

## REPRESENTATIONS OF CULTURAL MEDIATION DURING FIELDRESEARCH

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### Informant's Representations in Bibliography

A classic text which ensures the bases of British social anthropology, and I am referring to *Notes and Queries on Anthropology* (Fleure, Radcliffe-Brown, 1951), offers instructions for *investigators* at the very beginning of the study, referring to the attitude one has to adopt in relation to the natives or informants who are found on the field, stressing the fact that prejudice can harm scientific research:

*The idea that natives will say anything to please the investigator, and will invent information, is often found among Europeans who have dealt with the people mainly as their employers. Experience suggests that such views are generally much exaggerated and the investigator who establish a sympathetic understanding with the people and develops a system of checking his material need not be deceived by individuals of this type. (Fleure, Radcliffe-Brown, 1951: 29-30)*

Furthermore, the same investigator has to take into account the fact that the anthropologist ends up being *adopted* by the tribe he / she visits and that he / she will alter the tribe's attitude towards him / her, while being "really incorporated" into their society. While offering instructions for methodologies regarding the selection of informants, the authors of *Notes...* bring into discussion an important factor: "the best people" have to be selected, due to the fact that lowering "the social scale afterwards" is infinitely more acceptable and easy than vice versa. Pariahs must be avoided because, by association, the investigator's status will be lowered as a consequence.

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Not a piece of advice is given regarding a possible mediator between the investigator and the investigated but there is a hint that this possible mediator is, in fact, an interpreter, the *translator*. This translator is, in fact, a linguist, a specialist in converting words from the language of the anthropologist into words from native's language. Still, *meaning* is not brought into discussion. The process of doing fieldwork is thus a unilateral process during which the balance inclines towards the researcher, as the doer, the active element, the one who controls the flow of information. He also has to take into account various factors, such as the "[...] present day situation of the investigated culture, the study of culture contact [...] or the reconstruction of history" (*Idem*, p. 39). The culture contact does not refer, in this context, to a mediated encounter between investigator's culture and the native's culture but rather between various cultures within the same area as the researched one – specifically named: intra-group influences.

In his *Manuel d'ethnographie*, published in 1926, Marcel Mauss writes about the material difficulties an ethnographer might encounter while doing research, therefore his advice comes as a measure to prevent them:

[...] *en faisant appel à des informateurs conscients, ayant la mémoire des événements; ils peuvent se rencontrer parmi les fonctionnaires juridiques ou religieux, prêtres, féticheurs, hérauts...* (Mauss, 1926 : 7)

Consciousness and a good memory of the events are important criteria for selecting the informants; nevertheless, Mauss stresses that the informant plays an important role and has an equally important status within the community he comes to represent. At any moment, the priests or judges can become narrators or singers.

On the other hand, Mauss expresses the idea that the gathered material should be delivered or interpreted – in his words: "with the necessary comments" – thus including some sort of annotations, comparable to a *philologist work*. The necessary comments constitute a

metatext and transform the informant into author, offering him complete control of information:

*Une fois réuni tout ce matériel extérieur, il faudra trouver le magicien qui livrera le recueil de ses formules, avec le commentaire nécessaire. Ce travail doit être fait, de préférence à l'enquêteur étranger, par le technicien indigène autorisé : seul importe le point de vue indigène. À la limite, l'idéal serait de transformer les indigènes non pas en informateurs, mais en auteurs. Ainsi La Flesche, Iroquois pur et membre du Bureau d'Ethnologie Américain pendant quarante ans, a été chargé par les Indiens Osage de publier tout le rituel Osage. Hewitt, qui nous a révélé la notion d'orenda, est un Iroquois. (Mauss, *Ibidem*, p. 155)*

Three decades later, writing about the actions that a good ethnographer has to undergo during the field research, Claude Lévi-Strauss states the following:

*Fieldwork is taxing enough even in normal conditions: the anthropologist must get up at first light and remain alert until the last of the natives has gone to sleep (even then he sometimes has to watch over their slumber). He must try to pass unnoticed, and yet always be at hand. He must see everything, remember everything, takes note of everything. He must be ready to make the most of a humiliating indiscretion, to go to some snotty-nosed urchin and beg for information, and keep himself ever in readiness to profit by a moment of complaisance or free-and-easiness. Or, it may well be, for days together a fit of ill humour among the natives will compel him to shut down on his curiosity and simulate a sombre reserve. The investigator eats his heart out in the exercise of his profession: he has abandoned, after all, his environment, his friends and his habits, spent a considerable amount of money and time, and compromised his health. (Lévi-Strauss, 1961: 373-374)*

