speaking, in both regimes' discourses a series of inter-temporal mappings can be understood as at work, and this chapter's analysis will focus on three such types of mappings: mappings of the past onto the present, of the present onto the future, and mappings between the past, present, and future collectively. Each series of mappings presents further constructional developments to both leaders' respective cult networks that will be discussed in turn, such as the emergence of new kinds of constructions or new relations between (new) constructions.

Within the first set of mappings, I will argue that the past, through the careful selection of particular historical frames and the frame elements that comprise them (e.g. historical figures, events, ideas, triumphs, etc.), is deployed (in attempt to) confer the present leader and his regime with legitimacy. More concretely (and to be discussed in more detail below), powerful, culturally salient frames such as that of ANCIENT ROME in Italy or those associated with prominent, historical Romanian leaders supplied widely accessible conceptual structure that could be recruited to and exploited for the Fascist and communist regimes' own ends.

The second group of mappings – that of the present mapped onto the future – attempts to achieve what I term cult 'permanence.' Although certainly preoccupied with the leader's image in his own time, many manifestations of the cult also clearly sought to ensure that his image and his achievements would endure for generations to come. In conceptual terms, this requires a projection of structures from a base 'present space' into an imagined parallel 'future space' such that whatever X is present in the former is expected to persist in the latter at any given time Y. This was an endeavor frequently approached through works of physical construction, including both monuments erected in the leader's honor as well as more mundane projects undertaken under his direction and/or patronage. In either case, the leader's mark could be literally imprinted upon his nation and thus ensured to last. As will be discussed, this sets up a particular set of metonymic relations of MONUMENT FOR MONUMENTALIZED and BUILDING FOR BUILDER in line with the previous chapter's analysis.

In the third and final group of mappings, conceptual structure is mapped across three mental spaces – one past, one present, and one future – to create the properly *historic* dimension of the cult. Building on the preceding discussions of frames and metonymy, I will show how these 'present,' 'past,' and 'future' mental spaces, and the frames and elements within them, were combined in such a way so that what emerged was the leader simultaneously in the roles of what Claudio Fogu (2003) refers to as the 'historic agent' and the 'historic signifier' – that is, as the lone figure capable of giving present meaning to history, as well as the culmination and embodiment of history itself.

This chapter is structured as follows: in section 5.2 I will begin with a brief synthesis of some of the relevant literature on fascist and socialist conceptions and organizations of time, which

are essential in order to fully understand the terrain in which the temporal inflections of Mussolini's and Ceauşescu's cults developed and, over time, constructionalized. I will then provide a CBT-based analysis of the semantics of the word 'historic,' both to illustrate the kinds of temporal mappings that will be analyzed throughout the chapter as well as to lay the groundwork for the discussions of the 'historic agent,' 'historic signifier,' and 'historic era' constructions that follow. Sections 5.3-5.5 are in turn devoted to each of the three types of mappings outlined above. Section 5.3 demonstrates the recruitment of the past to legitimize the present, focusing on various cult-based works of art, while section 5.4 illustrates the role of architecture and monuments in preserving the cult into the future. Finally, section 5.5 converges with an analysis of two cult-based constructs for both the *era fascista* and the *Epocă de Aur*, each of which depicts their respective historic dimensions and in which the past, present, and future all clearly intertwine around the leader's own emergent role as the simultaneous enactor and embodiment of history. Section 5.6 then synthesizes the findings presented in section 5.5, highlights their metonymic dimensions, and serves as a conclusion for the chapter as a whole.

5.2 – Temporal Configurations: Fascism, Socialism, and 'Historic' Time

In order to fully understand the role that time had in Mussolini's and Ceauşescu's cult networks, I contend that it is first necessary to briefly look into both regimes' conceptions, organizations, and uses of time more broadly. These are each considered in turn in sections 5.2.1 and 5.5.2. I will then supply a CBT-based analysis of the semantics of 'historic' in section 5.2.3 that will prime the analyses of the subsequent sections.

5.2.1 – Fascism and Time

Roger Griffin's work (e.g. 1993, 2007, 2018) has been very influential in suggesting that at fascism's core is a "palingenetic" impulse based in a captivating yet protean "founding myth." Rarely grounded in historical reality but steeped in nationalist sentiment, this myth serves instead to inspire and to evoke images of a glorious past that can be 'reborn' in the face of a prevailing decadent order compounded by an experiential crisis of time brought about by the collective forces of 'modernity.'[9] For Italian Fascism, it was the myth of Ancient Rome that, as a paragon of political, military, and cultural greatness to which all of the newly-unified Italy could relate, proved particularly potent. This potency was directly linked to its relative ubiquity which, in cognitive-linguistic terms, translates to it constituting a semantic frame that was both sufficiently ontologically salient and entrenched well enough so that its evocation and invocation had widespread and forceful resonance. Indeed, Pier Giorgio Zunino (1985) considers Ancient Rome

[9] The fascist 'crisis of time' has been addressed in studies such as Fenn (1997), Nunes de Almeida (2020), and in numerous works by Griffin himself (e.g. 2007, 2008, 2015; see also Esposito & Reichardt 2015a, the introduction to the aforementioned edition of the *Journal of Modern European History*). 'Modernity' in this view constitutes the complex interaction between rapid technological advancement, increasing secularization and the concomitant decline of religion's supremacy, the breakdown of longstanding social and political structures, and changing relations with the idea of history itself. In combination, these amounted to a "liquefaction" of human experience, or an erosion of longstanding traditions and beliefs. This term originates in the work of the sociologist Zygmunt Bauman, whose numerous works (e.g. 2000, 2006) are worth noting in any discussion of modernity's catalytic power in fomenting existential crises. Ruth Ben-Ghiat's (2001) book *Fascist Modernities* is also worth noting here for its astute capture of the ways in which Italian intellectuals grappled with tensions such as those between the national and the international, the traditional and the modern in attempting to forge a distinctly Italian modernity under Fascism.

to have been a kind of 'catch all' concept that could be used to justify any plan, idea, or action, while Marla Stone (1999) underlines its decidedly 'flexible' nature and its susceptibility to a wide range of interpretations (i.e. construals). Emilio Gentile's (1993: 136) suggestion, too, that Mussolini sought to mold Italians into *romani della modernità* ('Romans of Modernity') further highlights a multivalent significance of the Roman past as something that could be readily reinterpreted and reapplied to Fascism's own present.

ANCIENT ROME, as a frame, is thus characterizable by a degree of polysemy (or 'meaning potential,' to again use Fauconnier and Turner's 2003 term) that, as we have already noted, equally pervaded Mussolini's cult system and likewise – as we shall see – provided fertile ground for its expansion in terms of both leader and constructional polysemy. Yet, while ANCIENT ROME certainly occupied a privileged place in the regime's mythologized canon, it by no means operated alone: as Griffin (2018: 67-68) notes, it was rather a part of "a kaleidoscopic composite of various imaginings of the nation" that ranged from idyllic images of the rural Italian countryside (*strapaese*) to Dante and the Italy of the High Renaissance to that of an imminent completion to a 'failed' *Risorgimento*.[10] With a vibrant and varied patchwork quilt of historical frames at its disposal for self-representation, Fascism thus had considerable room to adapt its messages and appeals as the contemporary situation required it.

As noted in section 5.1, despite its recruitment of the past and its tensions with the forces of 'modernity,' fascism nonetheless also possessed a solidly futural, 'revolutionary' dynamic and largely embraced innovations in art, technology, and the media of the period. This has resulted, perhaps somewhat paradoxically, in fascism being understood as something inherently 'modern' itself in its incarnation.[11] Esposito and Reichardt (2015a: 43) unpack this seemingly untenable opposition nicely:

> By establishing this nexus between future-oriented dynamics and an eternity which obviously encompassed the past, fascism was able to fulfil not just the need for a new beginning and 'revolution' but also the longing for rootedness. The narrative of rebirth and eternity with which fascism replaced the narrative of progress comprised both the prevailing obsession with movement and revolution and the omnipresent longing for deceleration. Fascism presented itself simultaneously as the origin of the break with centuries of decay and decadence and as the restorer of continuity and preserver of permanence.

Ancient Rome once again proved both powerful and useful here: Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi (1997: 92) considers it to have functioned as a "model of action" and "the foundation on which to build a bright [F]ascist tomorrow," while also noting that "by claiming Roman origins, [F]ascism naturalized its role within Italian history," and simultaneously legitimated itself and its agenda through its calls to "reactualize the grandeur of the past." These sentiments are largely echoed in Claudio Fogu's (2003) *The Historic Imaginary: Politics of History in Fascist Italy*, at the core of which is a line from a 1929 Mussolini speech that quickly became a popular motto of the regime – *fascismo fa la storia, non la scrive*.[12] This quote, which translates to 'Fascism makes

[10] On the notion of a 'failed' *Risorgimento* (which, we can recall, refers to the protracted unification of Italy between 1848 and 1870), see Chapter 1, note 36 as well as a multifaceted discussion in Riall (1994). On Fascism's appropriation of the Renaissance and its incorporation into numerous propagandistic projects, see Lasansky (2004).

[11] This thesis is presented most forcefully and with considerable detail in Griffin (2007).

[12] Quoted in Fogu (2003: 9; 21).

history, it does not write it' functions, for Fogu, as the perfect encapsulation of the temporal spirit of Fascism and of its role as the 'historic agent' within a wider 'historic imaginary' that came to be during the Fascist *ventennio*. He elaborates:

> [F]ascism transfigured the idea of historic eventfulness into the mental image of [F]ascist historic agency. That is, it conceived and presented itself as a *historic agent* whose acts possessed the qualities of immediacy and unmediated signification we commonly attribute to historic events. Just like the historic event, the [F]ascist act of representation was aimed at giving presence to the past in the mind of the observer, thereby eliding the medium of narrative between historical agency and consciousness. In fact, [F]ascism celebrated its historicness by institutionalizing a historic mode of representation at all levels of visual and ritual mass culture (10).

This passage is particularly significant for the present chapter's focus on the relationship between personality cults and time: in Fogu's analysis, the 'historic agent' – or the maker of history – came to find its embodiment in Mussolini, who with time also came to function as the sole 'historic signifier,' or the singular giver of meaning to history, within the Fascist historic imaginary (ibid., 101). These roles in combination constituted a crucial temporal nexus between past, present, and future that was grounded in the figure of Mussolini himself, ultimately crystallizing an image of him as a fully historic figure at the helm of a historic era – the *era fascista*. While his study deals specifically with Fascist Italy, I think many of his arguments (and particularly those regarding these historic roles) can be applied more broadly to any authoritarian regime led by a touted providential figure, a claim to which I will return later.

5.2.2 – Socialism and Time

History, as is well known, plays a fundamental role in the Marxist conception of historical materialism, which provided the ideological baseline for the communist regimes of the Soviet Union and its satellites.[13] Beyond this, however, it also constituted a crucial tool for these regimes to recruit and modify as a means to augment their own self-representations, with the consequence that it acquired a decidedly malleable status as something that party leaders could adapt and alter as political and economic conditions changed, or simply as they deemed necessary.[14]

Turning specifically to communist Romania, one finds that history's position has at once been inflated and more deeply saturated with a potently nationalist sentiment rather transparently geared toward legitimating the leader and the regime. Much of this, according to Lucian Boia, was based in an obsession with crafting a sense of "uninterrupted unity" through a carefully constructed sense of shared history (2001: 129). By uniting Romanians around a common, polished version of history, so the logic went, Ceauşescu could then posture himself as a kind of embodiment of this history, as the incarnation of Romanian unity whose rule continued, if not eclipsed, past glories in

[13] Stalin's own interpretation was published in his *Dialectical and Historical Materialism* in 1938 (see Stalin 1940), which then became the official Soviet doctrine. See also Perry (2002) for a helpful overview of Marxist conceptions of history and historiography more generally.

[14] A number of important works have demonstrated the various means and methods through which Stalin's regime, the original blueprint and model for all Eastern Bloc regimes, reshaped and mobilized Soviet and Russian history for nationalizing and propagandistic purposes. See for example Yekelchyk (2004), Dobrenko (2008), and various contributions in Platt & Brandenberger (2006).

its glittering *Epocă de Aur*.[15] This observation is largely corroborated in Katherine Verdery's (1991) study of cultural production and national ideology in Ceauşescu's Romania, which elucidates the distinctive synergy between nationalism, history, and intellectuals that coalesced from the mid-1970s onward (see chapter 6 in particular). Within an intellectual 'economy of shortage,' as she puts it, history, history-(re-)writing, and politics were brought ever closer together, and she notes:

> history was crucial to the symbolic element in the Romanian leadership's symbolic-cum-coercive mode of control. History was a major source of new symbolic resources for the apparatus to deploy and a fundamental site for reappropriating older ones. Ceauşescu referred to the historical profession as the 'historians' front,' in the military sense, vital to shaping both the national and the materialist facets of his regime's ideology and to socializing the public into a particular set of values. To consolidate this 'front' had required new institutional arrangements that drew the production of historiography more and more tightly under central control (ibid., 220).

This exceptionally fraught politicization of history took a number of forms, from increasingly concerted efforts to draw parallels between Ceauşescu and a litany of revered leaders from Romanian history (going as far back as the pre-Roman kings of Dacia; see Boia 2001: 199-205) to the regime-sponsored historical school of *Protochronism*. *Protochronism* itself, in line with an increasingly fervent desire to prove the continuous presence of Romanians in the region from antiquity onward,[16] sought to demonstrate how many intellectual and technological advancements commonly attributed to the West had, in fact, either originated or were preceded by such developments in Romania, in a rather bald attempt to flaunt Romania's cultural, historical, spiritual, and intellectual superiority (see Verdery 1991: chapter 5; Deletant 1992; Tomiță 2007). The *Epocă de Aur* thus saw history take center stage, put to use to index both Ceauşescu's deserved place among the greats as well as the kind of Romanian resurgence that his guidance would bring. With Romanian history on his side and in his veins, Ceauşescu was, like Mussolini, thus prepared – if not destined – "*a face istorie*" 'to make history' of his own (Lambru 2006: 201).

5.2.3 – The Semantics of *Historic*: A Blending Approach

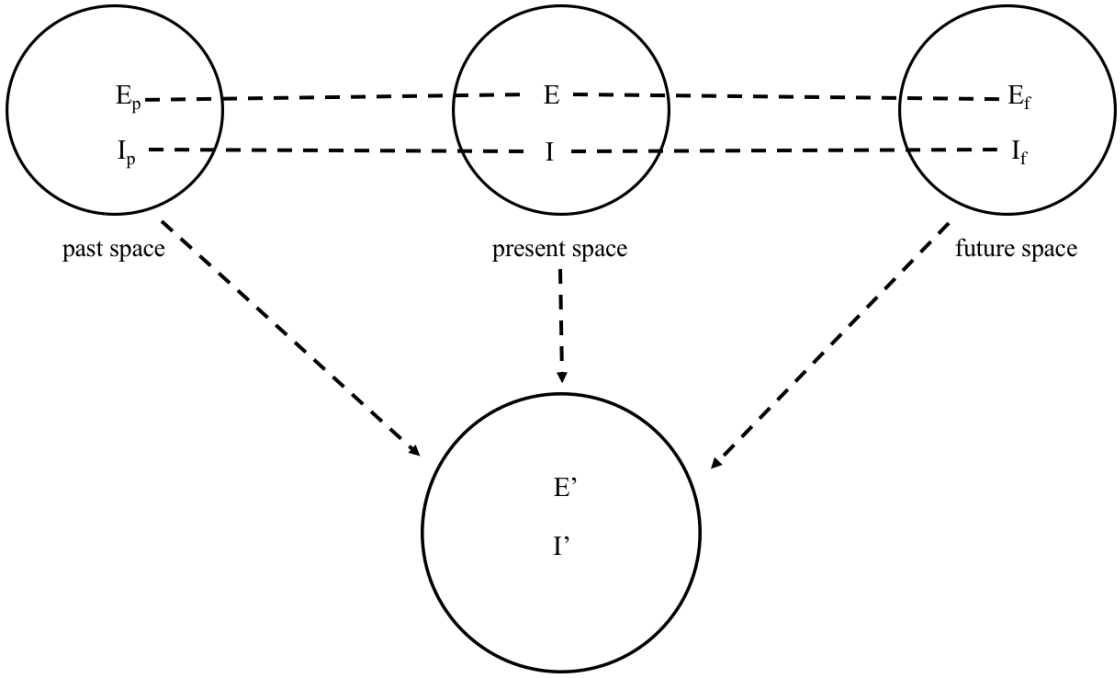
The semantics of the word 'historic' itself are additionally relevant here. As mentioned, following along the lines of Fogu's (2003, 2015) research on the Fascist 'historic imaginary' I maintain that a certain preoccupation with achieving historic significance is a central feature of

[15] As Adrian Cioroianu puts it with Barthesian (1957) *mythologies* in mind and of relevance to forthcoming discussions, such a mythically-charged Ceauşescu was able to oscillate between both *signifying* history and being *signified* by it: that is, just as he could embody the fruits of Romania's historical struggles on the 'path' to socialism, he also derived meaning and legitimacy himself from this history, in reduced and remolded form, his reign in turn constituting the logical, inevitable destination along this same path (2005: 97).

[16] This desire was part of a broader intellectual battle over history with Hungary, and in particular over who could claim the 'right' to Transylvania by virtue of having 'been there first.' Of note is the frenetic outcry sparked by the 1986 publication of a three-volume *History of Transylvania* by Hungarian historians in which, under the sleek gloss of purportedly rigorous scholarship, they proclaimed definitively that there had been no Romanian inhabitants in the region when the Hungarians first arrived in the ninth century CE (Verdery 1991: 219). See various contributions in Péter (1992) for discussion.

authoritarian leaders and regimes around which a personality cult develops. This, as has been suggested, takes the form of the declaration that the present regime is reigning in a historic era that is distinct in and from history, even if history itself supplies much of the style and substance for such proclamations. Thus, in order to fully understand the historic dimensions of the *era fascista* and the *Epocă de Aur*, it is necessary to properly distinguish the two terms 'historical' and 'historic' semantically. Unlike the word 'historical,' which functions broadly as a descriptor for history and anything relating to it (i.e. a descriptor for strictly *past* facts, events, figures, etc.), the word 'historic' conveys a sense of special importance, of 'history-making,' as it were, that is not explicitly tied to the past in the same way that 'historical' is – rather, it straddles the boundaries between past, present, and future. In other words, to consider something 'historic' is to suggest its importance across all three temporal planes: a historic event, for example, is an event whose significance in the present (i.e. in its own time, when it is first deemed 'historic') is of such a magnitude that it, in essence, is predicted to endure in the future, once its own 'present' has become past. This peculiar blurring of past, present, and future as encoded in the semantics of 'historic' can be aptly captured in CBT, in which 'past,' 'present,' and 'future' mental spaces are jointly projected into a blend. This is modeled below in Figure 5.1 for the example of a 'historic event':

Figure 5.1: 'Historic Event' blend



In the above, a given event E is deemed historic in its own time of occurrence (i.e. in its own present) and thus is conferred a certain level of importance I. As mentioned, the importance afforded by the semantics of 'historic' is one that transcends the temporal bounds of the event's own present, acquiring a kind of (expected) permanence such that, conceptually, it sets up a series of three temporally distinct mental spaces – a present space, a past space, and a future space – as well as a series of mappings between elements within those spaces. The mappings between the event E in the present space and what we might refer to as its 'past memory' (E_p) in the past space

and its 'future expectation' (E_f) in the future space obtain in the blend to project E'. Similarly, the importance I associated with E also maps across the spaces to form I_p and I_f, thus projecting into the blend an emergent durativity of I (shown as I') across time.

Bringing things back to the topic at hand, discussions of both Mussolini's and Ceauşescu's cults have pinpointed the peculiar relationship that both leaders came to have with time in a handful of different ways. For example, the crystallization of Mussolini's cult from a more spontaneous *mussolinismo* into an institutionalized *ducismo* has been described as his transformation into both an *ahistorical* (Passerini 1991: 16) and a *historic* (Fogu 2003: 12) persona within the Fascist imaginary, while Ceauşescu's cult has been seen as an attempt to render him a wholly *atemporal* figure (Mocanescu 2010: 417). The differences between these various descriptions are subtle: Passerini's and Mocanescu's labels, for example, suggest a degree of 'timelessness.' In the light of what has just been suggested above, however, I am again inclined to follow Fogu's work, for what appears to result instead from this CBT analysis of 'historic' – and indeed, I think, from an analysis of both leaders' cults more generally – is not so much a leader who is removed from time or from whom time is removed (i.e. timeless), but one who is rather deeply imbued with time and is thus instead, to neologize, 'time-*ful*.' I will aim to demonstrate this in the following three sections.

5.3 – Mapping the Past onto the Present

As we have seen in sections 5.2.1 and 5.2.2, both Mussolini's and Ceauşescu's regimes took advantage of the wide range of historical frames at their disposal. In this section I argue that both regimes' recruitments of the 'highlights' of their respective pasts can be attributed to their desire to confer legitimacy at once to the leader and to the regime as a part of broader, large-scale nationalist projects. It is no secret that fervent nationalism and curated versions of history tend to work hand in hand,[17] and neither Mussolini's nor Ceauşescu's regimes were an exception, with each appealing liberally to their respective historical canons for assistance in creating their own versions of an idealized national(ist) subject – the *uomo nuovo* and *omul nou*. Indeed, with Mussolini and Ceauşescu each serving as the embodiment of this idealized 'New Man,' as we have seen, it is no surprise that these historical frames were appropriated to be deliberately and generously mapped onto their own images. Each such appropriation will be analyzed in turn, first with Mussolini in section 5.3.1 followed by Ceauşescu in section 5.3.2.

5.3.1 – Mussolini and History

As noted in section 5.2.1, the historical frames with which Fascism crafted its own image were plentiful and diverse, but two of the most prominent were that of ANCIENT ROME and the RISORGIMENTO. At least part of the reason for this can be attributed to an additional key frame that is shared by both of these frames and indeed with the frame of FASCISM itself – that of LEADERSHIP. As Mussolini's own cult took off and became an integral part of the Fascist regime from the mid-1920s onward, so too did his image and leadership trigger comparisons to providential and commanding figures that preceded him. One example is the well-known parallels

[17] See Anderson (1983), Hobsbawm (1992), and Smith (1999) – as just a few examples among many – for studies into the relationship between nationalism, history, and myth.

that were drawn between Mussolini and the Roman Emperors Julius Caesar and Augustus.[18] Perfectly in line with the regime's self-representation as the 'Third Rome,' Mussolini's image came into natural association with those of the great Roman emperors, to the point where Mussolini could be depicted as an emperor himself, such as in the painting in Figure 5.2. The relatively simple embellishment of Mussolini's penetrating stare and bald head with the laurel leaves and toga iconic to (and indexical of) Roman emperors frame-metonymically profile the LEADERSHIP frame within a broader structuring frame of ANCIENT ROME, in so doing prompting a blend in which Mussolini appears to be the reincarnation of Augustus himself.

Figure 5.2: Mussolini_Augustus blend (1927)[19]

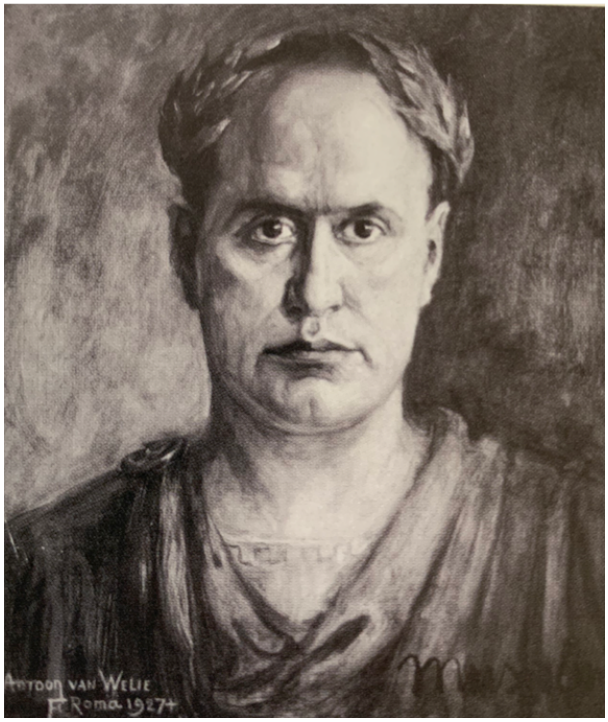


Figure 5.3: Mussolini_Garibaldi blend (1929)[20]

Similarly, the painting in Figure 5.3 likens Mussolini to the great hero of the *Risorgimento*, Giuseppe Garibaldi (Pieri 2013: 167).[21] Entitled *La prima ondata* ('The First Wave'), this painting depicts a calm Mussolini on horseback, surrounded by *camicie nere* in the midst of battle.[22] It is a

[18] While initially seeking parallels with Julius, both Fascist officials and Mussolini himself began identifying (him) more with Augustus as time passed due both to the comparably short duration of Caesar's reign as well as the violent means that brought about its end. For more discussion see Wilkins (2004) and Nelis (2007: 405-407).
[19] Taken from Heller (2008: 88), a painting by Dutch portraitist Antoon Van Welie.
[20] Oil on canvas, painting by Primo Conti, 1929. Image retrieved October 12, 2022 and included courtesy of Fondazione Primo Conti. Web address linked here: https://www.fondazioneprimoconti.org/opereprimoconti/opereprimoconti_view.php?editid1=165.
[21] For the general Fascist appropriation of Garibaldi, an emblem of Italian nationalism and the recipient of a veritable cult of his own, see Fogu (2003: chapters 3-4) and Baioni (2010).
[22] Also worthy of comment is the prominent red beast with which one militant is grappling, which is a clear reference to socialism. It also constitutes a potent blend in its own right, and one that aims to illustrate Fascism's victory over

scene that sets up clear mappings between the RISORGIMENTO frame and a mythologized version of the Fascist March on Rome in 1922,[23] in which frames of BATTLE or STRUGGLE are also invoked and serve to foreground the role of the leader. Garibaldi's historical struggle and triumph are mapped onto Mussolini's rise to power, which in turn imbue the latter with a kind of inherent justification and motivation for takeover rooted in the deeply nationalist drive of the former.

Figure 5.4: 'Augural Dawn of Fascism' blend (1923)[24]

Thus, in both Figures 5.2 and 5.3, broader historical frames of ANCIENT ROME and the RISORGIMENTO supply salient structures that were recruited to bolster an overarching frame of FASCISM. Specifically in terms of Mussolini's cult, it was a shared frame of LEADERSHIP that was profiled in each case, which, in CBT terms, amounts to relatively straightforward Identity mappings in which specific individuals and their likenesses – and with them their associated traits – are mapped onto Mussolini himself.[25] As a modern-day Augustus, Mussolini was poised to return Italy to the glory of Ancient Rome and its empire, whereas his Garibaldian attributes signaled his

socialism following the latter's ideological dominance in the period of conflict and unrest known as the *biennio rosso* ('Red Biennium') of 1919-1921.

[23] See Chapter 1, note 37 for a brief discussion of the March on Rome and its mythologization in Fascist discourse.

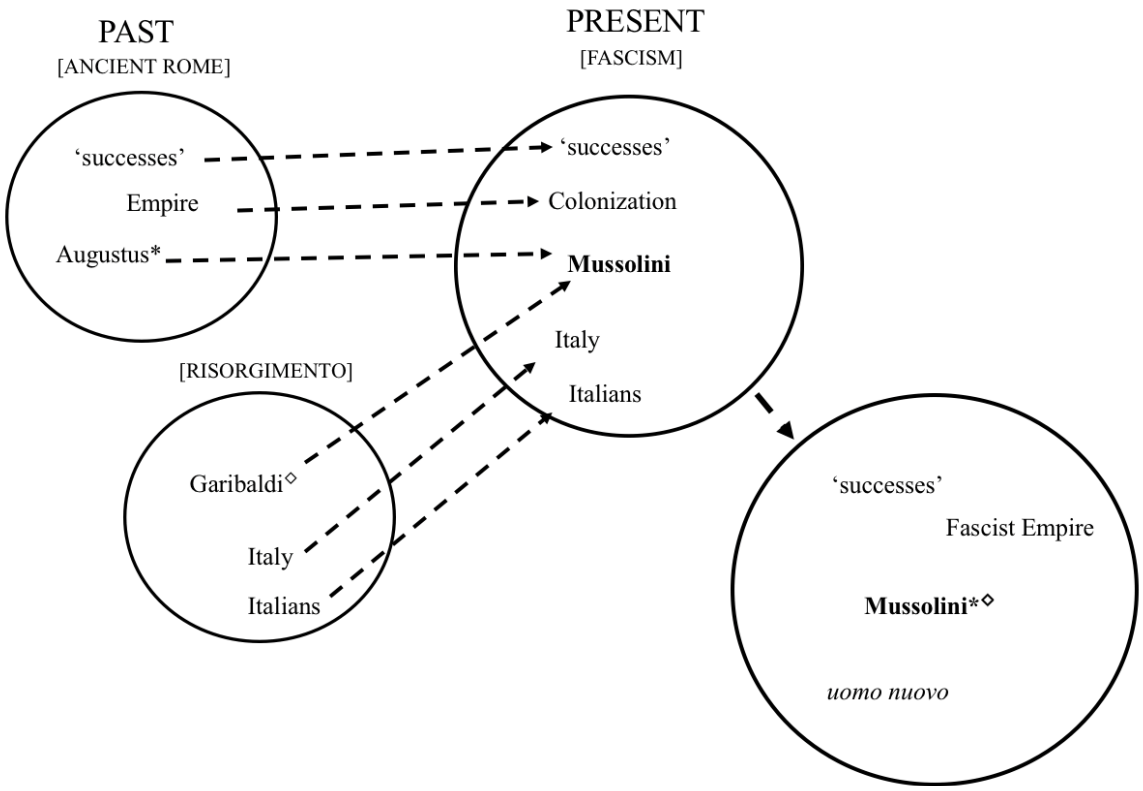
[24] Image courtesy of the Archivio Sturani in Rome (see Sturani 1995: 229).

