MIHAI EMINESCU AND POLITICAL JOURNALISM

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Abstract: *Mihai Eminescu continued a quite long tradition of Romanian journalism and his interest in political aspects can be easy understood taking into consideration the tumultuous historical epoch. Our approach does not emphasize the well-known virulent stylistic features of Eminescu's texts, but what and who proceeded this kind of criticism and outstanding dignified attitude towards authorities, political parties and national social reality. The present paper brings out mainly the feminine prophiles involved in this process as the author had previous contributions regarding this subject.*

Keywords*: politics, Romanian history, journalism.*

Having in our attention the out standing and purposeful historic and political context of the 19th century in the Romanian counties, and afterwards in the independent Romania, we may dignify one of the most well-known imaginative antitheses: *Order* versus *Chaos*. Before the 19th century, Romania culture was dominated by chaotic and winding attempts to define its national structure. That overwhelming disorder and amalgam badly needed several forces to impose a coherent undertaking. Our country, an island of Chaos at that time, was a place in which Romanian people were lost as in a maze. This is a frequent imaginary representation of the impossibility to communicate (Oişteanu, 1989: 263). The maze is like a border between two realms. At the beginning of the 19th century, Romania was the realm of Chaos or of Disorder. Over the western border, it was the organized realm of civilized modern societies. Heroes' actions came into proeminence in order to connect the two realms and well handly bring rder into the Chaos. These heroes epitomize both the masculine and the feminine tenets. In mithology, their names are Teseu and Ariadne. The latter offered the thread leading the male hero to the imaginative representation of malefic and disheveled force, Minotaur. Reaching the center of the labyrinth, disposing Minotaur, getting out of the maze are all the characteristic features of an attunement, of a spiritual revival (Chevalier, Gheerbrant, 1995: 192). Mircea Eliade, a man of science of so good repute, has also underlined the value of this battle for Order and Truth. In his famous book, *Tratat de istorie a religiilor*, Eliade points out the difference between *relative truth* and *absolute truth*, which means, in fact, a confrontation for obtaining absolute truth mainly based on an almost transcendent virtuousness (Eliade, 1991: 51).[1]

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[1] "În perspectiva adevărului relativ, lumea fenomenală, deşi ontologic ireală, există într-un mod foarte convingător în experienţa omului obişnuit. În perspectiva adevărului absolut, spiritul descoperă irealitatea a tot ce pare să existe, dar această revelaţie e verbal inexprimabilă [...], dacă nu este păstrată valoarea conduitei morale..." – *Cf.* Eliade, Mircea, *Tratat de istorie a religiilor*, traducere de Mariana Noica, prefaţă de Georges Dumezil, Bucureşti, Humanitas, 1991, p. 51.

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So, Romanian people have had this archetype of *Order* versus *Chaos* well and frequently presented in both popular and literate culture. It has a clear-cut significance: the ordered Chaos becomes Cosmos. There are several conspicuous cosmogonical fables. An old one presents a meaningful chart of the sky on which the popular term for the Milky Way is translated into Romanian by the phrase *Calea întortocheată/The Mazy Way*. Ariadne herself is another constellation with the name *Aridela*, which clearly calls forth the mythological onomatology. In this mythological display, Romanian folk mentality brings into focus another major symbol, namely the symbol of *ball of threads* which lays stress on the paradigm of the labyrinth and the meaningful travel inside it.[1] The brave traveler got into the labyrinth and into the centre of the ball of threads trying to disjoin the knot which means, in fact, to collate with perils and difficult drags, drawbacks, with the terrible darkness and murkiness symbolizing the ignorance, perplexity in front of unknown, new things, methods, and subjects.

Making a parallel with the Romanian society of the 19th century, we conclude that there was also a national effort to get out from the black side of European map by acquiring the correct way to modern civilization, cutting-edge trends and ideologies. Romanian people wanted to form into a united and independent nation. One of the most legitimate and powerful wishes was that of synchronizing with all the ideas and the ideals of the Western European countries.

The historical period in which Transylvania was a part of Austro-Hungarian Empire stood for a general spiritual progress, but also for a women's emancipation loop. This agreeable influence took place both in all the Romanian counties and in Transylvania and it was conclusively helped by literary, political and journalistic acts. The newspaper became the major mean of information, a fateful witness of the Romanian evolution in its whole. Gathering the information from all corners of the country, it was proved that main, old and traditional cultural capitals of Europe were important factors which had greatly influenced the intellectuals' education, spiritual progress and the Romanian communication with Western Europe.

