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ION CARAION. IDENTIFICATION WITH ARGHEZI – SOLUTION FOR MORAL DILEMMAS

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Abstract: *Starting from a text where Ion Caraion presents dimensions of Tudor Arghezi's biography and literature, I've underlined those aspects which reveal the influence that meeting Arghezi had upon Caraion's future evolution. By presenting Arghezi as an exemplary role model, Caraion creates the opportunity to use whatever resemblance might exist between them to transform the justification of the Arghezi's actions into an indirect self justification for his own options.*

Keywords: *identification, treason, self justification, life versus literature.*

1. Introduction

This paper is founded on the premise that a certain evolution of Ion Caraion and Tudor Arghezi's relationship had a big impact on the future development of the former. Both in what concerns his social interactions as in what concerns his career as a writer. The way in which he refers to Arghezi reveals in Caraion's case a certain way of feeling, thinking and overall of explaining himself, by establishing a relationship of identification with certain features of that who becomes his role model.

It is interesting to analyze not as much the objective reality of this interaction, between the two poets, but its subjective dimension, those meanings that Caraion invested in it, and the way in which he himself understands and interprets it indirectly suggesting a certain psychological self-portrait. That is why I chose as a main reference the text in which Caraion presents Tudor Arghezi, that text that was first published as a foreword for the volume Tudor Arghezi "Verses", edited by G. Pienetescu, in 1980, at Cartea Românească Publishing House. The text was further developed and republished in the volume "Diary II" written and organized by Caraion in 1981 (the year when he left Romania and requested political asylum in Switzerland) and published only in 1998, at Albatros Publishing House, an edition by Emil Manu.

2. Tudor Arghezi – Role Model for Ion Caraion

Serenela Ghițeanu stated in the article "The Mirror of an Informer", published in the April 2007 issue of "Magazine 22" that one could notice in what concerns Ion

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Caraion a clear case of "Stockholm syndrome": "All of this syndrome's symptoms occur: as a consequence of a traumatic event (jail), during which the victim's life is threatened, the victim is isolated and has no chance to escape, and the captor shows at some point signs of friendship (the episode of recruitment in exchange for his freedom), the victim shows positive feelings towards the captor and ends up by adopting his vision" (Ghițeanu, 2007). This is, no doubt about it, a possible explanation but it would be too much to consider it the only acceptable one or even a sufficient one to justify such a complex and contradictory evolution as the one that Ion Caraion is known for.

Besides the tone used for describing Arghezi and his attitude in certain moments they have met, the evolution of the relationship between the two poets is not, as Caraion presents it, less significant.

The poet that wrote "Mould flowers" is portrayed whit the appreciation that suits a role model. This is a very important aspect of the relationship that is established and I will focus further on those aspects that reveal levels of certain role model identification.

Arghezi's writings are appreciated as being valuable enough as to place one's interest for his rather uneasy nature on a lower rank of a potential hierarchy.

Although his analysis starts by underlining the unfair comparison that has often been made between them, Caraion tries to prove that Arghezi is probably the only Romanian poet gifted enough as to sit next to Mihai Eminescu "(…) Eminescu created our language. Arghezi transformed it into a never ending spectacle." (Caraion, 1998, 108)

Although Caraion's analysis isn't concerned only with Arghezi's writings, his appreciation for this poet's literature seems to always be the element to tip the balance towards a specific positive perception. Arghezi is featured as an indubitable authority and no reason to argue with it can be strong enough. This perspective that Caraion offers is very convenient: we owe it to his literature to forgive the man. Therefore anything that Arghezi the man might do, will always be less relevant than (and excused by) the poet's activity.

In what concerns the relationship between the two, this is also defined by a compensatory alternation if one was to consider those times when Arghezi encouraged and supported Caraion in contrast with those when he contributed to his conviction. But, even though the presentation is rendered so that one could build a balanced representation of Arghezi by adopting a perspective look upon the relationship between him and Caraion, the strongest arguments that justify some of Arghezi's options are to be find outside their relationship, in the poet's nature of being and in his choice for a certain hierarchy of the elements in his life.