The French ethnologist does not mention how a good informant should act, or better said *react* to the researchers' performance. Moreover, the image that Lévi-Strauss proposes, or at least, that can be inferred from the mentioned fragment, is that of an informant who detains the power in relationship with the researcher,

an informant that controls information and therefore controls the process of research. On the other hand, the ethnographer is rather submissive and completely dependable on the mood swings on behalf of his / her informants, not to mention weakened and abandoned, uncomfortable and in rather poor health, an idea which suggests that doing field research consumes the scientist, empowering the native at the same time. The ethnographer has to be extremely present and at the same time almost invisible while trying to comprehend the resorts of a different culture. Lévi-Strauss does mention his more direct relations to several important informants from the Nambikwara tribe, among which the chief Tarundé was a remarkable character:

*As an informant he was invaluable to me, in that he understood my problems, solved my difficulties, and took a real interest in my work. But his functions preoccupied him, and for days together he would go off hunting, or on reconnaissance, or to see if the fruit – or seed-bearing trees were doing well. There were also his wives, whose continual invitations to amorous amusements of one sort or another found in him the readiest of partners. (Lévi-Strauss, 1961: 301)*

The tribe chief is a problem solver, which can be read as a sort of mediation between the researcher and the new environment. The only unstable fact is that the chief cannot detain himself from his daily occupations and activities and in my opinion this is due to the role he plays within his community. Someone with less attributes or even a marginal can be a better informant not necessarily because he / she knows more but because he / she has more time available.

Lévi-Strauss passes through a different situation while finding himself within the Bororo tribe, more specific in the village of Kejara, where the chief tribe supposedly did not speak any Portuguese; therefore another native has to perform the role of informant:

*[...] there was at Kejara a native destined to act as my interpreter, and also as my principal informant. He was about thirty-five years old and spoke tolerable Portuguese. He claimed, in fact, that as a result of the*

*missionaries' exertions he had once been able both to write and to read in Portuguese. The Fathers took such a pride in this that they had sent him to Rome, where he had been received by the Holy Father in person. Apparently they had wanted him, on his return, to get married according to the Christian rites and in disregard of the traditional practices of his tribe, This had led to a spiritual crisis from which he emerged reconverted to the ancient Bororo ideal; and he went to Kejara and had lived there, for the last ten or fifteen years, the life of a savage in every particular. Stark naked, painted scarlet, with his nose and lower lip transpierced by nasal and lip-plugs, the Holy Father's befeathered Indian turned out to be a most remarkable exponent of Bororo sociology. (Lévi-Strauss, 1961: 200)*

A sociologist *avant la lettre*, the above mentioned native displays another image of the informant: first of all, I am referring to what Lévi-Strauss names: *principal informant*, a role that imposes respect on the other informants, a reference, a individual that speaks more often than others on behalf of his community. Therefore, his discourse will be the one that could become representative for a certain way of relating to things. Secondly, this person spoke "tolerable Portuguese", which makes him not only of inestimable value but a *language translator*, on a first level. When admitting that the informant proved to be a "most remarkable exponent of Bororo sociology" the researcher states a new level to which the native reaches: that of a sociological representative, moreover, a *cultural representative* of his community, or what can be named *cultural translator* or *cultural mediator*.

### **Informant's Representations on the Field**

The following observations come to complete the portrait of the informant and offer balance to the power relations that are established between the researcher and the informant during the filed research process. They are observations drawn after a research which started in 2007 and was continued until 2011, with breaks and periods of long pauses but also with returns of several days, every year. The historical context of the region and of the place where the research was done is of extreme importance, in my opinion, due to

the fact that people's lives were deeply influenced by it. I gathered information about it not only from bibliography but also from what people narrate about their past.