The subject of Romanian women's contribution to cultural development of our country has been several times approached by us. The women's position in the Romanian society and the history of our country seem to be a constant issue and an unfailing debate almost in every historic epoch. It is not the only matter with such characteristics. For example, multiculturalism is also an issue as old as Europe and its history and it has begun when the Roman elite took possession of Greek spiritual legacy and all the benefits of its civilization (Karnoouh, 1997: 7).

The first ideas about feminism appeared in Romania due to a few women writers who had also a journalist career. They are less known because they had not an active voice in the political field which was the most noticeable. Some of them were active in the traditional Romanian counties; others were keen personalities in Transylvania. Of course, this is a very brief introduction to a measureless topic. It was not peculiar only for Romania.

[1] *Cf.* „ ... ghemul este o paradigmă a labirintului, în aceeaşi măsură în care ultimul este o paradigmă a primului, pentru ca atât unul cât şi celălalt să nu fie decât simbolice reprezentări ale Haosului." - Oişteanu, Andrei, *Motive şi semnificaţii mito-simbolice în cultura tradiţională românească,* Minerva, Bucureşti, 1989, p. 265.

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Since the very beginning, feminism was reformist in all the countries. The British authors used to assert that the goal of the feminist research works has been "to give back the women to the history", but also "to give back the history to the women" (Miroiu, 1995: 33)[1]. In order to render to the women their visibility from the historical point of view, it was a common place for quite a long period to differentiate with respect to "Hi-story" (phonetic expression for men's history) and "Her-story". But the so called her-story is very interesting in Romania too.

The first Romanian woman journalist was Maria Rosetti (1819-1893) who edited few newspapers quite well-known in that epoch: *Românul/The Romanian*, *Mama şi copilul/Mother and Child* (Petcu Marian, 2007: 39). It was a first example for a woman's implication in activities usually linked to men's working field. As a matter of fact, several clues regarding the feminist movement came in sight at the same time with other important European countries. I. Heliade Rădulescu, statesman, poet and journalist, published a literary and scientific review, *Curierul de ambe sexe* (1837), as a result of his complete understanding of the intellectual tendency of his time. The same remark is consistent for *Albina românească* (Gheorghe Asachi), *Icoana Lumii/The Icon of the World* and George Bariţiu's *Gazeta de Transilvania*.

Another notable person was Sofia Nădejde (1858-1946), Iosif Nădejde's wife and Octav Băncilă's sister. The first was a significant politician, publicist and sociologist. The latter was one of the most gifted Romanian realist painters with radical political views. Sofia Nădejde did her first appearance as a journalist in *Femeea română*, but she continued to publish in *Basarabia*, *Contimporanul/The Contemporary*, *Literatură şi ştiinţă/Literature and science* (editor – Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea), *Gazeta săteanului/The Villager's Newspaper*, *Muncitorul/The Worker*, *Munca/The Labour*, *Social-democraţia/Social Democracy*, *Lumea nouă/The New World*. She was the director of *Evenimentul literar/The Lietrary Event*, also a well known translator, and the author of quite a lot of novels, short-stories and plays: *O iubire la ţară/Love in the Country, Din chinurile vieţii/Among Tournements of Life, Robia banului/The Thrall of Money, Părinţi şi copii/Parents and Children, Patimi/Passions* etc. From a literary point of view she experienced the impact of French naturalism and another two Romanian currents - *poporanism* and *semănătorism*. She shared with her husband and brother the radical ideas and she played a very active role in the socialist movement of that historical epoch. She was appreciated as the leader of the feminist movement and her entrance as a journalist had a clear and fierce attitude. She argued for equality between men and women and for liberty. She had a famous dispute against Titu Maiorescu. They argued about brain capacity at men and women, the latter maintaining that women had no capacity to develop their intelligence and their social function must be remote (Mihăilescu Ștefania, 2002: 85).[2] The female author proved very

[1] Lerner, Gerda, *The Creation of Patriarchy*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1986 *apud* Miroiu, Mihaela, *op. cit.*, p. 33

[2] „Oare nu-i ruşine pentru secolul nostru, ca jumătate din omenirea, aşa numită civilizată, să stea în sclavie? S-au eliberat robii, d-lor; însă noi am rămas. Poate credeţi că exagerez? Nu, nicidecum şi voi arăta mai jos că vorbesc adevărat. Veţi zice oare: ce nu vă educăm: nu vă dăm voie să vă îmbrăcaţi după gust? Eu voi răspunde că şi sclavii primeau o educaţiune, care folosea numai stapânilor; şi sclavii erau siliţi să se împodobească, nu însă pentru a li se face lor plăcere, ci stăpânilor. Tot asemenea şi cu

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sound scientific knowledge, being an equal crusader for Titu Maiorescu. Sofia Nădejde pointed out correctly the fact that the so-called women ignorance was a direct consequence of the lack of education and scarce social conditions which were unfortunatelly retained by the political class (Nădejde: 1889).