3. The evolution of the relationship between Arghezi and Caraion

Caraion says that he first read some of Tudor Arghezi's lyrics in the magazine coordinated and aggressively advertised by Nicolae Iorga "Clear thought". The historian would sometimes belabor, through his articles: Eugen Lovinescu, Lucian Blaga, Ion Barbu and had started a real campaign to argue the literary value of Tudor Arghezi. Surprised by the unfair judgment of Iorga's appreciations, Ion Caraion, back then only a high school student, will publish, under a fake name, "in a small obscure province magazine" (Arghezi, XXII), in the spring of 1940 an article where he expressed his regrets "towards Nicolae Iorga's lack of receptivity for the Arghezi's poetry" (Arghezi, XXII). Although a year filled

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with more important events for the attention of that who was "a great historian, university teacher, the leader of a political party" (Arghezi, XVII) Iorga will take the time to find out who was hiding under the fake name that had dared to publicly argue with his critical views, and he will see that high school student, Stelian Diaconescu (the real name of Ion Caraion) will be expelled. This decision will be postponed and never executed as in that year's autumn, after the institution of the Antonescian regime, Nicolae Iorga will be murdered.

Later on, after graduating from high school, young Caraion goes to Bucharest to look for a job. He is hired as a proofreader for the newspaper "Timpul" and because he persuades the editors that he is also a very good writer, they will give him the chance to write an article. He will then publish "Lina or about the modern fairy-tale" a review of Tudor Arghezi's recently published novel "Lina". The poet that was very well appreciated in the social circles of the time is thrilled by the article written about his novel and will have a great influence upon Caraion's further career. He will even invite the young man that had recently become an editor, to pay him a visit at his house at Mărțișor.

As an editor for the magazine "The World", Caraion is the subordinate of G. Călinescu. As the critic didn't have enough time to get involved in the editorial work, Caraion is the one responsible with handling the magazine. That is why when "The World" decides to dedicate an issue to Charles Baudelaire, Caraion is the one that has to ask Arghezi if he would be willing to contribute. They accidentally met in a rather unusual context: at the pay desk where they both went to collect their monthly pay. They start discussing about the Baudelaire issue in "The World", and Arghezi is surprised to find out that Caraion translated the foreword for Baudelaire's "Les fleurs du mal". He asks the young editor to hand him the text, and with a gesture that shocks everyone around starts reading it right away, delaying this way the moment when he was about to collect his money. Thrilled by the quality of the translation he had just finished reading he promises to send a text. The surprises coming from the poet that was known for his rather difficult nature didn't stop here. Caraion was delighted to find out that the text Arghezi sent wasn't another translation but a critical review of Baudelaire's work and, as if that wouldn't have been enough, he refuses to accept any payment for his contribution saying that he had only agreed to publish a text in G. Călinescu's magazine as a symbol of his friendship for Ion Caraion.

Caraion's way of telling the story builds up towards a climax of the surprises that his relationship with Tudor Arghezi had offered along the way. This specific way of recounting it emphasizes a certain very important moment that is, as I will further argue a turning point for his future development. At a time when magazines, newspapers and publishing houses were banned to publish any of his writings, Tudor Teodorescu-Branişte, the chief editor of "The Morning Newspaper" will publish, in the 17th of October (1946) the article "The Crysis of Romanian culture" and, two months later, "The Man's Crysis". Both articles, as Caraion himself describes them: "forewarned about the emergence of *proletkultism* and its ineluctable damages" (Arghezi, LV). It is not one of the objectives of this paper to discuss the content of the two articles, but I am interested and I will focus further on the angle from which Caraion presents them in the text mentioned above. There are a lot those who will write against the article "The Crysis of Romanian Culture", among them: Miron Radu Paraschivescu, Victor Eftimiu, Cezar Petrescu. It must be