The onset of the field research was Solotvino (Slatina in Romanian / Aknaszlatina in Hungarian), from the Tiaciv *rayon* (Teceu in Romanian), a former miners' town (with three saline mines), situated nowadays in Transcarpathian Ukraine, a small town which claims its roots from 1359 (Kotigorosko, *Ținuturile Tisei superioare*, apud Ciubotă, Marina, 1999: 66). Throughout history, Solotvino was part of the Máramoros County – during the Kingdom of the Great Hungary, then was part of the Habsburg Empire, and then of the Austro-Hungary, until 1918. For a very short period of time (a few months), Romanian troupes have reached the region, as far as the town of Hust<sup>1</sup> but Romania never claimed those territories which entered starting 1920 under Czechoslovak administration. Administrations changed in high speed over the first half of the twentieth century; therefore Solotvino came to dispose of a rather muddling history.

Solotvino was and still is an extremely heterogeneous place (something between a small town and a big village) – a place where, until the second world war there lived an important Jewish community, and also Hungarians, Romanians, Ukrainians, Czechs, Slovaks, Roma, and afterwards, during the Soviet period – Russians. People spoke, as they confess today, in several interview, “all languages”<sup>2</sup>, that is all the languages of the great empires under which administration Solotvino was, at the same time as Transcarpathia, and there would be no surprise that people are trilingual, at least.

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<sup>1</sup> While establishing the Romanian border after the first world war, what counts is the fight against bolshevism, states Radu Ciuceanu, in a study dedicated to the Romanian-Ukrainian relations, in a volume coordinated by Viorel Ciubotă (1999). In 1919, Romanian troupes reached the ethnographical limit of Hust – information that appears in the correspondence from the front line to the Romanian delegation in Paris.

<sup>2</sup> „Tăte limbile”, in original.

Having schools in *Moldavian*, Ukrainian, Russian and Hungarian, Solotvino offered and still offers students the possibility to study until they reach high school (in Ukraine, pupils graduate from high school around the age of 16).

Those who want to attend a faculty either went / go to Ujgorod (the most important city of the Transcarpathia *oblast*), or – in cases of Romanians I talked to<sup>1</sup> – they attend the University in Chişinău. After 1990, the children of the families that assume a Romanian identity attend universities in Baia Mare or in important academic centres: Cluj, Bucureşti, Timișoara.

Solotvino is not only heterogeneous under linguistic aspect but also when referred to religion, the most prominent being: Pravoslavica (Greek-orthodox), Greek-catholic, Romano-catholic, Jehova's Witnesses, Baptist, Adventist. During the period 1945 – 1990, the Greek-catholic church was forbidden but today the parishioners can practice their religion and moreover, they have two new priests (before 1990, there was only one priest, Gheorghe Pitulac, who served in three different villages) and they are also recovering the church patrimony, and also erected a new church. The new priests are Romanian missionaries who asked the Baia Mare Bishop to be send to place were they are needed and therefore they reached to Solotvino<sup>2</sup>.

Among the representative persons for the Romanian community in Solotvino there was and still is Marioara Deiac (born Huban), former teacher of Russian literature. In her house I have done my first interviews which gave me the opportunity to create an experiment that would emulate what Oscar Lewis did in 1940 in Ciudad de Mexico, while studying what he called "cultura de la pobreza"<sup>3</sup>. I am now referring to the fact that, after several

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<sup>1</sup> Marioara Deiac, Maria Huban, Gheorghe Huban.

<sup>2</sup> The information is from Marioara Deiac during an interview in April, 2011.

<sup>3</sup> *Los Hijos de Sanchez* is representative for the way in which Lewis studied the culture of the poor by making interviews with the members of the same family in order to observe and record how they explained their relations and how they referred to the community they lived in.

discussions when she insisted on the idea “I am our family’s encyclopaedia” and offered details on the family members there were to be found either in Solotvino, or Sighet, Marioara confessed she was in the possession of a handwritten notebook which her father wrote after he returned from deportation. The father, Dumitru Huban, was deported in Karaganda, Kazakhstan, in 1950 and returned to Solotvino in 1955. In 1982 he had begun writing his memoirs from the camp, in a notebook, with Latin characters and also Cyrillic ones. The notebook was scanned and when I returned to Timișoara I typed it. This discovery encouraged me not only to pay attention to the father’s notebook but also to be more interested into the life stories of the members of the family. Therefore, starting that moment I did interviews with Marioara, her mother, her brother, afterwards her son in an attempt to investigate the way in which family memory functions.

In 2007 I have recorded a detailed story about Marioara’s family, about her life and her father’s life. I also did interviews with her mother on the deportation period.