[25] 'Identity,' we can recall from Chapter 2 (section 2.3), is one of several 'vital relations' that Fauconnier & Turner (2002) describe as schematic conceptual relations subject to cross-space mappings and compression in the (often unconscious) process of blending.

capacity to unite Italy and Italians and to thus 'complete' the *Risorgimento*. On top of this, too, and in line with all other cult constructs discussed thus far, the salience not only of their structuring frames but also of these representations themselves – both cognitive and ontological in nature – as a consequence of the regime's concerted appeals to the past permit us to understand their development, over time, into constructions in their own right.[26]

Figure 5.4 provides another example of the appropriation of the ANCIENT ROME frame. Unlike Figure 5.2, however, which draws from a particular element within that frame (a frame of LEADERSHIP that syncs Augustus' figure with Mussolini), Figure 5.4 incorporates numerous, multivalent components that profile different aspects and elements of the ANCIENT ROME frame, thus rendering a multiplicity of different interpretations of the image while nonetheless strongly suggesting a particular 'conclusion' – that of Mussolini and Fascism's historic victory following the March on Rome. On the one hand, the image, which adorns a postcard from early on in his reign, can be read as clearly invoking a Roman triumphal procession, in which military commanders would parade through the streets of Roman cities in celebration of a recent victory or conquest, as the March on Rome was celebrated to be (Holliday 1997). On the other hand,

Figure 5.5: Fascist conceptual mappings, 'past' → 'present'[27]



[26] Additional such examples of Mussolini's depiction as Garibaldi, Caesar, or other historical figures can be found in abundance in any compilation of Fascist-era cultic production (e.g. Sturani 1995, 2003; Di Genova 1997).

[27] One will recall that the number of mappings and correspondences between the input spaces and frames need not be limited to those that I have included here, nor need they be as 'simplistic' as the one-to-one mappings that this or other blends provided may suggest. Rather, what has been presented is a schematic representation of the interaction between salient components of the input frames as seen in the examples under analysis (see Chapter 2, section 2.3 for additional discussion).

it also clearly invokes the Roman goddess of the dawn, Aurora, who was frequently depicted in a two-horse chariot such as that in Figure 5.4 (Hard 2020: 44). And, indeed, the *fasces* in her hand coupled with the image's text – *aurora augurale del fascismo* 'augural dawn of Fascism' – function in tandem to ensure that, in the blend, this 'dawn' is not merely that of a new day, but that of a new era – the *era fascista*. Furthermore, it is the otherwise out-of-place portrait of Mussolini – with his iconographic stare and suit of the 1920s – held aloft by a secondary figure in Aurora's chariot (Aurora herself, perhaps?) that explicitly equates the dawn of the *era fascista* with Mussolini himself. This multimodal construct can thus be seen as an attempt to actualize what was promised in the Mussolini_Augustus blend – a 'return' of Rome, as it were, under Fascism made possible by the emergence of a modern-day Augustus. And, indeed, as the regime progressed into the 1930s so increased its obsession with empire, expansion, and "returning" to territories once controlled by the Romans (Fuller 2007: 40).

Figure 5.5 provides a model for the kinds of temporal mappings evinced thus far in Mussolini's cult. Historical frames such as ANCIENT ROME and the RISORGIMENTO occupy past spaces and are mapped onto the FASCISM frame in the present space. The emergent blend (represented by the bottom-right circle) thus constitutes numerous 'legitimating' features for the regime and the cult: a Mussolini variously infused with attributes of both Augustus and Garibaldi, Fascist imperial conquests perceived as simply a rightful return to formerly-occupied territories, and the articulation of a properly Fascist Italy and Italian citizen in the *uomo nuovo*.

5.3.2 – Ceauşescu and History

As with Fascism, Romanian communism made ample use of multiple historical frames in crafting an idealized version of itself. For this section I have selected three paintings that each demonstrate in slightly different ways how such frames were brought into and used to promote Ceauşescu's cult.[28] The first of these is a painting by Constantin Piliuță entitled *Eroi neamului* ('Heroes of the People'), provided in Figure 5.6. In this painting, Ceauşescu is standing at a podium as if giving a speech, bedecked in his presidential sash and clutching the accompanying scepter as seen and discussed in Chapter 3. Here, however, it is the pantheon of leaders appearing behind Ceauşescu that are of particular interest, and from left to right they include: Burebista, the ancient king of the first 'unified' Dacian state; Mircea cel Bătrîn 'Mircea the Elder' (1386-1418), ruler of Wallachia during the Middle Ages; Mihai Viteazul 'Michael the Brave' (1593-1601), who briefly unified the three Romanian Principalities of Wallachia, Moldavia, and Transylvania in 1600; Ștefan cel Mare 'Stephen the Great' (1457-1504), famed ruler of Moldavia; Alexandru Ioan Cuza (1859-1866), the first ruler of the (again-)united Principalities under then-Ottoman rule; and Nicolae Bălcescu, a leading figure in the 1848 Revolution that ultimately led to Romanian independence.

In her own analysis of Ceauşescu's cult, Alice Mocanescu considers this panel to constitute an "endorsement" of Ceauşescu on the part of these leaders, an assemblage of some of the most revered figures in Romanian history (2010: 426). Indeed, it appears as if the entirety of Romanian history itself (from the times of Ancient Dacia through to the unification of the nation), embodied

[28] The three selected paintings are, it should of course be borne in mind, just a sample of the many, many such historically-themed artworks commissioned in Ceauşescu's honor. Additional paintings can be found in Büchel & Carmine (2008), a compilation volume drawn from the expansive collection of Romania's Muzeul Național de Artă Contemporană, as well as in the (1986) RCP-sanctioned publication *Partid, popor, o singură voință: album omagial de artă contemporană românească, dedicat celei de-A 65-A aniversări a făuririi Partidului Comunist Român*.

in these figures, is uniting to stand behind Ceauşescu – both in the sense of unanimous approval of his rule and in the sense of being clearly backgrounded to it.[29] What is also thus clearly profiled in this painting is a frame of LEADERSHIP, a frame in which all seven figures can be integrated into the same role of 'leader.' Unlike in the Mussolini_Augustus or Mussolini_Garibaldi blends discussed in the previous section, however, within the present blend Ceauşescu is not himself depicted 'as' one of these past leaders. Rather, he is depicted 'with' them: each of them is present 'as themselves,' so to speak, removed from their own time and placed into Ceauşescu's era unmodified. The emergent legitimacy implied for Ceauşescu and his rule thus comes to be not through any one-to-one Identity mappings but instead in mappings between shared Roles that are achieved through a sweeping compression of Time.

Figure 5.6: 'Heroes of the People' blend (1977)[30]

[29] It is also worth noting an explicit disregard for chronological ordering in the painting: Michael the Brave's rule – the figure who appears directly behind Ceauşescu – actually occurred after that of Stephen the Great, who appears to his right (the rest of the ordering reflects chronology, from left to right). This has been understood as a reflection of Ceauşescu's own personal attraction to Michael the Brave as the quintessential symbol of Romanian unity and independence, an image that he came to want associated explicitly with his own person and reign (Mocanescu 2010: 427; Marin 2020a: 203).

[30] Image courtesy of the collection of the National Museum of Romanian History.

Another example is a painting by Dan Hatmanu entitled *Anniversary* supplied in Figure 5.7. In this painting, Ceauşescu and Elena are celebrating his birthday, as is made abundantly clear by the large *ianuarie* 'January' in the upper right-hand corner, the month in which he was born. This is wholly uninteresting on its own and it is the man with whom Ceauşescu is clinking his glass – Ştefan cel Mare – that is of note here. Reaching out of his frame and, as it were, through time itself, the Moldavian leader offers a special congratulations – and, inferentially, his approval and legitimacy – to *cel mai iubit fiu al patriei*.[31] Evidenced again is a powerful compression of Time such that two great leaders, though in reality separated by roughly 500 years, celebrate as friends and as equals.[32]

Figure 5.7: 'Anniversary' blend (1983)[33]

One final example is the painting by Sabin Bălaşa in Figure 5.8 entitled *Cântarea României* 'Song to Romania.' The title is an explicit reference to the annual, national festival of the same name in which Romanians of all ages, ethnicities, and social standing were brought together in a highly formalized competition of cultural production in celebration of the nation (see Giurchescu

[31] Another of the many laudatory epithets for Ceauşescu – "the most beloved son of the nation" (Verdery 1996: 73).
[32] It can be noted in passing that, in her work on state-sponsored and popular-resistance art in communist Romania, Mirela Tanta includes a quote by Hatmanu from a 2006 interview in which he claims that this painting was "an act of irony" that the Party, in readily accepting it as a work of genuine homage, did not recognize (2014: 34). We shall consider such (re)interpretations and the 'subversive' side of constructional polysemy – including Hatmanu's piece here – in detail in Chapter 6.
[33] Oil on canvas. The painting is part of the collection of Romania's Muzeul Național de Artă Contemporană, included with permission.

1987).[34] Centrally located at the top of the painting and singled out within the apogee of a blue triangle is Ceauşescu, his hand raised in its iconographic position that ambiguously straddled a simple wave and a religious benediction.[35] Flanking him on either side, however, is once again the pantheon of Romanian leaders, providing further evidence of the cult's reliance on the representation of direct, unmitigated historical greatness that, through simple spatial proximity – that is, its presence 'with' – could be mapped onto Ceauşescu himself.

Figure 5.8: 'Song to Romania' Blend (year unknown)[36]

These historical figures played a fundamental role in the construction of Ceauşescu's cult by placing him on par with them, as both a hero in his own right and as inferentially the heir to their respective geniuses and accomplishments. The manipulation of and reliance on historical incarnations of the LEADERSHIP frame were each essential to supplying Ceauşescu's cult with a legitimacy that it otherwise sorely lacked, even if – performatively – they were not successful in doing so. Indeed, even the gaps are telling: as Lucian Boia remarks, the sequence of invoked providential figures under Ceauşescu stops with Cuza in 1866, and in between the two there is "an arid space, productive of secondary heroes but not of exponents of Romanian destiny or creators of history" (2001: 202). It is this "desert," he notes, "through which the Romanian nation has passed [that] gives meaning to a messianic expectation, [that] highlights the urgency of the saving act, and [that] immeasurably amplifies the status of the dictator" (ibid.).

Figure 5.9 depicts the past-to-present mappings that have been discussed thus far for Ceauşescu's cult. In it, outer-space links connecting the role of 'leader' between the different historically-based variants of the LEADERSHIP frame obtain such that Ceauşescu should emerge –

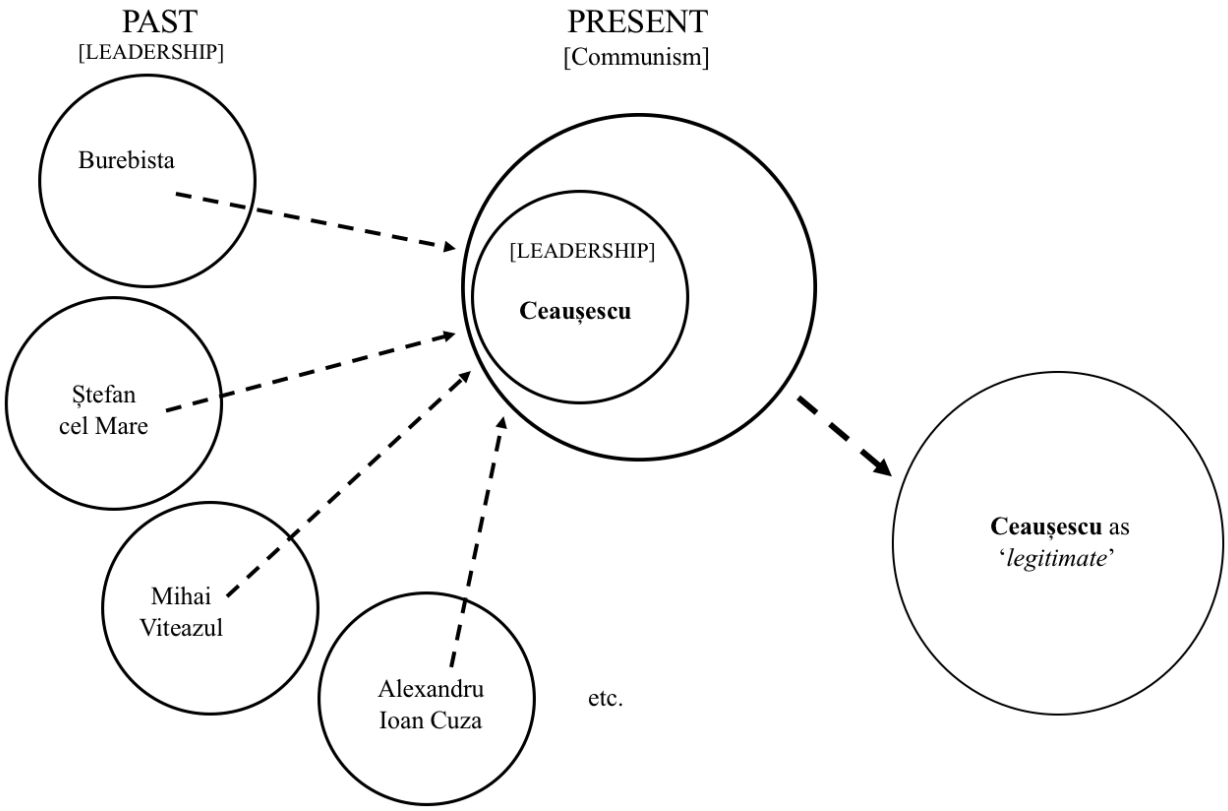
[34] Romanian folk traditions usually took center stage in these festivals, and they are indeed embodied by the dancing women at the base of the painting. Also present is Elena, who occupies the painting's middle, prominently bearing two children in line with her title of "Mother of the Nation" as discussed in Chapter 3.

[35] See Bonnell (1997: 145-147; 165-166) for similar remarks on the "multivocality of the arm and hand position" in Soviet posters featuring Lenin and Stalin (ibid., 145). The use of gestures, postures, and colors evocative of Orthodox iconography suggests that, even if on the surface these regimes adopted a very anti-religious stance, they nonetheless understood well how deeply entrenched, powerful, and consequently useful religious frames could be (see also Asavei 2020 – in particular chapter 3 – for a similar argument).

[36] Image courtesy of the collection of the National Museum of Romanian History.

in all of Figures 5.6-5.8 and indeed in the wider Ceauşescu cult network – rather logically as the latest great leader in Romanian history. In other words, the emergent blend confers Ceauşescu with a kind of 'constative' legitimacy that is itself deeply reliant upon this apparent sequential logic. This 'constative' achievement – to say nothing of performative efficacy – results from the simple profiling of the shared frame structures that he has in common with other Romanian leaders throughout history, a feat materially achievable in his cult constructs by simple virtue of temporal compression and spatial proximity.

Figure 5.9: Communist Conceptual Mappings, 'Past' → 'Present'



This points to another stark contrast in how such past and present spaces, and their resultant emergent blends, interacted and operated in each of Mussolini's and Ceauşescu's cults. That is, just as we saw in the previous chapter in terms of both cults' depictive embodiments of their respective concepts of the 'New Man' and then, by extension, their peoples as a whole, here once again Ceauşescu's cult is strictly characterized by a configuration of 'with' while Mussolini's permits for (if not wholly embraces) a relation of 'as.' The same kinds of metonymic principles are thus also at work here, and to a strikingly similar effect. This in turn suggests the possibility of new, highly schematic metonymy-based constructional templates – in other words, schemas – that emerge around and in response to these kinds of representational proclivities that, again, we might simply and broadly label Mussolini 'as' and Ceauşescu 'with.' That is, and perhaps a bit more concretely, that Mussolini can be variously depicted 'as' ordinary Italians, 'as' the embodiment of Italy, or 'as' a range of historical figures from the Emperors of Rome to Garibaldi to even

Napoleon,[37] draws from the same kind of integrative template in which, broadly, his Identity is collapsed into that of another. Such a collapse is not evidenced in representations of Ceauşescu, whose representations instead follow a template of 'with' such that his emergent legitimacy – whether 'believed' or not – falls out from his spatial proximity to other indexical reservoirs of legitimation, historical or otherwise, from which he draws.

5.4 – Mapping the Present onto the Future

As we have just seen, historical and historically-based frames were deemed to have had a powerful legitimating effect in their incorporation into and their structuring of images of Mussolini, Ceauşescu, and their respective regimes alongside and in the likeness of what were widely considered symbols of excellence, power, and success. This strategy is undoubtedly critical for crafting a kind of popular support for the leader and overall consent – whether genuine, feigned, or somewhere in between – in his own time, but much of cult production and thus manifestation also appears to be aimed at preserving the leader's image, accomplishments, and overall legacy into the future. I refer to this as an attempt at achieving cult 'permanence.'

This desire for 'permanence' can be observed in any number of urban restructuring, renewal, or construction projects that take place under authoritarian or monarchical systems and results from the same kinds of metonymic associations presented in Chapter 4. Walter Benjamin (1999), for example, discusses in his famous *The Arcades Project* the strategic reorganization of Paris under Napoleon III that reconfigured space in a way that better facilitated governance. By refashioning and renovating an 'out-of-date' Paris, Napoleon was able to better exert his control and simultaneously imprint his own image onto the cityscape through his very alteration of it and, in so doing, achieve a kind of metonymic self-enshrinement. History is replete with such examples, from unrealized projects like the *Volkshalle* ('People's Hall') of Hitler's Berlin or the Palace of the Soviets of Stalin's Moscow to the glittering, modern capitals of contemporary Central Asia and the Gulf states, all of which can be fundamentally understood as a desire to create a lasting impression in time through a reconfiguration of space. Indeed, it appears that the more acutely aware autocratic leaders are of the limits of their own 'time horizons,'[38] the more fervent their desire to spatially inscribe and memorialize themselves.[39]

This particular enshrining function of the built environment depends crucially, however, on the conventional (and seemingly mundane) assumption that buildings and monuments are designed to last – that is, on their associated, image-schematic frame structure of 'durability.'[40] As such, they are perfect candidates for imbuing the leader with the above-mentioned notion of

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[37] See Chapter 6, note 47.

[38] A term borrowed from Olson's (1993) study on dictatorships and democracies and their relationship to economic development and prosperity, it refers to a leader's or a regime's understanding of its own possible duration and is thus either 'long' or 'short' in nature. In general, due to issues of succession and instability that frequently plague them, dictatorships tend to have 'short' time horizons whereas secure and established forms of democracy have 'long' ones.

[39] This tension is noted in Koch (2018: 152) specifically in relation to boom-bust cycles in resource-dependent economies such as the Central Asian, Gulf-state, and Southeast Asian regimes that she analyzes and that of 1970s Venezuela as presented in Coronil (1997). It is not hard to imagine this principle applying on a much broader scale, however, such that it can account for a number of different factors ranging from degree of political instability to a leader's personal paranoia.

[40] The concept of 'image schemas,' it should be mentioned, originates in Mark Johnson's (1987) study *The Body in the Mind* and is intended to capture the experience-based and embodied nature of basic-level human cognition and conceptual orientation (i.e. distinctions such as up-down, in-out, etc.) that in turn function as scaffolding for the construction of more elaborate meaning(s).

'permanence.' In CBT terms, monuments and buildings function both as material anchors for blends that project the leader's image into the future as well as concrete testaments to his role as the 'historic agent' who has succeeded in altering his own present such that it will leave his indelible mark on the future.[41]

We will consider such projects of permanence in relation to both Mussolini's and Ceauşescu's cults, which will be discussed below in sections 5.4.1 and 5.4.2, respectively.

5.4.1 – Mussolini's Permanence

The prominent historian of Fascism Emilio Gentile signals the Mussolinian commandment of *durare* ('to last, to endure') as an example of the Fascist "ossessione del tempo" ('obsession with time') (1993: 135). Citing many of the ritualistic, religious components of Fascism such as the 'cult of the fallen' and the insistence on a "rivoluzione continua" ('continuous revolution'), he observes an "impulso di una volontà di potenza che vuole sfidare il tempo"[42] inherent in the Fascist project (ibid.). This same "impulso" can be traced in the material construction of Mussolini's cult as well, and in various guises, as shown below in Figures 5.10-5.12:[43]

Figure 5.10: Mount Giano DUX (2009)[44]

[41] This kind of interaction between material, image-schematic structure and particular, viewpointed meanings is in fact rather ubiquitous. Comparable cases have been demonstrated, for example, in studies such as Lou's (2017) lucid analysis of the multimodal political discourse deploying the image of an umbrella in the 2014 Hong Kong protests and in Stec & Sweetser's (2013) treatment of Borobudur and Chartres as physical sites anchoring particular complex, performative blends that emerge from the interaction of the physical with the spiritual.

[42] *...impulse of a will to power that wants to challenge time* [my translation].

[43] Gentile also provides ample discussion of numerous construction projects that went unrealized and whose ostensible goal was to "eternare il tempo di Mussolini" ('eternalize the era of Mussolini') (ibid., 209-232).

[44] Image retrieved September 16, 2022 from Flickr.com in accordance with the Creative Commons License. The photograph is dated December 12, 2009 and was taken by username 'redbanshee.' Link to web address here: https://www.flickr.com/photos/7596795@N08/4269269664.

Figure 5.11: Mussolini's Face (Ethiopia) (1936)[45]

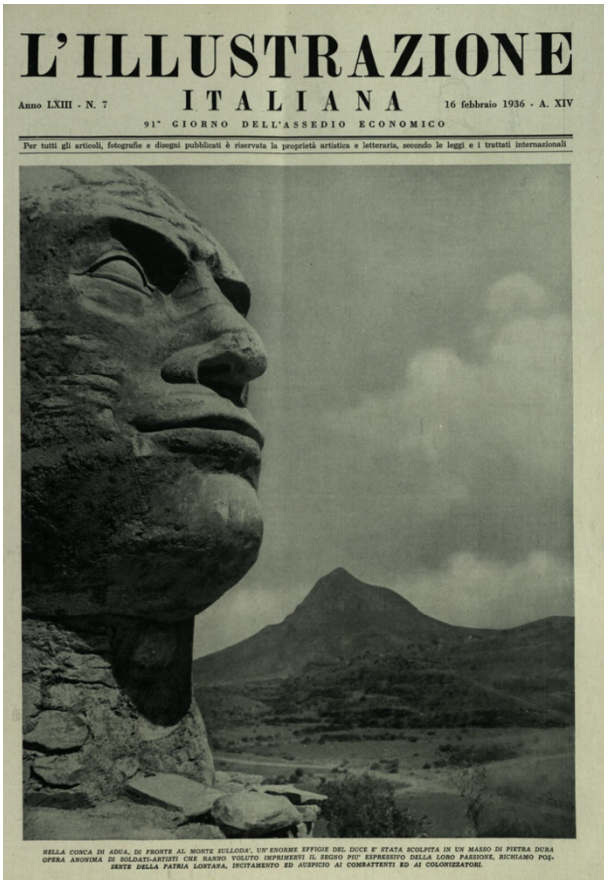


Figure 5.12: Mussolini Obelisk (*Foro Italico [Foro Mussolini]*) (2011)[46]

In 1938-1939, the Fascist Forestry Corps planted a series of pines on the slope of Mount Giano (located in the Apennines not far from Rome) in such a way that they prominently spelled out 'DUX,' as shown in Figure 5.10 (Armiero & Hardenberg 2013: 284). DUX, as the Latin equivalent of Mussolini's own title of *Duce* ('leader'), can be understood as clearly evoking the ANCIENT ROME frame that, as we have seen, played an important role in structuring Mussolini's cult and image. However, as we saw Chapter 4, such non-literal means of representing Mussolini also functioned to bestow him with a kind of permanent visibility and omnipresence. Indeed, a metonymic relationship of TITLE FOR TITLE-HOLDER obtains in Figure 5.10 such that Mussolini is rendered 'present' on the hillside without actually being there. This demonstrates the metonymic

[45] Retrieved August 25, 2020 from the *Biblioteca di Storia Moderna e Contemporanea digiteca*. Despite its physical location in Ethiopia, the carving appeared in the February 16, 1936 edition of the popular periodical *L'illustrazione italiana*. Link to web address here: http://teca.bsmc.it/pub/images/materiale_a_stampa/periodico/Illustrazione%20italiana(L%60)/RAV0070589_1936_00007/RAV0070589_1936_00007_011.jpg.

[46] Retrieved August 7, 2022 from Wikipedia Commons. Photograph by Jean-Pierre Dalbéra. Link to web address here: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Le_Foro_Italico_(Rome)_(5906477156).jpg.

nature of monuments' capacity to render something continuously present even when it is no longer there – in other words, to achieve permanence.[47]

Figure 5.11, by contrast, is somewhat more literal in nature: it constitutes a carving of Mussolini's leering head into the Ethiopian countryside, supposedly crafted by Fascist soldiers in the wake of Italy's conquest of Ethiopia and the subsequent declaration of the Italian Empire in May of 1936 (Heller 2008: 90). Here the literality (that is, iconicity) of Mussolini's representation arguably backgrounds the precise metonymic functions of monumentality discussed above by rendering omnipresence – though obviously not in any *actual* presence of Mussolini – rather directly through the penetrating gaze of his rocky counterpart. Regardless, it still can still clearly be read as an attempt to preserve Mussolini's image into the future – to quite literally set it in stone – with the added bonus of doing so in a land he could claim to have conquered.[48]

Figure 5.12 shows the famous Mussolini Obelisk, the focal point of the erstwhile *Foro Mussolini* complex in Rome. As an abstract monument to and not, for example, a statue of Mussolini, it possesses the same kind of metonymic relationship with Mussolini that the DUX forest has. However, it differs in that not only does it have 'DUX' carved upon its surface but also 'MUSSOLINI,' a quasi-redundant measure that nonetheless functions to ensure that the correct connections are made and that – thanks to the structure's apparent durability – they will continue to be made in the future. And, indeed, the Mussolini Obelisk remains to this day in the *Foro Italico* exactly where it was erected now nearing a century ago, thus successfully fulfilling the desire for permanence that Mussolini and Fascism sought.[49]

5.4.2 – Ceauşescu's Permanence

One does not need to search very hard to find Ceauşescu's principal attempt at cementing his image and legacy in Romania's future history – the infamous *Casă Poporului* ('People's House') discussed in Chapter 4. Indeed, the subtlety of its monumentalizing function is perhaps only paled by that of the ornate structure itself – shown again in Figure 5.13 – which, alongside the grandiose Boulevard to the Victory of Socialism, constituted the new *Centru Civic* ('Civic Center') in the heart of Bucharest. Begun in 1984 and, as we can recall, incomplete by the time of Ceauşescu's overthrow in December 1989, the project in its totality is estimated to have cost around $1.5 billion, a staggering sum for a nation already burdened with a stagnant economy and widespread food and resource scarcity (O'Neill 2009: 96).

As Alice Mocanescu (2010) has rightly observed, the installation of the frightfully enormous palace can be understood as an attempt by Ceauşescu at "conquering time." The sheer size of the structure suggests a frenetic, desperate obsession on his part with ensuring self-monumentalization, as if anything less ran the risk of dooming him to an eternity of obscurity that he evidently very much feared. Furthermore, if one recalls his many architecture-related titles – e.g. the 'premier architect' or the 'architect of national destiny' – a metonymic relationship

[47] This metonymic relation of TITLE FOR TITLE-HOLDER was deployed on a wide scale across various media, e.g. postcards (Sturani 1995: 286-288; Heller 2008: 87), human choreography (Falasca-Zamponi 1997: 81), and (monumental) architecture like the obelisk in Figure 5.12 (see also Baxa 2010: 74, 144; Baxa 2013: 123).