In one leading articles (5th of April 1878), the pioneer-journalist Maria Flechtenmacher indited a real ode for the Romanian women who deserved to be equal to those living in the United States, England, Italy or Germany. She proudly mentioned the fact that many women from Transylvania, Basarabia and Bucovina subscribed to her magazine or the fact that a lot of associations congratulated her and the civic minted actions of the women living in the capital of the country. Those tones and undertakings presented in her publication were known in the Western Europe too as many female readers had standing orders to *Femeea română/Romanian Woman*. Maria Flechtenmacher was initiated in the existing of other European magazines far more advanced in promoting and protecting feminine rights (e.g. *The Magazine from Geneva*, *La Cornelia* - Florence, *La Donna* - Bologna, *Women's Suffrage Journal* – England, and many others issued overseas). She impressed by her arraignment and her militant sentences.[1] Her style was simple, quite unpolished, but direct and bold, mentioning a lot of information and being a true model and stimulus for the Romanian population *across the mountains* meaning Transylvania - Arad, Gherla, Făgăraş, Cernăuţi, etc. – (Mihăilescu, 2002: 76). One may notice the effort to blur her feminine features in favor of other detached ones. She wrote sly about Parisian fashion, worldly habits, and regretted the deaths of great feminine spiritual leaders such as George Sand, de Sevigné, de Girard, Madame de Staël etc.

Taking into account women differentiation, several female writers and journalists brought in the general political situation and underlined the necessity to emancipate Romanian women as a condition for at least two causes: updating Romanian society and synchronizing it with European standards.

Accordingly, quite many women interfered also in educational dimension of the Romanian society. They founded schools, edited reviews, wrote articles and approached critically political aspects. Although all these authors debated the same subjects, it is obvious that their actions were quite frail because there was no coordinated activity and everybody tried to promote causes and to bring home great ideals in several places on the whole territory of Romania. Comparatively, there was no difference between programs, articles and claim, but all of them lacked the power of a linked system.

Journalism and its first forms of political journalism are a natural outcome of a modern nation striving to present itself to Europe and to the world. They were crucially

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femeia: toată educaţiunea ce primeşte nu este decât ceva ce nu contribuie nicidecum la dezvoltarea inteligenţei sale." *Cf. Cestiunea femeilor* and *Răspunsul d-lui Maiorescu în chestia creierului la femei*, in Mihăilescu, Stefania, *Din istoria feminismului românesc*, vol. I, Iaşi : Polirom, 2002, pp. 83-95.

[1] „Vom arăta apoi mai la vale cum în Franţa, unde generalitatea femeilor nu se ocupa decât de invenţiunea luxului ş-a modei, bărbatul se ocupă de cultură, de drepturile femeii, care constituie jumătate parte a societăţii umane. La noi însă ce face bărbatul pentru femeie? N-o ajută la nimic bun!... o descurajează, o ia în râs dacă vede că voieşte să sfărâme singură crisalida care-i ţineau lipite aripile inteligenţei. Căci instrucţie graţie Domnului nu i s-a dat până acum." – *Cf. Articol redacţional* în Mihăilescu, Ştefania, *ed.cit.*, p. 78.

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present and involved in the revolutionary movement (1848), The Union from 1859, The Independence War (1877) and The Great Union of 1918. They were not inferior to any other European woman lain on the barricades of the revolutions from France, Germany or those from Austro-Hungarian Empire.

The journalistic or literary activities had an active part in finding the way out from the mythical *labyrinth* of ignorance and non-recognition in the modern and civilized European area. Political journalism tried hard to follow the thread of the destiny of our nation. They were aware of the importance of that insistence and the present imaginary representation of a cultural, political and social European profile cannot exclude the Romanian features. All these mentioned social and cultural changes associated with modernity cultivate a focus on national and individual identity which was found out due to the successful travel through the mental maze. The boundary lines fell out.

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