Later on, in 2008, I returned to Solotvino with the typed text of the father’s notebook and asked for further information from Marioara. She not only translated words I did not understand because they were in Russian or local dialect but also offered explanations regarding her father’s life (where he was born, what did he do as a young man, where did he studied or worked). I also made interviews with Marioara’s mother and Marioara’s brother.

In 2011 the stories were completed by other members of the family or by persons that knew the Huban family. I repeated the interviews with Marioara, with her mother and with Marioara’s son, Mihai, or with people who had similar stories (one family member was deported, for example).

My most frequent informant was, during all these researches, Marioara Deiac. I only had a more complete perspective of our relation after ending my staying in Solotvino, in 2011, and after comparing it to the years before it. My researches started when I was



a student and were part of a team of research from the University of the West, in Timișoara. When I and my colleagues met Marioara, we had to create different connections to one another. One of my colleagues was a nephew of hers, while the others (including me, obviously) were complete strangers whom she just met. It was in 2007 when she first narrated her family's story, which she narrated again in 2008 and detailed further more in 2011. When I write *detailed*, I am referring to (apparently) insignificant *details*<sup>1</sup> the ones that offer – in my opinion – consistency to the whole story. During the four years, Marioara converted herself from informant / researched / interlocutor / subject into a translator<sup>2</sup> of her own community (with all the implication that *cultural translator* mean), respectively into an *ethnologist avant la lettre*. She passed (or was passed) into the researchers' community that is analysed by Sanda Golopenția when she discusses the field research (2001: 17). But in Marioara's case, the situation is different than the one mentioned by Golopenția, who writes about the fact that during the field research the ethnographer is accepted by the community he / she studies accomplishing thus the goal of every researcher: that of being fully accepted by the community – or, in other words, completely accepting the *point de vue*<sup>3</sup> of the native. For Marioara, as I said, the situation is different, because she is the one accepted within the

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<sup>1</sup> Vintilă Mihăilescu (2009, p. 94) mentions the following: "In his turn and on the footsteps of Marcel Mauss, Lévi-Strauss considers that the subject of ethnology consists of the debris that is falling from the table the other human sciences, those 'details' that others do not give any importance."

<sup>2</sup> In this respect, Bernard H. Russell (1994: pp. 277-278) writes: "Work closely with the translator, so that she or he can fully understand the subtleties you want to convey in your questionnaire items. Next, ask another bilingual person, who is a native speaker of your language, to translate the questionnaire back into that language." The interest is focused mostly on the appropriate usage of words, therefore backwards translations are used, as a safe-net plan and in order to ensure a correct understanding of the linguistic meaning.

<sup>3</sup>Not necessarily in the sense used by Genette in *Figures*, as *focalisation* in relation to events but as referring to the Other's culture, as a positioning regarding the Other's culture.

researcher's community, sharing their *point de vue*. The debate is whether the point of view can be completely parted between those involved in the process of ethnological research.

The true research would actually mean the passing of the researcher to the community he / she studies<sup>1</sup>, and not the passing on the native to the researchers' community. Without assuming that I can clarify these differences, my opinion is that an extended or about to extend research project will inevitably transform the person that connects the specialist and the community. Not only the specialist alters the community but the mediator is altered by the specialist. The mediator does not entirely belong to his / her world anymore, does not have an innocent look, a look which does not quest for research subjects but does not have yet the specialist look but rather a more ... *trained* look. This person, the translator (linguistic or cultural) is caught in between different types of perspectives, or in Clifford Geertz words:

[...] *inside versus outside, or first person versus third person descriptions; phenomenological versus objectivist, or cognitive versus behavioural theories; or perhaps most commonly emic versus etic analyses, this last deriving from the distinction in linguistics between phonemics and phonetics, phonemics classifying sounds according to their internal function in language, phonetics classifying them according to their acoustic properties as such.* (1983: 56)

Without fully belonging to one or the other world, the intermediary, the cultural mediator belongs to both, being part of a new community, of those with fluid identities but taking the advantage of having different points of view, therefore a more complex image of the situation. Being at the same time within an emic and an etic situation, the mediator is an insider and an outsider and can have both "*un regard de près et de loin.*"

Translation is a top issue for anthropology; Boas encouraged his students to learn the language of the population they were about

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<sup>1</sup> The *adoption* mentioned in Fleure, Radcliffe-Brown (1951).

to study and that idea determined an entire school of thought to develop in that direction, at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth. Still, Boas was rather interested in the language role when studying a culture:

*Translation was the modus vivendi; however, the anthropologists of the time were not concerned with questions of translation but only with the information itself, and the ways in which it could be used to buttress the evolutionary schemas and theories which they were hypothesizing. (Rubel, Rosman, 2003: 2)*

The translation issue and that of “cross cultural understanding” appears later on, when anthropologists focus on *ethnographic writing*. How do we translate a culture into another, is this translation possible, can it follow a linguistic pattern? To all these rhetorical questions the answer would be affirmative, in my opinion, stressing the idea that indeed, a cultural translation can take the *form* of linguistic translation but underlying the idea that what is translated is the concept of foreignness, or Otherness:

*Translating is seen as a ‘traitorous act’. Cultural differences are emphasized and translation is seen as coming to terms with ‘Otherness’ by ‘resistive’ or ‘foreignizing’ translations which emphasize the difference and the foreignness of the text. The foreignized translation is one that engages “... readers in domestic terms that have been defamiliarized to some extent. (Rubel, Rosman, 2003: 61)*

But what and how do we translate when the researcher and the researched speak the same language? What does Marioara, for example, need to translate and to intermediate? While transmitting information regarding her family, Marioara does not translate words but information, offering narration while the linguistic aspect is dispensable. Both of us speak Romanian, therefore it seems that I would not have a problem with understanding what she is saying. Still, in these situations, why do I presume that the role of cultural translator or mediator belongs to Marioara and not to me, as researcher whose duty is to represent later on the community from

Solotvino to the academic community? The concept of Otherness should be my responsibility and represent my interest, not Marioara's. The two worlds among which Marioara settles the transfer are – on the one hand Solotvino, with the stories of its inhabitants, respectively the anthropologists' community and the one of the readers interested in anthropology.

James Clifford, quoted by the editors of the volume *Translating Culture*, states that mediation between cultures or *cultural translation* is possible:

*We might call this translation in the first instance. How does one approximate as closely as possible the original words and ideas of the culture being studied in the translation? Glossing and contextualizing is one of the methods used, which we will discuss later in greater detail. Clifford has made us very aware of the constructed nature of the ethnographic text and the various messages such texts convey. The ethnographic texts, which anthropologists publish today, never consist of the data exactly as collected in the field. (apud Rubel, Rosman, 2003 : 4-5)*

Getting to know the community, its memory and its stories is a process to which I had access through Marioara – the one who made the selection and detained the know-how regarding her acquaintances; she was able to judge their competences regarding the narrating process, the capacity of memorising and delivering events. As a researcher, I had to takeover the information and process them in order to present them to a more or less *implied reader*. Marioara is the one that *contextualised situations* and offered details; that is how I found out about the conflicts or negotiations between different religious groups (Pravoslavlic and Greek-catholic were trying to share the space of the same church, which was rather difficult; bigger houses in the community meant that the householders were working in Russia, Italy or Spain and then invested all their gains in properties – to give just a few examples).

Somewhere, in between the community from Solotvino and that of the implied readers, those interested in anthropology, in the way the family memory works, in the former Soviet space, Marioara and I as intermediary from their behalf and from our behalf have

negotiated for four years ways of transferring knowledge. How did they do that? By offering one another the opportunity to look around in their own kitchen<sup>1</sup>.

In an exceptional volume, *Tuhami – Portrait of a Morocco*, Vincent Crapanzano speaks of the offerings and lack of the fieldresearch process, of the importance that an assistant can have and of the fact that the assistant's voice is never clearly heard. Built around the story of Tuhami, from a perspective of Moroccan culture, the book refers only in the end to the person that intermediated the meeting between Crapanzano and Tuhami, namely Lhacen, the one who expressed his wish of not being present in the text but at the same time, the person without whom the volume would not have been written.