[48] As far as I am aware, however, this statue has not in fact survived.

[49] On the topic of the presence of many Fascist-era buildings and monuments still throughout Italy today and their attendant controversies, I will refer the reader back to note 35 in Chapter 4 as well as to the numerous contributions in Jones & Pilat (2020) that discuss the legacies of Fascist architecture more broadly. On the multivocality and volatility of enduring monuments over time – in spite of or indeed even precisely because of their structural 'permanence' – see Olin & Nelson (2003) and Levinson (2018).

between Ceauşescu as BUILDER and *Casă Poporului* as BUILDING forms in which the latter, in all its excessive grandeur, serves to metonymically stand in for and concretize – that is, render *permanent* – the former. Indeed, the palace continues to dominate the Bucharest skyline today and, although it now houses the Romanian senate, it nonetheless serves as an unavoidable reminder of Ceauşescu and the not-so-distant communist past (see Light & Young 2010; Tanta 2014: 90).

Figure 5.13: Ceauşescu's *Casă Poporului* (2009)[50]

Each of the four examples discussed in this section have consisted of a structural manifestation of Mussolini or Ceauşescu, whether in his direct likeness or as a monument (of sorts) constructed in his honor. In this way, they can be understood as further (or, in the case of the *Casă Poporului*, simply expanded upon) examples of the kind of symbolic or 'indirect' constructions discussed for both leaders' cults in Chapter 4. At the same time, a few points are worth reiterating here: first, the frame-based structural integrity or 'durability' associated with each of these monuments (and indeed with frames of MONUMENTS or BUILDINGS more broadly) entails an assumption that the monuments will persist in time. In other words, there is a reason materials such as marble and trees are preferred in these cases over, say, paper or sand. Second, it follows that not only the monuments but also what they commemorate will endure, a relationship that is metonymic in nature. Third, this leads to an assumption of commemorative 'permanence,' which, as mentioned earlier, sets up mappings between a present space and a future space in which the content in the former is mapped onto the latter. Finally, the emergent durativity in the blend is in

[50] Retrieved February 9, 2023 from Flickr.com. Photograph by George M. Groutas, taken May 2, 2009. Link to web address here: https://www.flickr.com/photos/jorge-11/3804071520.

part due to the very frame-based, image-schematic notion of 'durability' of the monuments as structures, and thus their role as a material anchor for the blend.

In Figures 5.14 and 5.15 I have supplied updated blending diagrams that reflect the additions of these present-to-future mappings. In both cases, the (simplified) present space now includes a Mussolini or Ceauşescu marked with **, which is simply a way of signaling that I understand them to constitute the complex, emergent conceptualizations of Mussolini and Ceauşescu from section 5.3's past-to-present mappings. In other words, I consider the historically-imbued and -legitimated 'versions' of both leaders to be what stands in metonymic relation to the monuments erected in their honor. There is also no reason, other than for simplicity's sake, to exclude the many non-historical elements structuring Mussolini or Ceauşescu in these present spaces that have been discussed in prior chapters (e.g. Mussolini's virility, Ceauşescu's royal-like pretensions, etc.). Each is, of course, also a part of such 'complex, emergent conceptualizations' operative on a broader scale in both leaders' cults and, as such, should be understood as being variously (metonymically) accessible depending on the exigencies of a given construal-in-context.

The monuments, then, as durable structures, are projected into a future space (here shown as Monuments$_f$) in which the metonymic relationship of MONUMENT FOR MONUMENTALIZED is maintained by virtue of this assumed durability provided by the monument's structure as a material anchor, with the emergent result in the blend of cult permanence.

Figure 5.14: (Past-Infused) Present → Future Mappings – Mussolini

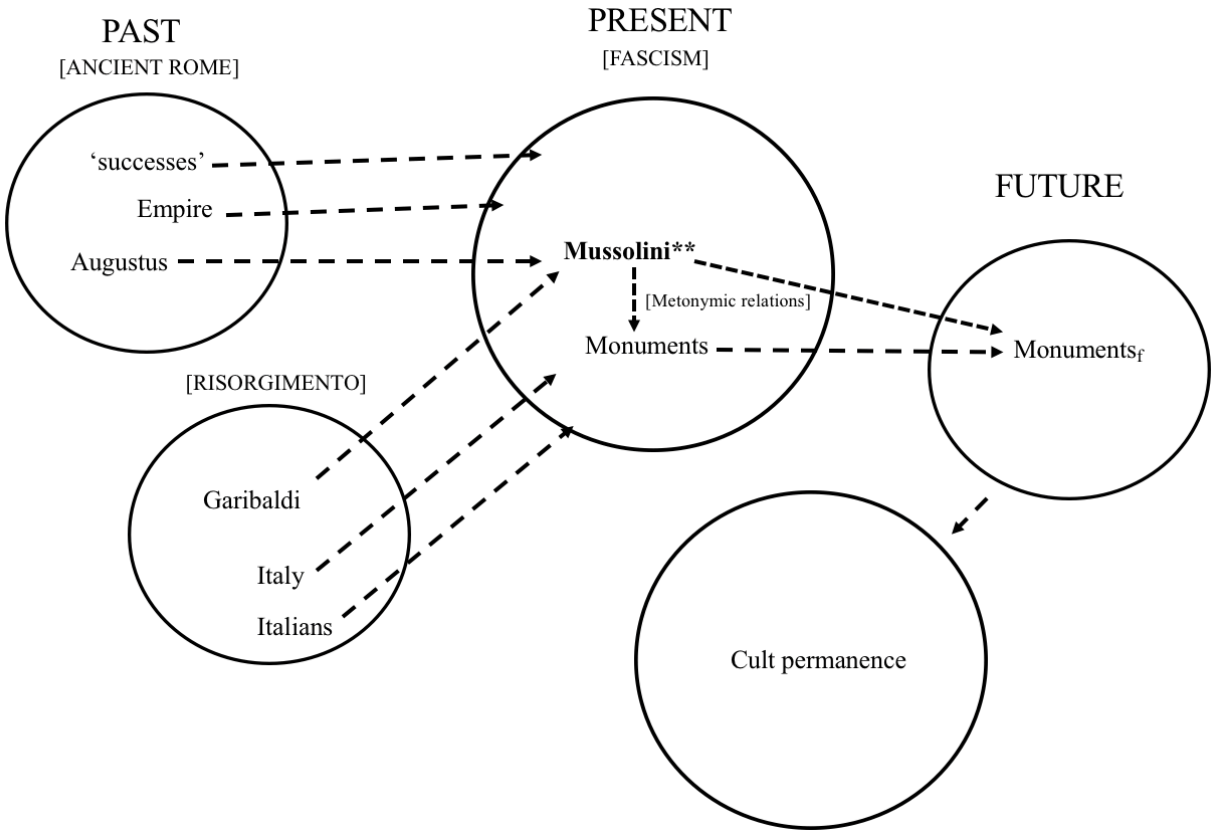
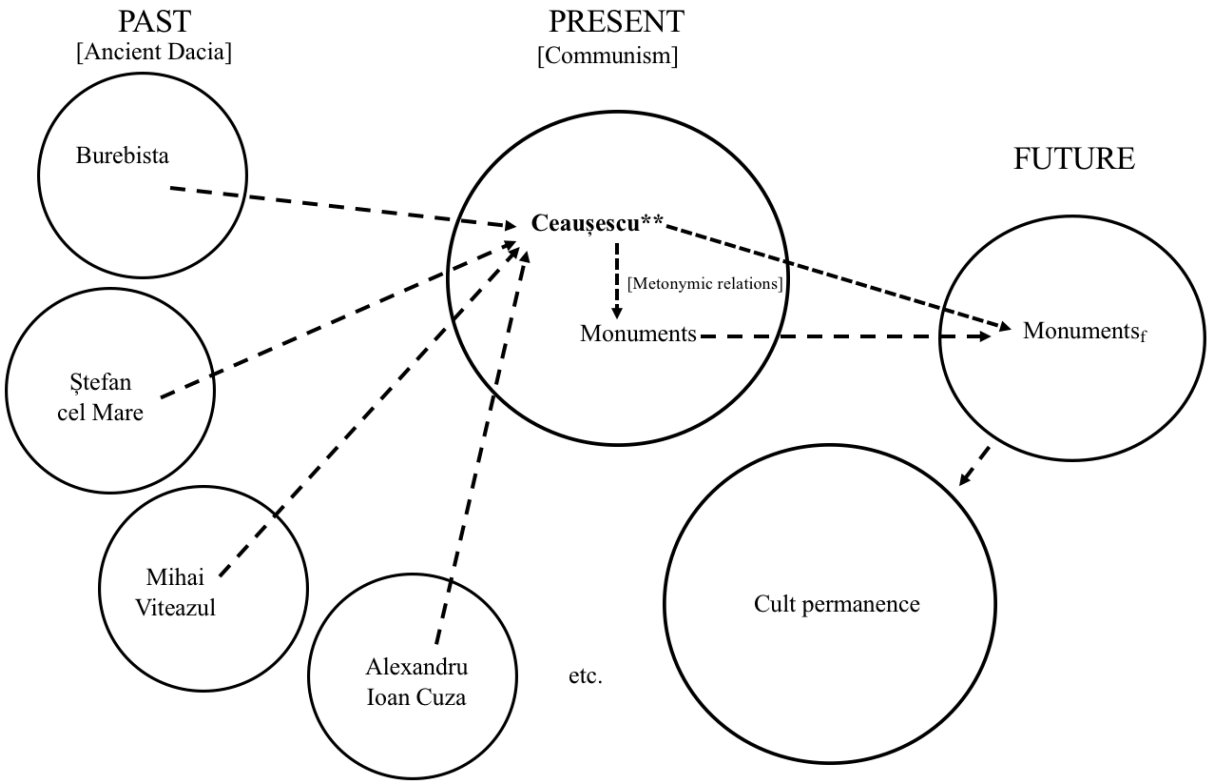


Figure 5.15: (Past-Infused) Present → Future Mappings – Ceauşescu



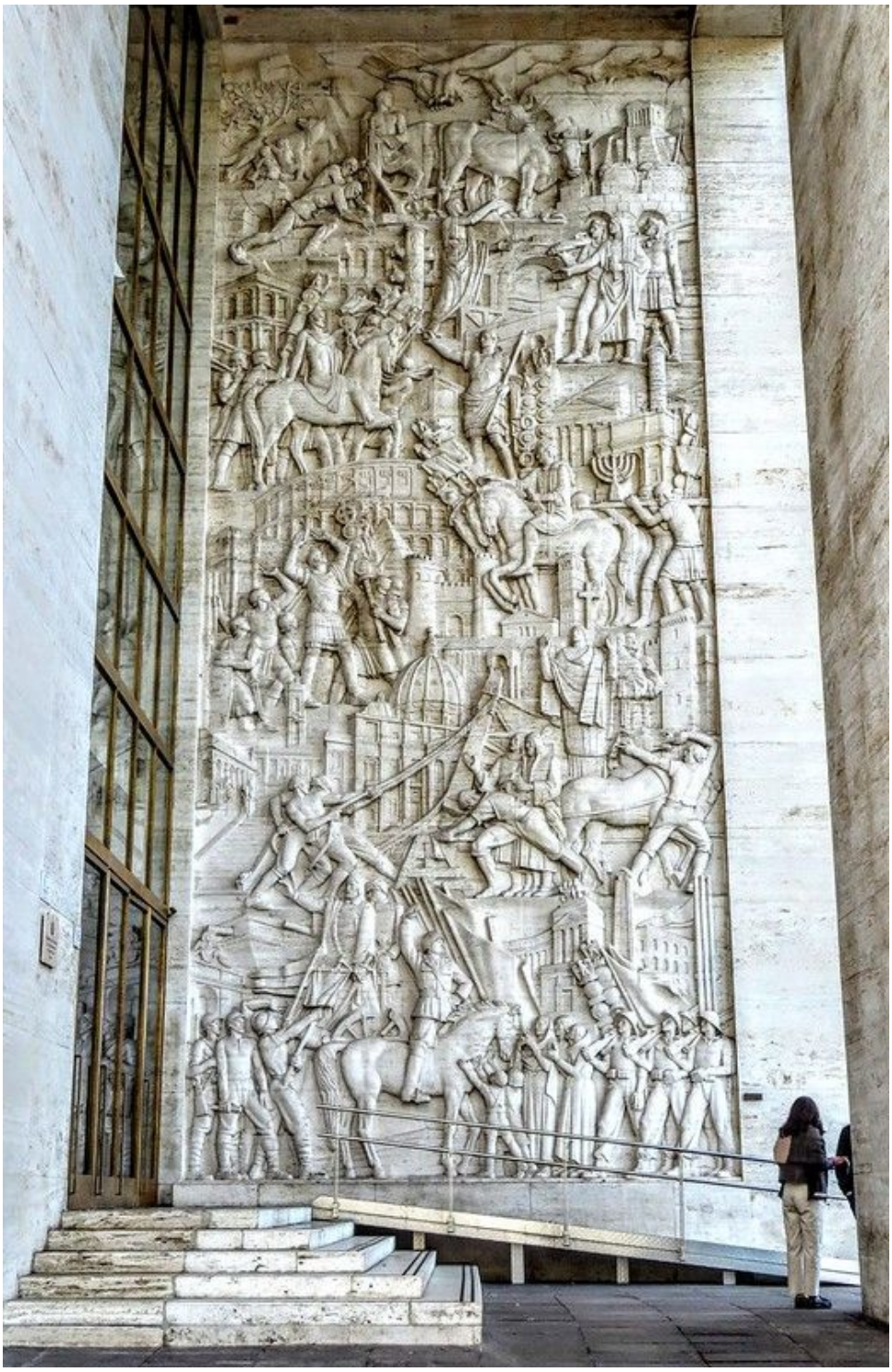
5.5 – Past, Present & Future: The 'Historic Agent' Emerges

The previous two sections have demonstrated the ways in which the past and the future came to play important structuring roles in the cults of both Mussolini and Ceauşescu through their individual interaction with the present. This final section instead analyzes works in which the past, present, and future are all recruited simultaneously. I have selected four constructs – two for each regime – that depict Mussolini and Ceauşescu in the joint roles of 'historic agent' and 'historic signifier' as discussed in section 5.2.1. In all four works, the historic dimensions of the *era fascista* and the *Epocă de Aur* are obtained through curiously similar effects: through a collage of numerous and varied images associated with Mussolini's or Ceauşescu's regimes – that is, we can say, various *metonyms* for both leaders – organized around a depiction of the leader himself. Such a strategy, of course, is one that we have seen deployed many a time now, both in this chapter and in the last, for Ceauşescu's representations but it is one that as yet has not been observed for Mussolini. Each of these works will be discussed in turn, in sections 5.5.1 and 5.5.2, respectively, first for Mussolini and then for Ceauşescu.

5.5.1 – Mussolini as 'Historic Agent'

The first construct is a bas-relief entitled 'The History of Rome' supplied in Figure 5.16. In this relief – which can still be found today just inside the entrance to an office building in the EUR district of Rome – the history of Rome is traced through its works of architecture from

Figure 5.16: 'History of Rome' Bas-Relief (1939)[51]



[51] Photograph by and courtesy of David Lown. Retrieved September 17, 2022 from his site *Walks in Rome*. Link to web address here: https://www.walksinrome.com/eur-rome.html. The date provided marks the year of the relief's completion.

top to bottom. Iconic landmarks such as the Colosseum and St. Peter's Basilica can be seen interspersed with prominent historical figures and stills of workers in the act of construction, all of which winds down to the focal point of the relief at its base: Mussolini, on horseback and in uniform, his arm raised in a manner ambiguous between commanding salute, Roman (Fascist) salute, and a simple wave. Figure 5.17 supplies a zoomed-in image.

Figure 5.17: 'History of Rome' Bas-Relief, Zoomed (1939)[52]

Among his immediate surroundings (just to his right) one finds, from left to right, the Altar of the Fatherland, the obelisk of Aksum, and the famous Square Colosseum, all projects with notable connections to Fascism.[53] Additionally, throngs of devout Fascists – men, women, and children alike – are congregated around his horse, bearing Fascist symbols, and directing their attention and praise toward him. The relief thus draws together and profiles several different frames – both past and present – that were recruited to and came to constitute veritable elements of a broader FASCISM frame.

In CBT terms, considerable compression of numerous vital relations is at work in this relief. Most obviously is that of Time, with centuries of Roman history compressed here into a single snapshot. This also entails compression and thus a reorganization of Space, with the layout

[52] Photograph by and courtesy of David Lown. Retrieved September 17, 2022 from his site *Walks in Rome*. Link to web address here: https://www.walksinrome.com/eur-rome.html. The date provided marks the year of the relief's completion.

[53] The Altar, for example, was dedicated to the first king of Italy, Victor Emmanuel II, and had strong nationalist connotations and was a frequent site for Fascist rituals (see Gentile 1993). The Obelisk of Aksum, originally located and built in Ethiopia, was seized by the Fascists following their occupation and transported back to Rome in 1936 (it was eventually returned to Ethiopia in 2005; see Marcello & Carter 2019 for a history). The Square Colosseum, also located in the EUR district of Rome and built in anticipation of the 1942 World Exhibition, constitutes perhaps the hallmark architectural example of Fascism's knack for blending the traditional with the modern.

of Rome here reflecting chronological order of construction rather than geographical placement. Mussolini's emergent role as the 'historic agent' in this relief is aided by his central placement within it, appearing overlain atop his capital's centuries of history. This suggests compression of another vital relation, and one very tied to Chapter 4's discussion of indexicality – that of Cause-Effect. While the compression of Cause-Effect relations can be as simple as, to use one of Fauconnier and Turner's examples, rather canonical indexicality such as seeing a pile of ash and deducing that there must have been a fire (2002: 96), it can also be more creative in nature. Indeed, Mussolini's placement here creates the impression that he is at once responsible for Rome's grand history and is himself an embodiment of it. His messianic figure appears as a kind of culmination of history – as the flesh-and-blood (if here stone) realization indexing Italian destiny in the form of his own *era fascista*. History, as it were, has paved the way for Mussolini's ostensibly eternalized present.

Figure 5.18: *Sintesi fascista* (1935)[54]

The *era fascista* is depicted somewhat differently in Figure 5.18 above, a 1935, three-panel painting by Alessandro Bruschetti entitled *Sintesi fascista* ('Fascist Synthesis'). As its name suggests, it consists of a diverse amalgamation of images that comprise disparate elements of the FASCISM frame: Fascist military prowess, for example, is profiled by cannons and three distinct groups of soldiers (at least two of which are dressed in *camicie nere*). Mussolini's aforementioned 'Battle for Grain' is profiled through the prominent inclusion of harvested wheat, while Fascism's technological advancements and modernist impulses are highlighted in the middle panel's airplanes, modern ships, and what can plausibly be construed as a radio tower, not to mention in

[54] This painting is currently part of the Wolfsonian Institute's collection at Florida International University. The central panel also circulated in the form of a postcard in the late 1930s (Sturani 1995: 234). The image was last accessed September 16, 2022 via its digital collection and included in accordance with its stated permitted purposes. Link to web address here: http://dpanther.fiu.edu/dpService/dpPurlService/purl/FWIT705233/00001.

the painting's overall overtly Futurist style.[55] Built structures abound, too, with the pre-Fascist Doge's Palace in Venice, a tower befitting a medieval city, and even a Roman aqueduct mixing with Mussolini's Obelisk and towering, sculpted *fasces* akin to those that adorned the aforementioned 1932 'Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution.'

The emergent effect is, in essence, an overload of Fascism, with these images in their totality symbolizing Fascism as a whole. As with the 'History of Rome' blend, Space and Time are reorganized and compressed here such that the *era fascista* – as a distinct, historic epoch in time – is rendered visible and comprehensible by virtue of numerous, disparate frame elements of the FASCISM frame being simultaneously profiled. And, once again, Mussolini's presence – this time in three different guises, reflecting his various iconographic looks throughout the *ventennio*[56] – is at the center of the painting, with each face gazing in a different direction as if to underscore both his omnipresence and his complete oversight of (that is, involvement in) all that Fascism is and has done. In this way, the same indexical, Cause-Effect relations obtain also in *Sintesi fascista* such that Mussolini's agentive role in bringing about the *era fascista* emerges rather forcefully. At the same time, this multi-directional gaze suggests Mussolini's, and, per the last chapter frame-metonymically Fascism's, simultaneous orientation toward all three temporal planes past, present, and future.

5.5.2 – Ceauşescu as 'Historic Agent'

Changing courses to Ceauşescu and the *Epocă de Aur*, Figure 5.19 consists of a wool rug (year unknown) that presents the same kind of collage style and profiling strategies as the two previous works. In the rug Ceauşescu is shown – as was Mussolini – front and center, appearing both larger than all other included figures as well as in more detail and in full color.[57] While the overall organization of the construct's depicting Ceauşescu 'with' is wholly consistent with what was observed in the previous chapter, the temporal structure presented in this rug-blend is particularly striking, and it appears as if there are three separate 'layers' to it. The first functions essentially as the image's background and is occupied by the various monochromatic figures surrounding Ceauşescu (who himself appears as a superimposed second layer). Here we see some familiar faces: historical leaders occupy the upper portions of the rug (the figures of at least Ştefan cel Mare, Cuza, and Mihai Viteazul are clearly perceptible from left to right) to ensure that Ceauşescu's image is not left unconnected to the frames of (historical) LEADERSHIP integral to his cult. More directly flanking Ceauşescu, however, and on either side, are what appear to be rather commoner figures. These figures instead seem to mix the historical with the contemporary – soldiers, for example, can be seen on either side of him, along with what appear to be a miner, a bugler, and some kind of rancher. This temporal progression from top to bottom then finds

[55] It should be noted, too, that the painting's Futurist dimensions extend beyond the Cubist-inspired style in which these various symbols are depicted and in fact encompass the very notion of 'synthesis' itself as a manifestation of the principle of 'simultaneity' integral to Futurist aesthetics. As Anne Bowler notes in her study on Italian Futurism and Fascism, "[u]nderlying [simultaneity]… is the idea that in art, as in any single moment of modern life, a potentially infinite and always changing multitude of events, noises, actions, and sensations may be experienced in concert… In Futurist painting, simultaneity led to the attempted portrayal of the multitudinous movements, sensations, and scenes that constituted modern life" (1991: 779).

[56] See Calvino (1990) as well as Chapter 4, note 86.

[57] In terms of iconography, one will recall the discussion of Ceauşescu's portrayal in Figures 5.6 and 5.8, the former which depicted him giving a speech and the latter which included his hand in a raised gesture, both of which are present also in Figure 5.19.

completion in the third layer, the variety of further-colored images at the rug's base, each of which constitutes an emblem of the aforementioned 'imagery of progress' that profiles different frames from AGRICULTURE and INDUSTRY to HOUSING and TRANSPORTATION. Their placement in front of Ceauşescu, in addition to their similar coloring, forces a potent association between the leader and his rule's production – indeed, both an indexical and a metonymic one – as a result of the same kind of compression of Cause-Effect relations as seen in the previous two constructs. The compression of Time, too, between the deep history of the rug's background and the structures symbolic of (an idealized) contemporary Romania laid out in front of Ceauşescu further emphasize his role as a figure who bridges the past and the present, whose leadership and guidance will lead Romania to its destined modern, communist future. Ceauşescu's figure thus emerges here not only as the 'historic agent' singularly responsible for the *Epocă de Aur*, but also as the embodiment of this historically-infused destiny itself, as its 'historic signifier.'

Figure 5.19: *Epocă de Aur* rug (year unknown)[58]

The final work, a painting from 1978, is provided in Figure 5.20. As with the rug in Figure 5.19, this painting again sees Ceauşescu at the center with the same mixture of historical images (e.g. Ştefan cel Mare, a '1907' overlaying a collection of scythes that alludes to the 1907 Romanian peasants' rebellion) with contemporary ones (e.g. dams, powerlines, nuclear reactors, etc.), all of which populate a background colored by the Romanian flag. And, indeed, in line with all three works analyzed in this section, the same kind of temporal and spatial 'crunching' effect obtains through the use of collage. The past and present are brought together in one image in a simultaneous profiling of numerous elements within overlapping frames of the NATION (i.e.

[58] AP Photo, photograph by Vadim Ghirda.

ROMANIA) and SOCIALISM to which Ceauşescu himself, as the leader of each, stands in frame-metonymic relation as suggested in the previous chapter. In this way, Romania's past is now rendered as both socialism's past and as Ceauşescu's past as well, just as they all share a present – and, indeed, by a not-so-subtle inference – also a future.

Figure 5.20: *Epocă de Aur* painting (1978)[59]

5.6 – Conclusions

In each of the constructs considered in the preceding section, what can principally be understood as at work are powerful relations of frame metonymy between numerous elements of broad, multifaceted frames of FASCISM and SOCIALISM and those very frames themselves. That is to say, these frame-metonymic relations are what provide structure to the overall collage effect and are what constitute the links between the otherwise diverse and jumbled collection of images and the overarching frames of FASCISM and SOCIALISM that are being depicted 'in their totality,' so to speak, as visual representations of the *era fascista* and the *Epocă de Aur*. This effect is achieved through the incorporation of numerous, well-established, *salient* images (i.e. those frequently selected in other forms of propaganda) that might individually profile disparate aspects of the FASCISM and SOCIALISM frames being used instead in combination. Put plainly, such constructs materialize the metonymic links between the range of (here positive) elements associable with these frames of FASCISM and SOCIALISM as discussed at the end of the previous

[59] Retrieved August 23, 2020 from the National Museum of Romanian History website's online exhibition *Portretele unui dictator* and included with permission. The site notes that it was offered by Natalia and Nicolae Gadonschi. Link to web address here: http://www.comunismulinromania.ro/index.php/galerie-speciala/erou-intre-eroi/#1456489451145-c50e206c-f56c.

chapter, serving both as indices of and anchors for the 'historic era' in which both regimes inscribed (and to which they doggedly accredited) themselves.

The presence of both Mussolini and Ceauşescu in all four of these works, however, invites further conceptual relations to emerge in line with the semantics of 'with.' Through their central positioning in each, they are at once metaphorically depicted as the 'heart' or 'core' of Fascism or socialism as they – again by virtue of their occupation of the 'leader' element in what essentially amount to grand exhibitions of the FASCISM and SOCIALISM frames at large – frame-metonymically stand in for them as their embodiments, not unlike the embodiment discussed in Chapter 4. Additionally, however, there is a recruitment of these constitutive frames across time – past figures and structures intermingle with accomplishments of the present that are in turn indicative of those of tomorrow. It is thus within this cross-temporal representation of FASCISM and SOCIALISM that Mussolini's and Ceauşescu's figures, as their frame-metonymic instantiations, take on new meaning and out of which new constructions emerge: they are both 'historic agent' in their apparent role in bringing about the historic epochs of their rule – and through these same frame-metonymic chains all that has been achieved during them – as they come to represent and define time or history itself as the 'historic signifier,' as the figures whose name and image are to become indissociable from their 'historic eras' that are themselves – in line with the semantics of the term – to endure beyond their own present, in the future as a part of history.

Chapter 6 – *(De)Constructing the Cult: Jokes, Caricature, Irony, and Conceptual Transferability*

6.1 – Introduction

Throughout the course of Chapters 3-5, the cults of both Mussolini and Ceaușescu have been presented and explicated as communicative, semiotic systems structured in terms of a constructionist network. In each, we have considered the emergent effects that various representations of both leaders had on their respective networks, noting the kinds of (groupings of) constructions that arose, what kinds of frames and blends were recruited to or generated in them, and how these constructions themselves interacted with and influenced one another. This cognitive-conceptual elaboration in turn entailed a focus on (and an account for) the polysemy characteristic of both leaders' images, the pivotal role that conceptual metonymy plays in such cults' formation, manifestation, and structuration, and the special significance afforded to time – past, present, and future – in each leader's cult in order to present him as a wholly *historic* figure. To do so, a host of varied constructs were examined ranging from printed ephemera in the form of photographs, posters, postcards, and pages from newspapers to works of encomiastic art and monumental architecture.