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underlined that despite the repercussions that he might have had to face, Arghezi is one of the few of Caraion's supporters. He will publish in "The Truth" (the 15th of December 1946) the article "Culture lack Crysis". Caraion is thrilled to find out that Arghezi still supports him despite the difficult and risky context in which texts that contradicted the directions dictated by the state were published back then. His joy won't last. A few weeks later, Arghezi writes an article through which he assumes a totally different position than in the former. His act of dissociation and radical turn can be even more perceived as an act of treason if we were to recall how Caraion presented his gesture of defending a valuable writer, against an important leader of the state (Nicolae Iorga), when he was only a young highschool student on the merge of being expelled and of forever compromising his career. Also Arghezi's gesture is even more surprising for Caraion as it occurs on the background of a friendship that was build and encouraged by the one that had now betrayed him. Caraion's attempts to confront Arghezi about his contradictory attitude, failed. Arghezi concedes to answer him only indirectly through articles where he continues to belabor him; among others suggesting that he tried to assume ideas that had first belonged to him, to Arghezi.

4. Identification with Arghezi - self justification of moral compromises

At first shocked by Arghezi's radical turn of perspective, Caraion will, further on, focus on rebalancing the poet's image with arguments that are to be found in a certain inherent psychological structure of his, indubitable, as it is involuntary, and uncontrollable, or even more indubitable, as it is a *sine qua non* condition of his creative dimension.

"Arghezi had – a conflictual nature – two consciences (…) with one or the other he used to look for peace in heavens or in hells (…)" (Arghezi, LXV - LXVI). The poet is described as forever instable, continuously searching and hesitating between evanescent solutions. This lack of stability of his decisions and options makes it impossible for him to completely assume his writing: "But does Arghezi really believe in poetry? Not a fair asked question. Does Arghezi believe that poetry holds a truth for him, or even the truth of fulfillment, steadiness and fullness? We must say no. But we must, just as well, say yes. Of course he does. Of course he doesn't. Just like the smoke, evanescence and deceit, poetry tortures him, without bringing him neither salvation, nor healing (…) So poetry is a lie, leading memories into his archaeologies, a lost paradise. A simple newspaper article, even more a lie. What to reproach? To whom? After all he was Arghezi and I was nobody. No matter how much the ugly surprise had bitten out of my chimaeras what sense would have had the pout I was suffering off? None." (Arghezi, LXVIII)

Although he will not focus on this Caraion won't forget to show that Arghezi will became a consequence of his own acts, he had refused to defend the freedom of culture and his own freedom will therefore be limited: one of his volumes will be banned from publishing ("101 poems") and from then on, his literature will be despised and minimized.

He continues by arguing that the contradictory nature of Arghezi's "variable humours" wasn't only specific to poetry. No doubt about it Arghezi's personality had similar consequences both in what he was writing as in his real life interactions. During another visit at Mărțișor Caraion witnesses Arghezi vituperating against different public (and literary) personalities of the time "Slaughtering without hesitation, he was probably making up things, at least to a

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certain extent. But he wasn't spearing anyone, no matter what relationship he had had yesterday, the day before or some other time with one or the other (…) But it wasn't the real reality the one to count, but his reality, the reality of his fiction. He was ebullient and he moved vivacious from one victim to another." (Arghezi, LXXXI). Also he recalls "And he wasn't ever completely, forever and for sure on someone's side for too long, not even on his own side without his instabilities, some natural, others played, provoked (…) made up in order to give him satisfaction and balance, but by accepting with resignation the idea that his laying at pause, his swinging, his always running after the illusion of something else were defined within his own limits (…)" (Arghezi, CXII)

Arguing that Arghezi's attitude was a consequence of the specific way he was built gives Caraion the chance to indirectly use this explanation for self justification. No doubt about it his two personas (Ion Caraion - publicly assumed identity of the poet and literary critic and Nicolae Anatol or Artur, Caraion's other identity, this time a contributor for the Romanian Security Service during the communist regime) were able to simultaneously exist also as a consequence of his referring to a role model having the authority that Arghezi had for Caraion, reference that set the ground for the unproblematic division of his ego into two different instances and the refusal to try to explain the problematic relationship instituted between this two instances.