Lhacen is the person that discovered Tuhami, a brilliant narrator, *un personnage* / a character in the real sense of the word, a creator of performance that was depicted in *The Arabian Nights*. Relating to these two representatives of the Moroccan culture, Crapanzano writes comments on what field research meant to him, comments that help me define my own relation to Marioara. She was, at the same time *Tuhami* and *Lhacen*, an exceptional informant, who senses how things evolve, a creator and thinker over her own words but also an intermediary who is able to find other potential interesting informants. Here it is, retrospectively, Crapanzano's fieldresearch which allows me to comment upon it:

*As I look back over my notes, and as I accept to recall my meetings with Tuhami some ten years ago, I am immediately struck by the impoverished*

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<sup>1</sup> In „Prologue” to *Fascinația diferenței* (1999: 8), Vintilă Mihăilescu writes: "All these years (of field research, my note, N. M.) took place in the obscuritz of the kitchen, where the team of anthropologists developed their activity, drinking their beers and their spreading their gossip, without the possibility (maybe without the need) to get out on the market in order to sell their intellectual products. We constantly talk among us, that's right, with nostalgic delights as natural as one breathes or loves. [...] After we were removed from our kitchen in 1989 – the intimate charm of this life of seclusion fell apart. In the bright light coming from outside and facing the questioning eyes of the Other, the shadow could not remain a value in itself, but a possibility a memory."

*quality of my emotional response. My questions seem frequently cold, unemotional, and detached. Was I frozen before Tuhami? In part, the question must be answered affirmatively. There were times when my relations with Tuhami specifically or with Morocco and the Hamadsha more generally – the two cannot easily be distinguished – were such that I could not permit myself any response but the most distant. It was at such times that I took refuge in my difficulties with Arabic and exploited, I suppose, the presence of Lhacen. It was at such times, too, that I made use of «ethnographic distance» and various theoretical positions, most notably the psychoanalytic but others as well, to distance myself and to defend myself from an onslaught of presumably intolerant emotions. (I should add here that Tuhami took refuge at times in Lhacen's presence, in «ethnographic distance» as he understood it, and undoubtedly, in his own theoretical understanding of what was transpiring. (Crapanzano, 1985: 139)*

From Crapanzano's perspective, at a certain moment the ethnographic research had become a role play during which researcher and informant were hiding behind the mediator's back, behind the person who was present during the interviews and was ignored by the two direct involved participants. Whose *point de vue* was the true / plausible one?

Functioning as interface between both worlds, Lhacen was at the same time Moroccan and ethnologist, without being *just Moroccan* or *just ethnologist*. Sometimes an enthusiast, revising Crapanzano's ideas other times, Lhacen manages to become invisible when the American ethnologist analyses his meetings with Tuhami but is present when the researcher discusses the difficulties he encountered during the research, being part of the research methodologies rather than of the researched culture, a sort of team worker not a potential informant.

In my case, Marioara is at the same time an informant and a mediator, exchanging roles as it follows: in 2007 she debuts by being an informant, a direct witness of certain events (events related to her life – like getting into the University in Ujgorod, being a teacher during the Soviet Union, marrying a Ukrainian, finding lost relatives

in Romania), a narrator of events lived by others (her father's deportation, the rough time her mother has had during the years when the father was away), a living memory of her family. She repeats that she is an encyclopaedia regarding her family relations, she seems to detain all the information regarding the family past or pretends to be so; she encourages her brother to narrate me a certain episode that she thinks it is representative for her father, she almost conducts the interview I took to her son, whom she challenges and stimulates him saying: "Tell her, tell her about how your grandfather told you stories. The grandfather told stories (she looks at me)..."

She becomes a translator in 2008, when I asked her to help me understand some words, either in Russian or in dialect. Thus, words like *ciumiză* (besom), *holova* (boss), *ciaina* (tea-shop), *ovseanka* (oat porridge) were translated into Romanian; in other situations, when the text referred to the years of her father's youth, when he was the mayor of Solotvino, she asks questions such as: "But doesn't he say about when he was a teacher? He was a teacher in Plăiuț<sup>1</sup>. And doesn't he say about getting married?"

She becomes a co-worker in 2011, when one of her favourite sayings was: "This person could tell *us* some things. That would be a good narrator."

An apparently innocent pronoun – *us* – marks the fact that Marioara envisages herself or imagines herself as a person that belongs to the community of researchers, rather than to the community of Romanians from Solotvino. My constant request not only for narrations about her life but about other people that would be able and, most of all, willing to narrate and be recorded, could be a sort of mechanism that encouraged her to feel entitled to gradually assume the roles of informant, *mediator* and finally, *amateur ethnologist*. And, as far as my latest information goes, she is considering putting down her life story as a result of various interrogations from outside. Marioara would then be a producer of text, maybe even of ... *ethnographic text*.

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<sup>1</sup> Village at 12 kilometres away from Solotvino.

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