At this stage, however, if it is not already apparent, it is worth drawing attention to the fact that each of the constructs discussed in Chapters 3-5 were more or less 'sanctioned' by Mussolini's and Ceaușescu's respective regimes in that they were disseminated – and therefore consumed – in the public sphere. Such constructs – as I believe has been amply demonstrated – can indeed illuminate much in terms of the cognitive underpinnings of an emergent constructional network built up and populated by a host of different representations, themselves manifesting across a range of (multi)modalities. They cannot, however, I would contend, provide the 'whole story' on their own, particularly if we truly want to understand cult systems as the expressly *communicative* systems that they are. To do so, one must pay attention not only to those constructs that arise and are disseminated 'from above' (to take back up and slightly twist the discussion of usage-based approaches in Construction Grammar from Chapter 2) but also those 'from below' – that is, those that are generated based on and in response to the very models imposed by the former. Expanding the focus to such forms of cultic production in turn allows us to address further the constructional polysemy that emerges as part of what can be understood as a kind of cultic 'dialogue.' This, as we shall see, applies both to various kinds of novel reappropriations (e.g. jokes, parody, caricature, riddles, and creative adaptations) as well as to possible alternative interpretations of the 'sanctioned' constructs examined thus far (e.g. ironic interpretations). This chapter seeks to remedy this gap between 'above' and 'below,' or between 'official' and 'unofficial' by taking up this eclectic assortment of creative cultic reappropriations, alongside their attendant meaning potentials, and assessing how they might fit into the overall constructionist approach presented thus far.

Crucial in this regard – as we shall see – is an explicit understanding of these various reappropriations as emerging from the very models or templates that they, in one way or another, in turn subvert.[1] Lisa Wedeen's (1999) masterful analysis of the cult of Hasif al-Asad in Syria highlights this reality as a pivotal element of what she refers to as the "ambiguities of domination." Per her formulation, the regime, on the one hand, with its incontestable authority to set the limits of what was and was not acceptable in public discourse, was able to posture an unequivocal, if perhaps absurd, image of Asad that all Syrians had to act 'as if' they fully bought into. In this way, the cult symbolically produced its own power that was in turn sustained via a kind of mutual performativity (in the Austinian sense) on the part of the regime, its propaganda apparatus, and citizens alike. At the same time, however, the cult and its attendant spectacles did more than simply establish a particular narrative and enact a form of "disciplinary-symbolic power" (145) – they also, in the same breath and based on that very narrative and display of power, "invite[d] transgressions" (4-5).[2] She notes:

> Just as the regime clutters public space with its symbolic displays of power and magnificence, the jokes, films, and slapstick comedies that poke fun at the regime are ways in which people create and commemorate more or less alternative conceptions of politics… The discourse contains and structures both the guidelines for obedience and the material for subversion (ibid., 131).

Thus, the very forms and representations that structure, exhibit, and perpetuate power can, in the same mold, be used to subvert, challenge, or debase it.[3] By 'setting the stage,' as it were,

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[1] Such interconnections between seemingly opposite forces such as domination and resistance, powerful and powerless, hegemonic and subaltern – at their most broadly construed – have been widely noted across a host of disciplines and contexts. Several are worth mentioning here, including: Sharp et al. (2000), a collection of essays on how domination and resistance are inextricable from one another or are even co-constitutive; Stallybrass & White (1986), which provides an approach to 'high' and 'low' discourse polarities and their interrelation through the lens of Mikhail Bakhtin's (1984) conception of the 'carnivalesque'; Michel Foucault's (1976/1990) idea of 'reverse discourse'; Michel de Certeau's (1984) formulation of everyday 'tactics' operative in the face of and in response to dominant 'strategies'; Antonio Gramsci's theorization of cultural hegemony (see Gramsci 1975); Nicholas Mirzoeff's (2011) exposition of the role of (counter)visualities in delineating relations of power; and James C. Scott's (1985, 2013) notion of 'everyday resistance,' from which Wedeen's (1999) own analysis draws, which highlights the various functions that by-and-large intimate, small-scale transgressions can have in the face of and in response to a dominant power and its imposed discourse(s) (see Haynes & Prakash 1992; Fitzpatrick 1994; and Kozlov, Fitzpatrick & Mironenko 2011 for additional scholarship in this vein).

[2] In drawing attention to the power of symbols and rhetoric to enforce compliance, Wedeen draws on Foucault (see her discussion on pp. 18-19; 153) and defines disciplinary-symbolic practices as "the ways in which power is generated through its representation… the insinuation of formulaic rhetoric and self-serving state symbolism into the daily lives of citizens, habituating people to perform the gestures and pronounce the slogans constitutive of their obedience" (145). More than a mere dressing to or a façade for a cruder form of power, she notes, the cult "does not simply depend for its efficacy on other mechanisms of enforcement; rather, *the cult is itself such a mechanism*" (ibid.; emphasis original).

[3] Such functions are again perhaps most associable with the work of James C. Scott and his notion of 'everyday resistance,' which has been as generative as it has been problematized in studies approaching the 'subaltern' experience at large (see Mitchell 1990 for a critique, as well as Sivaramakrishnan 2005 and Johansson & Vinthagen 2020 for overviews in addition to critiques). It should be stressed, though, as critics of Scott's approach have rightly pointed out, that there is not *necessarily* a 'political' (i.e. subversive, transgressive, resisting, etc.) charge to such reappropriations or reproductions – they can, as Wedeen (1989: 89) observes, function instead to reinforce whatever dominant discourse or ideology they inhabit (see also Butler 1993). Similarly, Yurchak (2006: 27), noting remarks in Hollywood (2002: 107), recalls Derrida's contention that "the sign's ability to break with context in itself is ethically

cult systems like that of Asad (and, as we have seen throughout this dissertation, of Mussolini and Ceaușescu) in turn generate a conceptual system in which both ruler and ruled alike become enmeshed, inured, and, for all intents and purposes, 'fluent.' Indeed, there is a history of understanding such power relations in terms of linguistic metaphors, from Stephen Kotkin's (1995) conception of Soviets learning to 'speak Bolshevik' as the situation required to the deployment of 'Aesopian language' (e.g. Loseff 1984; Guran 2010; Terian 2012) in literature as 'resistance through culture'[4] to James C. Scott's formulation of 'hidden transcripts' as the 'weapons of the weak' deployed as private, small-scale acts of 'everyday resistance' in the face of dominant forces or ideologies (e.g. Scott 1985, 1990, 2013). While the use of such metaphors, and the underlying assumptions about language, knowledge, authenticity, and selfhood that they entail, have not gone unchallenged,[5] they nonetheless provide intriguing ground on which to consider the *communicative* dimensions of imposed representational systems such as personality cults to a host of diverse ends, including those geared precisely toward subverting the cult's very constative semantics. That is, and as Wedeen herself spins such a linguistic metaphor, "[t]o accept the vocabulary of the cult is also to be able to use it to undermine rather than glorify" (1999: 130).

The potential for the 'redeployment' of such cultic representations, including those based in Mussolini's and Ceaușescu's cults that will be discussed here, speaks to their – to use the term introduced in Chapter 1 – *constructional polysemy.* As we can recall, constructional polysemy is intended to capture how each use of or encounter with a given cult construction, each occurring within a particular, specified context, allows for a (potential) break in that construction's form-function link at the 'constative' level. That is, while the 'form' of such cultic constructions, in drawing from the representational templates permitted by the cult system as imposed, remains – even in redeployment – more or less the same, the 'function' side of things is far less stable, often shifting out or away from the meanings anchored to the 'literal' or 'constative' dimensions and into new – and often subversive, if simply unintended – ones. We can recall the work of Alexei Yurchak (2006) on the variegated and shifting meanings that emerged from the otherwise entrenched 'authoritative discourse' (Bakhtin 1994) of the late-socialist Soviet Union. Yurchak frames this particular relation between – to again put things in constructionist terms – 'form and function' as a paradox, and he notes:

> The paradox of late socialism stemmed from the fact that the more the immutable forms of the system's authoritative discourse were reproduced everywhere, the more the system was experiencing a profound internal displacement. This displacement of the system was in turn predicated on mass participation in the reproduction of the system's authoritative forms and representations, enabling the emergence of various forms of meaningful, creative life that were relatively uncontrolled, indeterminate, and 'normal' (i.e. not perceived as out of the ordinary or alternative). Having this normal life was in turn predicated on participating in the performative reproduction of the system's authoritative forms and

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and politically neutral, until it is invested with new meaning." In other words, 'resistance' is not and cannot be assumed as a given and, if indeed present, must be recognized as contingent on a host of factors external to the act of reproduction itself.

[4] It is worth briefly noting that 'resistance through culture' has been a popular, though not entirely unproblematic, explanation for cultural production and the role of the intellectual in Ceaușescu's Romania more broadly. As examples, see Marino (1996), Ioniță (2011), Tănăsoiu (2011), and Asavei (2020: chapter 2) as well as Preda (2017: chapter 6) for a concise review and revaluation. We will return to this idea in section 6.5.

[5] See Yurchak (2006: 16-18) for an overview as well as Gal (1995) for a particularly forceful critique of Scott's work.

> representations. Reproducing the system and participating in its continuous internal displacement were mutually constitutive processes (2006: 283).

Akin to Wedeen's observations on the ambiguous nature of the cult of Asad and its own paradoxical combination of effects, then, Yurchak's study points to how a proliferation of particular representations does not necessarily equate to any degree of staticity in their interpretation. Thus, much in the vein of Derrida, Butler, and others taking up their work on iterability, citationality, and intertextuality (e.g. Briggs & Bauman 1992; Hollywood 2002; Agha & Wortham 2005; Yurchak 2006; Nakassis 2012, 2013), the continual use and reuse of particular representational *forms* – themselves associable with particular, prescribed, constative meanings or functions – can give way to the eventual emergence of new meanings, functions, or interpretations that are in part dependent on, as they are determined by, each new context in which they are uttered or encountered. This emergent constructional polysemy, it will be argued, in turn lends itself to what in linguistics is referred to as 'productivity,' or "how established abstract schemas of a language… can be used to license novel utterances" (Hoffmann 2020: 3).

To render this initial discussion more concrete we can turn briefly to the two cult systems under analysis here. The very saturation of particular representations of Mussolini and Ceauşescu within their respective societies, it could well be argued, openly invited their scorn, mockery, and reappropriation in kind. This could be for any number of reasons, e.g. as responses to specific actions taken, to various hardships imposed, to the widespread surveillance and repression, to all the bombast and pageantry, or even just 'because.' Indeed, if one simply takes the various constructs connoting Mussolini's quintessence of virility or Ceauşescu's unironic flair for Byzantine extravagance that we have seen in earlier chapters, it is not hard to imagine how they might acquire and then be actively 'repurposed' to generate new meaning(s), as we shall see in the following pages.

The present chapter's structure differs slightly from those preceding it in that, rather than being divided into sections dedicated individually to a particular phenomenon's manifestation in either (or both) Mussolini's or (and) Ceauşescu's cults, it will present examples grouped according to their type of creative reappropriation-as-constructional redeployment. This is due in main to the fact that, since most data presented here were produced clandestinely, what survives is far more limited and, as such, there is no guaranteed means to compare apples with apples and oranges with oranges, so to speak, consistently across both regimes.

Section 6.2 begins with an overview of some key concepts for the chapter's exposition, namely that of constructional 'transferability' (section 6.2.1) and the related notions of creativity and productivity (section 6.2.2). All three, it will be claimed, are useful for understanding how ubiquitous, entrenched representations of Mussolini and Ceauşescu might go from something passively observed to something actively appropriated and repurposed. This will entail a reflection on my original cognitive cult definition and some initial remarks on the implications of my extended use of 'construction' here applied to multimodal-yet-hypervisual communicative data. The following three sections then move on to an examination of subversive data, starting first with jokes (section 6.3) followed by 'overt' visual parodies and caricatures (section 6.4). Section 6.5 then concludes with a consideration of the potential ubiquity of 'covert' ironic interpretation that cults, given their own discursive ubiquity, risk generating and sustaining.

6.2 – Transferability, Productivity, Creativity

As has been mentioned throughout this dissertation, accounting for the magnitude of potential semantic open-endedness, evolution, and creative extension is critical to a proper analysis of a cult's communicative capacities. Yet, at first blush, it would seem to present a challenge to any systematic theory of language or communication seeking to account for it – it is difficult to imagine, for example, how traditional models of grammar and assumptions about language could enrich our understanding of or demonstrate how the kinds of multimodal, semiotic systems such as personality cults do in fact communicate beyond recourses to the very kinds of linguistic metaphors or 'codes' mentioned above. Constructionist approaches to communication, however, with their usage-based perspective and their focus on and attention to patterns of frequency, might, as has been argued throughout this dissertation, just be up to the task. Two domains of constructionist research (to put it broadly) will be particularly useful here in this chapter, and they are: (a) the notion of (constructional) 'transferability' and (b) (constructionist approaches to) productivity and creativity. Each will be discussed in turn.

6.2.1 – Constructional Transferability

The idea of 'transferability,' as posited in Fischer (2015) and discussed in Nikiforidou (2018: 562-565; 2021: 193, 197), we can recall, is born of recent expansions and adaptations of constructionist principles to questions of language and discourse that go 'beyond the sentence' in their scope (e.g. various genres, registers, or text types).[6] In essence, it amounts to the felicitous transference (that is, use) of a given construction in(to) a new, atypical context while still remaining intelligibly recognizable as such, and "appears to correlate with the degree of entrenchment and concomitant conventionalization of the link between linguistic form and discourse setting" (Nikiforidou 2018: 562).[7] To illustrate, we can take an example presented in Antonopoulou and Nikiforidou (2011: 2604-2605) and provided below in (1) of a cartoon in which figures a group of bears sitting in chairs, one of which is standing and addresses the others, stating:

(1) "My name's Elmo. Well, it all started rather innocently… killing socially, y'know… A game warden here, a tourist there… impressing the other guys, y'know… But then I just couldn't stop… Sometimes I'd even stash an extra one in the crotch of a tree."[8]

Even without any further context, both the image and the monologue combine to readily evoke a scene akin to (that is, a *frame* of) Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), which is indeed confirmed by the caption included beneath the cartoon – "At Maneaters Anonymous." As Antonopoulou and Nikiforidou note, several features of the linguistic discourse are integral to this understanding, including (a) the immediate use of a predicative construction – *My name is X* – with the purpose

[6] This kind of discourse-wide work on construction grammar, we can recall from Chapter 2, has seen increased attention in recent years. See Chapter 2, section 2.6 for discussion and numerous examples of such work.

[7] In this vein, 'transferability' can also be thought of as a kind of litmus test for attributing various conventional, supra-clausal patterns of language constructional status: if a certain discourse pattern (broadly construed) *can* be felicitously transferred, then that is grounds for classifying it as a discoursal or genre construction; if not, then other factors should be considered, e.g. situational factors (see Fischer 2015 for a fuller discussion based on the register known as 'child-directed speech').

[8] The cartoon itself features in a (1986: 53) compilation of the series *The Far Side* by Gary Larson.

of self-introduction, which is a conventional practice in AA meetings; (b) minimal lexical changes to the invoked elements of the AA frame (e.g. 'killing' for 'drinking'; 'warden'/'tourist' for [e.g.] 'beer'/'whiskey'); and (c) the particular sequencing of each frame-evoking, parodied statement (e.g. excuses for the killing/drinking, the 'stashing' of the bodies/alcohol, etc.) (ibid., 2604).[9] Per their analysis, each of these formal components, supplied in the order that they are, "are essential parts… which characteriz[e] the AA construction as a whole."[10]

Of course, the situation in (1) is *not* a canonical instance of an AA meeting but rather a parody of such a meeting, with the purported addiction not being one to alcohol but to killing. What this shows, however, is that the use of an otherwise ordinary predicative construction, in combination with particular lexical constraints and a sequencing of statements, has a sufficient degree of *conventionality* to be transferable into an otherwise wholly incongruent context without sacrificing the intelligibility of the template on which it draws. This, Antonopoulou and Nikiforidou note, is a consequence *both* of the conventionality of the particular, individual clause-level constructions that are used as well as the resultant totality of their use in combination. As they put it:

> Jointly, both the supra-clausal patterning, and the clause-level constructions and constrained lexical material constitute the formal make-up of the AA construction… [Individually] each of the clause-level semi-schematic constructions (e.g. *My name's X*) is an instance of general and fully productive constructional patterns (e.g. the predicative construction) which are fully inherited by the specific expressions; each such instance is also compositional in that its component parts can be mapped onto specific parts of its interpretation. Nevertheless, they are part of the encoding idiomaticity of the particular discourse type and they derive their constructional status from their conventional association with such a discourse (ibid.).[11]

Such conventionality is, in turn, made all the more apparent by constructs such as (1) in which these constructional features are felicitously transferred into a new context. A felicitous or "successful" transfer, as Fischer (2015: 268) remarks, "constitutes a considerable argument for a conventional association between form and meaning," and, hence, constructional status. Furthermore, the AA-bear parody in (1), in creatively applying a conventional constructional template to new ends, suggests an understanding of a construction's 'transferability' not out of

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[9] As the authors address in a later piece in which this example is also discussed (Antonopoulou, Nikiforidou & Tsakona 2015: 29-31), this cartoon is, of course, a multimodal construct consisting of text and image (the gathering of seated bears) that are each doing 'work' to communicate the AA parody. Antonopoulou and Nikiforidou (2011: 2603) acknowledge this, too, but note that their focus is on just the linguistic features of such discourses and concede that a fuller analysis would require the incorporation of multimodal considerations. See discussion in the aforementioned (2015) paper in addition to the work of Nate Cohn (e.g. 2013, 2018; Schilperoord & Cohn 2022) and the other studies listed in Chapter 2, notes 25-26 for examples of such multimodal-constructionist applications to comics, cartoons, and beyond.

[10] This AA construction is one of several examples that they analyze as particular larger, supra-clausal genre constructions, others being horoscopes, telephone call-openings, classroom discourse in the form of student-teacher interactions, and academic language as used in scholarly publications. As they argue, each is characterized by – to different degrees – a conventional relationship between form, sequence, and particular lexical fillers that, in combination, constitute individual, genre-specific, discoursal constructions.

[11] See Fillmore, Kay & O'Connor (1988) for early work in Construction Grammar that introduced the idea of 'encoding idioms,' focusing on the English idiomatic expression 'let alone.'

sync with Derridean citationality or Yurchak's Soviet paradox discussed above. That is, although not a given, through taking and repurposing widely comprehensible forms or templates and inserting them in novel situations, opportunities open up for their 'constative' meanings to be enriched, altered, or otherwise creatively adapted.

6.2.2 – 'Re-'Constructions: Subversion as Creative Transference

In Chapter 1, I introduced my cognitive definition of personality cults that has informed this dissertation and been explicated throughout it. At this juncture, it is useful to consider it once more:

> A personality cult is a complex network built up of a dynamic chain of frame-structured conceptual blends that themselves (potentially) constructionalize and form constructions at varying levels of schematicity.

At the heart of this definition is a very broad, cognitively 'general' view of what a construction is – 'a frame-structured conceptual blend.' This adaptation is necessary given the scope of the data under assessment here (so much of it being visual in nature), but it also diverges markedly from most research in Construction Grammar, which is, understandably, despite its attention to principles of general cognition, very much oriented toward language proper. It is not, however, entirely without precedent: we can recall Thomas Hoffmann and Alexander Bergs' (2018) exploratory essay on constructions and genre in which they posited that "constructions in the technical sense can be seen as central units not only of language, but of human cognition generally" (p. 5). This echoes Hoffmann's (2017b: 4) earlier claim, too, that "form-meaning pairings of varying size and schematicity are actually the central unit of human cognition in general," which leads him to suggest that Construction Grammar and its principles might be extendable beyond cognitive linguistics, perhaps serving as a model and framework also for a more encompassing Cognitive Semiotics (Zlatev 2015; Zlatev, Sonesson & Konderak 2016; Brandt 2020).[12] In this vein, then, my use of constructions follows in their footsteps and reflects particular cult representations that were deployed and encountered frequently so enough as to garner a degree of *entrenchment* in the minds of individuals and *conventionality* in the community (Schmid 2020). It is thus also crucially a very *conceptual* understanding, one whose 'formal' dimensions lie largely in the frame structures recruited to each construct-blend, an understanding that I intend without eliding the impact of particular, reproduced, 'iconic' images as 'forms' in their own right (to be discussed below). These are then stored as clustering exemplars within the cult network, capable of (co-)expression and recognition in and across modalities to account also for the many visual manifestations of both leaders' cults that we have encountered.

Consequently, my approach here aligns closely with that of blending theorist Mark Turner, who maintains that "to know a communicative system is to know a relational network of form-meaning pairs and how they blend to produce (actually) performable constructs" (2020: 13; 2022:

[12] See also Hoffmann (2021) and Turner (2022: 98-99) for similar remarks regarding the potential for opening our understanding of what a 'construction' is to wider swaths of thought and semiosis. Cognitive Semiotics, as defined by one of its leading proponents in Jordan Zlatev, is a relatively new, transdisciplinary field aimed at "integrating methods and theories developed in the disciplines of cognitive science with methods and theories developed in semiotics and the humanities, with the ultimate aim of providing new insights into the realm of human signification and its manifestation in cultural practices" (2015: 1043).

98). Blending is thus once again central here, as it has been throughout the dissertation, having been posited as the conceptual phenomenon behind both constructional combination in Construction Grammar and broader processes of creativity, linguistic or otherwise.[13] To again bring in Turner's words, "[b]lending is the foundation of creativity in communication, or, more specifically, in the creation of form-meaning pairs" a process that entails the "creation of *novel* form-meaning pairs, using *established* ones as inputs" (2020: 1, 6; emphasis mine). Understanding 'established' form-meaning pairs to simply be conventionalized blends, blending is thus both "recursive" and productive – "[o]nce blending has created a compressed blend congenial to human thought, that blend can serve as a stabilizing input for a new blending web, to be used in compressing yet other extensive ranges of ideas. A blend resulting from the process of blending can be an input to the process of blending" (Turner 2014: 245).

Thus, we have arrived at how we might consider the redeployment of cult constructions to subversive ends: I will consider each construct that we see to constitute a 'reblend' of a blend that takes as one of its input spaces an 'established' form-meaning pairing – that is, a particular representation of either Mussolini or Ceaușescu, understood, of course, as a cult construction. Any other input space(s) (e.g. frames, viewpoints, other blends, etc.) with which the construction is blended, however, will vary according to the 'exigency' of the context of its deployment (Schmid 2020). Each of these 'reblends' will thus be creative and many of them humorous, but this last point is not a given – how each redeployment, as a specific construct, is used and interpreted is always subject to contextual factors. Each 'novel' form-meaning pairing that results, however, is what constitutes the constructional transference – a new blend.

A few other, related points are also worth making here before moving on regarding memory, schematicity, and productivity. First, we can recall that memory (as a general cognitive capacity, i.e. not one limited to language) plays a critical role in constructionist, usage-based approaches. It is necessary for the accumulative recognition of patterns so that constructions may be structured, stored, organized, and accessed within the constructional network. Thus, the more particular constructions are encountered, the more entrenched they become in long-term memory. Memory, however, is "vast but imperfect" such that even our most vivid of memories are stored abstractly – constructions themselves, per Goldberg's most recent definition, are but "lossy memory traces" of encountered constructs (Goldberg 2019: 6; 7).[14] This abstraction, however, is what in turn begets constructional schematicity. The notion of schematicity – itself an emergent phenomenon, as we can recall – follows from the clustering and alignment of such "lossy memory traces" as exemplars (Bybee 2013) within individuals' "high- (hyper!) dimensional conceptual

[13] Blending approaches to Construction Grammar, while by no means unanimous in the constructionist literature, are well established and have been carried out for a host of different phenomena both purely linguistic (e.g. Turner 1996; Nikiforidou 2012; Hoffmann 2018, 2019, 2020; Herbst & Hoffmann 2018; Herbst 2020) and multimodal in scope (e.g. Steen & Turner 2013; Antonopoulou, Nikiforidou & Tsakona 2015: 26-31; Turner 2018, 2020; Hoffmann 2021). Considerable research has also demonstrated the role of blending across a swath of different creative domains including language, visual art, philosophy, religion and ritual, poetry, literature, film, humor, and even computer science. As just a handful of examples, see Sweetser (2000, 2006), Coulson (2001, 2022), Fauconnier & Turner (2002, 2003), Coulson & Oakley (2006), Turner (2006, 2014), Sørensen (2007), Brône & Coulson (2010), Dancygier (2012), Dancygier & Sweetser (2014), Gomola (2018), Veale (2019), and Gordejuela (2021).

[14] As she explains in her (2013) chapter in the *Oxford Handbook of Construction Grammar:* "Memory for any experience is necessarily partially abstract insofar as the experience is not encoded completely. We might remember seeing a kumquat but we have abstracted away from the color of the kitchen table upon which it sat; we also may have not noticed the tiny scratch in its surface or the exact length of its stem. So our mental representation of an experience, no matter how vivid, is partially abstracted from the actual experience" (p. 27).

space," based in perceived (abstract) overlap in their patterns or characteristics, whether formal, functional, or contextual (Goldberg 2019: 7).

It is thus, as advocated in Chapter 3, the schematic clustering of cult representations as entrenched templates (constructions) that ultimately permits for their repurposing. That is, in line with a usage-based approach to communication, once particular representations have undergone conventionalization, a process itself based on their frequent use/encounter, they are not necessarily limited to the 'constative' dimensions entailed by their conventionalized forms. Rather, a whole host of factors – context, creativity, intentionality – can in fact be 'brought in,' as it were, such that constatively celebratory forms may be performatively altered, destabilized, or challenged in their 'reuse' in the vein of observations in Derrida (1988), Butler (1993), etc. This, as we shall see, applies both to productive 'types' and 'tokens,' the former consisting of broader 'patterns' of representation (schemas and subschemas) and the latter of particularly replicated-and-disseminated, individual micro-constructions (cf. Ceauşescu's ubiquitous portrait or Mussolini's threshings as shown in Chapter 3, Figures 3.7-3.14).

This brings us to a final point regarding productivity. In linguistics, as mentioned, productivity is understood in terms of how established rules or patterns license or 'sanction' novel utterances – that is, in Construction Grammar terms, the more ways in which a given construction can be creatively deployed or extended, the more 'productive' the construction is said to be (Goldberg 2019: 62-65). It would be wrong, though, I think, to outright equate linguistic productivity with the kind of multimodal-yet-hypervisual image productivity that we have observed in Mussolini's and Ceauşescu's cult systems thus far. Drawing a picture or putting together a digital image for mass reproduction and print, for example, are skills obviously very different one from the other let alone from linguistic production. People do not simply 'create' images in the same way that they produce language. At the same time, though, if one assumes – as I do here – that the cognitive-conceptual *basis* of creative production is the same, in the broad sense of constructions and their blending, it follows that the recognition and redeployment of these constructions, even across different modalities, are not wholly disconnected. A joke told or heard, or a caricature drawn or viewed that satirizes Mussolini's Caesarian pretensions, for example, will both draw on the same stored constructions. This is not to say that modality does not matter, simply that it is not wholly determining.[15]

When it comes to the kind of 'productivity' that will be addressed here, moreover, it is crucial to bear in mind that, due to censorship, proscription, and the clandestine nature of their exchange, many of the kinds of constructs produced – indeed, perhaps even most – took place in very localized conditions, between small groups of Italians or Romanians, or even between individuals, who trusted one another. What is produced, then, is expected to vary and considerably so, on a very micro-scale – the kind of community-wide, omnipresent rhetoric and imagery of official cult representations simply cannot be matched by and in their clandestine reappropriations. The dialogic structure that cult systems evince, then, is produced by a curious mixture of the macro and micro such that individuals' personal constructional networks become populated by both conventional and idiosyncratic cult constructions, both blendable to a variety of ends.[16]

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[15] While not phrased in this way nor precisely concerned with the question of multimodal productivity as I am here, the musings of W. J. T. Mitchell (e.g. 1986, 1994, 2012, 2015) on the nature of mental imagery and the relationship between (e.g.) 'text' and 'image' or the 'visual' and the 'verbal' have informed a great deal of this dissertation's extension of Construction Grammar to visual data.

[16] Such a 'mixture,' it should be noted, is also in line with recent work in Construction Grammar addressing questions of online meaning construction and the postulation of 'local,' ephemeral constructions that emerge over the course of a single dialogue or interaction, and thus on a very micro level. For example, based on Du Bois' (2014) theory of

With this all said, we can now move on to the data.