Another level of the identification with his role model concerns his interaction with literature, the importance that literary creation had in the hierarchy of his concerns. As for Arghezi, for Caraion too poetry is central. All other concerns and aspects of life are secondary.

In the essay "A Drop of Intellectual Blood" published in his "Diary II" and republished in fragments and then in a special form (that will be discussed in a future article) in "The Last Bolgia" (the third and last of Caraion's diaries) Caraion concentrates one of the ideas that is recurrently restated in almost all of his critical and autobiographical writings "Under the pressure of my life's years that had been stolen, of the manuscripts several times confiscated or destroyed, with the heart-rending complex of not having enough time to write and say what I had to say; obsessed by the idea that my message was once again threatened to be repressed, for 15 years I had no other solution, I will work like crazy: 14 to 16 hours a day, to leave a work." (Caraion, 1998, XIII) "(…) risking my own life for the life of the work of art not to be girded or dispossessed of its attributes, for it not to have the right to accept neither gag nor handcuffs" (Caraion, 1998, X). Although this time explained mostly by the context in which he writes this urge to devote himself to literature is one that preceded his detentions. Often Caraion presents the time before his detentions as one devoted to literature. He was concerned with writing literature or about literature, and the time that wasn't invested in his publishing activity was used for reading or translating. One cannot oversee the resemblance between the way he presents himself as mainly concerned with literature and the way he presents Arghezi "Arghezi's life was an exercise for art, an overwhelming effort to exist only for the delight of words. His work wasn't only nor the exploiting of some minor handiness but the combined result of putting together a great talent and an infinite and difficult labour." (Caraion, 1998, 125)

The resemblance doesn't stop here. Recalling the experience of the years he was detained, Caraion describes how he was forced to write without hands, without paper or pencil "in my head, although there wasn't enough silence in there either" (Caraion, 1998, 117) That is why, he claims, many of his poems were worked up in his mind not in the proper conditions of a space specially designed for writing.

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That is why, Caraion says, he can better understand Arghezi who "speaks or spoke as he writes" (Caraion, 1998, 115), meaning that he was continuously working out, he continued to search for poetic formulas even then when he had to be part in a conversation "while discussing the poet continued to create and sometimes he succeeded admirable" (Caraion, 1998, 115) "he continued to work while answering to you or speaking to you, he was a creator of distributed attention." (Caraion, 1998, 118)

5. Conclusions

Although still just one of the circumstances that contributed to the forming of a certain psychological profile of Caraion's, his meeting with Arghezi is a very relevant one. The situations he is forced to reflect on give him the opportunity of an exercise to try to integrate contradictory attitudes into an entity that rests coherent only through the refusal to simultaneously consider this different instances and through the refusal to indict this division. Through his speech Caraion builds it up to be deeply related to a search specific to the act of creation. The justification is also build on the argument of literature's rank in the hierarchy of the poet's concerns. The idea will be continued with another one that is continuously emphasized in Caraion's critical and autobiographical writings that, in what concerns a writer, literature must come first and literature will always place the interest for his life's events on a secondary level, both for himself as for those interested in analyzing it.

The comparison that ends with underlining the resemblance between the two is not one build up out of reasons for demonstration but one that encompasses some of Caraion's observations that clearly present aspects in which the poet compares and identifies himself with Tudor Arghezi. Therefore the purpose of this paper was not that to build up possible theories but to present real scenes of the poet's biography, underlining the way in which their consequences acted in the evolution of the options he made and of the self justifications he might have worked up for himself.

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