6.3 – Jokes

Political jokes – or political humor more generally – are surely one of the most cited and frequently studied means of transgressing, responding to, or simply engaging with a system of power. Abundant research on the topic both at large and relating to particular national-historical contexts has shed light on the many ways in which it can function – publicly or privately, wieldable by common citizens, the media, and figures of power alike – variously as critique, entertainment, resistance, subversion, denigration, a 'safety valve,' or even, seemingly paradoxically, in the service of the status quo at which it pokes fun.[17] Such research has proven particularly productive in the context of authoritarian regimes, too, given the nature of the power dynamics at play in them, with foci often on the 'how,' the 'why,' and to what ends political humor is deployed given the risk of incrimination, punishment, or other retribution for those who engage in it.[18]

Under authoritarian systems, a key characteristic of such jokes is their acute ephemerality, limited to their particular moment of exchange such that – should they not be overheard by unfriendly ears – they leave no incriminating trace. They are thus a curious kind of discursive hybrid, at once highly intimate yet still public affairs, to be shared only among trusted confidants but drawing on shared experiences, perceptions, and beliefs accessible to a much wider community. Freud (1960), in speaking to humor more generally, highlighted these features of jokes, considering one of their requisite features to be a 'psychical accord' between teller and hearer so as to share in a communal burst of relief or 'release.' This communality is underscored by Wedeen (1999: 121), who considers the sharing of jokes making fun of Asad's cult to have

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dialogic syntax, Brône and Zima (2014) consider the possibility of a 'dialogic construction grammar,' characterized by 'ad hoc constructions' that emerge dynamically over the course of a conversation and acquire 'micro-entrenchment' status (a use of 'micro' that, of course, differs from that intended by the term 'micro-construction' introduced in Chapter 2, expounded on in Chapter 3, and used throughout this dissertation). Other, similar approaches and considerations are developed in Imo (2015) via 'Interactional Construction Grammar,' Hoffmann's (2017b, 2021) attention to the role of working memory in online meaning construction, and contributions in Auer & Pfänder (2011) on 'emergence' broadly as a process.

[17] On political humor 'at large' see, as a handful of examples, Schutz (1977), Larsen (1980), Speier (1975/1998), Freedman (2008), and Tsakona & Popa (2011), the last of which provides a recent and thorough interdisciplinary overview of the literature and serves as an introduction to a volume that comes at questions of political humor from a range of cultures, languages, and periods. On issues with the 'safety valve' metaphor, a widely posited theory of political humor that stipulates that the tolerance of sporadic, localized acts of transgression precludes larger-scale, organized acts of rebellion and is therefore in a regime's best interest (e.g. Speier 1998: 1395), see Declercq & El Khachab (2021) and discussions in Wedeen (1999: 88-92), Oring (2004: 220-221), and Davies (2007). On the various social functions of humor (e.g. its use as a social corrective, its role in establishing or reinforcing in- vs. out-groups, its incorporation into forms of spectacle and entertainment, etc.), often tightly bound to the political, see Nilsen (1990), Billig (2005), and Jones (2010).

[18] These endeavors have tended to take shape in rich, detailed, and thorough examinations of specific authoritarian contexts that explore the peculiarities of the humor – what is allowed and disallowed, what forms and subjects do such jokes take and why, how it relates (if at all) to processes of subversion, resistance, or eventual revolt – that emerges within them (though see Dundes 1971; Oring 2004; and Davies 2007, 2014 for some assessments broader in scope). Some remarkable such examples include: within the context of the Soviet Union, Dobrenko & Jonsson-Skradol (2022) and Oushakine (2012) on state-sponsored laughter under Stalinism, Klumbytė (2022) on Soviet Lithuania in particular, and Astapova (2021) on post-Soviet Belarus. See Herzog (2011) for Nazi Germany, Riley (2008) for the German Democratic Republic, Pi-Sunyer (1977) for Franco's Spain, and Tam & Wesoky (2018) for various approaches to humor in communist China. Finally, see Badarneh (2011) for Arab political jokes at large, as well as Wedeen (1999: chapter 4; 2013) and Declercq & El Khachab (2021) for studies focused on Syria and Egypt, respectively.

"operate[d] effectively as resistance to the cult to the extent that they allow[ed] tellers and listeners to overcome the isolation and atomization that official performative practices induce[d]." As a "a *reductio ad absurdum*," the political joke allows for, per the folklorist Elliot Oring, a "momentary revision of reality" (2004: 227). As he puts it:

> The political joke, with its incongruities and its mechanisms for making those incongruities appropriate (Oring 2003: 13-26), allows for a momentary revision of reality. The joke is a *reductio ad absurdum* by means of which the regime, the leaders, the incompetence, the hardships, the duplicity, the surveillance, and even the terror are domesticated and discounted. In each of these jokes, a space is created – however small – that the party cannot penetrate. The joke rejects conventional logic and with its own counter-logics affirms the independence and integrity of tellers and hearers… These jokes do not merely express opinion. They objectify that opinion and crystallize it in aesthetic forms (2004: 227).

Thus, as mentioned earlier, such jokes draw on and upend the 'conventional logic' imposed by the regime and its representations, not unlike Bakhtin's (1984) conception of the medieval carnival and 'carnivalesque' discourse in which the powerful, the sacred, and regular order and discourse are inverted and mocked, redeployed at their own expense. Our first such example is an Italian joke, provided below in (2), that takes as its template one of Mussolini's most common titles following the conquest of Ethiopia, *fondatore dell'Impero* 'founder of the empire:'

(2) Salutate nel Duce il fondatore della fame[19]
Salute the Duce the founder of hunger

This joke, which dates from 1940, is emblematic of much of the humor that crops up in (response to) authoritarian regimes. On the one hand, as mentioned, it draws from an established template: in this instance, a representation of Mussolini as *fondatore dell'Impero* that circulated widely in Fascist discourse. In fact, the entire phrase on which (2) is based possessed significant salience of both kinds, coined as it was by the deeply loathed and incessantly mocked Fascist Party secretary, Achille Starace, in 1936 and frequently used as an opener to Mussolini's many speeches (Galeotti 2001: 11). More than an oral expression, however, it was turned into a slogan and disseminated across a range of media, as illustrated in Figures 6.1-6.2, and consequently can be considered an emergent cult construction in its own right.

On the other hand, however, the punchline of the joke presents a clear alteration of the formula on which it draws, substituting *impero* 'empire' for *fame* 'hunger.' This is an example of what Seana Coulson (2001, 2015) refers to as *frame shifting*, the process of "semantic reorganization that occurs when incoming information is inconsistent with an initial interpretation" (2001: xii).[20] The hearer of the joke in (2) is thus primed, based on the joke's initial presentation,

[19] Taken from Vacca (2011: 182), my translation. Another version is provided on page 190: *Quel fonditore* [sic] *della fame, Duce del Cazzo*! ('That founder of hunger, fucking Duce'). Vacca's book is an extraordinary compilation of jokes, stories, quips, and insults belittling Mussolini as recorded in the reports of the secret police between 1930-1945. It is a rarity of a work focusing exclusively on clandestine humor under Fascism, though see Passerini (1984: chapter 2) for additional examples and discussion as well as Aquilanti (2015) and Gundle (2015) for regime-sanctioned humor, which is, of course, not entirely dissociable from its clandestine counterpart.

[20] See also Victor Raskin's (1985) notion of script switching, which is essentially the same idea. I follow Coulson's terminology principally because she situates her framework within conceptual blending theory, as do I.

to expect one conclusion (i.e. *impero*) that is then contradicted and usurped by the insertion of something novel, unexpected, and incongruous with this original presentation in its place – in this case, *fame* – which in turn leads to a reanalysis of the joke and a humorous effect.[21] No longer the founder of the resuscitated Italian empire, Mussolini has instead been construed as the figure responsible for widespread hunger brought about as much by autarchy as by World War II.

Figure 6.1: *Salutate nel Duce* engraving (date unknown)[22]

The point to be made here, though, is that the 'shift' is the result of a process of blending wherein an established representation (i.e. construction) of Mussolini serves as an input space that is blended with a frame of HUNGER in another. The result is an incongruity that, given the contextual dimensions of Italy in 1940 either on the precipice of entering or already entangled in World War II, is humorous in nature, if darkly so. Thus, we might say, a construction (subschema) of Mussolini_FOUNDER OF EMPIRE has been *transferred* – via its blending with a frame of HUNGER, incongruous with its constative dimensions – into a new context (that is, a construct) and has thus been imbued with new meaning.[23] This is depicted in Figure 6.3, with the dotted red line representing the joke's frame shifting from the expected one of ITALIAN EMPIRE (evoked inherently alongside the construction Mussolini_FOUNDER OF EMPIRE) to the invoked frame of HUNGER.

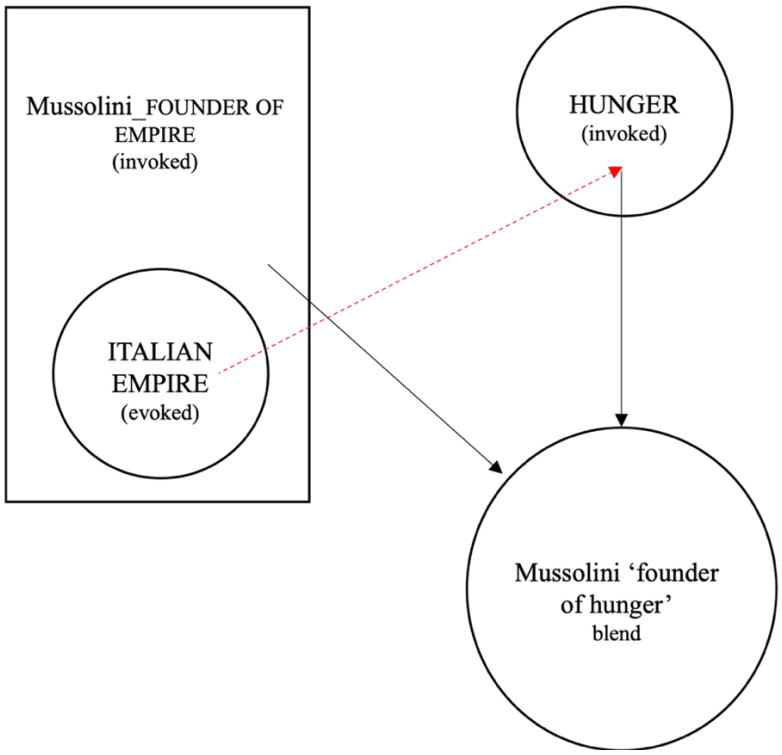
[21] Although it is far outside the scope of this dissertation, it is worth mentioning that Coulson has validated her model with robust experimental data demonstrating the psycho- and neurolinguistic reality of frame shifting (e.g. the processing 'cost' associated with it; see Coulson 2015 for an overview).

[22] Photograph by Gianni Valerio, dated January 2015. Retrieved from *Ventennio Oggi* in accordance with the Creative Commons license. Accessed January 15, 2023, link to web address here: https://www.ventenniooggi.it/vicenza-scritte--motti-del-ventennio?lightbox=dataItem-kmdqyex72.

[23] I will remark here in passing that blending, as a cognitive process, is not in *itself* responsible for humor – not all blends are humorous, and not all things humorous are necessarily blends (Attardo 2021: 361; see also Dynel 2011). As humor itself (i.e. *why* something is funny) is not my focus here, I will simply refer the reader to Attardo (1994, 1997, 2020), Brône, Feyaerts & Veale (2015), and Ritchie (2018) and references therein for thorough discussions of it from cognitive, linguistic, and indeed cognitive-linguistic perspectives.

Figure 6.2: *Salutate nel Duce* poster (~1936-1937)[24]

Figure 6.3: 'Founder of Hunger' blend



[24] Poster designed by Piero Todeschini. Image retrieved January 15, 2023 from *Catalogo generale dei Beni Culturali* and included in accordance with Creative Commons License CC-BY 4.0. Link to web address here: https://catalogo.beniculturali.it/detail/HistoricOrArtisticProperty/0500670477.

A second example is a longer, parodic adaptation that draws on the regime's penchant for self-sacralization,[25] presenting a host of different Mussolinian representations to whom appeals are made in the form of a prayer. It is provided below in (3):

(3) La preghiera degli italiani ('The Prayer of the Italians')[26]

O Duce amato – va all'inferno	O beloved Duce – go to Hell
O Duce Somaro – scompari!	O you ass of a Duce – get lost
O Duce bello – squagliati!	O handsome Duce – vanish into thin air
O Duce gonfio – sparisci	O puffed up Duce – disappear
O Duce oceanico – va morì ammazzato	O oceanic Duce – drop dead
O Duce santo – va farti benedire	O blessed Duce – be damned
O Duce alato – va in Marmarica	O winged Duce – go to the front line
O Duce nocchiero – affoga nel fango e così sia – presto e bene	O Captain Duce – take a running jump the sooner the better, so be it

Luisa Passerini (1987: 76), who presents and discusses this prayer, notes that it was too complicated to be passed on orally and was instead discovered stuck to a billboard in Turin in 1941, referred to in the police report as the "well-known libelous manuscript," indicating that it had some circulation and thus salience in the community. She further remarks that the inclusion of terms such as 'Captain,' 'winged,' and 'oceanic' were drawn explicitly from official regime rhetoric and, as such, when "taken out of context, caused great amusement to those who were aware of their contrived sound" (ibid., 76). Yet the prayer, curiously, in fact intersperses such 'official' representations with novel, subversive ones in *O Duce Somaro* 'ass' and *O Duce gonfio* 'puffed up' (inflated). The former, for its part, constitutes an example of the well-attested practice of debasing Mussolini via his equation with animals (ibid., 110; Vacca 2011: 23-24), and the latter clearly draws on the countless representations of Mussolini's pompous, virile posture (cf. Figures 3.17-3.20). Both, however, are also suggestive of the kind of localized constructionalization that was suggested above at the end of section 6.2.2, their (micro-)productivity evinced in their easy amalgamation with reappropriated official representations, each transferred in and blended in a chain to produce a derisive prayer rife with satire.

Jokes, anecdotes, and frequently humor-tinged *zvonuri* 'rumors' also proliferated under Ceauşescu's reign.[27] Gabriela Glăvan (2019a: 158), for example, remarks that, despite the criminalization of jokes that might have fit the broad label of "conspiracy against social order," an "immensely rich folklore" nonetheless flourished in Ceauşescu's Romania, taking as its subject not only the great *Conducător* and his wife but also aspects of everyday life such as endless lines

[25] On Fascism's religious aspects, see Chapter 1, section 1.5.1 and Chapter 2, note 6.

[26] Taken from Passerini (1984: 87). The English translations given are those from the (1987) translation of the book by Robert Lumley and Jude Bloomfield (pg. 76).

[27] Many such jokes, anecdotes, and rumors have been compiled, published, and analyzed, whether as part of specifically Romanian anthologies (e.g. Ştefănescu 1991a,b) or those dedicated to political-humoristic production in the Eastern Bloc as a whole (e.g. Banc & Dundes 1990; Niculescu Grasso 1999), often times in combination with commentary. Romanian jokes under communism in particular have also been examined at length, and from a variety of disciplinary perspectives, in Sampson (1984); Cochran (1989); Cioroianu (2005: chapter 5); Savu (2013); Marin (2015; 2016a: 447-459); and Glăvan (2019a,b), while others have treated their 'afterlives' in a post-1989 Romania from perspectives of collective (counter)memory, nostalgia, and fantasies of revenge (e.g. Georgescu 2010; Manole 2013). Contemporary applications of Ceauşescu's image will be considered in the dissertation's conclusion.

at the grocery store, widespread food shortages, the curtailment of electricity, heating, and hot water, the ubiquity of the Securitate, and the RCP's droning ideology. Indeed, a great many of the jokes presented and discussed in various anthologies are not explicitly about Ceauşescu nor his wife *per se*, their punchlines instead centering on quotidian hardships. At the same time, though, regardless of the topic, Ceauşescu is, it is also quite clear, unavoidably evoked. That is, and per Robert Cochran's (1989: 261) assessment, Ceauşescu's "own brutal insistence [on being] the most omnipresent figure in Romanian life," ensured that "[i]n laughter as in life, [Ceauşescu] is at the center" – even if not explicitly invoked by name. This underscores the foundational role that *conceptual metonymy*, as outlined in Chapter 4, can also play in the deployment of such humoristic transference-blends. We can take as examples the jokes below in (4-5):

(4) Timpul nu vrea să se încălzească, aşa se pare că n-a primit indicaţii preţioase.[28]
The weather doesn't want to warm up, so it seems it hasn't received any valuable instructions.

(5) Întrebare: Ce este coada?[29]
Question: What is this line?
Răspuns: Adunarea generală a oamenilor muncii pentru alegerea delegaţiilor la Congresul Foamei.
Answer: The general assembly of working people to elect delegates to the Congress of Hunger.

First, it is apparent that in neither of the above jokes is Ceauşescu invoked expressly by name. Yet, at the same time, in each of their interpretations, for the incongruities to be (partially) resolved and the jokes 'gotten,' Ceauşescu is nonetheless brought in, 'presenced' in each of their punchlines in line with the indexical-metonymic symbolic evocation discussed in Chapter 4.[30] The joke in (4), then, while seemingly simply addressing some lingering winter weather, can instead be understood as constituting a metonymic evocation of the Ceauşescu 'in *vizită*' subschema first discussed in Chapter 3 through the inclusion of *indicaţii preţioase* 'precious instructions.' That is, since Ceauşescu routinely gave out such instructions during each of his *vizite de lucru*, which were dutifully reported in the press (Petrescu 1998: 235), they here function as a metonymic vehicle for this particular cult construction. The joke thus presents another example of frame shifting, entailing a reanalysis away from inclement weather to *incapacitated* weather, unable to improve without Ceauşescu's treasured guidance and expertise.

The joke in (5), in turn, presents a question-answer format in which an onlooker references a long line – a common sight in Ceauşescu's Romania, especially in the 1980s when this joke was told – and asks what it is for. The response, rather than simply noting that it was for some food items (as would be typical of corresponding non-joke rejoinders), takes a conventional, prolix formula characteristic of the press[31] and, as with the frame shifting in (2) above with Mussolini

[28] Taken from Marin (2016a: 444), no date given. My translation.
[29] Taken from Ştefănescu (1991a: 106), my translation. The joke is dated November 16, 1988.
[30] It can be noted in passing that the presence or presentation of incongruities on the one hand, and then their partial resolution on the other, are widely considered to be the two most fundamental aspects of humor. See Attardo (2020: chapter 4) for a detailed overview, as well as Oring (2003) on the idea of partial resolution of an 'appropriate incongruity' and Abdel-Raheem (2018) for a multimodal, blending approach.
[31] Such formulaic, stilted, protracted, and – when either read or heard – repetitive expressions are emblematic of what is often referred to as the *limbă de lemn* 'wooden language' of Romanian and other Cold-War European communisms.

fondatore, substitutes the final word for the punchline, 'hunger.' In so doing it at once subverts the 'constative' meaning of the construction from which it draws and underscores the realities of Romanian life – long lines, little food, and widespread hunger. More than this, though, the particular expression invoked is a clear reference to the RCP elections as they would be reported in the press, with the expected 'RCP' substituted for the otherwise incongruous 'hunger.' Here, then, the metonymic evocation of Ceauşescu falls out from his own metonymic conflation with the RCP, which remains intact despite its literal 'absence' from the joke in question.

In other jokes, reference to Ceauşescu was explicit, such as those provided below in (6-8). These jokes came in many forms, including puns exploiting the phonology of his name (6), the refashioning of ubiquitous RCP slogans (7), or the telling of short, fictional stories in which he would often feature as the protagonist (8).[32]

(6) Întrebare: Cum mai e numită România?[33]
Question: What is Romania called?
Răspuns: Ceauşwitz.
Answer: Ceauşwitz.

(7) (a) Stima noastră şi mândria/Ceauşescu – sărăcia![34]
Our esteem and pride/Ceauşescu – poverty!
(b) Stima noastră şi mândria/Ceauşescu – România!
Our esteem and pride/Ceauşescu – Romania!

(8) Ceauşescu a găsit metoda de a scăpa de datorii: vinde în străinătate epoca de aur.[35]
Ceauşescu found the way to pay off his debts: he's selling 'the golden age' abroad.

Examples of phonological puns of Ceauşescu's name à la *Ceauşwitz* – which clearly plays on the phonological similarity between his name and that of the infamous Nazi concentration camp – were abundant and constitute fascinating, sound-based metaphoric blends.[36] In the case of (6), a blend of ROMANIA IS AUSCHWITZ is prompted, with any of the myriad possible mappings between the input frames projected depending on the context, but it is accessed metonymically – that is, as there is no overt reference to Romania in the answer, the pun requires the hearer to 'make the connection,' as it were, straightforward as that may be, between the nation and its phonologically-

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See Zafiu (2007) for a detailed description of the Romanian variety, which was often deployed in parodied form, as it is in (5), in many jokes of the era.

[32] These stories also featured widely in the Soviet Union and other Eastern European countries. They have been extensively studied in the Soviet context in particular, where they are referred to as *anekdoty* 'anecdotes' (see e.g. Draitser 1982; Yurchak 1997, 2006; and Smirnova 2014 for various analyses). In Romania, apart from Ceauşescu the other principal protagonist of such narrative jokes was Bulă, a character variously naïve or intelligent and whose many (mis)adventures mocked as they highlighted daily depravations.

[33] Taken from Ştefănescu (1991a: 98), my translation. The joke is dated May 31, 1987.

[34] Taken from Marin (2016a: 451), who attributes the joke to Ştefănescu (1991b: 98) [my translation]. It can be noted, too, that *Stima noastră şi mândria* was also the title of a patriotic song from the era, with the source of 'esteem' and 'pride' lyrically ambiguous between Romania and Ceauşescu. It can be listened to here (last accessed March 30, 2023): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uyNTcWwFeiY&embeds_euri=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.hotnews.ro%2F&source_ve_path=MjM4NTE&feature=emb_title.

[35] Taken from Ştefănescu (1991a: 87), my translation. The joke is dated December 12, 1985.

[36] Other examples are provided in Cioroianu (2005: 113-114) and include references to Bucharest as *Ceauşima* and to Ceauşescu as *Maosescu*, each playing on the phonology of – and, frame-metonymically, thus accessing frames of – Hiroshima and Mao Zedong, respectively.

invoked ruler.[37] This can be attributed to the salience of the conflation of Ceauşescu with Romania which, as we have seen in Chapter 4, also informs other metaphoric-metonymic constructional blends within his cult system such as THE NATION IS A BODY.

This conflation is also exploited in (7) through the recasting of the regime-sanctioned slogan in (7b) with that in (7a). With clear attention to prosody, *Ro-mâ-ni-a* is switched out for *să-ră-ci-a* 'poverty,' the emergent conflation now not one of Ceauşescu with his country, but of Ceauşescu as 'cause' with his 'effect' – not anything worthy of esteem or pride, but widespread poverty. Such a joke clearly demonstrates a case of frame shifting, too, which lends the joke its punch due to the incongruity it generates with one of Ceauşescu's principal indexical metonyms – the 'imagery of progress' also discussed in Chapter 4.

Finally, the widely proclaimed Romanian *Epocă de Aur* 'golden age' under Ceauşescu discussed in the previous chapter is wittily invoked in (8). Here it is portrayed as a valuable export, thus poking fun at Ceauşescu's obsession with paying off the national debt in the 1980s as it underscores the stark divide between the regime's declarations of prosperity and everyday life in the same breath (again, see the 'imagery of progress' from Chapter 4).[38] The joke thus transfers the *Epocă de Aur* construction out of its typical trumpeted ubiquity and blends it as a commodity, going along with the Ceauşescu regime's insistence on its existence yet suggesting that, while this may well be true, it is certainly not something that Romanians have ever seen nor experienced.

6.4 – Caricatures

Another area in which the transference of cult constructions can be evidenced is their incorporation into creative caricatures. As with jokes, caricatures have a long and rich history deeply intertwined with politics and political expression.[39] Leaders of all stripes, politicians, and

[37] Réka Benczes (2013: 174-175) discusses the role of phonological analogy via rhyme in the generation of novel compounds based in existing ones – e.g. *grass ceiling* from *glass ceiling*, *knee-mail* from *e-mail* – that I think can be applied more broadly, i.e. also to the kind of sound-based metaphoric blend in (6). She further suggests, I think rightly, that "[p]honological similarity to an already existing compound might be able to bring forth conceptual similarities between the source compound and the novel coinage, thereby enhancing the humorous effect of the novel expression" (ibid., 175).

[38] Some context is in order here: Romania's national debt rose from $0.5 billion in 1976 to a staggering $10.4 billion just five years later in 1981 (Deletant 2019: 288). Paying off this debt as quickly as possible became an unequivocal obsession for Ceauşescu, who declared in 1982 that he would do so by 1990, a goal requiring that Romania drastically reduce its imports and greatly increase its exports, particularly of foodstuffs (ibid.) As a consequence, the infamous austerity measures were thus put in place, with rationings beginning in some locales as early as 1982 and reaching, on the eve of the 1989 revolution, allotments as bleak as "one kilo of sugar, one kilo of flour, a 500-gram pack of margarine, and five eggs" per person, per month (ibid.; see also Ban 2012).

[39] Like the scholarship on political humor, that on caricature is vast and wide ranging. Earlier attempts at coming to an explicitly 'political' theory of caricature include Streicher (1967) and Coupe (1969), though the term 'caricature' itself has its roots in sixteenth-century Italy and analyses of it long predate these, often approaching it and its subjects from a general perspective even if these tended to be political in nature (e.g. observations by Baudelaire [cf. Hannoosh 1992], the work of Ernst Gombrich [e.g. 1973; Kris & Gombrich 1938], etc.). Political caricature became particularly popular in England in the eighteenth century and in France in the nineteenth (Wechsler 1983: 317), and there is a rich vein of research on celebrated caricaturists of these periods such as James Gillray (1756-1815), Charles Philipon (1800-1861), and Honoré-Victorin Daumier (1808-1879) (e.g. Childs 1997; Kerr 2000; Hunt 2003; Haywood 2013) whose works set the stage for the kinds of caricature to be discussed in this section. Two pieces additionally worth noting are Cherstich (2014), a relevant study on the interaction between official propagandistic representations of Libya's Muammar Gaddafi when he was alive and those that emerged in the wake of his death, and Fischer (2016), a compilation of Pulitzer Prize-winning cartoons based on a range of historical events, figures, and attitudes from the 1920s through to the present.

public figures have for centuries been made the subject of visual satire, whether openly or in secret, often at the risk of imprisonment. Definitions of caricature have tended to focus on its simultaneous *individuating* and *exaggerating* functions – that is, the caricatured individual must at once remain recognizable as a specific person as particular, salient of their features are markedly distorted to some end (Perkins 1975; Rhodes 1996: 9-11).[40] Most often this distortion is based on physical features such as perceived defects, but it can also draw on prominent linguistic, gestural, or behavioral attributes in multimodal caricatures such that it is clear *who* is being caricatured, even in excess (Rhodes 1996: 11; Andrews 2019, 2020).

Perhaps as a consequence of his particular corporeality and its centrality to his image, Mussolini was a prime target for caricature, both domestically in the earliest years of his regime and even more so abroad once his relationship with Hitler took off in the second half of the 1930s and into World War II.[41] Variously targeted were his distinctive facial features, his virility (which often went hand in hand with jabs at his intelligence, via frequent depictions as a brutish, bumbling oaf), and his unquenchable thirst for power. Numerous such examples are provided in Figures 6.4-6.7.

Beginning with Figure 6.4, the caricature consists of a 1924 cartoon published in the satirical periodical *Il becco giallo* that can be read as a clear lampoon of Mussolini's Caesarean pretensions. Mussolini himself is readily detectable as the image's focal point, perched atop a horse, bedecked in Roman imperial dress, and waving to a crowd of Roman-style would-be *camicie nere*. The scene, an apparent parody of the March on Rome, is riddled with elements constitutive of the ANCIENT ROME frame, from Mussolini's attire to the incorporation of *fasces*, soldiers, the acronym S.P.Q.R.,[42] and even the caricature's caption – *Il trionfo di Cesare* 'The Triumph of Caesar.' The salience of Ancient Rome as a motif in Fascist discourse, as we saw in the last chapter, alongside Mussolini's frequent depiction as Augustus, ensured that such a representation attained conventional status and, hence, the emergence of a Mussolini_Augustus construction-blend. Here, in Figure 6.4, we can consider the caricature in question to constitute a redeployment of this construction, a transference out of its typical context connoting majesty into a new one of parody. Rather than an instance of frame shifting, then, the caricature can be read as a case of 'literalization' (Scott 2004), taking the Mussolini_Augustus construction-blend at face value and prompting the viewer to contextually infer its opposite.[43]

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[40] The psychology of caricature recognition, it is worth noting, has been studied at length as part of broader inquiries into the dynamics of facial processing and recognition (e.g. Valentine 1991; Rhodes 1996; Lewis & Johnston 1998) in part due to what is referred to as the 'caricature effect,' or the seeming paradox that distorted images seem to in fact be recognized better (or at least equally as well) as their veridical counterparts (Tanaka & Smith 1996: 306; Perkins 1975).

[41] Satirical periodicals such as *L'Asino* and *Il becco giallo* enjoyed widespread readership and circulated until 1925 and 1926, respectively (see Del Buono & Tornabuoni 1972 and discussions in Mascha 2011, Aquilanti 2015, and Pagano 2020, as well as Gundle 2010 for a broader synthesis of the role of caricature and satire in the downfall of Mussolini). While they will not be considered here, numerous compilations of images, cartoons, and propaganda lampooning Mussolini from abroad (often alongside Hitler and, particularly in the US, also Hideki Tojo) have been put forth and can be found in Gianeri (1945), Zapponi (1981), and Sturani (1995: 321-330), not to mention Jack Oakie's parodic portrayal as 'Benzino Napaloni' in Charlie Chaplin's classic (1940) *The Great Dictator*. Also of note are Tono Zancanaro's famous *Gibbo*, who will be discussed in the following pages, as well as the Slovenian painter Tone Kralj's subtle yet extraordinary incorporation of both Mussolini and Hitler into several Church murals, depicting them as villainous figures in a variety of biblical scenes (Pelikan 2020).

[42] The acronym S.P.Q.R. was a commonplace sight in Ancient Rome and refers to the government of the Roman Republic, standing for *Senatus Populusque Romanus,* or 'The Roman Senate and People.'

[43] This presumably would not have been difficult, given that, as mentioned, the caricature appeared in a satirical periodical.

Figure 6.4: Mussolini caricature as Roman Emperor (1924)[44]

Mussolini's physiognomy – though certainly not absent in Figure 6.4 given his large face and signature grimace – takes center stage in Figures 6.5 and 6.6, both of which provide caricatures that, in essence, reduce him to his legendary facial features. This, of course, on the one hand simply reflects a standard of caricatures – as the psychologist Gillian Rhodes puts it, caricatures "may be effective because they exaggerate features that are strongly associated with particular faces, i.e. features that are distinctive for those faces" (1996: 118). Yet, on the other hand, the peculiarity of Mussolini's face, its features, and their centrality to his image suggest something more is at work. Indeed, both caricatures are markedly composite in nature, consisting in simplistic lines and shapes arranged in the form of a crude face. That this crude face is unmistakably Mussolini's, however, is a byproduct of (a) the salience of his own features – his eyes, forehead, head, chin, and mouth most prominent here – and (b) the metonymic link that they, as we have seen, afford to him as a whole. In this sense, Figure 6.5 in particular is rather extraordinary given that *just* eyes – bulging though they are – and an expansive forehead are perceptible, figured into a cross expression. Such caricatures, then, clearly draw from the same kind of schematic representations responsible for the Mussolini_SILHOUETTE schemas observed in Chapter 4, capable of evoking his presence in a host of different manners and contexts, whether celebratory, ludic, or disparaging.

[44] Taken from Del Buono & Tornabuoni (1972: 106).

Figure 6.5: Mussolini facial caricature A (1923)[45]

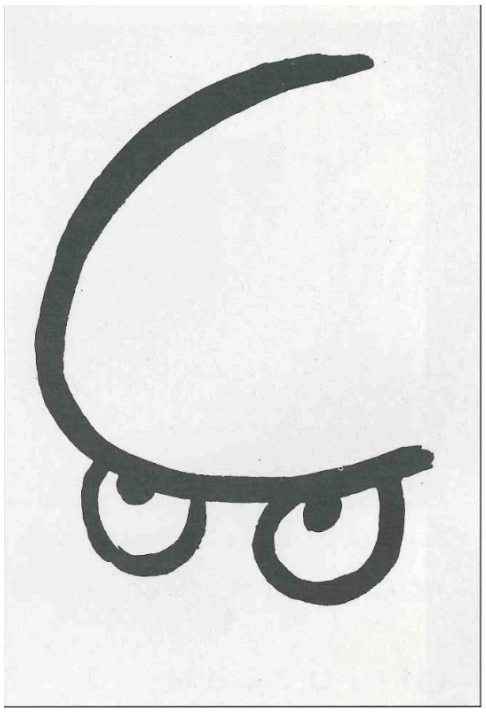
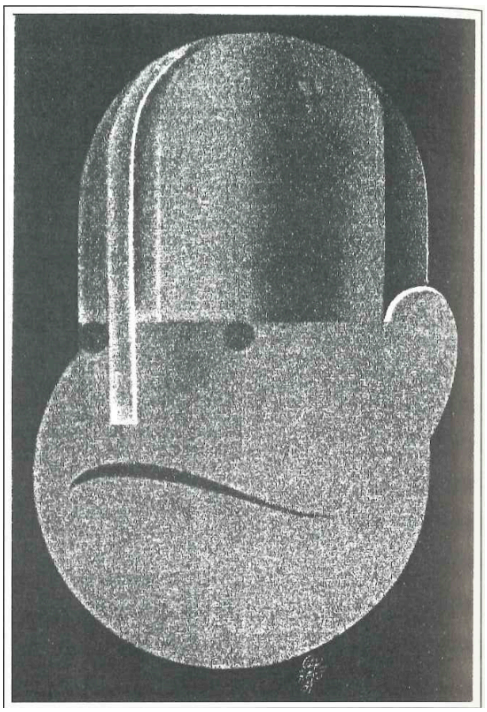


Figure 6.6: Mussolini facial caricature B (1931)[46]



Furthermore, caricatures could also draw on specific images that achieved wide enough circulation to be afforded (micro-)constructional status, as in Figure 6.7 below. Simply titled *Lui* 'Him,' it presents Mussolini with a highly exaggerated forehead and scowl, sporting a crown on which is engraved *guai a chi me la tocca* 'trouble to whomever touches it.' Beyond an ostensible caricature of his thirst for power, it very clearly draws on the same kinds of physiognomic schemas as Figures 6.5-6.6. More than this, however, it also appears to be a caricature based on the famous (1919) photograph by G. Caminada (Figure 6.8) that enjoyed widespread circulation, and particularly in the mid-1920s when Figure 6.7 was released (Sturani 1995: 262).[47] Caminada's photograph, in fact, is considered a "groundbreaking symbolic representation" in its emphasis of his trademark facial features, looming into view out of the background's sheer blackness, accreditable for putting into motion "the visual shorthand that would make Mussolini immediately recognizable" – in other words, his face's forceful metonymy (Swan 2020: 260).

[45] Image courtesy of the Archivio Sturani in Rome (see Sturani 1995: 236). The drawing, by Sergio Tofano, earned first prize in a competition of Mussolini caricatures (ibid., 237).

[46] Image courtesy of the Archivio Sturani in Rome (see Sturani 1995: 236). The drawing is by Paolo Garretto, a well-known caricaturist of the period, and Sturani notes that it takes up a similar version from 1926 (ibid., 237).

[47] The mass reproduction of this photograph coincided with the wake of the Matteotti scandal in 1924 (see Chapter 3, note 61), and as such can be seen as a calculated attempt to fortify Mussolini's 'corporeal charisma' in the face of serious damage to his public image (Sturani 1995: 262; Swan 2020: 260). It in turn featured in innumerable postcards, supplied the cover image of prints of Sarfatti's (1925/1926) widely read biography *Dux*, and inspired countless adaptations and re-renderings (see e.g. Sturani 1995: 290, where it is used to create an image of Mussolini as Napoleon). It was also, apparently, a favorite of Mussolini himself, who had it hung up over his desk at the headquarters of his newspaper, *Il Popolo d'Italia*, in Milan (Swan 2020: 261).

Figure 6.7: Mussolini caricature as king (1925)[48]

Figure 6.8: Mussolini's looming face (~1921)[49]

Perhaps the most striking caricatures, however, are those by Tono Zancanaro (1906-1985), whose famous series and its title character, *Il Gibbo*, are widely considered to constitute anti-Mussolinian satire.[50] Indeed, one cannot deny that both *Gibbo* (Figure 6.10) and its predecessor *Gibbone* (Figure 6.9) clearly invoke, as they draw from, Mussolini's physiognomy:

[48] This caricature is by the well-known illustrator Gabriele Galanatara under his pseudonym of 'Ratalanga' (see Pagano 2020: 211-212 for additional discussion). Image accessed September 11, 2022 from Wikipedia Commons. Link to web address here: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Asino_Mussolini_1924.jpg.

[49] Image courtesy of the Archivio Sturani in Rome (see Sturani 1995: 262). While the original photograph is from 1919, Sturani notes that this reproduction – in the form of a postcard – can be dated to around 1921.

[50] Although Mussolini is a clear inspiration for the character, he was not the only one nor was he ever its sole target. In fact, the seeds of *Gibbo* were apparently sewn while Zancanaro was terribly ill and bedridden in a hospital, his diagnosis causing him to visualize a grotesque figure in its damp, faded walls. Further developments and inspirations came from the title character of John Ford's (1935) film *The Informer*, Gypo Nolan, as well as an enormous fighter-man named *L'Angelo* that Zancanaro observed at a circus in Bolzano, who possessed a triangular head reminiscent of the *Duce's* (Di Genova 1997: 49-50; Gundle 2010: 22). Although just one sketch of *Gibbo* has been included here, thousands were produced between 1937 and 1945, ranging from simple line-drawings to immensely elaborate, baroque, and grotesque compositions, compilations of which (with commentary) can be found in De Grada (1964), Ragghianti (1971), and Di Genova (1997: 155-165).

Figure 6.9: The angel 'Gibbone' (1939)[51]

In true caricature fashion, both Figures 6.9 and 6.10 exaggerate Mussolini's most prominent features, from the former's noticeably triangular head, expansive forehead, enormous mouth, and dominating nose to the latter's bulging eyes, bald head, and even (indeed, exceedingly) larger mouth, all taken to the level of the truly grotesque. More than simply playing on Mussolini's corporeality, however, Figure 6.10 also constitutes another example of a caricature of a specific scene, one that we first saw in Chapter 3 and that was reprinted on numerous occasions: Mussolini with the Sword of Islam, a particular, productive, and iconic example of the Mussolini_WARRIOR schema, reproduced in Figure 6.11 for comparison.[52] Viewed one atop the other, one is struck by their clear similarity in the face of otherwise manifest difference. It begs the question of what precisely Zancanaro intended with this caricature, to which we can only provide speculatory answers. For one, the blend that it prompts presents a rather decided 'clash' (in the sense of Fauconnier and Turner 2002) – that is, Mussolini's WARRIOR attributes, though discernable given the (specific) Mussolini 'as warrior' micro-construction that clearly serves as an input space, are seemingly nulled in the blend by his apparent incapacity to act on them, his horse crushed beneath his copious flesh.

[51] Retrieved September 18, 2022 from *Archivio Storico Tono Zancanaro*, another replete resource on the life and works of Zancanaro, with permission of archivist. Link to web address here: https://www.tonozancanaro.it/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&id=52&Itemid=596#galleryef15e7062a-1.

[52] The history behind the taking, retouching, cropping, and dissemination of this photograph, and the context in which this all occurred, are amply documented in Wright (2005) and Swan (2020: 27; 286-288) and provide a telling glimpse into the Fascist propagandistic machine. A statue of its likeness was also commissioned and set up in Tripoli, and can be viewed at the link here (last accessed March 30, 2023): https://patrimonio.archivioluce.com/luce-web/imageViewPort/720?imageName=ATTUALITA/A35-171/A00086852.JPG.

Figure 6.10: Gibbo and the Sword of Islam (1944)[53]

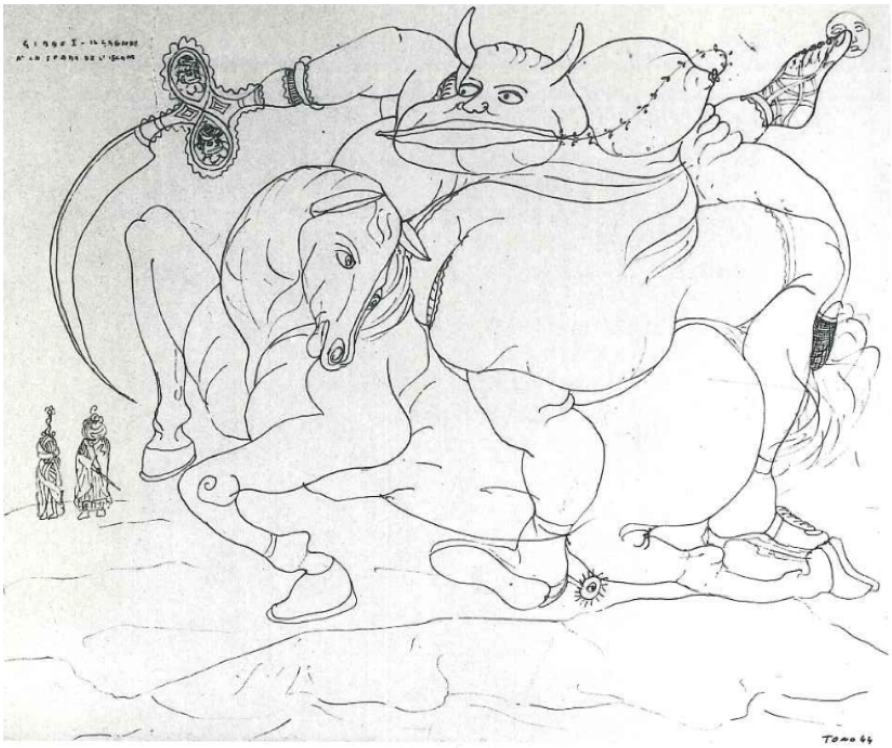


Figure 6.11: Mussolini and the Sword of Islam (1937)

[53] Taken from Di Genova (1997: 158).

6.5 – Enter Irony … Everywhere?

In stark contrast to Mussolini, caricatures of Ceauşescu are decidedly harder to come by. It seems unlikely, though, given the richness of the jokes discussed in section 5.3, that this means that no such caricatures were ever made or passed around; rather, it is likely as much a reflection of their limited survival as it is attributable to the effectiveness of the censorship imposed on the press and the arts, and the ubiquity of the *Securitate*.[54] Nonetheless, however, even without a panoply of literal caricatures from which to draw, we are not without visual data. Indeed, the many, many works of homage that were commissioned in Ceauşescu's honor provide an intriguing opportunity to analyze caricature from a different angle, one that has often been called, to reiterate a point raised earlier, 'resistance through culture.' Caterina Preda helpfully sums up the situation facing artists (but also intellectuals more broadly – see Verdery 1991) in Ceauşescu's Romania as follows:

> The Romanian artistic space of the 1970s and 1980s saw artists engaged in a complicated game of ambiguity and duplicity, creating both for official exhibitions and for smaller, more private artistic projects; complete disengagement from the official system was quite rare. In several ways, artists collaborated with the regime, were victims of the dictatorship, and helped to deconstruct its myth (2017: 254).

Given the rigidity of the Party's dictates, the consequences for not following them (economic and otherwise), and its suppression of narratives alternative to those it prescribed, any dissent or resistance to these hegemonic models, so the argument goes, had to be expressed within their reproduction, simply 'veiled' in some manner – thus, a resistance that takes shape *through* official culture. While such an approach tends to pigeonhole artists into a binary of working either 'for' or 'against' the regime, the reality of the matter – as noted in Preda's remarks cited above – was far more *ambiguous* such that whatever was produced contra the regime was also *ambivalent*, with voices dissenting Ceauşescu and his mission inextricable from those heaping on genuine praise (Verdery 1991: chapters 5-7; 310-311).[55] In such a milieu, then, sincerity, intentionality, and volition would appear to lose relevance, in turn lending themselves to the rich constructional polysemy of cult constructions and opening the door for, to borrow a term from the linguistic literature on pragmatics, 'purposive ambiguity' on the part of regime 'creators' (Kittay 1987).[56]

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[54] This is despite the 'thaw' in censorship, restriction, and repression that characterized Romania in the mid-1960s, when Ceauşescu was first elected General Secretary. In fact, research has shown that, regarding the press, the liberalization brought about by this 'thaw' was largely undone already by November of 1965 (Ceauşescu's first year in power), first by a retooling of the press laws enacted in the wake of the 9th RCP Congress and then decisively following the aforementioned 'July Theses' of 1971 that brought all forms of political, ideological, educational, and cultural activities firmly under the wing of the RCP (Şercan 2014: 7-8). This applied even to the one sanctioned humor magazine published during communism, *Urzica* ('The Nettle'), that, while featuring plenty of caricatures throughout its run, would have never permitted any of Ceauşescu (Barbu 2020).

[55] Such ambiguity and ambivalence in turn allows for the Romanian intellectual's 'dilemma' under communism to be described by Barbu (1999) in opposite terms yet to the same effect – as he puts it, intellectuals simply engaged in "assent through culture," since, due to the regime's hegemonic control of what could and could not be reproduced, there simply was no space for any real dissidence, even if what was produced was done so, for all intents and purposes, unwilfully (see also Barbu 2002).

[56] Nerlich & Clarke (2001: 4-5) provide a succinct summary of the term in their essay on polysemy: "One can frequently observe that a speaker intends a word (phrase, or sentence) to 'have' multiple meanings in context or that the hearer notices that a word (phrase, or sentence) has more than one meaning. This is what Kittay herself calls

Taken together, such ambiguity and ambivalence presuppose that any given cult construct will have more than one associable meaning – a 'literal' or 'constative' one, on the one hand, and others that – as we have signaled throughout this dissertation – will emerge and depend on the context of their 'use' or encounter.

One such emergent meaning is irony. Irony itself is a complex, diverse, and "strongly contextual" phenomenon that has been approached and theorized from myriad perspectives (Ruiz de Mendoza & Lozano-Palacio 2019: 150).[57] In her study of visual irony in photographs, Biljana Scott (2004: 35) pulls out the following three, relevant traits: irony entails an (a) "ideological component, which sets two orders of reality and associated belief systems into conflict with each other"; (b) "a dissembling component, or at least an element of differential awareness, between the ironist-cum-audience and the unwitting victim of irony"; and (c) "an incongruity, which alerts the viewer to either the intention or the potential for irony."

Curiously, each of these three traits can be observed within visual cultic production. Taking any number of regime-sanctioned constructs witnessed in Chapters 3-5, ideology is treated as a true 'performative,' as if its constative dimensions, by simple virtue of their depiction, reflect accordingly or serve to enact a particular reality. Artist intentionality, as mentioned, thus appears to be irrelevant from the regime's perspective as what is produced is, constatively, blanket adulation. Whatever irony is to emerge, then, does not fall out from anything in the visual construct *per se* but rather from its incongruous interpretation within its wider discursive context. That is, as Linda Hutcheon (1994) argues, irony relies on a kind of 'insider knowledge' shared within particular 'discursive communities' for it to be perceived or effective. Scott echoes these sentiments in her reflections on the role of the viewer in visual irony, asking:

> to what extent is an ironic viewer important in the working of irony? It has been said that irony without an audience is like one hand clapping. Irony can easily be missed but it can equally well be read into images where none was intended. There is scope both for individual differences in the perception of irony, and for changes in ironical potential over time and across context, depending in both cases on the frames of reference of an image – or of the world. If these frames of reference are shared between photographer [artist] and viewer, the ironical intent of the photographer [artist] is more likely to be recognized and appreciated (2004: 54).

The potential for irony, in this view, as located within inferences based in shared contextual knowledge between creator and viewer, becomes rampant. A telling example of what Mirela Tanta calls 'commissioned irony' we have, in fact, already seen: Dan Hatmanu's (1983) painting entitled *Anniversary*, included again on the following page in Figure 6.12.

'purposive ambiguity' (Kittay 1987: 80). The hearer either 'gets' the multiplicity of meaning intended by the speaker or she doesn't – the 'polysemous' utterance, which can be a joke or not, falls flat." They note, too, how it is equally possible that the hearer may infer or 'hear' more meanings in a speaker's utterance than intended (see the quotation by Romanian artist Dan Hatmanu supplied in Tanta 2014: 33-34 and discussed below as a seeming example).

[57] Detailed overviews are far beyond the scope of this dissertation, though important works from a literary perspective include Muecke (1970), Hutcheon (1994), and Colebrook (2004), each of which signals the historical, contextual, and social dimensions of ironic production, interpretation, and expectation. Ruiz de Mendoza & Lozano-Palacio's (2019) account is worth noting in that it seeks to combine literary insights with linguistic approaches to irony (e.g. Sperber & Wilson 1981; Clark & Gerrig 1984; Gibbs & Colston 2007; Colston & Athanasiadou 2017), which more often stress its communicative and cognitive underpinnings.

Figure 6.12: 'Anniversary' blend (1983)

An ironic reading of Figure 6.12 is in a sense quite intriguing. Simply in regurgitating the regime's supplied mandates, the painting manages to be at once effusive and derisive, prompting a surprisingly creative blend in which the historical legitimacy it constatively conveys is either 'accepted' or 'rejected' depending on the viewpoint taken in the interpretation process.[58] Moreover, the ironic reading is, apparently, what the artist himself intended. Tanta (2014: 33-34) includes a statement by Hatmanu from a 2006 interview in the newspaper *Ziarul de Iaşi* in which he maintains that *Anniversary*

> should be read between the lines. It was an act of irony… The party accepted the painting because they could not understand this type of irony. Instead, another painting of mine was considered by the Party to be tendentious, even though I did not intend that: I painted a lot of doves around Ceauşescu's head and they thought that I said through this detail that Ceauşescu had birds in his head. But I did not intend to suggest such a thing.

Whether or not he is to be believed,[59] the ironic reading of the painting is nonetheless plainly accessible, as much today as it would have been in 1980s Romania. Indeed, observed in this light, a whole range of constructs crafted apparently in homage become (re)interpretable as ironic caricatures of Ceauşescu and his megalomania, as in another painting in Figure 6.13.

[58] See Tobin & Israel (2012) for an account of irony as a viewpoint phenomenon within a mental spaces framework.
[59] Eugen Palade, a fellow prolific painter of Ceauşescu portraits, for example, denies that anyone would have ever flagrantly tried such a thing given the repercussions one risked incurring if the irony were perceived (quoted in Cioroianu 2006: 261, n15).

Figure 6.13: 'Harvest' blend (1989)[60]

In this construct, Ceauşescu is front and center, bedecked in his 'in *vizită*' costume, surrounded by Elena, party officials, and, harkening back to Chapter 4's discussion of his cult's preference to depict him 'with' his various metonyms, a range of assorted such symbols: a sea of grain ready for harvesting, a distant, flag-waving crowd, and even what appears to be a large cruise ship, naturally emblazoned with the classic CEAUŞESCU-PCR. This construct, on the one hand, checks all the Party's boxes by deploying a slew of conventional, approved cultic constructions that constatively present Ceauşescu's attentive, fruitful, and celebrated leadership. On the other hand, however, if contextual incongruities are detected between real-world realities and the construct's constative contents, then an ironic interpretation becomes wholly possible. Indeed, from this perspective, outright *absurdity* could be prompted, the concurrent deployment of several cult constructions – interrelated though they are – paradoxically achieving both coherence with cultic visuality while highlighting its incongruity with reality.[61]

Both Figures 6.12 and 6.13, then, are indicative (if not emblematic) of the constructional polysemy that comes to characterize licensed cultic representations: their constative dimensions remain fully intact, yielding a relatively tidy series of meanings of one type, as they are, simultaneously, vulnerable to a far more unruly process of semantic enrichment: irony, parody,

[60] Painting by Constantin Nițescu, oil on canvas, entitled *Working Visit to Brăila*. It is part of the collection of Romania's Muzeul Național de Artă Contemporană, included with permission.

[61] Or, as Gregory Currie puts it while discussing an ironic picture of Margaret Thatcher posing for her portrait – "When people make groveling pictures of those who do not deserve esteem, we have an ironic situation," an emergent situation that he notes, fittingly enough for our purposes, *metonymically* renders such a picture or painting situationally ironic in nature (2011: 162).

derision, etc.[62] Quite simply put, they demonstrate how a single constructional form can be blended to very different ends once it is caught up in what Bogdan Ştefănescu (2016: 23) describes within the context of Ceauşescu's Romania as 'contra-discourse:'

> a baffling form of *para*-resistance wherein the official discourse and its antagonist… become ironically interfused. The ambivalent coexistence of contrary discourses, of the language of power alongside idioms of resistance or opposition to power is an interesting case of, so to say, covert dialogism. Ideological stands and strategic positionings are no longer discrete and the meaning and function of both discourse and [its antagonist] are no longer univocal.

While the multivocality, polysemy, or, indeed, simply ambiguity of artistic production under Ceauşescu has certainly been well theorized, it was, of course, not limited to his regime. Examples can also be found in the case of Mussolini's cult, such as the postcard on the following page in Figure 6.14. Dispensing with any notion of subtlety, it contains a collage of nearly 40 different heads – and expressions – of the *Duce*, all squished together, one atop the other. While a true Mussolini fanatic might find the postcard endearing, an ironic reading is, once again, as Enrico Sturani (2003: 200) points out, certainly fair game here. Indeed, so many of his recognizable constructional guises clustered together – Mussolini 'as warrior,' 'as orator,' 'as captain,' 'in fez,' to name but a few – exhibiting the full range of his expressive capacities almost *suggests* an ironic interpretation, something not lost on Mussolini himself: known for having a heavy hand in the construction of his own image, he apparently found the collage excessive, banning its reproduction in September 1937 (ibid.; citing remarks in Malvano 1991). Although perhaps a rather 'extreme' construct in this regard, it was certainly not the only one amenable to such interpretations, and the regime and its apparatuses were very conscious of how cultic representations and practices could render unintended, comedic effects. Bringing things back full circle, Sturani mentions a directive released in 1939 by *Minculpop*, Mussolini's *Ministero della cultura popolare* 'Ministry of Popular Culture' to journalists:

> Nei riguardi del Duce non è sempre opportuno usare delle frasi magniloquenti. Così non è opportuno usare la dicitura 'Il fondatore dell'Impero' anche quando egli va a visitare un asilo (Sturani 2003: 200).
>
> Regarding the Duce, it is not always appropriate to use magniloquent phrases. Thus, it is not appropriate to use the term 'Founder of the Empire' when he goes to visit a kindergarten [my translation].

[62] Jadwiga Linde-Usiekniewicz's (2020) notion of 'parasitic blends' is worth mentioning here. She defines such blends as "any situation when a blend is understood not exactly as intended by the blend's creators" (654, n12) and develops them as an explanatory mechanism to account for the unpredictability of blends' interpretations. Her account is rich, detailed, and timely, focusing on Polish anti-refugee rhetoric, and its attention to blends' interpretational unpredictability is important (see Rohrer 2005; Brandt 2013; Veale, Feyaerts & Forceville 2013; Forceville 2020: 92-95 for criticisms of blending theory in this vein). Nonetheless, I think her account's separation of 'intended' from 'unintended' readings of a given blend affords too much presumption on the part of the analyst (see e.g. her remarks on page 657), particularly in the light of the data under examination here and the preceding discussion of the irrelevance of intentionality to cultic production.

Figure 6.14: Mussolini collage postcard (1936)[63]

Such dictates in turn suggest that *any* regime-sanctioned cultic representation perhaps ran the risk of semantic enrichment in the form of ironic (re)interpretation. This apparently rampant risk of irony warrants some reflection in the broader context of what has been discussed so far. The mockery of Mussolini's and Ceauşescu's cults, this chapter has aimed to demonstrate, could take place in one of (at least!) two ways: on the one hand, this could transpire through the creative redeployment of conventionalized cult constructions to new ends, as in the various jokes assessed in section 6.3 and in many of the caricatures we saw earlier of Mussolini in section 6.4. In such reappropriations, various salient aspects-turned-constructions of each leader's cult, it was argued – Mussolini's facial features, Ceauşescu's *Epocă de Aur*, honorific titles and 'wooden' language, etc. – are 'transferred' out of their canonical contexts into new, subversive ones, often blended with frames incongruous with their constative dimensions but very much relevant in the overarching social context of their deployment (e.g. hunger, shortages, World War II, the Romanian debt crisis, etc.) in order to achieve this effect. As such, they are clearly subversive acts, generated from the blending of sanctioned and contextual features to particular (in the cases here, parodic) ends.

[63] Image courtesy of the Archivio Sturani in Rome (see Sturani 2003: 200). It is attributed to Bruno Munari.

The second such method, as observed in Figures 6.12-6.14 in this section, simply reproduces the regime's own self-adulating forms – nothing inherently subversive or contra official discourse is included but, nevertheless, they are still subject to ironic interpretation. Why this is so is attributable once more to the social context in which they are encountered. In the cases under analysis here, the megalomania of both Mussolini and Ceauşescu, the saturation of their images, the stranglehold they each had on 'public visuality' (Strassler 2020), when combined with all of the day-to-day hardships and suffering that their rules inflicted on millions, perhaps supplies the perfect recipe for irony to emerge ubiquitously on a scale matching that of the faces it ironizes: it need not, but may well could, be found anywhere. This, I think, illustrates well the kind of instability that characterizes and roils the semantic systems of personality cults despite their formal rigidity, an instability that becomes all the more apparent once the leaders that they adulate have fallen and the cults themselves are a matter of the (even if very recent) past. It is to this topic that we now turn in the dissertation's conclusion.

Chapter 7 – *Conclusion: Constructional Afterlives (?)*

7.1 – Introduction

For over twenty years, Italians and Romanians lived, experienced, and negotiated the cults of Mussolini and Ceauşescu. The cults, in their fully-fledged, institutionalized, most ubiquitous forms, took time to crystallize and develop. Cult constructionalization did not happen overnight, nor was it a uniform process. We have seen the multiplicity of representations and representational means that came to populate both leaders' cult networks throughout their durations, both in terms of the raw material for saturation at the macroscopic level as well as their various reappropriations at the local level. In so doing we have assessed them as a particular form of hypervisual 'authoritative discourse' at once communicative, cognitive, and material (Bakhtin 1994).

What happens, though, when the leader at the center of a cult falls from power, killed or otherwise? What becomes of the cult when its stranglehold on public visuality is abruptly shattered such that it can no longer – as much as it simply loses reason to – enforce its own ubiquity? A clean break and a clean slate may well be desired by the forces that toppled it, but they are hardly readily attainable objectives. After all, all that was produced, displayed, and disseminated did not occur in a vacuum, does not simply vanish, and is not promptly or unilaterally forgotten.[1] Leader cults, for all intents and purposes, readily outlive their leaders. Rather than obviating this paragraph's initial question, though, such observations instead invigorate it: if a cult and all its associated representations do not simply go away – as we shall see was (and is) certainly the case with the cults of both Mussolini and Ceauşescu – what does become of them? What changes when the cult system and all its constitutive constructions become temporally detached one from the other, when its subject is no longer living flesh but memory?

This final chapter takes up these questions in the form of an extended conclusion, addressing the 'afterlives' of both Mussolini's and Ceauşescu's cults in the immediate aftermaths of their falls and in some of their contemporary manifestations. It intentionally raises more questions than it answers and considers such 'afterlives' in the light of this dissertation's blend of Construction Grammar, cognition, cultic communication, and visual culture.

First, though, it is perhaps helpful to briefly flesh out both Mussolini's and Ceauşescu's falls from power. We can begin with Mussolini, whose rule in Italy came to an abrupt yet ambiguous end on July 25, 1943. Chief among contributing factors to this was the Italian war effort, which had been faring badly for quite some time: the regime had been forced out of its territorial holdings in North and East Africa, the 1941 invasion of Greece had proven as costly as it had bloody, Italian cities were being peppered by Allied aerial bombardments, and now Italy

[1] Scholars of Italian Fascism might be reminded here of the philosopher Benedetto Croce's famous (and rebuked) remarks that Fascism was but a "parenthesis" in Italian history, as if something neatly bookended by a decisive start and end and, consequently, hardly worth giving any serious thought.

itself had been invaded, the Allies having arrived in Sicily earlier that month.[2] With the war now on home soil, faith in Mussolini was deeply shaken for ordinary Italians and his own inner circle alike.[3] This prompted a special meeting of the Fascist Grand Council on the night of July 24 that ended early the next morning with a vote of no confidence in Mussolini in his role as Prime Minister. He would be formally deposed by King Victor Emmanuel III later that day and subsequently arrested, though that would not truly be the end of things: the Allies would continue their incursion northward, eventually reaching Rome that September at which time a secret armistice between the Allies and both the King and Mussolini's appointed successor, Marshal Pietro Badoglio, was signed. The celebration that marked Mussolini's removal – which was broadcast across the nation via radio transmission – however, would prove short-lived:[4] the secret nature of the armistice left the Italian military with no directives and thus clueless to the King and Badoglio's actions. The result was that some 650,000 Italian soldiers were captured and shipped off to internment, both at home and in the eastern theaters, by their former German allies, who immediately took action once the armistice had been signed (Morgan 2007: 102). In its wake Italy would be plunged into chaos and civil war, with Italians fighting one another, often in addition to either German or Allied occupants, according to a mishmash of ideological loyalties.[5] Mussolini, for his part, would be rescued by German forces on September 12 and would be taken northward to helm the Italian puppet state, the Republic of Salò, until his capture and execution in April 1945 by partisan forces. We shall return to his fate there below.

Ceauşescu's last days came about no less precipitously. Unlike Mussolini, though, there would be no gap between his ousting as ruler and his ultimate death, the two occurring within the span of a week.[6] Long-brewing discontent sparked outright protest in the city of Timişoara on December 15, 1989 over something quite specific – the scheduled removal of a Calvinist minister, named Laszlo Tökes, from his church (Kideckel 2004: 133). Ostensibly viewing the uprising as nothing of too great concern, however, Ceauşescu ordered its quelling – leaving at least 60 dead by *Securitate* gunfire – before taking off for a three-day state visit to Iran (Deletant 2019: 485-486). The protests would not be quelled, however, and upon Ceauşescu's return on December 20 they had spread to multiple cities, including Bucharest, and had racked up many additional casualties of soldiers and civilians alike (ibid., 488). At this point, and what perhaps is a sign that he truly believed in his own manufactured megalomania, Ceauşescu called a rally of support for the next day, oblivious to the magnitude of the turmoil now rocking Romania. The usual, requisite crowd was assembled, complete with banners and portraits, and Ceauşescu's speech was set to be broadcast nationally. Shortly after he began speaking, however, and dismissing the protestors as foreign agents and 'hooligans' just looking to cause trouble, a great – and unprecedented –

[2] On these topics, for which there is an extensive literature, see De Grand (2000: chapters 7-9); Bosworth (2005: chapters 16-17), Morgan (2007), and Patricelli (2007).

[3] See Imbriani (1992), which remains a fundamental work on the development and deterioration (if never absolute) of Mussolini's cult in the later years of the *ventennio*, picking things up in 1938 with the aftermath (and aftereffects) of the invasion of Ethiopia and imposed sanctions through to his deposal and arrest.

[4] The recent work of Joshua Arthurs (e.g. 2015, 2017) has been highly illuminating of the many, varied, and nuanced reactions and responses – many, but by no means all, joyful – to the 'first' fall of Mussolini and Fascism in its immediate aftermath until the secret armistice signed on September 8, 1945.

[5] See Bosworth (2005: 502-504) and Morgan (2007: chapter 7) for a detailed discussion of these events.

[6] On the circumstances surrounding the Romanian revolution, the events leading up to and that ultimately transpired during it, and Ceauşescu and Elena's subsequent escape, capture, trial, and execution, see Siani-Davies (2005), Petrescu (2010), and Deletant (2019: chapter 17). It and the other revolutions of 1989 have also received considerable comparative and 'reflective' treatment by scholars assessing their origins, impacts, aftermaths, and legacies (e.g. Tismăneanu 1999; Tismăneanu & Iacob 2012; Ghodsee & Orenstein 2021).

commotion broke out, with protestors screaming out, interrupting, and halting his speech. Although its transmission would be cut off soon after, it would not be before Ceauşescu, stammering, the confusion palpable on his face, was shown across the nation (ibid., 489).[7] Long past their breaking point, Romanians had finally been pushed far enough to make their anger known in the face of the man who for years had been its cause.[8]

Then, even more bewilderingly, Ceauşescu attempted *another* support rally the following day. At this point tempers were flared and those gathered threw hurled "boos and stones" alike at the balcony on which he was stationed (ibid.). Now recognizing the gravity of the situation, Ceauşescu and Elena attempted to flee via helicopter but were eventually intercepted, captured, and held hostage for a few days in the town of Târgovişte before a hasty, secret trial took place after which they were summarily executed by gunfire. Such violent ends, not only for the Ceauşescus but also for the scores of protestors in Timişoara and elsewhere, in fact tragically distinguish Romania from the rest of the Eastern Bloc as the lone transition involving any bloodshed.

7.2 – Iconoclasm

In the wake of both Mussolini's and Ceauşescu's downfalls, widespread practices of iconoclasm erupted.[9] Pictures, symbols, statues, and monuments that had colonized public vision for so long were attacked, felled, desecrated – even beheaded (Figure 7.1). The omnipresent portraits of the leader – for so long the face of the nation – were taken down and destroyed, defiled, and defaced, some even set afire in the vein of centuries-old practices of effigy burning (Figure 7.2).[10] The cult itself, one could readily say, came under attack via the frenzied yet purposeful destruction of its innumerable material anchors (Hutchins 1995, 2005).

In many ways, these iconoclastic practices can be understood as a kind of *damnatio memoriae* (Arthurs 2017: 212), as an attempt to obliterate both Mussolini and Ceauşescu from historical memory. As Philip Manow points out, "[t]he ubiquity of [the leader's] radiant image documents his power," while, on the flip side of the same coin, "[u]npunished destruction of his image means that his time is up" (2010: 92). This signals both a performative (in the Austinian sense) and a metonymic function to iconoclasm in that through and in damaging the likeness of the leader one, in some sense, succeeds in damaging the 'real thing,' too.[11]

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[7] Part 1 of his last speech – during which the chaos, the cries, and the Ceauşescus' attempts to regain control are all plainly audible – can be viewed on YouTube, link here (last accessed March 30, 2023): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wWIbCtz_Xwk&t=372s. A rhetorical analysis of the speech can be found in N. Marin (2008).

[8] See Verdery (2015) for a telling series of letters drafted by Romanians between December 1989 and May 1990 in which they poignantly detail their thoughts, emotions, responses, and actions in the whirlwind of the revolution and its wake.

[9] For recent accounts of iconoclasm – and other (re)actions in the wake of Mussolini's 1943 dismissal – see once again Arthurs (2015, 2017) as well as Gundle (2013c: 241). Marin (2020a: 191; 204-205) discusses iconoclastic responses to Ceauşescu's images, detailing instances both before and after his downfall. Iconoclasm itself – and particularly the destruction of erected statues and monuments honoring Lenin, Stalin, and other prominent figures – has been widely discussed in the context of the Eastern European Bloc and the Soviet Union, both in the wake of the 1989 revolutions and in scattered bursts brought about by societal upheaval on the backs of changes in leadership (see e.g. Verdery 1999: 4-13; Gamboni 2002: 96-106; Tikhomirov 2012).

[10] See Göttke (2021) for a recent history of effigy burning as a visual form of social protest.

[11] Or, at least aspires to – see David Freedberg's (2021: chapter 6) essay on motivation in iconoclasm, especially pages 148-150. This can readily be conceived in terms of blending theory, too: for a discussion of performativity, metonymy, and blended spaces, see Sweetser (2000).

Figure 7.1: Beheaded statue of Mussolini (1943)[12]

But it is not quite so simple. We can recall here W. J. T. Mitchell's distinction between 'image' and 'picture,' which in many respects equates to the division we have drawn throughout this dissertation between 'construction' and 'construct,' or 'construction' and 'material anchor.' Images and constructions alike, in this vein, are conceptual configurations that – with and through their encounter or 'use' – become entrenched in the minds of 'speakers.' They are materialized and 'anchored' through the picture-as-construct, to blend the two terminologies, but once they are 'out there,' so to speak, they are not beholden to it: they exist beyond it. As Mitchell reminds us:

> The image has value, but somehow it is more slippery than the value of the picture or statue, the physical monument that 'incarnates' it in a specific place. The image cannot be destroyed. The Golden Calf may be ground down to powder, but the image lives on – in works of art, in texts, in narrative and remembrance (2005: 84).

And, indeed, this is precisely what happened to/with both Mussolini and Ceaușescu, and then some: though so often consumed – and now, denigrated, too – via their mediated representations, via pictures-as-constructs, the demise of both Mussolini and Ceaușescu was in fact enacted also through the brutalization of their own *real* bodies. Mussolini's dead body became an immediate spectacle, if on a small scale: once captured and executed, he was dragged to Piazzale Loreto in Milan alongside several Fascist officials and his lover, Claretta Petacci, where they were

[12] Image © Fototeca Gilardi, included with their permission. The photograph was taken on July 25, 1943 in Rome.

Figure 7.2: Defaced portrait of Ceauşescu (1989)[13]

[13] Photograph by Gáspár Török, taken in Târgu Mureş, Romania in 1989. Image accessed September 10, 2022 from the digital photographic archive of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty and included here with the photographer's daughter's permission. Link to web address here (photograph 23): https://www.rferl.org/a/romania-photo-archive-documents-turbulent-20th-century/31263061.html.

beaten, abused, spit upon, and strung up upside down for all to see[14] (see Figure 7.3 below).[15] The Ceauşescus were not subjected to the same kind of frenzy, but their trial and subsequent shooting were both filmed and would be eventually broadcast for all of Romania to see, though not until several months after the fact, on Easter Sunday, 1990.[16]

Figure 7.3: Mussolini's dead body on display (1945)[17]

[14] See Sergio Luzzatto's (1998) gripping history of Mussolini's body (published in English translation in 2005) that documents the many 'adventures' it had throughout its 'political life [as a] dead body,' to bring in the title of Katherine Verdery's relevant (1999) book on the political potential of corpses. Luzzatto's work details a busy such life of a corpse, from its exhumation and removal in 1946 to its eventual return in 1957, with all the manifest rumors, gossip, and post-Fascist and revisionist brouhaha that surrounded it. Such matters are also discussed in more condensed form in Di Bella (2004: 49-56).

[15] See Panico (2020: 70-72) for examples and discussion of recent reappropriations of this image and Mussolini's suspended body in contemporary Italian anti-Fascist discourse.

[16] Prior to this, only selected excerpts from the trial and the couple's dead and cleaned bodies had been broadcast, which did little to dampen widespread rumors and skepticism. These ranged from the belief that those who had executed the couple did so in an effort to hide their own crimes or complicity, about which the Ceauşescus certainly would have known and would have exposed if given the chance, to hearsay that the entire process had all been a sham and that Ceauşescu was alive and well, living somewhere abroad (see Kideckel 2004: 134-135). See Kozinski (1991) for a brief yet thorough account of the trial's filmic proceedings, its farcicality, and its implications for Romania – within the context of the early 1990s – moving forward.

[17] Retrieved March 2, 2023 from Wikipedia Commons. Mussolini's body hangs second from the left. Link to web address here: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mussolini_e_Petacci_a_Piazzale_Loreto,_1945.jpg.

Yet – and to Mitchell's point above – neither widespread iconoclasm nor even the finality of the leader's killing was successful in eradicating their memory. As Joshua Arthurs puts it in the case of Mussolini, the concerted aggression directed toward his image is to be understood "both as an inversion of the personality cult and, conversely, a confirmation of its continued vitality," as clear indication of "the extent to which Mussolini's image had colonized Italians' imaginations over more than 20 years" (2017: 213). This continues to hold true as, even decades later, Mussolini's – and Ceaușescu's – images continue to appear, to resonate, and to give – as they are given – (new) meaning. In line with the observations pointed out in the introduction, then, their cults have not simply gone away, neither materially nor cognitively; they persist.

The next two sections deal with cultic representations that have appeared in recent times (i.e. years after both cults officially lost their totalizing authority over public visuality) that allow us to probe broad questions of cult systems' endurance, erosion, and evolution. They are of two kinds. The first presents a preservation of – or perhaps a return to – the original 'constative' dimensions of cultic constructions by way of their use to 'nostalgic' ends: the cultic blends of old, as it were, are 'accepted' at face value and reflected back as such by those for whom they still (or newly) resonate. The second kind, conversely, consists of a host of different manifestations of 'classic' cult constructional forms to a variety of disparate ends. These have much less concrete associable meanings and in turn evince a kind of semantic bleaching: that is, the original 'constative' dimensions appear to have been (wholly?) lost. In both cases, however, it is the contextual 'break' stipulated in Derrida's (1988) theory of citationality that seems crucial, now no longer merely a possibility but indeed a reality, a given. The questions posed earlier can thus be re-formulated as follows: What (and how) do (re)uses of cult constructions 'of old' mean when they crop up in the 'post-cult' era?

7.3 – The Cult Lives On …

I concluded Chapter 4 with the postulation that, as their cults grew and evolved to truly take over public and visual space as the centerpieces of their respective regimes, so too did Mussolini and Ceaușescu each emerge as 'master metonyms' for their reigns as well as for an entire range of attendant frames, concepts, entities, and sentiments related to yet also exceeding 'the political' at its most broadly construed. My argument there considered both leaders 'in their time,' of course, when political frames of FASCISM and SOCIALISM and their indices were current, tangible, and ubiquitous realities. I would suggest here, however, that their metonymic power has endured – indeed, has acquired the very kind of desired 'permanence' described in Chapter 5 – so as to operate even today, even if under new circumstances and conditions.

This in itself is hardly a novel observation and is one that brings us into contact with the veritable flurry of research that has emerged since the turn of the century into issues of collective memory and what we might simply call 'cultic nostalgia.' While it is too vast a literature to be given its due here in what is left of this dissertation, certain questions that it addresses are resonant with the ongoing semiotic vitality of cult systems like Mussolini's and Ceaușescu's and are worth unpacking and opening out within the present visual-constructionist framework. As a point of departure, one can observe that in both Italy and Romania a series of historical particularities has allowed for a rehabilitation – if by no means unanimous or univocal – of both the *Duce* and the *Conducător* to emerge.

In Romania, for example, Ceaușescu's image has seen a resurgence that in many ways stems from widespread feelings of dissatisfaction with how things are today and, by extension, a

kind of nostalgia for how they once were.[18] As with many other post-socialist nations, these sentiments have been chalked up to the failures of and subsequent disillusion with transition: just over 30 years have passed since the revolutions of 1989 and for many Romanians (as for many other Eastern and Central Europeans) all the bounty, hope, and change that they promised has largely failed to materialize.[19] As a result – and despite a rather ubiquitous anti-communist rhetoric in the years following the revolution that kept them squelched (see Georgescu 2016) – various symbols and images of the socialist past have resurfaced. Chief among them, of course, as the 'master metonym' for this time, is Ceauşescu (see Figure 7.4 below).

Figure 7.4: Ceauşescu portrait, 100th anniversary (2018)[20]

[18] Many comparative inquiries, examinations, and reflections have appeared in recent years that shed valuable light on the complexities of this dissatisfaction, nostalgia, and their interrelation. As Maria Todorova succinctly puts it, this nostalgia takes shape in the form of "[s]ocial memory that is selective and contextual" such that even when people "evoked the 'good' socialist past, they were not denying the corruption, the shortages, the queues and the endless intrusions and infringements of the state; rather, they were choosing to emphasize other aspects: economic security, full employment, universal healthcare and education" (2010: 5). As a handful of examples exploring these topics, see Boym (2001), Oushakine (2007; 2010), Todorova & Gille (2010), Bartmanski (2011), Georgescu (2016), Ghodsee (2017), Bouma (2019), and Cordali (2023: chapter 7).

[19] In July 2010, for example, in the throes of the global financial crisis, public opinion polls conducted in Romania revealed that Ceaușescu's image had been reappraised: 49 per cent of respondents polled had a favorable view of him, compared to 15 per cent that had a negative view and 30 per cent who had mixed views. This is a stark departure from a similar survey conducted in 1999, which had polled Romanians split 22 per cent each with 'favorable' and 'unfavorable' views. These figures and others (e.g. polling on communism as an idea, as a system of government, etc.) are provided and discussed in Marin (2016b).

[20] AP Photo, photograph by Vadim Ghirda.

Figure 7.5: Mussolini memorabilia (year unknown)[21]

In Italy, by contrast, Fascism as a historical epoch is much further removed in time from the present than is Romanian communism, but a potent combination of resurgent right-wing ideologies and Italy's own 'divided memory' regarding its Fascist past have ensured that Mussolini's specter has not diminished.[22] Scholars point to his rehabilitation with the preponderance of the nostalgic cliché that Mussolini 'made the trains run on time' (among many other 'good things' that he did), the dispersed notion that Fascism was overall a 'good dictatorship,' and claims that Mussolini's 'only mistake' was getting involved with Hitler.[23] Mussolini's body, too, housed in a crypt in his hometown of Predappio, attracts thousands of visitors each year in acts of pilgrimage. The town thus functions as a kind of 'cultic space' in which his followers and admirers can gather and 'experience' him (see Serenelli 2013).[24] More than just

[21] Photograph by and included with permission of Antonello Nusca. Image retrieved November 20, 2022. Link to web address here: https://antonellonusca.photoshelter.com/image/I0000x.6trCqtbxk. No year is given, though judging from the commemorative calendars on display it is likely from either 2005 or 2006.

[22] See David Foot's (2009) monograph for a comprehensive (and critical) account of Italy's 'divided memory,' which, as a term, in short captures the multiplicity of often contradictory interpretations of events, figures, and periods in Italian history, including Mussolini, Fascism, the Resistance, Italian colonialism, and Italy's role in World War II and the Holocaust. Additional discussions in this vein can be found in Battini (2003), Ben-Ghiat (2004), Fogu (2006), Lichtner (2013), and Levis Sullam (2018).

[23] Scholars have recently been addressing such views with some urgency: see, for example, Ventresca (2006), Gundle (2013c, 2022), and Corner (2022). The idea of Mussolini as having done 'good things' is not without complexity, either: his regime was responsible, as has been mentioned, for draining the Pontine Marshes south of Rome and the creation of new, habitable settlements (the 'New Towns') that still exist today (see Fuller's forthcoming book for a comprehensive account of Mussolini's quite favorable reception in the area, both in his time and in the present).

[24] Adding to the area's already palpable cultic aura, Predappio's former *Casa del Fascio* has recently been proposed as the site to house Italy's would-be first, national museum of Fascism, which has sparked contentious debate between its proponents and opponents (see Storchi 2019). The controversy has not only to do with the selection of both Predappio (as Mussolini's birthplace) and the *Casa* (as an ambivalent relic of Fascism) as a site for the museum, but

a space of remembrance, though, Mussolini's image continues to permeate the town, most famously in the continued sale of Mussolini 'memorabilia' (see Figure 7.5 above).

Both images present a certain kind of the aforementioned 'cultic nostalgia' materially-anchored in their respective cult constructs. In Figure 7.4, Ceaușescu's signature portrait is carried by an older man at a rally marking Ceaușescu's would-be 100th birthday, held at his resting place in Bucharest.[25] The text beneath the portrait reads 'a man like him is born once every 500 years! He wanted Romania to be the Garden of Mary'[26] – a description that one can assume Ceaușescu himself would have found very much to his liking had he still been alive. This in turn highlights an extraordinary kind of 'literality' to the portrait in its nostalgic redeployment, especially when considered within the fuller historical context and extent of Ceaușescu's cult itself. That is, the 'use' or 'reappropriation' of this Ceaușescu construction here, in a context of his celebration taking place 29 years after his fall, evinces a manifest resonance between the construct's 'constative' and 'performative' dimensions that sharply contrasts with the kinds of reappropriations seen in the previous chapter. Here, instead, the construction's original blended constellation of meanings has been accepted, ostensibly internalized, and reflected back – the cult, put plainly, even after its own seeming death in 1989, has 'returned,' reblended.

Figure 7.5, in contrast, presents an array of commodified Mussolinis, his image transfigured into a veritable (and one would guess, profitable) brand in its own right. As Mario Panico has noted in his own study of contemporary manifestations of Mussolini's image, such memorabilia present the Duce as "exactly the man seen in the photos of the regime… not altered but repositioned" in which he finds a calculated reproducibility that he considers "almost sclerotic" in its rigid adherence to the Fascist canon (2020: 72). This speaks to the continued productivity (in both a literal and a linguistic sense) of Mussolini's cultic constructions that here, for the faithful, once again suggests a stark alignment with the constructions' original constative dimensions. Thus, as with Ceaușescu above, here, too, the memorabilia prompt for a blend of Mussolini's image to be read, and consumed, 'at face value.'

There is something peculiar, though, about the 'literality' evinced in both Figures 7.4 and 7.5. Does it amount to a kind of performative 'resemanticization' of these cultic constructions with their original, constative dimensions, or is it simply an inherited continuation? Is there something cyclic at work here, a kind of semantic 'loss-and-gain' anchored to contextual dimensions?[27] Context is certainly key, as it is the temporal-contextual 'break' (i.e. both leaders as elements of 'the past') that permits for nostalgia in the first place as an attitudinal viewpoint that inherently 'looks back' on something that no longer 'is.'[28] Consequently, then, in blending terms it follows

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also with it how should depict Mussolini and Fascism (i.e. opting for a neutral or 'non-committal' stance versus taking a firm, precise position on both; See Fuller 2018 for discussion, who supplies telling and contrasting comparisons with German museal practices depicting Nazism).

[25] It is worth pointing out that Ceaușescu's dead body, too, has had some 'adventures' of its own: it was exhumed – alongside Elena's – in 2010 in the wake of continued rumors that the couple either was buried elsewhere or was simply not really dead. Forensic scientists had to be called in to verify the exhumed bodies' identities. (Asavei 2016: 28).

[26] This latter part is a reference to a speech made by Pope John Paul II in Bucharest in 1999, where he referred to Romania as the Garden of Mary.

[27] This will be considered in more detail in section 7.4.

[28] We can recall that 'viewpoint' itself is a prominent locus of study in cognitive linguistics, defined by two of its leading scholars as "a discourse participant's alignment with an aspect of a frame or situation" (Dancygier & Vandelanotte 2016: 14). Vandelanotte (2017: 158) elaborates by noting that "to speak of viewpoint requires a conceptualizer in a discourse event assuming a position (for instance, in terms of perception and spatiotemporal location, likelihood and knowledge, attitude and feeling, or solidarity/power dynamics) toward an element within a described situation or knowledge structure."

that 'nostalgic blends' emerge from blending familiar form-meaning pairings with particular 'backward-looking' viewpoints. Put differently, the 'good-old-days' dimension of cultic nostalgia calls for the selective projection of only the best qualities of the leader – which are readily available in the 'constative' dimensions of the constructional forms in both Figures 7.4 and 7.5 – from a positionality that is necessarily temporally removed.

Mussolini's, Ceauşescu's, and others' cults, however, do not simply live on for the nostalgic. Their 'afterlives' take shape in myriad other ways, from their invocation in the press to stenciled street art of their likeness. What, we now must ask, do we do with this persistent representation and how does it relate to the 'original' cult network to which it is so clearly indebted?

7.4 – … But What Does It Mean?

As just discussed, Mussolini's and Ceauşescu's cultic auras certainly live on for many, whether as a continuation or as a kind of nostalgic 'rebirth.' It would be deeply misguided, however, to ascribe to every such reappearance of their images this kind of sentiment. The final visual data that I will present deal once more with contemporary cultic reappropriations, but of a different sort: rather than dealing with overt nostalgia, they entail a recruitment of cultic constructional forms to, as mentioned, an array of disparate, ambiguous, and unpredictable ends. Useful here is the work of anthropologist Serguei A. Oushakine, who presents intriguing ideas on the relation of form to meaning that are relevant to the kind of cultic-constructional 'afterlives' to be seen and discussed below. In his study of 'retrofitting' the past in post-Soviet Russia, Oushakine argues against a pattern of "historicizing critique of aesthetic forms" in many nostalgia-oriented studies that he sees as politically motivated (2007: 453). He rejects what he calls a fixation on "the content of the form" in such analyses as "a historically specific aesthetic constellation in which the meaningful component and its representations become inseparable and mutually constitutive" (ibid.). Such approaches, he maintains, in "emphasizing the ideological *origin* of a particular cultural device or stylistic configuration… tend to overlook the function of enframing that these remarks and reproductions accomplish" (ibid.; emphasis original).[29] He counters with his own method of interpretation:

> Instead of exploring ideological or social pedigrees of post-Soviet nostalgic evocations I will focus on their pragmatics… I show that the importance of symbolic forms of the past cannot be limited to their original context, meaning, or genealogy. The old form is evoked not in order to express its old meaning. Rather it reveals the inability of existing forms to communicate a relevant content… In other words, I will approach post-Soviet reincarnations of the past as pictorial rather than performative projects. By shifting attention to the forms themselves, I will demonstrate that the cultural logic of these reincarnations has more in common with the act of mechanical retrofitting (facilitated by the digital age) rather than with the

[29] He describes the process of 'enframing' (which originates in the work of Martin Heidegger 1977) as follows, a use that has no relation to the present dissertation's conception of a semantic frame: "Unlike a frame that separates the object from its immediate background, enframing is a process of active (syntactic) ordering through which the field of cultural production becomes graspable. Enframing is less a practice of concealed interpretation than a way of parsing out, containing, and positioning objects that could be endowed with some semiotic importance later" (2007: 453, note 14).

process of political restoration. It is the familiarity of the old form that becomes crucial (ibid.).

While within the realm of leader cults the use of cultic forms *precisely* geared toward their original, constative, 'genealogical' dimensions – as we have just seen – cannot be denied, Oushakine's formulation of the open-endedness of the 'form' gels well with our observations on the post-cult temporal-contextual 'break.' In particular, it raises questions central to the evolution of cultic communicativity, the form-meaning-context relationship inherent in constructions, and the very nature of visual 'constructionalization' itself and its own 'aftermath(s).'

The following data can only attempt to open up and explore such questions. Let us first take up Ceauşescu, for whom once again it his most iconic portrait (resupplied in Figure 7.6) that has circulated as the basis for his most productive contemporary manifestations, examples of which are found below in Figures 7.7-7.11.

Figure 7.6: Ceauşescu portrait (year unknown)

Figure 7.7: Ceauşescu 'I'll Be Back' (year unknown)[30]

The images in Figures 7.7-7.11 are at first blush as disparate as they are alike. Figures 7.7-7.8 consist of captioned stencilings of Ceauşescu's portrait that proliferated throughout Bucharest and other urban centers in the 2000s with provocative captions, e.g. 'I'll Be Back' and 'LOST' shown here as well as '*Vin în 5 minute*' ('I'll be there in 5 minutes'; Preda 2010: 145-146). Figures 7.9 and 7.10 are instead particular artistic creations: the former, originally displayed outside the balcony from which Ceauşescu delivered his last speech, supplies his signature portrait reconfigured with eyes closed, eyebrows raised, and a much wider smile overlaying a pink-and-

[30] Image taken from Preda (2010: 146), an engraving that adorns a city wall in Bucharest. Photographer unknown, but the image's artist is purportedly Dumitru Gorzo (ibid.). The precise year of its etching is also unknown, but in another article Preda notes that images of this kind began appearing in 2006 (2013: 201).

Figure 7.8: Ceauşescu 'LOST' (2006)[31]

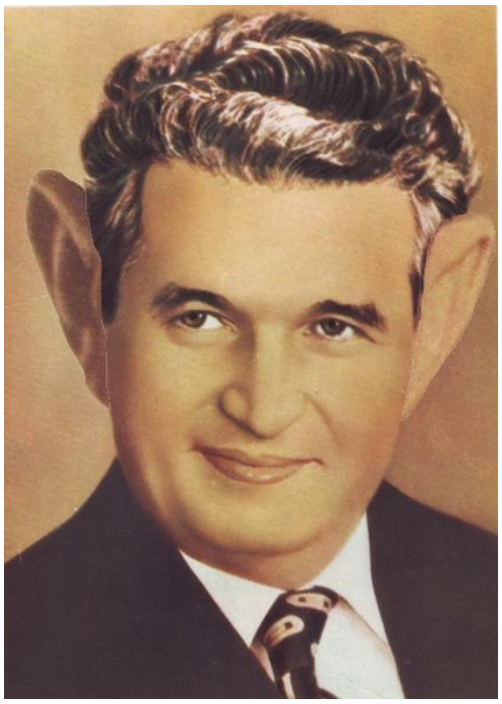
Figure 7.9: Ceauşescu 'Everything Is Wonderful' (2016)[32]

Figure 7.10: Ceauşescu tiramisu 'Sweet Propaganda' (2012)[33]

[31] Image accessed September 19, 2022 from Flickr.com. Photograph by Andrei Alexandru, dated October 24, 2006. Link to web address here: https://www.flickr.com/photos/21249675@N00/278509306, included in accordance with CC License Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 2.0.
[32] Image courtesy of the artist, Ortaku.
[33] Image courtesy of the artist, Alex Gâlmeanu. Retrieved March 5, 2023 from his blog, link to web address here: https://blog.alexgalmeanu.com/blog/2012/06/29/dulcea-propaganda/.

green rendering of the European Union flag, all captioned with the phrase *totul e minunat* 'everything is wonderful.' Figure 7.10, in turn, entitled *dulcea* ('sweet') *propaganda*, presents a series of Ceauşescus decorating individual tiramisus. Finally, Figure 7.11, perhaps the most recent of them all, presents a bronzed and immaculately airbrushed Ceauşescu who appears rather ordinary, apart from his comically oversized ears.

Figure 7.11: Big-eared Ceauşescu (year unknown)[34]



Each construct, however, in taking Ceauşescu's most iconic construction as a template and repurposing it, demonstrates – in line with Oushakine's theorizations above – quite plainly the enormous 'meaning potential' (in Fauconnier and Turner's 2003 terms) that a single base form can (come to) have when temporally-contextually removed from its original semantic 'source.' Put differently, the images in Figures 7.7-7.11 are neither *clearly* nostalgic nor derisive, whether from the perspective of authorial intention (if known) or in terms of broader, possible interpretations.[35] They are, rather, simply ambiguous, evincing a perhaps heightened degree of the *constructional polysemy* that has been discussed throughout this dissertation. Scholars have described the

[34] Image retrieved March 5, 2023 from the Wikipedia parody website *Uncyclopedia*: *The Content-Free Encyclopedia* and included here in compliance with CC License Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 2.0 Generic. No artist is provided, but it was uploaded by username 'RoAwesomeFace' on August 21, 2018. Link to web address here: https://en.uncyclopedia.co/wiki/File:Nicolae_Ceausescu_with_big_ears.jpg.

[35] Ortaku, the artist behind the image in Figure 7.9, explains in a 2021 article with the Romanian cultural publication *feeder* that his aim was semantic open-endedness and to stimulate various responses in his viewership: though the template is clearly recognizable, Ceauşescu appears in a way wholly out of the ordinary, prompting viewers to contemplate why or at what he might be smiling so heartily. Even the text, 'everything is wonderful,' is, per Ortaku, intended to evoke very different interpretations (the article, in Romanian, can be found here https://www.feeder.ro/2021/10/10/ortaku-x-street-art-bucuresti/; last accessed March 15, 2023). Alex Gâlmeanu, in kind, the artist behind Figure 7.10's tiramisus, explains the piece as part of a larger commentary on Ceauşescu as a brand, akin to everyday commercial advertising and geared toward consumerism (see link above in note 33).

emergent expansion of semantic functions that Ceauşescu's image has taken on in contemporary Romania in a variety of ways, from irony and 'ironic countermemory' (Manole 2013; Georgescu 2010) to 'pop memory' (Báthory 2019), 'vernacular memory' (Asavei 2016), and 'alternative memories' (Preda 2013). Each term signals, however, a multiplicity in his images' meaning that is in turn facilitated by the online age and the ease (and anonymity) of digital reproduction.[36] Figure 7.11 is emblematic in this regard: its creator and date of creation are unknown, though it was encountered as the primary image for Ceauşescu's entry in the Wikipedia parody site *Uncyclopedia: The Content-Free Encyclopedia*. Its caption there explains the conspicuous enlargements: "God-Emperor Ceauşescu, listening to the Romanian people's cries of joy. That's why he needs such large ears." Here, though, the caricature-caption combination clearly departs from the construction's 'constative' dimensions but jocularly flips them on their head, much like the examples in the previous chapter. Not too unlike the nostalgic examples in section 7.3, then, Figure 7.11 presents a curious sort of pre-1989 constructional relic, a formal-functional 'retention' despite the temporal-contextual break.

What are we to make of these constructs? First, the temporal-contextual 'break' is, again, a given post-1989, but it certainly appears essential for the kind of 'desemanticization' and 'resemanticization' observed in many of these deployments of Ceauşescu's most iconic cult construction. That is, the semantically indeterminate reappropriation of this construction seems possible only (a) because the cult system as hypervisual 'authoritative discourse' from which it originated has ceased to operate and (b) because sufficient time has passed for these forms to be taken back up and renegotiated. Prior to the cult's downfall, as we saw in the last chapter, such reappropriations were highly constrained, limited to small groups of confidants. Similarly, a newly dominant anti-Ceauşescu and anti-communism discourse took over in Romania post-1989 that kept widespread use of his image at bay. With both of these contextual constraints lifted, Ceauşescu's image has been allowed to return in full force with a slew of new attendant meanings in tow.

More than just context, however, is responsible for these emergent meanings, and certain cognitive and conceptual processes also play a crucial role. Findings from research into three hallmark domains of historical-linguistic inquiry – namely, grammaticalization, lexicalization, and constructionalization – have highlighted these processes and are worth considering here, even if briefly.[37] One such process is known as *semantic bleaching*, whereby some (linguistic) form gradually loses its substantive, lexical content, typically through its frequent use or 'habituation' (Haiman 1994).[38] This bleaching, however, tends not to entail a simple, unidirectional 'loss' of

[36] On Ceauşescu's continued and variegated presence and depiction online, see Preda (2013).

[37] This is not the place to crack open the immense literature on these processes or historical linguistics more generally, so brief definitions and examples of each will have to suffice: *grammaticalization* typically refers to the formation of grammatical items from erstwhile lexical ones (e.g. the development of English *have* from its lexical meaning of possession into one marking tense and aspect [e.g. *I <u>have</u> done it*]) while *lexicalization* constitutes the process by which new lexical or 'contentful' words develop in a language (e.g. the word *cupboard* originating as a compound *cup* + *board*). Constructionalization, in line with Construction Grammar's encompassing view of lexical items and grammar alike as constituting constructions, views both processes to be examples of constructionalization that simply have different outcomes, i.e. 'procedural' (grammaticalization) or 'contentful' (lexicalization; see Traugott & Trousdale 2013; Barðdal et al. 2015). For a focused discussion of all three processes and their interrelation, see Trousdale (2012).

[38] On semantic bleaching and semantic change more generally, see Sweetser (1988, 1990), Traugott & Dasher (2002), and, for a concise review of the literature, Traugott (2019). On the vital role of frequency in language structuration, see the work of Joan Bybee (e.g. 2006, 2007, 2010).

meaning but rather follows a 'loss-and-gain model,' in Traugott and Trousdale's (2013: 106) terms, which they explain as follows (see also Sweetser 1988):

> Crucially, bleaching of lexical meaning is normally associated with increase in grammatical meaning – further evidence of loss-and-gain. The pragmatic implicatures that enabled the grammaticalization have become part of the new semantics, which is now more abstract, procedural rather than lexical (2013: 106).

Although we are not dealing with 'grammar' here in images of Ceauşescu and Mussolini, I nonetheless think the insight is relevant and illuminating: rather than simply 'losing' meaning (though meaning may still be lost[39]), this bleaching also entails a 'gain' in a given constructional form's schematicity and productivity, an 'expansion via abstraction.' It can thus be 'used' to communicate a wider range of meanings than its original, 'constative' dimensions might convey,[40] such that the more it is used, the more additional meanings it can take on. Yet, because such loss-and-gain processes are also both inherently *gradual* and *gradient* (see discussions in Traugott & Trousdale 2010a,b), 'loss' does not equal obliteration: meanings, like memory, can also 'live on' – hence, both the nostalgic blends in Figures 7.4 and 7.5 and the humorous blend in Figure 7.11.

With all this said we can now turn to the dissertation's final visual data. This last group of images brings us back to Mussolini and consists of several constructs from a very peculiar image campaign featuring his effigy that illustrates another key development in cultic production since the fall of both leaders' cults: the explosion, with the rise of the internet, of digital images instantaneously accessible, generable, and transmissible all over the world. Thus, alongside the mandated temporal-contextual 'break,' a space has opened for a possible geographic one, too, allowing for the diffusion of cultic representations, sentiments, and a host of their emergent blends outside their nations of origin. This leads us to the series of images presented on the following pages in Figures 7.13-7.18 in which feature an iconic picture of Mussolini (provided in Figure 7.12 for comparison) atop the curious caption 'MUSSOLINI, Tha original Che.' Notably, each of these images appeared not in Italy but around New York City, (at least) in the years 2008-2010.[41]

Although Mussolini's image – a posterized version of the photograph in Figure 7.12[42] – is identical across all of Figures 7.13-7.18, each, as individual constructs, presents something slightly different: Figure 7.13 shows a fairly simple black-and-white poster, whereas Figure 7.14 contains a colorized version of Mussolini in what looks like decal form. Figure 7.15 once again presents a black-and-white poster, though here the backdrop has been transformed into a kind of radiating repetition of his outline, acquiring an almost hypnotic effect, and one can make out an additional

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[39] Generational differences are certainly a factor here, as they are indeed also in processes of linguistic change: in the case of Mussolini and Italy, there are very few Italians still alive who experienced any part of his regime. In the case of Ceauşescu's Romania, however, there is a stark generational divide between Romanians who endured his cult firsthand and those who have simply inherited its 'afterlives.' Considered from this angle, some of the original meanings that Ceauşescu's constructions might have had for those who experienced it (i.e. those intimately tied to the cult meta-context) have simply been 'lost' or 'bleached' for younger generations who only know it via what they have been told.

[40] See also Nikolaus Himmelmann's (2004) model of grammaticalization as 'expansion' of which he finds the core feature to be 'semantic-pragmatic context expansion' of particular constructions (i.e. emergent polysemy).

[41] As far as I am aware, these images have only been written about in a 2010 article by Gabriele Romagnoli in the Italian newspaper *La Reppublica*, accessible here via its online archive (last accessed March 30, 2023): https://ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/2010/08/13/come-nasce-un-icona.html. He attributes them to the street artist Nyte Walka.

[42] We have in fact already seen an adaptation of this photograph in Italy in Mussolini's own time – see Figure 4.8.

Figure 7.12: Mussolini in helmet (~1932-1935)[43]

Figure 7.13: Mussolini 'Tha original Che' A (2009)[44]

Figure 7.14: Mussolini 'Tha original Che' B (2008)[45]

[43] Image retrieved March 4, 2023 from the collection of the Finnish Heritage Agency, link to web address here: https://www.finna.fi/Record/museovirasto.AC43C3039292A7A7D28B68E99A6AC887?lng=en-gb. No name of a photographer is provided.

[44] Image retrieved March 4, 2023 from Flickr.com. Photograph by username 'SliceofNYC,' dated April 17, 2009. Link to web address here: https://www.flickr.com/photos/20158323@N04/3471601012, included in accordance with CC License Attribution 2.0 Generic.

[45] Image retrieved October 2, 2022 from Flickr.com. Photograph by JJ (username 'Singing With Light'), dated January 6, 2008. Link to web address here: https://www.flickr.com/photos/11384441@N06/3899248189, included in accordance with CC License Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 2.0.

Mussolini and a Che plastered up alongside it. Multiple, multi-colored Ches appear in the poster in Figure 7.16 in a manner reminiscent of Andy Warhol's famous celebrity silkscreens, surrounding and contrasting the dominating figure of the black-and-white Mussolini. The image in Figure 7.17, in turn, is quite striking in a number of ways, perhaps first and foremost in its depiction of Che and the rather extraordinary inversion of his own, renowned iconicity-turned-commercialism. That is to say, here it is Che, the very "face that launched a thousand t-shirts," who dons the emblazoned t-shirt, in full color, his iconic face now displaced by that of a black-and-white Mussolini and moved 'upward' to occupy that of the consumer.[46]

Figure 7.15: Mussolini 'Tha original Che' C (2010)[47]

Figure 7.16: Mussolini 'Tha original Che' D (2009)[48]

These figures invite several questions: what, first of all, is this campaign to mean? It is certainly provocative: the two figures hardly seem compatible, much less for one to be 'tha original' other. An 'informed' viewer might grasp the apparent paradox of the Fascist dictator as

[46] This descriptor is from a 2010 article in *The Guardian* by Angelique Chrisafis (link here, last accessed March 15, 2023: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2002/may/03/cuba.angeliquechrisafis). The face here – and of the other Ches depicted in Figures 7.13-7.16 – is drawn from the famous photograph of Guevara taken in 1960 by Alberto Korda.

[47] Image retrieved March 4, 2023 from Flickr.com. Photograph by Daniel Lobo, dated August 14, 2010. Link to web address here: https://www.flickr.com/photos/62518311@N00/4898760954, included in accordance with CC License Attribution 2.0 Generic.

[48] Image retrieved March 4, 2023 from Flickr.com. Photograph by Salim Virji, dated June 7, 2009. Link to web address here: https://www.flickr.com/photos/44124427152@N01/3603741071, included in accordance with CC License Attribution-ShareAlike 2.0 Generic.

the forerunner to the socialist revolutionary, which suggests the potential for ironic interpretation, but what might the 'uninformed' viewer make of their blending? What constellations of meaning are generated by both figures, individually, and then *in* their blending, in the conceptual sense? Does Mussolini as 'the original Fascist' – an *actual* historical role of his! – factor into things or, in line with Oushakine's remarks above, is the constructional *form* a kind of end in itself here, emptied of such content? Che's face, moreover, is a particularly recognizable global icon that has for decades served as the symbol *par excellence* of counterculture, as an "icon of dissent" (Prestholdt 2019).[49] Does Mussolini, for all his iconic dimensions discussed in the preceding pages, possesses that same kind of global recognition? That his name appears surely helps, but what transnational symbolic associations does he, and it, bring?

Figure 7.17: Mussolini 'Tha original Che' E (2009)[50]

Finally, Figure 7.18 is an image that perhaps speaks to the campaign's interpretation by at least one viewer: here it appears slashed, defaced in a manner reminiscent of the iconoclasm targeting Mussolini's representations in 1943. It has also been 'labeled,' a scrawled 'bastardo' clearly legible along the poster's right flank. That this was captured all at once in a single photograph raises several more questions: were these actions carried out by one person or multiple? Did they all occur during the same 'encounter' or across several? Is the apparent defacement even the result of human interference, or is it perhaps the result of some heavy rain, or a blast of wind? Furthermore, the text that accompanies the other five constructs in Figures 7.13-

[49] For further discussion of Che as a global, counterculture, and commercial icon, see Kunzle (1997), Kemp (2021: chapter 6), and Spicer-Escalante (2014).

[50] Image retrieved October 2, 2022 from Flickr.com. Photograph by Hrag Vartanian, dated April 14, 2010. Link to web address here: https://www.flickr.com/photos/40751750@N00/4521128766, included in accordance with CC License Attribution-NoDerivs 2.0.

7.17 has here been effaced, with only the very top of Mussolini's 'M' still somewhat perceptible. Without it, we may again ask, is Mussolini even recognizable? If this were Italy, we might well be inclined to say yes; but here, in New York City, over four thousand miles away and some sixty-five years removed from his death, it is impossible to say.[51]

Figure 7.18: Mussolini 'Tha original Che' F (2010)[52]

Thus, without his name, without the caption, and without Che's accompanying face, the tattered poster in Figure 7.18 displays its own 'afterlife' that to an ordinary passerby might hardly be intelligible let alone recognizable. That is, not only has Mussolini himself been effaced, but so

[51] The scribbled 'bastardo' does suggests that, for someone, at least, Mussolini and his attendant frame of FASCISM have been recognized.

[52] Image retrieved October 2, 2022 from Flickr.com. Photograph by Alan Houston, dated July 28, 2009. Link to web address here: https://www.flickr.com/photos/40393409@N08/4041947894, included in accordance with CC License Attribution-NonCommercial 2.0.

has his ascribed 'status' as 'Tha original Che' – whatever blends that Figures 7.13-7.17 might prompt (and, by extension Figure 7.18, too, at some prior point) are ostensibly no longer accessible. Yet, we might also ask, what about someone familiar with this image campaign, who perhaps has seen dozens of Mussolinis as 'Tha original Che' strung up around town? Might they indeed still recognize the image and 'recall' its erstwhile 'meaning potential,' even having come across it in its dilapidated state? I do not have an answer for many (indeed, most) of these questions. However, there are some final considerations to be made that might serve as quasi-answers to at least a few of them, to which we now turn.

7.5 – Concluding Considerations

The first such consideration poses another question in response to the one raised last in section 7.4: in considering this New York City, Mussolini-Che image campaign, are we presented with a new, emergent construction in its own right? One that 'multiply inherits' (Goldberg 1995; Hudson 2007; Trousdale 2013; Sommerer 2020; see also Chapter 3, p. 71) structure (conceptual and material) each from Mussolini's and Che's iconic images-as-constructions? After all, if Mussolini's and Ceauşescu's images can proliferate to bring about emergent, frame-based, construction-blends – per the present usage-based framework and argument – then surely Che's can, too, and those of any number of other figures who acquire 'iconic' status and around which systematized, 'cultic' semiosis forms.[53] The point to be underscored here is that the cult as 'authoritative discourse' and the range of attendant political frames with which it is associated may be particular to the leader cults of the twentieth century (e.g. those of Mussolini and Ceauşescu) and their echoes (e.g. the cult of Kim Jong-un in North Korea), but the cognitive, semiotic, and communicative processes at work in them are most definitely not. 'Cultic constructions,' then, should be expected to emerge in a host of other environments. Additional or comparative inquiries could shed further light on this kind of hypervisual and multimodal constructional emergence as it springs from the marriage of universal cognitive properties (e.g. semantic frames, entrenchment, perception, usage and frequency effects, salience, etc.) with distinct cultural and contextual factors (e.g. *what* is salient, *what kinds* of frames are relevant, how is broader social discourse organized, etc.).

The second consideration deals with cult 'afterlives' and what they (are to) mean. In conducting research for the previous chapter's discussion of caricature, the following remarks from Judith Wechsler stood out to me:

> Political caricature is intrinsically ephemeral; it loses impact when we no longer know the code and have nothing at stake (1984: 317).

[53] Many such figures spring to mind. These include both expressly political figures around whom regimented cult systems comparable to Mussolini's and Ceauşescu's emerged as well as a range of historical and celebrity individuals whose impact on the public imagination has been deep and long-lasting. In terms of the former, examples worth considering are Navaro-Yashin's (2002: chapter 6) analysis of the cult of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in 1990s Turkey; Strassler's (2020: chapter 1) musings on the image campaigns featuring pictures of both of Indonesia's Sukarno and Suharto following their respective regimes; Cherstich's (2014) essay on the reappropriations and depictions of Muammar Gaddafi in the wake of his overthrow and death; and Cheek's (2008) account of, as he puts it, 'the multiple Maos of contemporary China.' In terms of the latter, this might include as disparate of figures as Anne Frank, whose many meanings, representations, and remediations are explored in detail in Kishenblatt-Gimblett & Shandler (2012), and more 'classic' cultural icons such as Marilyn Monroe (see Dyer 1986; Bolton 2015) or Bob Marley (see Prestholdt 2019).

Very little of this chapter dealt with caricature *per se*, of course, but I think Wechsler's pithy description packs punch on a far wider scale. What are we to make of the 'afterlives' of the cult constructions that this conclusion has analyzed? We have considered several of the many questions that they pose and possible interpretations on offer. From a semantic perspective, their uses variously display bleaching, retention, resemanticization, and a possibly open-ended polysemy. The relation evinced between 'form' and 'meaning' – complicated even further here by 'context' – has roiled the linguistic definition of a construction as a form-meaning-context constellation. In Wechsler's terms above, what precisely is 'at stake' here, and for whom? Now, with the daily realities of both cults confined to history and their representational progeny accessible the world over, what does it mean to 'know the code' and does one even need to 'know' it to use it? I do not have an answer to provide here but would point to work in 'visual culture' that engages with such questions and with which an increasingly multimodal cognitive linguistics might benefit from engaging moving forward.[54]

Karen Strassler's (2020) book on 'image-events' in post-authoritarian Indonesia is one such work. Early in the book, in discussing the circulation of particular images of Suharto (a former dictator) and those of Munir Said Thalib (a slain human rights activist-turned-martyr), she highlights the image's central role in contemporary 'media ecologies' for enacting political agency and contestation. Considering these images to constitute "artifacts of a politics of visibility," she elaborates that

> [in] [a]ppealing to possible futures through reworked icons of the past, [these image campaigns] suggest how making, circulating, and responding to images has become a pervasive mode by which people enact their political agency. Such images travel through an intricate media ecology, mobilizing the potentials of different forms and channels of public address: from streets to museums, newspapers to T-shirts, online memes to stickers. As they move and ricochet off of each other – and off of other images and texts – they form a restless, open-ended series. Each act of producing a sticker, downloading a poster, uploading an image as a Twitter avatar, circulating a meme, glancing at a street artist's stencil, or scanning the pages of a newspaper, is a small but potentially critical event in the agonistic and ongoing process of public envisioning (ibid.: 8-9).

Highly characteristic of the digital age, this passage and her book more broadly reflect the enormous productive potential that images have, in both senses of the word. Particular images, in their constant circulation and (re)negotiation, have the ability to shape, challenge, and redefine social relations, practices, and conventional meanings, to produce change.[55] In certain cases, these images, like Suharto's or those of Mussolini and Ceaușescu observed throughout this dissertation, at one point in their production inhibited change. Circulating within and as part of the cult's

[54] Like cognitive linguistics, visual culture (or visual studies, as it is sometimes known) is a 'loose' field bound up in an inherent interdisciplinarity that often weaves together analysis of particular visual artifacts and minutia with broader historical, social, political, or cultural trends, theories, contexts, and questions. As a small handful of broader works that could serve as a worthy introduction to many of the field's leading figures, frameworks, and lines of inquiry, see the following works, whose titles are well worthy of their contents: W. J. T. Mitchell's (2005) *What Do Pictures Want?: The Lives and Loves of Images*; Whitney Davis' (2011) *A General Theory of Visual Culture*; Nicholas Mirzoeff's (2011) *The Right to Look: A Counterhistory of Visuality*; and James Elvis, Gustav Frank & Sunil Manghani's (2015) *Farewell to Visual Studies*.

[55] On such potential of images, see contributions in Spyer & Steedly (2013).

hypervisual authoritative discourse, their polysemous 'meaning potential' was, as mentioned, largely contained to small-scale reappropriations. Yet, once broken off from their original cult contexts, their capacity for taking on and generating new meanings – as we have certainly seen – explodes, locating this potential somewhere closer to the linguistic sense of the word 'productive.'

This leads us to our final concluding consideration. In the preceding pages I have written of cultic representations as constructions, of which I have in turn stressed their status as conceptual entities, as entrenched conceptual blends. That is, within the usage-based, constructionist approach adopted here, a given cult construction emerges with a series of constative dimensions through its repeated encounter or 'use.' This in turn simultaneously entails its proliferation in myriad contexts (i.e. it is highly 'productive') such as to concomitantly acquire (individual) entrenchment, (social) conventionalization, and constructional schematicity. In so doing it comes to function as a template for a host of further uses and reappropriations that, in each new context of their deployment, permit for Derridean citational 'breaks' in their meanings. Such emergent *constructional polysemy*, as I have called it, accounts for the multiplicity of possible meanings that any one cult construction might (come to) have, constatively or performatively, whether 'positive,' 'negative,' or 'neutral' in evaluative charge.

Most often, these cult constructions materially took shape as images. Images are, however, themselves not language. Neither has this dissertation, with its focus on visual materials, argued as much. I have, however, proposed to think of language and images in much the same way – again, as constructions, understood as entrenched conceptual blends.[56] The very idea of a 'visual construction' or a 'visual constructionist approach,' however, likely does not sit well with everybody within the Construction Grammar camp at large. This is, in a sense, understandable given the linguistic bent of the theory – it arose as a means to theorize and account for human language. Yet, if at the core of any given constructionist approach is the idea of a 'form-meaning pairing' – a relation that, as any Construction Grammarian would acknowledge, is never as binary, one-to-one, or static as its formulation may make it seem – what, precisely, stipulates that it be *limited* to language *per se*? After all, cognitive linguistics and Construction Grammar alike consider linguistic knowledge to be just one 'part' of general knowledge, inextricable from other cognitive processes and knowledge structures. Indeed, as Adele Goldberg has often emphatically put it to highlight this, "knowledge of language is knowledge" (2019: 52). If this is so, it might follow, then, that constructions as 'form-meaning pairings' apply more broadly to human communication at large, regardless of modality. While simple food for thought at this point, it is a hypothesis that has been explored throughout this dissertation and is one that I think worthy of further consideration, scrutiny, and investigation going forward.

[56] Many works have been noted and discussed throughout this dissertation that have taken explicitly multimodal or imagistic data and incorporated them into the 'field' of cognitive linguistics such that one of its primary research orientations has become devising a holistic account of human communication in all – and across all – its various modalities. While not all of these works take a constructionist approach as I have here (though, again, see e.g. Steen & Turner 2013; Dancygier & Vandelanotte 2017a; Hoffmann 2017b, 2021; Zima & Bergs 2017a,b; Turner 2020, 2022 for specifically constructionist approaches to multimodality), they all highlight the rich overlap in meaning-making and -emergences processes across modalities, whether grounded in processes of conceptual blending (e.g. Sweetser 2000; Fauconnier & Turner 2002; Turner 2006, 2014), in the guiding principle of contextual relevance (e.g. Forceville 2020), or in arguing for a multimodal model of mental representations (e.g. Hart 2016). This dissertation has aimed, with its focus on particular communicative and hypervisual data, to contribute to these same larger conversations and arguments.

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